

Trauma and Abuse: A Psychological Approach to a Chapter of Latin American History

By Luigi Zoja

"Oh! Before this moment, I existed. My heart is deadly wounded."

—*Codice Fiorentino, VI*

In Mexico, as in no other place, the encounter between natives and Europeans takes the shape of *trauma* and *collapse* for the preexistent society. While, for instance, the war against the Incas and their empire lasted forty years and the campaign against the Mayas almost a century and a half, the one against the Aztecs was over in less than two years, and much less than that if one counts only the period of effec-

tive military activities. It seems that the Spaniards, getting into a vast and impervious country, the language and geography of which they did not know, barely had time to cross it by foot, carrying along their heavy supplies.

In no other place is the cataclysm so hard to explain by normal logic. The Aztec empire, besides being large and highly organized, was built precisely upon military invincibility; and it was a young state, in full expansion, nothing like a decadent institution.

On the other hand, if one adopts the point of view of myths and archetypes, in no other place does the collapse of the preexistent society become so explainable. Prophecies, rites, transcendent beliefs—everything prepares the Mexicans to renounce not only fighting but also surviving with their own identity when the Spaniards arrive.

In no other place perhaps (and here the "perhaps" is necessary because the reconstruction is entirely psychological), does the identification of a whole people with the emperor (because of the absolute role he plays and the almost complete identity between politics, astrology, and myth) seem to have favored the psychic contamination of society as a whole, disseminating his own personal collapse through it.

In no other place, finally, and in no other time in history, do a collective depression and renunciation of the will to live (when not an explicit will to die)

Luigi Zoja, Ph.D., has recently moved from Italy to the United States. He works in private practice in Manhattan and in Katonah, Westchester County. Dr. Zoja is a training analyst of the C.G. Jung Institute—Zurich and Past President of CIPA (Centro Italiano di Psicologia Analitica). He is a former teacher of psychiatry at the State University of Palermo. Dr. Zoja has had clinical practices in Zurich, Switzerland and Milan, Italy. He is the author of many papers and books, published in Italian, German, French, Portuguese, Greek and Slovenian. His books in English are: *Drugs, Addiction and Initiation*, Sigo Press: Boston, 1999; *Growth and Guilt*, Routledge: London, 1995; and a forthcoming book, *The father*, Routledge: London, foreseen Spring, 2001. The text of this article was first delivered as the opening speech at the 2nd Latin American Congress of Analytical Psychology, in Rio de Janeiro, June 2000.

seem to have contributed (along with hunger, diseases and massacres, of course) to a people's cultural and almost physical disappearance. According to some calculations, by the end of the sixteenth century—the century of the conquest—the native population went from 25 million to 1 million, a survival rate of 4%, and shrank to less than 3% during the two decades that followed. That corresponds to the disappearance of over 97% of a whole subcontinent's population (Cook and Borah, 1971).

Something is broken, high up; it doesn't matter if in heaven or in Montezuma's personality, because heavens reach down to the common man through Montezuma and the priests who surround him. And the distance separating the common man and Montezuma is infinitely greater than the one separating Montezuma from heaven. This rupture is communicated to the whole people as a process of contamination that was not instantaneous but certainly very fast—if it is true that Montezuma was actually killed by the very ones who wanted to resist.

What interests us here is that this deep wound stays open throughout the following centuries, to the point of being considered the basis of national identity. This negative identity, sour and repressed, was described by Octavio Paz (1950) in one of Latin America's most famous essays, "The Labyrinth of Solitude." The violence of this negative identity forcefully struck me, as an European visitor, at the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City. This museum is built upon that fracture, but in such a way that the cleavage remains implicit and is never named. Everything simply stops at the arrival of the vessels from Europe. That

is, the National Museum of Anthropology itself conveys to the visitor the idea that those vessels and that Europe do not take part in the gradual formation of the Mexican *anthropos*. One doesn't know what they are; they are something other, excessively "other." The visitor at the museum is led along a path suggesting that Mexico's anthropology and the Mexican nation are to be grasped in that fracture. This interpretation implies that the Spanish vessels wanted to trespass a frontier, and instead they brought the frontier with them. That frontier has become an unbridgeable split between past and present, a flagpole of otherness stuck in the heart of Mexico.¹

History's Circularity and Linearity

The European visitor, as ignorant as myself, may be deeply disturbed by this revelation. He then gets a car and drives to the north, to visit Teotihuacán, and, not far from there, the monastery of Acolmán. He crosses a peaceful pre-Columbian town and a religious center. In doing so, he hopes to unite both worlds, at least in his own personal experience. But he fails. The fracture becomes deeper when visiting all those places which unite in narrow space a Spanish church and a pre-Hispanic archeological site. Facing each other, we find in fact two opposite conceptions of time, never to be reconciled: the time of natives and the time of conquerors. Circular time and linear time.

