



THE HEADLESS CENTAURS :

their voyage and conquest -- by Hugh Fox



## An Introduction of Sorts ...

Europe at the end of the Middle Ages was a closed shell. One God, one language, one religion, one social system. But outside the frontiers of Europe there always hummed an aura of the fabulous. The Alexander legends, the works of Marco Polo, the works of the ancient poets like Virgil maintained a spark of the "romantic," the "incredible."

Then the New World, America, was discovered. At first they believed it was under the control of the devil and the explorations were a combination of mercantilistic curiosity and religious crusade. Europe split wide open. The New World (or worlds because, after all, we're talking of Africa and the Far East as well) changed every neat concept in the European consciousness. In South America, especially, the Spaniards were confounded. These were barbarians, these people ... so ran the story. They were infidels, devil worshippers. And the Spaniards were Crusaders, bringers of Christ to the heathen. They really saw themselves that way.

From the beginning, though, it was not merely an encounter between Christ and Devil, but between Technology and non-Technology, between an industrializing and a non-industrial culture, between the Indians who lived in a myth-centered world and the Spaniards who lived half in myth and half in greed. The early Aztec codices make the Spanish out to be gods -- saw them and their horses as centaurs.

Christ, in this context, becomes a battle, a war god -- conquest means not only destruction and pillage, but the annihilation of all traces of the former Indian gods. The early chroniclers describe in great detail the customs of the Aztecs and Incas and Mayas. Within a decade there was nothing left to describe. Today, going through the ruins, through Monte Alban, Palenque, Chichen Itza, Pisco, Cuzco, Chan-Chan, from Mexico all the way to Lake Titicaca in Bolivia, you can only marvel at what the Spaniards must have destroyed. A great deal has been written recently on the mystiques of the Aztecs and Incas, and what emerges are cultures dominated by "spirit," by worship, by a genuine other-worldliness, a permeability between "this" and the "other" world.

Once the Spaniards had conquered the Indians, they began to quarrel among themselves and civil wars broke out. The influx of gold into Spain caused a fatal inflation and by the seventeenth century Spain itself was an empty desert. In both North and South America, though, the Indians were destroyed -- in South America physically by making them semi-slaves on farms and in mines, in North America by relegating them to reservations, mis-translating their names, mis-representing their ideals.

In North America in the nineteenth century the Ghost-Dance religion began, led by an Indian named Wovoka. He believed that by dancing a certain magical dance wearing magical shirts that the old days could be revived. However, those

who thought that the ghost-dance shirts were impervious to bullets soon found out that magic didn't work against steel and the ghost-dance religion became a children's game.

Now in South America the Indian is still outside of the "civilization." It is difficult to say how many Indians in Bolivia and Peru don't speak Spanish, but it is often said that 70% of the population of Bolivia and Peru speak Aymara and Quechua. In Ecuador, Chile, Columbia, the Indian is still stepped on, semi-enslaved. In the U.S. he is outside the fringe of society, "subsidized" by the U.S. government, still exploited and/or ignored.

That is what Western Man did to the Non-Western World in America. He did or is trying to do the same to the Non-Western World in the Far East, the Middle-East, Africa, wherever he can.

\* \* \*

About the title. From a conversation I had one night with Dukardo Hinestrosa, the Columbian Nadaista. He invented the collection title for Ediciones de la Frontera: Pez sin Escamas (Scaleless Fish). The Centaurs, of course, in the early CODICES are the Spanish on horses. The Aztecs depict man and horse as one animal. The Headless part I took as a symbolic meaning to refer to the fact that until the Spanish began the conquest of the New World (after the expulsion of the Moors, which significantly ended in 1492) they were "headless" in the sense that they had no more purpose. The New World conquest gave them purpose again. The Spanish historian Americo Castro and others, for example, see the conquest of America as an extension of the reconquest of Spain.

-- July 23, 1968, Providence, Rhode Island

THERE IS NOTHING NEW ABOUT WHAT WE ARE DOING IN VIET NAM. IT'S THE SAME THING WE DID TO THE AMERICAN INDIAN, THE SAME THING THAT THE SPANISH DID TO THE INCAS, AZTECS AND MAYAS -- THE SAME THING THAT ALL THE OCCIDENT HAS DONE TO ALL THE NON-OCCIDENTAL WORLD.

