

CARLOS FUENTES

A WRITER'S DAY

GREGOR VON REZZORI-VALLOMBROSA AWARD

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I am a disciplined writer. Every evening, before going to bed, like a diligent scholar, I prepare a list of tasks to be done the next day. Subject, characters, language; everything with Teutonic precision.

Then I sleep.

I wake up early. I wash. I make breakfast. Silvia cooks lunch and dinner. She is sleeping soundly now.

And then around 7:30, I sit down and write, with my diagram close at hand. At noon I stop working, knowing what I didn't know before and forgetting what I already knew.

What I have written in four and a half hours has little or nothing to do with the rational shopping list of the evening before.

Something different has emerged. An improbable new element, an obscure surprise, the joy of the now written comparable only to the despair of the non-written.

What happened during those hours of sleep?

Apart from any Freudian rationalisation – dreams distort, repress and symbolise – I can accept the idea that those we have loved, now dead, appear to us in dream to tell us in secret what they had been unable to say alive. If this is true, it means that in the act of dreaming there appear not only the ghosts of creation, but also its beneficiaries, its first and foremost public:

The loved ones.

Dreaming means creating because during sleep, which is half of our existence, the management of life and the announcement of death make an appointment to meet. It is a portal at which the two extremes of the beginning and the end join hands. How could dreams fail to alter the discretion of the rational, by injecting it with their own indiscretion?

To arrive at a compromise that neither compromises the dream nor sacrifices reason opens a gateway – a double portal, hard to guard – between what I rob from sleep and what I give to wakefulness, because even if I wrongly believe that I can control the gateway of morning, I am not sure I know whether I am opening or closing the gateway of night.

One thing is certain; this is not a hostile process, threatening to myself or others. It is dangerous, yes, but only for me. If the evening before I knew what I would be writing today, how can I now write what I did not know before?

The answer should be sought for, I believe, in the age-old question of who will read what is written. I am sceptical of writers who, from the very start, proclaim they are writing for the people. And I detest writers who have a prefabricated recipe for bestsellers. I am allured instead – as by an abyss, it is true – by the adventure of an initial mystery (for the writer?) or the onanism of solitary justification (I write only for myself), to arrive, in my seven hours of sleep, which are the other half of life, at a revelation of the concrete beneficiaries: the nearest, the dearest, those who have left us, obeying the law of the deep river, to await us in a time whose hour hand is missing. A grandmother from the northern region of Mexico, a descendent of the Yaquis Indios, courageous and quick-witted, small and dark, the daughter of the director of the Sonora Mint, who came from Santander, and who let her as a child slide down a great heap of gold coins. The mother of four women (one of them my mother), the young widow of a tall, pale, grandfather whose life came to a lonely, pitiful end in a squalid hospital, obliging my grandmother to seek work in the literacy campaign promoted by Minister José Vasconcelos; and once retired, unwillingly, to bestow on her grandchildren her fantastic anecdotes, and on her sons-in-law a handbook of good manners.

My other grandmother, from Veracruz, austere as a Gothic statue, slender as a reed, the daughter of German immigrants from the Rhineland, married at the age of eighteen my grandfather, a son of the Canary Islands, director of the National Bank of Mexico at Veracruz, where my father was born and, before him, a sister and brother. When my grandfather was struck by progressive paralysis the family moved to Mexico City, where my grandmother opened an elegant pension that served the cuisine of Vera Cruz: seafood salad, rice with fried bananas, *guachinango*<sup>1</sup>, shredded beef. My grandmother never saw an electric stove, and I knew my grandfather only when he was already in a wheelchair, paralyzed and, like old Villefort in the *Count of Montecristo*, expressionless except for his diabolically mobile eyebrows.

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<sup>1</sup> *Guachinango*, or *huachinango*, is a kind of fish very common in the Gulf of Mexico, resembling the mullet in appearance but closer to the dentex in taste.

They have all departed with the decorous naturalness of unacceptable things, as have the two persistent visitors of my dreams, my father, a disciplined man, meticulous and elegant, a diplomat by profession thanks to an adventurous imagination that my mother took upon herself to curb, her feet firmly planted on the ground and her heart as open to her husband and children as it was mistrustful toward a world unsuspected by my father, but not by her.