The time of the natives is alternation, rotation, and return of the stars, of the gods and also of worldly events—which are known in advance, because inseparable from those superior powers. The conquerors' time seeks perfection, is assigned to will power, and has been

codified in a sacred text; but that goes on without ruptures into lay modernity: the craving for individual improvement and collective construction of history that characterizes the peoples of the Bible and the Western world.²

The circular conception of time is known to us especially thanks to the work of Eliade (1949), who related it to simpler populations and their dependence on agricultural cycles. Mexican society represents something much more complex, but its idea of time remains obsessively bound to an original moment in which everything was already predicted.³ Everything is contained in the cosmogony and everything has been decided and made sacred by it. Without a concept of history and becoming, without an effective writing system to register it, and without a sacred text from which to seek guidance, the Aztecs do not overcome the idea of the eternal return: they transfer this “primitive” concept to a level of complexity more in accord with their society and religion. To know what is right and what is wrong, what shall and what shall not happen, it is not enough to know the year and its agricultural cycles. They are, in turn, part of the cycles of the years and the stars. This way, everything becomes predictable and unchangeable because it has been foreseen, or at least minutely prearranged, in the past. But this knowledge is not accessible to the common man—being restricted to the old (since the Aztec “year” corresponds to fifty-two of our years), to priests, to astrologers—and is cultivated by obsessive repetition and tradition’s ritual (in the literal sense of recitation of ancient truths which form the core of the education of the young.)

Todorov (1982) has brought to light very well the relationship between the

absence of a sacred written text and the craving for continuity through oral repetition, which presupposes the reoccurrence of some basic events. It seems to us, however, that the lack of writing actually reveals something much deeper and widespread: a preexisting anxiety, not caused by the lack of writing.⁴ In the Aztec world, the craving for continuity and collective identity⁵ had to be expressed in a frenzy that we can hardly imagine, since they could not rely on writing as an outer object to register the past or the passing of the seasons, as happens in other cultures.

Surrounded by the ruins of Tula, Montezuma tries to listen to the voices of stones, which whisper to him old tales about the greatness of the Toltecs, who were there before the Aztecs: the obsession for the return of the god *Quezalcoatl* is not only part of a fixation in that greatness but also an absolute need for revival of the past. There is no identity without the permanence of what has been. Even more: there is no existence without permanence. Since continuity cannot be found in outer records-written texts-it is sought in an inner, mental record; that is, in that part of psychic experience that we call archetype. In the absence of outer means of continuity, the decisive factor is the psychic experience whereby all that is already known will one day return. This experience becomes the single truth.

The surviving Aztec wise men, forced to confront Franciscan friars, would not think to enter a theological debate, something inconceivable to them. Displaying great modesty, they would not argue in favor of their own religion. They would just say that it had always been the way it was. Their faith was the same their parents and their

forefathers had always had. The reassuring experience of the archetype repeating itself *is* the proof that their religion is valid, and not the other way round. Aztec religion is not a theological system, but an experience and an archetypal emotion that one cannot dispute with abstractions. And if this religion is made up of archetypes, its essential outward manifestation will take place where the great archetypes are projected: in dreams and visions to which a prophetic value is attributed, or in astrology.

For Montezuma, the arrival of the Spaniards is the rupture of that continuity that ruled the world. For him, the strangeness of the newcomers is not the inconceivable aspect—even if horseman and horse were taken as a single being, what would be so inconceivable about that? Just call them gods and everything becomes reasonable; the Aztecs were used to even stranger gods. *The inconceivable is that their arrival should be a novelty, and not a repetition. A new-type and not an arche-type.* Thus, Montezuma's first concern is not to know what will happen next, but to discover what has already happened. He frantically consults elders all over the empire. He stops only when he finds one who possesses ancient drawings where similar beings are depicted: proof that the Spaniard's arrival was predicted (foreseen, actually).