1.

Collochio

god-devil  
speaketh unto them,  
sometimes in the likeness of a  
black dog,  
sometimes in the likeness of  
a black calf

(NOT AS WHITE AS ALBION  
the sea-gull island  
spreading its  
fragrant wings across  
innocuous seas,  
overshadowing, shadowing over  
unfragrant peoples):

THE BUILDING OF  
FRIARIES AND NUNNERIES  
AND CHAPELS  
GOETH WONDERFULLY  
FORWARD .

Ophir is as ophir does,  
fills the need

to un-now

In my time,  
the woods were  
full of

slide (brass)  
telescope into

owls and  
beggars

some possible,  
possible, possible  
although improbable,  
previously-proved-  
impossible

howling talons  
and empty eye-  
sockets

to-come

and the owls always won.

2.

Now you see it,  
now you

("On a good day you can hear the water  
filling from the river which went  
out of Eden to water the Garden)

don't.

Mind-eye man

sniffing un-reality  
abstractly

projects

paradiso terrestre to the North-East  
and "our antipodes" to the South-West,  
Paradise roared round with fire,

reaching upto the sky,

inviting hand to see,  
eye to turn,  
burn,  
break,  
through and through and through  
persistance  
out of reach,

in reach and  
he'll (generic) ignore it.

3.

The Lord of the Elephants

(gold, silver, pearles --  
and precious stones)

snorts at the feathered dawn  
(from) behind his (to him) invisible fire-wall,  
waiting without knowing he is waiting, in his  
known-unknown world  
to be discovered -- and destroyed.

Talking to the devil (god),  
never eating off the same  
dishes twice,  
never wearing the same clothes  
twice:  
the sun sweats, weeps,  
vomits  
gold  
and the aviaries scream  
with the idolatry of  
such opulence.

the barbarians are,  
these are  
the barbarians  
are

still

on the other side  
of the wall.

4.

Only the silver-gold wheels  
turn.  
The titles come first,  
the spoor before the slaughter,

gold plants,  
corn fields with  
silver stalks, gold ears,  
gold rabbits, mice, snakes,  
lizards, butterflies,  
gold birds in gold trees,  
lions, tigers, gold and silver baths  
with gold and silver pipes,  
water is innocent that doesn't know the  
hand that touches it,  
air through the trees,  
rain,

The value of a thing is  
in its itness, itself,  
what it is, what it is  
in itself ....

Don Diego Dado ha dado dados a ....

On the seventh  
day of the seventh  
year, this seventh son of a  
seventh son,  
hearing seven  
peacocks  
scream above the snorting of his  
swine,  
carefully balances his severed  
head on its bloody  
stalk,  
evokes the name of  
Santiago  
seven times,  
and the break is healed.

Que sui-je?

Je suis l'âme errante.

5.

The four stars of the Southern Cross  
held up against the

("Boanerges, filii  
tonitruui.")      in(un)fidel(faithful),

faith in the orthodoxy of Paradise,  
pearls around his neck  
strings of love-trysts

as I lay me down to dust

and

longitude      latitude      drown in the sound of diving water.

Vidi quattro stelle  
non viste mai furo ch'alla prima gente,

annihilating the  
self-shell (sin) able-unable  
(lo que Dios quiera)  
to say

Don Diego feels the wind, and the stars become,  
not a cross, but a  
mandolin,  
but he thinks  
cross, splits down through his Manichee center,  
And wind becomes merely the leaven of the great dough sails.

6

Trapalanda,  
night now  
and the moon rises in slow motion,  
negative fuchsia riders on negative fuchsia horses  
flow  
through the up-to-the-horses-  
knees  
hairgrass,  
water-arcs  
falling, the bounce, swing  
(slow motion)  
stride of  
out-of (after)  
time.