And here I must thank my father, and his love for the brother who died, for the fact that I have embraced literature. My deceased uncle, named Carlos like me, was more than a promise, a brilliant young Vera Cruz poet, the favourite disciple of the poet Salvador Díaz Mirón. A tall, blond, serious boy, who in 1919, at the age of twenty-one, was sent Mexico City to study and died there of typhus fever in a land revolutionary and revolutionized, where epidemics of poverty and neglect reaped more victims than bullets.

My paternal grandmother grieved for him the rest of her life, as my maternal grandmother had sorrowed for her husband. I always saw them dressed entirely in black, in mourning, and this is how they appear to me in my dreams, retelling stories so old they have become new again.

My children too enter my dreams, although in different ways. Cecilia, the eldest, is alive and helps me in my work. Natasha, the youngest, died at 29 of an impatient life, thirsting for knowledge, downing it in one gulp, restless and rebellious at the faults of people and the injustice of the world.

My son Carlos felt instead the harmony of life and his vocation as poet, film-maker and painter, accelerating his natural creativity - he had been creating since childhood - when he discovered, while still a child, that he was mortal, being haemophiliac from birth and vulnerable to all the ills of time.

My life is a book that stands erect thanks to those two book-ends that support it and give it a sense of beginning and end: Carlos Fuentes Boettiger, my uncle the poet, and Carlos Fuentes Lemus, my son the poet. They are perhaps the most assiduous visitors to my dreams; so that when I wake and sit down to write I no longer know whether what I am writing is my own, or has been dictated to me by my namesakes of the truncated lives. They have transformed my survival into an ordinary miracle that I would be unable to repay, except through love and that mediator of love who is my wife Silvia, always waiting for me at the exit from the labyrinth of sleep with a golden thread in her hand, to keep me from losing myself.

I awake knowing that it is unjust not to know we are mortal. 'We believe', wrote Tennyson, 'that we are not made to die. Death convinces us of the contrary. Therefore, death is just'.

Ancestors, dead young or old. Only rarely do my friends appear in my dreams. Their presence is too strong, too discreet, to interfere with my nights. Each friend is like a Virgil who accompanies me in the light of day, in the eternal morning that is friendship and that finds expression - ciao, hello, how are you, what a pleasure, what a miracle – in words not only exclaimed but simply spoken, since in friendship I discover that the blessed word is not the word blessed nor even the cancellation of the word, but the *spoken* word.

Byron described friendship as love without wings. I try to restore the wings to friendship, which, according to Dickens, is a bird that must not lose a single feather, not even the quill with which I write. I am a pre-modern writer who uses no machines, but pen, ink and paper, keeping them always at hand in an airplane, on the beach or in a hotel. Do words need anything else?

What is certain is that now it is morning, between seven-thirty and twelve-thirty, the hours of the written word. What is certain is that in writing and in life we live in an incessant exchange of words. We know that the world gives us words, and that in writing we give them back to the world. But the written word is no longer the same word the world gave us. It has been transformed by language, which belongs to all, to say something that belonged to no one before.

And if now the written word has been returned to all, it is only because the exchange is ceaseless, and language does not slumber in the siesta of everyday life, but assails the life of every day with a shock that is both nocturnal and auroral, forcefully transforming it:

*Oh wretched mortal, hard thy fate!*

with acute irony:

*Hypocrite lecteur, — mon semblable, — mon frère!*

or with shocking innovation:

*Riverrun that, past Eve and Adam's church ...*

In any case the world will no longer be the same again.

Nor will the writer be; creation creates tradition and tradition creates creation, and in this unending relationship between what has been and what will be, that which exists encompasses all of time within itself. Each page is both memory and desire, past and future, but only here and now, in the present inscribed in the spaces of Madrid, Mexico City or Macondo, and in time past or time to come, in that hour belonging to all which is

reading, a moment both intimate and collective, both shared and individual, both public square and private corner.

Here is what noon means for me:

Outstretched hands and benevolent gaze.

Some write to be loved: Dickens, García Márquez.

Some write to be hated: Céline, Houellebecq.

Some write to be tasted: Saramago, Nérida Piñon, artificers of the most *gostosa* language, Portuguese.

Some write to in-vert: Balzac, Galdós, Dos Passos.

Some write to sub-vert: D.H. Lawrence, Juan Goytisolo, Jean Genet.

Some write to di-vert: Sterne, Saki, Diderot.

Some write to con-vert: Mauriac, Bernanos, Graham Greene.