We were not able to look at those pictures, but we are not convinced that they resembled the newcomers: for instance, some of those figures were riding eagles instead of horses. However, we are convinced that Montezuma had found exactly what he wanted: not explanation, but preexistence; not resemblance, but archetype; not verification (that is, verity's control) but the emotion of continuity.

We realize, when we study Montezuma's biography, that the frightened surprise in face of a radical novelty is the *first traumatic rupture* of his life. At this point, we are taking another step, starting to couple the general notion of rupture to that of psychological trauma; not a personal trauma, though, but the collapse of the Aztec psyche as a whole. This event reminds us how a common myth, an archetype that appears in many different cultures, is precisely the one referring to a catastrophic event that disturbs cosmic order and puts the world in danger, driving it off its axis (de Santillana, 1986). The regular rotation of the cosmos is interrupted. The axis is dangerously tilted.

If for Montezuma the meeting of the two hemispheres amounts to a disturbance of the world's axis, for the Spaniards, on the other hand, the same meeting corresponds to its re-orientation according to the Tordesillas' Treaty (1494): a perfect vertical line, a perfectly new one. Like all perfect verticals, this one ideally unites earth and heavens—how could we expect anything else, since it just brings the pope's voice to perfection?⁶

This readiness to cut the world in two with the blessings of God seems to us something modern and profane, not so much due to its materialism as to the capacity to remain undisturbed in the face of absolutely new events and even to take hold of them. This capacity seems to have left behind the sense of continuity based on archetypal repetition. The conquest concerns *new* lands. But this readiness belongs mainly to men devoted to action, to the adventurers who will increasingly dominate the world. Under the surface, the majority of Europeans still need archetypes, and that makes them not so different from

Montezuma. A very clear example would be the Valladolid debate (1550), where the proper treatment of the subdued native populations was discussed. The confrontation placed Bartolomé de las Casas, who is known to have dedicated his life to defending the Indians, against Ginés de Sepúlveda, who stood for a point of view that today would be called imperialist. Las Casas won the debate, although centuries of oppression might have made us forget it. It is not the conflict between good natives and evil Europeans that is registered by history, but the starting point of that uninterrupted debate which eventually leads to Western complex, lay, and pluralist society. We can go without interruption from those apparently naive debates to today's theology of liberation and international law.

Las Casas espoused extensively the view that an event such as America's discovery should have been announced in the sacred scriptures.⁷ Sepúlveda, who favored a radical submission of the Indians, invoked Aristotle's authority (the author who, so to speak, described the archetype of enslavement in *Politics*). Both Las Casas and Sepúlveda *tried to prove their vision of truth, maintaining that it corresponded to an ideal and preexistent model, and was therefore eternal.*

Friar Bernardino of Sahagun, to whom we owe an extensive work dedicated to preserving Aztec memory, followed in his turn Gioachino da Fiore's utopia and used to "read" the meeting between Europe and America as the sign that the new utopic times were coming. Even those, like Sahagun, who dedicate themselves to history, the most characteristic result of human action, insist upon inserting the event in a chain of necessary, inevitable, and long fore-

seen recurrences. In fact, for Christians too it is the fact of having been *announced* that makes Christ be Christ. One of the central traits of the Western world is the intertwining of history's mundane character—that man is free to live day by day, without divine intervention—with certainties, truth, and preexistent prophecies. Not even Marxism has escaped this tradition.

Trauma and Abuse

Remember Hamlet's utterance "The time is out of joint. O cursed spite, that ever I was born to set it right"? When the axis of his world gets out of joint, Montezuma feels that a similar malediction has befallen him. Just like Hamlet—to whom he has been compared, during his phase of enigmatic uncertainty—Montezuma, head of the army, becomes depressed, anxious, apathetic, hesitant. Like Hamlet, Montezuma is alone. Like Hamlet, he is still respected, but feels that someone plots against him. Unlike Hamlet, however, he has no autonomous, lay thinking: all is magic, prophecy, prescribed deed.