Negative magenta now, the  
invaders  
come on the back  
of thunder, four footed  
spitting fire,  
Don Diego opens his mouth,  
a thousand natives die,  
when he blinks Tonacatecuhtli and Tonacacihuatl  
fall like flaming arrows,  
the grasslands dry, begin to burn,  
far away, on the other side of the mountains,  
the Lord of the Elephants,  
over the sounds of birds and flowing water,  
hears the first wails of terror begin to rise.

Nor do these tears mean the coming of  
rain,  
this blood nourish the re-coming of  
the sun.

7.

The sun never sets,  
the corn withers,  
the grass dies,  
the dustspots spread,  
the Lord of the Elephants encircles Don Diego and the  
other centaurs  
with winds,  
dust walls whirling round them in the mountains as they  
move inland,  
only their dogs bark, break the windwalls, and he calls  
up fire,  
speaks and the sky is filled with fire-lances  
that the centaurs meet with firetongues spit out of their  
own mouths.

Rabbits, owls, wild boars and the agate-eyed puma,  
the Lord of the Elephants' flesh melts, dissolves,  
and he spreads out like an outstretched hand,  
moving between the multiple death-life worlds.

I dress myself in the skin of my victim  
because the world is being born again,  
my victim touches the face of the gods,  
he moves up, forever to live with them.

The Now dissolving dissolves the dry grass and the earth,  
tempers the burning sun,  
the wind gods carry me aloft,  
and now, immune, I burn the sun,  
the sun no longer burns me.

8.

The Time of the Ocelot begins  
We shall be slaughtered  
in battle,

the best among us  
shall be taken captive,

we shall be sold  
into slavery,

the sky rains  
knives and  
serpents,

the rivers swell  
with pestilence, my  
people are covered  
with sores,

my temples fall,  
my images are  
broken and trampled,

my tongues  
fall silent,  
my gods fall  
from their skies

WHOEVER CALLS UPON THE  
NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE  
SAVED

BLESS THE LORD, O MY SOUL,  
AND DO NOT FORGET ALL HE  
HATH DONE FOR THEE

YOU ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST,  
MEMBER FOR MEMBER

FROM THE RISING OF THE  
SUN UNTO ITS GOING DOWN,  
THE NAME OF THE LORD IS  
WORTHY OF PRAISE

THE LORD IS THE PORTION OF  
MY INHERITANCE

IN THY SEED SHALL ALL THE  
NATIONS OF THE EARTH BE  
BLESSED

the rains stop  
the winds die

Señora nuestra Chalchiuhlicue y Chalchiuhlatonac, fill  
the hearts of thy faithful with thy love.

9.

Odin, Thor, Frey  
roar blood, the  
cycle is complete.

Thorvald pulls the arrows from his armpit and  
Tici-Viracocha

splits, explodes, fragments,  
and the sky begins to bleed.  
John Hawkins, the rat-eater,  
arises from his tomb in Cornwall,  
skeletal hand reaching out,  
seeking land that his eyeless  
eye sockets cannot hope to see, and  
all the statues of our dead ancestors  
melt and soak (disappearing) into the  
ground,  
the magenta-colored skies open and  
vomit down Humphrey Gilbert,  
sword in hand, naming the mountains  
of the moon Albion,  
as the burial mounds break open  
and the dust of the dead is  
carried aloft in a dull,  
brown cloud.

I claim  
I claim this land for  
this land  
I clamor for

the establishment of the  
NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM  
I  
EYE  
everywhere  
but not a drop to  
drink.

10.

The centaurs run round the high towers,  
circle the walls,  
gain strength as their hooves touch the earth,  
only the antipodes, linked with ligaments to the skies,  
are uncertain about the efficacy of their arms,  
so that, even when they make resistance,  
it is always with a spirit-arm  
strapped behind their backs.  
Hell against heaven hounds,  
and even the antipodes believe  
in the  
divinity of the  
centaurs.

In Guernica I come to see  
The sacred oak that waits for me.

Don Diego Dado came to the town  
Don Diego Dado blew the walls down,

Long daggers, short swords,  
crossbowmen, harsh words,  
and (as the black vultures  
come screaming down the day  
darkens, the earth splits,  
the sky fills with screams  
and the smell of burning  
flesh)

the extra push of  
valor (stout wink) that  
pulls a  
true believer  
through.