Some write to ad-vert: Swift, Voltaire, Orwell.

Feared, loved, hated, the writer conceals the secret wish to be both a disturber of the world that is, and a creator of the world that can be.

The ultimate objective is, in any case, the reader, and author's aim is to exert an effect on the reader's emotional life, to launch between himself and the reader a bridge of intimacy even at the cost of intimidation, to renew in the act of reading both the reader's spirit and the book's existence.

Because we know that the reader, protagonist of the post-meridian, knows the future.

The writer does not. And because the writer consigns a book to the reader, he must write a literature that *creates* readers, not a literature that *counts* readers.

The next reader of *Don Quixote* has not yet been born.

Before Cervantes, *Don Quixote* was unimaginable.

After Cervantes, we cannot imagine the world without *Don Quixote*.

This means that Cervantes - or Flaubert or Faulkner - lives through us centuries before our birth, and centuries *after* our death. The novel, in this way, *anticipates* our lives.

Because one thing is certain:

The reader will inhabit the evening of our day.

The reader will survive the author.

The reader will become the co-author of the book, and the next reader has not yet been born.

From this derives the slow capillary spread of the discourse, the ideas and the images of literature. Their measured pace is foreign to the frenzy of the world, so that the world, ever more attuned to breaking news and knowledge in pills, may fear this revolutionary

wager to outlast the news and still be news tomorrow and the day after; to disappear one day and reappear the next; to be as ghost.

Literature is disturbance of the established order; but it is hope for the worlds to be formed. It is, in its eternal present, an affirmation of the vitality of cultures. The anonymous *Popol Vuh* is as contemporary as Jorge Volpi's *Klingsor*, Homer's *Odyssey* as modern as Joyce's *Ulysses*.

Giacomo Leopardi gives a tomb to the poet of forever; Julián Ríos, a hat to the girl of now.

Dante's *Inferno* is as frightening as Tommaso Landolfi's sky, or Cesare Pavese's purgatory.

Each individual possesses at every moment the facts that have happened to him or will happen to him, but he possesses them only in the present, which is where the past and the future truly exist, by way of memory and desire.

And yet, who would want to remember everything, and who would always manage to get everything he desires? Borges' prodigious Funes is afraid to lose his mind remembering everything, and decides to limit his memory to a week of manageable recollections. This is the lesson of the evening: every story is selective, but not in the sense of transforming the failures of some into the success of others. In London, a Frenchman is surprised to find a Trafalgar Square and a Waterloo Station, just as, in Paris, an Austrian thinks that Austerlitz and Wagram, Napoleonic victories, were defeats, and in Mexico City we do not celebrate the victors – there are no statues of Hernán Cortés – but the vanquished: Cuauhtémoc, the last Aztec king, brandishing a lance, lends his name to avenues, districts, buses and bars.

Not for this reason, but in the sense lucidly explained by Carmen Iglesias, history is an ensemble of human events in which chance and necessity oblige us, men and women of every age, to respond to the time in which we happen to live with the tools proper to each epoch. This broad and generous definition – by its author – accepts the complementary nature of literature and history; both of them involve the imagination and the word.

Conversely, if not the word, it is imagination – imagination as the constituent element of truth – that is missing from religion (when it becomes dogmatic) and from politics (when it becomes ideological). It is on these occasions, when faced with dogma, faced with ideology, that we appreciate the value of literature in history, and of history in literature.

We offer enigmas rather than dogmas and ideologies blinded by absolute certainty. We doubt, in order to know. We know, in order to doubt.

This is the lesson of twilight.

The novels that evoke a historic past, portray a historic present or predict a historic future, offer us two certainties.

The first is that every historic time is, as such, destined to be the past in the linear measurement of calendars. In the same way, the 'past' encompasses the events of *War and Peace* that took place in 1812, those of 1984 that happened twenty-five years ago and those of H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* that, at least for now, have yet to happen.

The second certainty is that the novel's true time is always internal to it, and in this sense Tolstoy, Orwell and Wells are always *present*, are always in the present time of their narration, whether it evokes the historic past, the present or the future. One example will suffice for all: Calvino's *Cosmicomics*.

As the day darkens into evening, history and literature are united in memory. Then history loses its memory and the writer compensates with his imagination.

Balzac imagines a peasant in the absence of any historical record.