In Montezuma, astrology blends with a certain "historical" knowledge of his own society. He knows how recent the Aztec state is, and wants to strengthen it by emphasizing his descent, on the maternal line, from the vanished Toltec state. Montezuma must have had in his hands the illustrated pre-Columbian text that we know as *Codex Windobonensis*. This document tells the story of the Toltec god Quezalcoatl, who for the Aztecs was just a secondary deity. Quezalcoatl is the feathered-serpent god who, disappearing *in illo tempore*, has generated the morning star (Venus) and will return one day, coming from the East.

According to most accounts written soon after the conquest, the landing of the Spaniards was preceded by many prophecies of doom for the Aztec empire. Following those texts, Montezuma would have immediately interpreted Cortés's arrival as Quezalcoatl's return, and, to a greater extent, would have treated the Spaniards as gods. We know that around 1550 the belief had spread through subdued, disoriented, and humiliated Mexicans that the Conquest had been announced. But we don't know to what extent those prophecies were known *before* the Conquest, nor if Montezuma believed in them. It may be meaningful, however, that the oldest of those sources—the *Tlatelolco Annals*, written by an anonymous Indian living there in 1528—does not mention it at all. It is also clear that Cortés did all he could to retroactively endorse this belief, which provided a religious and inexorable basis for his power.

From a psychological point of view, this belief could have been gradually disseminated following the defeat—a possibility that Todorov (1983), too, leaves open—supported by the Spaniards, who controlled information more and more. The Mexicans could have tried, in turn, to unconsciously elaborate the trauma, reestablishing its transcendent meaning and reconnecting their mythic and circular time to the historical and linear time into which they had been forcefully thrown.

From a psychological point of view, Montezuma's personal behavior can also be considered the result of trauma. He seems in fact to dissociate into contrasting attitudes. On the one hand, he sends gifts and ambassadors to honor the arrival of the new gods; on the other, he sends magicians to annihi-

late them with spells. According to certain sources,⁸ he even combines his contradictory attitudes into one single action: he sends word to the Spaniards that he will offer them whatever gift they might desire if they will abstain from seeing him. (Naturally, in so doing, he excites their cupidity and gets the opposite effect.) The magicians declare that their arts are powerless, and this too may have strengthened Montezuma's belief that he was dealing with true gods.

To the extent that Quezalcoatl's return attracts all attention and the sense of events is lost, the magical mind of Montezuma realizes that the world is sick and its axis—to use Santillana's image—could have been broken already *in illo tempore* with the god's disappearance. In this case, the very return of the god in Spanish attire could have sent him back to his rightful place. The effort to exorcise the newcomers is not a military one: against a few hundred Spaniards, Montezuma could have used hundreds of thousands of warriors, but he hesitates too long to use them. It is, on the contrary, a mental fight. Montezuma tries to compress a new event into an old cast, to reintroduce historical time into cyclical time, and to turn the trip of Cortés—who was in Mexico for the first time—into the idea of return. That being the state of affairs, however, time still belongs to the Aztecs, but the land belongs to the returning god. Montezuma exchanged land for time, sold out the sovereignty of a country for that of a calendar, but the latter soon turns out to be useless without the former.

Too many things were not predicted by the Aztecs, and the "return of the gods" became meaningless. The deities arriving on the vessels reveal them-

selves to be increasingly cruel, greedy, and mean. Of the new facts, this is the more determinant. At the end the Spaniards won't be called gods by the Mexicans anymore, but *popolócas*, a word that means more or less the same as "barbarians." The new event is truly new and could not be compressed in preexistent moulds.

And why couldn't Montezuma make up his mind about a coherent, organized military defense? Again, the explanation can only be a psychological one. All our sources describe Montezuma becoming more and more depressed, anxious, apathetic. Instead of living the conflict externally, as would be adequate for a warlord, he internalizes it to the point of immobility, paralysis. By then, Montezuma may have had his doubts about the divinity of Cortés. But inside the emperor's soul an omnipotent, invincible creature, a deadly and monstrous god, had already taken root. He had been duped, imprisoned, abused, and yet Montezuma went on alternating between attempts at ineffective reaction and efforts to ingratiate the Spaniards with concessions or gifts. Montezuma—and through osmosis probably an increasingly large number of his subjects—acts like a person who has suffered the most catastrophic of traumas: someone who has been abused by someone else he trusted without reserve.