11.

Quetzalcoatl-Tici-Viracocha  
sallies forth on the sunplain,  
brandishing his war-axe  
and  
God the Father,  
lightning streaming from his palms,  
raises his hands  
and Quetzalcoatl-Tici-Viracocha  
is stunned, stumbles to the  
cloud edges and falls,  
down,  
in midfall extends his arms  
which flower plumes  
and  
arising he claps his wings  
as the Spiritu Sanctus,  
black-bat winged,  
its beak stained with blood,  
swoops down to meet him,  
and when they touch the skies explode,  
the clouds burn like dry grass and  
Christ the Musketmaker takes aim,  
but as Tepeyolohtli roars the musket shatters  
and Christ, raising up his punctured hands,  
drowns the world in his blood.

Santiago, patron of  
Cannons,

Arbitrator of  
Arquebuses,

Master of the  
Crossbow,

orare pro nobis,

orare pro nobis,

orare pro nobis,

Forger of swords,  
Pickaxes and  
Iron bars,

Why pursue this war?

orare pro nobis,

orare pro nobis,

I am sorry to  
have destroyed  
your cities

orare

and burned

pro

your people

nobis.

But I cannot, will not, leave; and even if I leave,  
or even if you kill me, I will be replaced and the  
conquest will be accomplished, because the destiny  
of the world is that

geometry shall  
destroy magic.

12.

Bodies the color of ripe corn,  
bodies as white as  
cornstalk buds,  
the buds of the maguey,  
beheaded bodies,  
armless bodies,  
legless bodies,  
bodies mutilated and torn.

The ideas remain intact,  
the rectangularity of the  
chessboard remains  
unchanged,  
the outline of the  
castle, knight, bishop,  
pawn,  
move forward through  
time,  
but the bodies are  
heaped, buried, burned.

13.

The ransom-eyed King of the Elephants,  
held captive in the blue tower overlooking  
the forty-fifth curve of the green lagoon,  
is taught  
to  
play  
chess.

N-QB3

the interlude of memory,  
foam sandals and gold  
rattles,  
ocelot skin  
bound on her  
calf and  
water lilies on  
her

R-QB1

shield, which she  
twirls above  
her head in

R(1)-K7 ch

circles, the songs and  
dances of Tecuilhuitontl  
were of love and  
sweet

QN-QZ

stories, they unbound  
their hair which  
covered them like

N(Q5)-K 7 ch

cloaks, the goddess  
of the young corn,  
about to die, with  
a gold disk on a gold  
chain around her  
neck and wearing  
carmine-colored

N-B3

sandals

Possessed (I am).  
Christus Rey

Comes

The Last Judgement,

But not for me,  
For me, but not  
aloft, the bellows blow, the  
cauldron of the damned.  
Why are the faces so placid?  
Why is there a need for a  
hell after this life  
here?

14.

The sun on my back I move through the metamorphoses of  
wind to become  
raven,  
jaguar,  
winged lion

and feathered serpent.

Held by iron chains I watch gold  
    masks  
    shields  
    goblets  
    brooches  
    earrings  
    necklaces

become rapiers and cinquedas, culverins, falconets, pikes,  
blunderbusses, cutlasses, Derringers, pepperboxes, carbines,  
mortars, Gatlings, Colt-Brownings, howitzers, torpedos,  
and slowly soar

up

F-101 B's, F-105's, Thunderchiefs, F-8 Crusaders, Convair  
F-106's, F-104 Starfighters, YF-12A's  
Furies

Demons

Skyrays

Mercurys

Atlases

Mercury-Atlas D's,

only the earth that Mercury invents and Atlas sustains,  
spinning sleekly hermetic and unplummed,  
without the respiration of

jade mosaic masks nor the hope-fear composite of jaguars  
and plume-head-dressed fire-gods,  
is faceless, mute, profane.

As the rooms fill with ransom the ghost-dance stops  
and the four sacred directions of the  
wind and universe  
become the bearings of a compass.

15.