Stendhal does not see the battle of Waterloo with the telescope of Bonaparte or Wellington, but with the blurred vision of Fabrizio del Dongo in the heat of the fray.

Dickens invents another London, and London repays him by transforming itself forever into the vision of Dickens.

Homer writes with a potent tongue that knows it is mortal: the voices of ancient Greece die out. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the secular word, remain.

We are all, in fact, besieged by a fatality that the book negates, revitalizing time after time, with each reading, the throb of life.

It is the hour of the book, the first hour of twilight, when the lamps light up and reading endeavours to illuminate the evening.

And what is it, what does it do, a book?

Books faithfully crown a secular civilisation of readers, often put to hard test by history.

Books create a crucially important culture of reading in countries that sometimes pass straight from oral tradition to political bombast, with a plug of silence in the middle. Books welcome and respect oral tradition, unmask oral rhetoric and save us from silence to project us into dialogue. Albeit in the solitude of reading, we are accompanied by the language, imagination and memory of another, named Cervantes or Shakespeare, at the moment when he is transformed into us through reading. Malraux said that Greece was the first civilisation without a holy book. And he added, it is the first civilisation in which the word intelligence means interrogation. Reading as dialogue and dialogue as question; is this the profound relationship between writer and reader? Has the hour of the

dinner prepared by Sergio Ramírez in honour of Rubén Darío arrived? Or that of the breakfast offered by Dino Buzzati to Hieronymus Bosch?

We converse: not only the writer and the reader, but also the book and society.

I do not believe that there exist 'democratic' societies in the pure sense of the term as specified by Lincoln: government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

I believe instead that in any society individuals can aspire to greater freedom – political, intellectual, religious and sexual. What differentiates regimes, in my opinion, is their acceptance or rejection of this grave, profound, unceasing aspiration, to which literature provides the privileged outlet of the word.

In the societies of the so-called 'free countries' (which protected Franco and Pinochet in the past) literature is frequently the object of indifference. The writer entertains others and himself; and is judged by irrelevant canons such as whether or not his book is a best-seller, whether he is in the spotlight or invisible, popular or unknown. Erroneous canons indeed; in 1936, *Anthony Adverse*, a Napoleonic saga by Hervey Allen, filled with intrigue, heroes in love and busts of emperors, was a great best-seller in the USA. But since *de bustibus non est disputandum*, that same year a little book barely mentioned by the critics and ignored by the public at large was published: *Absalom, Absalom!* by William Faulkner. Fifty years later, who remembers the trials and tribulations of Anthony, and who can forget the universal tragedy of the Sutpen family in the Deep South of America?

Some novels, from *Don Quixote* to *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, meet with immediate success.

And sometimes success is dissolved by time, as with *Peyton Place*. Some novels fall into oblivion, only to be resurrected by time, like *The Charterhouse of Parma*. But even in this regard, nothing is written in stone. The question remains as to how far politics welcomes literature and how a book that is profoundly significant, often obscure, poorly visible or hard to assimilate, a good book, either widely read or ignored, can resist in 'democratic' societies, that is, liberal societies open as much to error and injustice as to the critical and public possibility of correcting them; or in totalitarian states, where dogmatic truth is dictated, with no appeal, from above.

Literature brings imagination and words to any society. No society, I believe, can live without imagination and without words. But while in the 'democratic' societies, imagination and words can be the object of indifference or perversion aimed at nullifying their importance, in totalitarian regimes imagination and words are subjected to persecution, and this restores to them *all* of their due importance.

Night falls.

Because when books are burned in public bonfires and writers sentenced to exile, assassinated or imprisoned in concentration camps, we see with blinding clarity that the dictator wants to monopolize words, and brutally discredits not only opposing words but also differing ones; the heretical word, and let us consider well the etymology: heresy, *eso theiros, I choose*.

Totalitarianism, Philip Roth tells us, leads the writer into a concentration camp.

Capitalism, he adds, welcomes him into a television studio.

In speaking of Kafka, the Chilean philosopher Martín Hopenhayn introduces an intelligent query: Is it we who create power?

Do we bow down to our creation?

Do we dress the naked king?

Do we transform the fantasy of power into the body of power?

Liberal indifference and dictatorial difference illuminate only the fact that literature occurs simultaneously, regardless of the author's intention, in public and private schedules, for the simple fact that the writer brings language and imagination even to the freest society, and both are indispensable to the city, ignore or deny this fact as it may.