The traumatized Mexicans may have experienced a wound even more lacerating than that of being betrayed and abused by a parent: *they have been abused by their gods*. All the symptoms that followed correspond to this original catastrophe and will remain petrified for centuries in a large number of descendants: loss of self-confidence, loss of initiative, introjection of con-

flicts without any sign of visible aggressiveness, inclination to self-destructive behavior (addiction, suicide) and to reenactment of the abuse. If a trauma is ever to be elaborated and reassimilated, it happens through the hard examination and innovation that is characteristic of linear time, not of cyclical time. The fixation on cyclical time was the first self-defeating, masochistic symptom of the Mexican emperor.

This trauma, however, is not only an individual event, it is also a historical one. Accordingly, cyclical time is not only the general form of premodern time, opposed to the European form, but also an individual experience that can last as an unreachable island inside our modern world. *The cyclical experience of time is actually the regressive container in which we seek refuge after suffering unbearable trauma*. As a vicious circle, trauma reproduces precisely the existential conditions that generated it. But now the circular, reassuring time does not correspond to stability and insertion in a society; on the contrary, it represents isolation and pathology.

Trauma and History

We have not focused our attention on a historical event, as it is often the case, to amplify a clinical analysis. We have, on the contrary, turned to the clinical, hoping to attain a better understanding of this cataclysm, perhaps the largest of all human history.

According to Kalsched (1996), to whom we owe the only real study of trauma from an archetypal point of view, trauma can be defined as what happens when a negative experience cannot be dealt with through normal psychic defenses. Then, a second line of defenses comes into play, defenses

that are invincible and archetypal (in the sense they are not personally elaborated and cannot be personally controlled). They are also demonic, or diabolical, because absolutely autonomous and capable of producing a complete separation—*dia-ballo*, from which we have the word diabolical—between the Self and the external world. The purpose of such defenses is actually the ultimate and complete protection of the Self when it is attacked by something that threatens its psychic survival. But the same defense against the unbearable wound tends to become unbearable in its turn. From then on, the faintest sign of danger may evoke the archaic defensive demon. The psyche becomes almost unchangeable, does not learn from external experience, and no longer interacts with it. The secondary defense resulting from an occasional event becomes the only event. Just as in autoimmune diseases, *the defensive mechanism has gone out of control and attacks the very organism it is supposed to defend*. Similarly, on the psychological level, an excess of defense means that someone who has suffered traumatic abuse is ready to commit suicide, if by so doing he prevents the repetition of trauma, or even the mere evocation of it (since it is psychic experience we are talking about).

In general, analysts tend to focus upon individual trauma suffered during childhood. Maybe because it is already the insurmountable event by definition, few occupy themselves with the collective trauma that falls upon the adults.⁹ A trauma, however, does not directly depend on age or on personal resources that might contribute to its elaboration. The fact that we have been able to apply modern views of trauma, like the one developed by Kalsched, to an event and

a culture that are so remote from us, seems to confirm that the psyche reacts to trauma following an archetypal pattern. The manifestations of the reaction will of course vary individually and culturally, yet the basic model cannot, because this reaction consists of an activation of psychic layers that are neither personal nor cultural, but archetypal.

We are often impressed by the fact that the reaction to trauma of highly individual personalities in different historical circumstances can be astonishingly similar. When we think of Primo Levi, Odette Rosenstock or Hans Mayer (better known as Jean Améry), we don't think only of three survivors from extermination camps or of three authors who transformed, with tremendous effort, their experience into narrative, in Italian, French, and German.¹⁰ Above all, we think of three persons who, in spite of achieving such heroic sublimation, one day obeyed, after so many decades, the command from the demon of absolute defense, and killed themselves.

We know that the abused lose their will to live. And we can, through intuition, understand why so many Mexicans committed suicide, infanticide, or simply stopped fighting disease during the decades that followed the Conquest. It was not because they did not want to face a life of suffering—which was already the fate awaiting most of them even under the reign of Montezuma, in any case. Their problem was not suffering but the impossibility of incorporating into their psyches the abuse practiced by the gods. And the defense against the psychic presence of abuse must be at least as big, absolute, and divine as the forces behind the abuse itself. The defense against *remembrance in life* must be a

total one, even at the cost of becoming defense against *life itself*.