The sun on my back I look through the palm of my hand  
and read the signs,  
gold by weight instead of beauty,  
beauty hung for being beautiful,  
winds of locusts,  
all the forms and symbols metamorphized or destroyed  
("ahorcaron a dos indias, una doncella y la otra  
recién casada ... porque eran muy hermosas....")

drowning, the cutting off of breasts, noses,  
whatever part or organ that can be  
cut, mutilated,  
whatever variation of mutilation possible,  
all the possibilities of variation,  
the variations of possibilities,  
performed,  
excused --

WE ARE FEW  
THEY ARE MANY....  
MILITARY EXPEDIENCY.  
NEED.

I look through my palm  
and see myself weighed, measured,  
melted down, and Agnus deified,  
and as cuts rain down like raven beaks,  
biting, gouging into my cheeks, my shoulders, chest, eyes,  
I rise,  
the world red through the lens of my own blood,  
and make my own obsidian do to down me.

16.

They would have

worn,  
broken

down, time  
would have

sucked them  
all

down its maw,

The Eagles of the East  
would have killed the  
Jaguars of the West,  
the Serpents of the  
North would have killed  
the Ocelots of the South,

But  
they would have been  
them-  
selves,  
all with-  
in  
the compass of  
their  
their-  
ness.

les masques  
gold labrets

bas-relief en stuc,  
jade plaques,

les têtes en pierre  
sculptées,  
carved metates,

les crânes en cristal  
de roche, polychrome  
incensarios

Earth  
is,  
can  
not  
be,  
  
real,  
either  
every-  
thing  
  
has been in  
vain,  
or

in the late  
dust  
wind  
sun of  
after-  
noon

fad-  
ing

real,  
either  
every-  
thing

flow-  
ers  
flowing,  
stripped  
in the  
wind,

has been in  
vain,  
or

over the  
edge of  
day

there is  
some  
other  
life

in-  
to  
night,  
over the  
edge of  
night

some  
other  
place

in-  
to  
day.

17.

After conquest,  
civil war,  
the blood still boiling after the fire is out,  
the cannon-roar still echoing after the ball has struck,  
the sky still dead after the volcano has receded back  
into the ground

Christ digests Viracocha,  
the cat-god becomes  
man,  
the infinite welded to the finite,  
man no longer welded to the  
(cat, snake, bird, monkey, buffalo) world.

Centaur against centaur now,

Mass,  
Cross,  
Crusade,

and the eyes of the hills around the arena,  
watch,  
wonder,  
why did they, these god-monsters,  
why do they rumble across the rubble of our ruined world.

"For a long time we have wished to see you and hear the words that will give us understanding."

The corps of Arquebusiers advances,

SPAT

Don Diego Dado's left eye out,

bullets linked together by an iron chain.

TWANG,

right leg, gone,

(Saint Lazarus, come forth from the tomb before the fifth day, before your flesh is too far eaten by worms.)

The bar of his visor gone, ball against his forehead,  
the five wounds of Christ and now a sixth, his reason,  
gone,  
he falls,  
sprawls out across the maize-dust  
and Don Fernando Scorpio,  
both from Extremadura, swineherds both (all)  
raises his lance  
(Saint Lazarus, bury us in the walls of your sepulchur, and  
save us from putrefaction)  
and buries it in Don Diego's heart,  
then with a sweep of his sword, as if he were  
opening a huge and heavy book,  
he beheads him, places his head on a pike and  
declares himself victorious (over inertia).

18.

## Purgation

## Purification,

the dust of defeat settles,  
the heads all gone,

the hands like blind eyes feel along the sun-warmed walls  
for cracks and crevices.

How to make  
wax,  
wax  
candles,  
lighted in front  
of the holy  
altars and crosses,

You stop human sacrifices by sacrificing humans.

Chief Big Foot (defeat them with Vaudeville names)  
dies,  
struggling to rise,  
frozen struggling,  
his last gesture  
effort  
his last effort defeated,  
but caught in the  
gesture of struggle,  
his will as long as he had will  
willing against  
them,  
their death,  
their cold,  
their conversion,  
his will his only reality,  
as long as his reality stayed real.

One way to win.

The old men are dead,  
the leaders of the young,  
winter comes and we have no blankets,  
the children are freezing,  
those who escaped to the hills have no blankets  
or food ....