There is no doubt that words and imagination can be disturbing.

Why?

Because literature is *pluralist* in societies that may invoke plurality only on the occasion of public ceremonies or at election time. Because literature is *attentive*, it compels our attention in a world that is often distracted. And *attentive* literature is an assault on established custom, hypocrisy, and whitened sepulchres.

Because literature is *ironic*, both in the modern sense of distance and critical, even humorous observation of conventions and accepted truths, and in the *Socratic* sense (accepting a falsehood as truth in order to unmask it), *romantic* (possessing a vivacious spirit of paradox) or *existential* (irony as the requisite mask of seriousness because the latter, when solemn, is not believed).

To paraphrase Kierkegaard, we might say that literature always enters the world as a stranger. In other words:

Literature sees *other* possibilities of being human, which are often – almost always – lacking in public discourse.

Literature, then, extends those possibilities, according to the great Czech philosopher, Marxist and dissident Karel Kosík. It expresses reality, but moulds reality, neither before nor after, but within the work itself.

This means that a novel does not restrict itself to teaching us the world.

A novel aims to add something to the world, not merely to explain or portray reality, but to *create* reality; and not new reality alone, but *more* reality, by night, before the dawn of day; a reality that never existed before and that now, thanks to the novel, forms part of reality.

Such a project not only expands the historic breath of the world, but often founds it.

This, then, is my midnight project, my rough draft for tomorrow.

The novelists of Iberian and Spanish-American origin will understand what I am saying.

The literature and art of Spain and Latin America have originated less from its historic time than from the counter-time that the writer or artist opposes to historic absence or misfortune.

Where the Arab is fought, the Archpriest of Hita reinstates him with the *Libro del buen amore*.

Where the Jew is expelled, Fernando de Rojas reinstates him with *La Celestina*.

And where the edicts on purity of blood and the dogmas of the Counter Reformation extend the prohibitions of the time to every corner of the realm, Cervantes, in *Don Quixote*, shows that the novelist can create another time, a counter-time, in which reality merges with imagination.

Regrettably, there exists no Spanish or Spanish-American history without the Inquisitor Torquemada or the conquistador Nuño de Guzmán.

But fortunately, there also exists none without the Archpriest of Hita, Fernando de Rojas or Miguel de Cervantes, without Suor Juana, Neruda and García Márquez.

Or without the trans-Atlantic creative tradition. There is no Lezama without a Góngora.

From now on, however, there will be no Góngora without a Lezama.

Descendants of Sheherazade, the novelists of today, like the story-teller of yesterday, represent the ancient desire to defeat death through creation. Or at least to postpone death to another night, thanks to another story, and so to live another day – a glorious day – on this earth, to count a thousand and one nights.

- To narrate how a brother spilled the blood of his brother.

- To tell how windmills are giants.

- To enrich the peoples of the earth with the eccentric ways of Pickwick and Brás Cubas, with the ambition of Rubempré, the thousand lives of Tristram Shandy and the unique death of Hans Castorp.

- To fill the void of the world as only Lord Jim or Leopold Bloom, Remedios la Bella or the IMaga of *Rayuela* could do.

- To give a garden to the Presidentessa, a street to Fortunata and Jacinta, a prison to Edmond Dantès, a darkened room to Proust's narrator, a whaling ship to Ahab, a forest to Arturo Cova, a desert island to Robinson and a tomb to Pedro Páramo.

Thus has the novel answered the prayers of man to respect the manifold forms of humanity.

And thus it answers today the prayers of entire civilisations: Listen to me. Read me. But once having entered that shared space where Sheherazade dips her Madeleine in Swann's tea and Emma Bovary commits hara-kiri with Yuko Mishima's sword, and is embalmed in the coffin of *Santa Evita* by Tomás Eloy Martínez, the event of language itself shows us that we are forever creating a language, walking simultaneously backward to return to the origins of the speaking being, and forward toward his impossible conclusion in the future.

History becomes the subject of language, participating in the motion of language. It is both its night and its first light at break of day.

At the origin of words, moreover, what do we find if not the origin of knowledge itself, thanks to literature – myth, fable, epic, tragedy, poetry: literature as the first identity acquired by words, and words as the first identity acquired by the person?