During the decisive sixteenth century, the Aztecs enact their own historical suicide (Paz, 1950). First was a phase in which extinction was a real threat, due to a combination of organic and psychic pandemics; then, for centuries the population remained apathetic, as happens with the abused. The demonic archetypal defenses, which averted memories but also vital impulses, had clearly impregnated what Jungian psychology calls the collective unconscious. Nothing assures us that those defenses are only individual, that they cannot spread throughout society as a whole.

As we know, the abused forget precisely the things that matter most (Kalsched, 1996). This helps us to understand what I will call the “paradox of Octavio Paz”: the Mexican people, whose past is largest of all American populations, do not seem to be conscious of it, do not seem to have a history (Paz, 1950, chap. 4).

Kalsched tells us, agreeing with other researchers, that trauma tends to reproduce itself, and the victim tends to favor occasions for its reproduction. In dreams of abused patients, the demonic archetypal defenses manifest themselves, again and again, as powerful beings, especially as magical animals dedicated to protecting the Self but who at the same time separate the Self from life.

Language itself gradually ends up reproducing the experience of this short circuit, repeated inevitably when memories approach consciousness. In the mind of Primo Levi (1989), for instance, there was the autonomous repetition of the morning command: “Wstavec’!” (in Polish: “stand up!”). And he repeats it in his writings.¹¹ Or

when the speech of Elie Wiesel (1958), describing the first night at Auschwitz, interrupts itself and turns from linear into repetitive: “I will never forget that night, the first night in camp that have made of my life a long night, seven times shut. Never...” And the words “night” and “never” become a lullaby that crosses his book.

Can’t we say that this anguish, closed in a vicious circle, so characteristic of survivors from concentration camps, is the same expressed by the Aztecs when facing the Spaniards? “Their lances of iron, it was as if they set things afire. And their spades of steel waved like sea foam. It was as if they clanged their vests of steel, their helmets of iron. And others come, all equally covered with iron...” (*Codice Fiorentino*, XI). Or when they are ambushed: “Oh, worthy warriors! Oh! Mexicans! Come and help! There, they are dead already, the worthy warriors have perished! They are dead, they were betrayed, they were destroyed! Oh! Mexicans! Oh! Worthy warriors!” (ibid., XX). We may agree with Todorov that the tales of oral tradition tend to be repetitive, as a means to help fix them in memory, but we cannot help noticing that repetition becomes obsessive precisely when the trauma is described. Trauma and repetition are linked, archetypally as well as clinically.

Let us now go back one step, to the moment when Cortés and the Spaniards started to behave in ways that were increasingly cruel, ways incompatible with those of a god. We were asking ourselves when Montezuma stopped seeing them as gods. But does this question make sense, from a psychological point of view? We have said that at this point the antagonism with Cortés is being transferred inside the

soul of Montezuma, becoming an internal conflict. He is gradually paralyzed by it. Is there any sense in trying to discriminate whether the emperor believes that Cortés is a man or the god Quezalcoatl? From a psychological point of view, the ironman Cortés and the feathered serpent Quezalcoatl are both expressions of the demonical archetype that is activated in psyche following a trauma, intending to protect the Self while at the same time isolating it. In the external world, Cortés treated Montezuma exactly the same way: he went on honoring Montezuma as emperor, when he had already imprisoned him. Cortés-Quezalcoatl (that is, the archetypal demon) keeps enchained in autism the emperor Montezuma (that is, the Self).

Why should it make a difference to know whether, for Montezuma, the god Quezalcoatl had really returned? All available sources tell us that, after the arrival of Cortés, Montezuma was dominated by the eternal return of invincible monsters inside himself: "Oh!" he shouts. "Before this moment, I existed. My heart is deadly wounded" (*Codice Fiorentino*, VI). How can we help remembering Lifton's description of the traumatized in Hiroshima: *Death in Life*?

From a psychological point of view, what has happened is beyond remedy or repair. It will transmit itself to what remains of Montezuma's life, to his subjects, and, to an extent that is probably underestimated, to his descendants.

From a psychological point of view, the mythic, preannounced exterior return of Quezalcoatl is just the same thing as the autonomous, inevitable experience of interior repetition that refers to trauma and its monsters.

Notes

This article translated from the Italian by Victor-Pierre Stirnimann.