The factual geography of the novel encompasses vast areas of life on the planet not considered in the past, when Montesquieu could wonder ironically: how is it possible to be Persian? And Hegel could define in only two words the whole American continent as a vast and permanent 'Not yet': a postponed awakening, a prolonged night.

*Not yet*; Hegel may have been right, in the sense that America symbolises our unfinished task of being human beings acting and speaking, men and women who have not said the last word.

This is why, to the extension of space outside the modern novel, we must add, within each linguistic or national community, a diversification that concerns or is produced by the most invisible and besieged groups in our happy world, united in the shades of night, struggling for a ray of light:

The Jew and the Arab.

The Native American, the immigrant worker.

The homosexual.

The dissident in general, and even more in general and in particular at the same time, that half of the world's population which is the female gender. Yes, Sheherazade has come back to tell stories and to sing, in the sense of narrating as woman and as writer, not only through sex but through her universal song, that of poetry which is, in the final

analysis, the basis of all literature: the word not in one sense alone, but with a multitude of meanings, the word in gestation, either nine months or nine centuries.

There exists a common land of dawn in which the history we make ourselves and the literature we write ourselves can join hands.

That place is not Olympus but the Agora. It is the shared but unfinished space in which we deal with something that is infinite but threatened: the creation of men and women who have not said their last word.

A society is sick when it believes that history is complete and that all the words have been spoken.

A society is healthy when its women and its men know that history is not finished, nor are the words that express discordance, scepticism, dissatisfaction with the established order, whatever it may be, yet finished.

We are unfinished beings. We are unsatisfied beings.

We are infinite men and women.

Our history and our language cannot end, because there are many stories and languages, contradictory, multicultural, multiracial, and historically present.

The art of narrating contributes in unique manner to creating and maintaining a dominion of sufficient multi-valence, openness, plurality and sense of reawakening, capable of resisting at least to some degree the assimilation of the economic world based on instantaneous consumption of the goods it produces; of resisting the assault of the political world, which tries to requisition language to serve its own endless self-legitimizing; and resisting even the benign caresses of the positivist reasoning that tends, insidiously, to reduce language to the communication of what is purely factual and demonstrable.

And in any case, like couples in the garden of our origins, we write novels as much to postpone death as to open the way to it, through the act that gives us the freedom to fall only to give us the chance to ascend. The writing of the devil depends on the nearness of the angel; and so I also hail the new Spanish-American writers who occupy the scene today: Ignacio Padilla and Pedro Ángel Palou in Mexico, Juan Gabriel Vázquez in Colombia, Carlos Franz, Arturo Fontaine and Sergio Missana in Chile; the Mexicans Álvaro Enrique, Guadalupe Nettel and Mario Bellatín; the Argentines Matilde Sánchez and Sylvia Iparraguirre; and two Santiagos, Roncagliolo and Gamboa. They are the new day.

A novel set at break of day tells us that the past is still alive in memory and the future is present in desire.

Perhaps, in the concrete case of Latin America, the novel will significantly contribute to filling the most dramatic void and implementing the most demanding project in our history; to closing the gap between our extraordinary cultural wealth and our persistent political and economic poverty; to implementing the project for communicating the vigour and continuity of our prodigious indigenous culture, African and European – of mixed blood – to a democratic political life, sustained by the growing economic well-being of the majority.

From this project for the future, and from the sorrow for its absence today, the Latin American novel has not been, and cannot be, removed.

And not because it becomes a propaganda weapon or a political message, but because the novel keeps alive two realities without which societies languish and die.

Literature keeps both imagination and language alive.

And this is its servitude, as well as its glory.

And it will be, without doubt, its contribution, in the current century and millennium, to a Latin America that does not lie prostrate but stands on its feet, in which democracy is synonymous with well-being; in which we will overcome the inequality that now destroys our peaceful cohabitation and poisons our actions; in which, before the confusion and disappearance of the traditional regional, international and supra-national jurisdictions, we Latin Americans will be able to create and maintain the sovereign jurisdiction of communities created from the base, from the family, the school, the town, from work, from health, from the greatest capital that we have in America Latina: our enormous, *enormous* human and social capital, more important than any amount of volatile, scornful financial capital.

Literature is a part of Latin America's vast human capital. It is the marvellous reserve of a metal which, though utilised, never runs out: the golden coin of intelligence, of the word and of culture.

It is the herald of the sun.