- 1) We might call this the "Mexican" interpretation of the events. There is also a "Parisian" one. Todorov emphasizes in his works the novelty and the strength of the sight that Cortés directs to Montezuma and the Mexicans. In contrast to Columbus, who remains attached to his prejudices, Cortés confronts openly the problem of the *other*: he looks for informants, interpreters, intermediaries. He knows he's facing an absolute novelty and wants to understand it, even if his final goal is one of domination. Serge Gruzinski, in *La colonisation de l'imaginaire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), suggests a problem of encounter and assimilation: more precisely, the gradual incorporation of Mexican imagination into the Western and Christian one. Then we have Alicia Dujovne Ortiz (born in Argentina but living in Paris) reevoking the horrors of the meeting between the two worlds and concluding: "It is not the American continent that became hybrid in 1492: it's the world....Europe doesn't risk becoming hybrid...it has been so for five centuries, at least in its soul" ("Le mépris, la méprise et le métis," *Magazine Littéraire* 296 [February 1992] pp. 56-58). The European world speaks of hybridism because it doesn't have to fear assimilation. The non-European world is afraid of disappearing while giving sense to this hybridism.
- 2) I have developed this topic in *Growth and Guilt: Psychology and the Limits of Development* (London: Routledge, 1995).
- 3) See chapter 1, "The nahuatl conception of time and space," in E. Florescano, *Memoria mexicana* (Mexico: Contrepuntos, 1988): "The essential was not the flux of things, but the founding act that had eradicated chaos and created order in the Universe, establishing harmony in the world and conjuring the dangers of its disruption. Which amounts to saying that to maintain order, foundation and duration, all human creations had to repeat the creating act *par excellence*....All creation is then a repetition of the creation" (p. 29).
- 4) The anxiety of inserting the new event into the continuity of all that has already happened—or at least been written or described—is always and everywhere to be found. Couldn't we see our own Jungian cul-

- ture almost as a kind of oral culture transmitted through analysis, never to be entirely substituted by the written text? And doesn't it consist of the rediscovery of this reassurance, this victory of what's been there forever over what is new, a longing for the archetype and its cyclic repetition—even though an individual and individuating one?
- 5) The relationship between continuity, identity, and a situation of collective conflict has been focused on very well by R. Papadopoulos, "Individual Identity and Collective Narratives of Conflict," *Harvest* 43:2 (1997).
 - 6) The Alexandrine Line and the seal *Inter Coetera* from Pope Alexander VI (1493).
 - 7) In his largest work *Historia de las Indias* (1553-61). See also Todorov (1982).
 - 8) Muñoz Camargo, *Historia de Tlaxcala*, book II, chap.I (Mexico, 1892). The chapter also includes a detailed list of signs and prodigies that supposedly preceded and predicted the Spaniards' arrival.
 - 9) See the classic studies of R. J. Lifton, *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima* (New York: Vintage, 1969), and *Home from War: Vietnam Veterans* (New York; Simon & Schuster, 1973).
 - 10) See P. Levi, *Se questo è un uomo*. 3rd ed. (Torino: Einaudi, 1989); for Rosenstock, see O. Abadi, *Terre de détresse* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1995); and J. Améry, *Jenseits von Schuld und Sühne. Bewältigungsversuche eines Ueberwältigten*. 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Klett, 1977).
 - 11) Levi, *Se questo è un uomo*, "Le nostre notti"; see also the epigraph of *La tregua*, published in the same volume with it.

References

- Cook, S.F., and Borah W. (1971). *Essays on Population History*. Vol. I. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- de Santillana, G. (1963). *Fato antico e fato moderno*. In *Reflections on Man and Ideas* (Boston: MIT Press, 1968)
- Eliade, M. (1949). *Le mythe de l'éternel retour. Archétypes et répétition*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Kalsched, D. (1996). *The Inner World of Trauma*. London: Routledge.
- Paz, O. (1950). *El laberinto de la soledad*. Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Economica, 1986.
- Todorov, T. (1982). *La conquête de l'Amérique. La question de l'autre*. Paris: Seuil.
- Todorov, T. (1983). *Récits aztèques de la Conquête*. Paris: Seuil.
- Wiesel, E. (1958). *La nuit*. Paris: Ed.De Minuit.