Dead,  
among the dead,  
life among the dead,  
seek life, my life, my living, the living that  
made my life,  
among the dead.

19.

But even then, out of the stone crypt of acculturation,  
the old ways,  
tortured, twisted, grotesque,  
not only survive, persist,  
but thrive.

Wovoka:

"The sun died,  
I arrived  
up

(The Arapahos sing: "Father have  
pity on me, I have nothing to  
eat, I am dying of thirst --  
everything is gone.")

in the place of  
UNCHANGE  
REGENERATION,  
the world will come again,  
dance Arapahos and Cheyennes,  
Bannocks and Shoshones, Utes and  
Paiutes,  
hasten the day,  
push time into  
time-  
less-  
ness,  
float,  
impervious to  
bullets and annuities,  
over the hills  
and the long grass,  
blown by the winds

(Father, my father ....)

the world will come  
again as it was."

Only when it didn't come?  
The ghost-dance (Dance my people!)  
became a children's game,  
became a children's game,  
but hums,  
still hums,  
still will be renewed,  
the old ways  
persist,  
transformed.

20.

Only how can the ritual fire be maintained in the mine  
tied by the unseen time  
of sunup to sundown  
the life round,  
starting from and curving back to  
blindness.

the capsule around me  
changes,  
grows notches, begins to  
tick and clang,

grows rails, wheels,  
wheezes,  
sneezes,  
expands.

I stare at the backs of my hands,  
listen to my voice,  
feel my feet on rock and dust,  
reach out --  
but the capsule of my world  
expands faster than my mind  
can run.

I listen for winds, grass  
and the turning of the world,  
water,  
the hooves of day,  
the screech of night,  
but my mine-world  
is impenetrable  
and even when I emerge  
I carry the skins of other  
worlds around me.

What is new in the  
whirlwind of conquest,  
about death  
emanating from the core of  
a sanitized smile?

## 21.

The photographs are yellow,  
feather, fringe, moccasin  
and bead,  
worn on other bodies  
around other faces,  
an ironic commentary on  
vanished threats.

Heart safe behind yellow  
photographs,  
the eagle-bone war whistle  
trapped mute on yellowed pages.

Safe, the treaties stand  
broken, set, rebroken  
now  
and  
now  
and  
now  
into receding future now's of  
spiralling significance.

The roof expands,  
I rise up,  
the center of the maize plant spreads  
green across the sky,  
out from its center a cloud comes,  
I move across the center of the world,  
the cloud and I move fast,  
below the tribes gather,  
the separate tribes,  
the tribes that never  
gathered before gather,  
as the clouds close  
in around them the  
tribes gather in one  
tribe.

My brothers of all the tribes,  
rise to meet me,  
swirl rising around me,  
swirl around me,  
rise,  
and we merge,  
the lines between us dissolve ...

as the vision fades  
and the snow-wind outside circles  
around the walls of my winter  
as I sit in the middle of the floor in  
the darkness, fold my arms and wait.

22.

The potlatch squeaks,  
and the new (sanitary)  
privy still  
stinks  
high.

"Some kind of  
dance doll"  
lies in the  
corner

(Shoot my way out? With what? No more. Not even the idea.)

We bake bread  
in ovens and  
death is life,  
cyclic,  
regeneration,  
renewal,  
we are clouds,  
rain,  
and the leaking faucet  
hardly penetrates the

mantle of our  
minds.

SUN-FATHER

EARTH-MOTHER

WATER-GRANDFATHER

FIRE-GRANDMOTHER

CORN-BROTHERS

AND

SISTERS

In winter the planes drop hay and food  
(when they come)  
and in summer the  
wind whips up the  
dust dry  
around the ankles of  
our poverty.  
We don't move toward,  
our us  
is preferable to the  
handouts of hate  
disguised as destiny.

Per Capita  
Failure  
Official  
Distrust  
Indian Bureau  
The Vacuum of  
Bureaucracy

It is estimated that  
acculteration Tracoma,  
acculteration Tracoma,  
acculteration Tuberculosis,  
augment, Other,  
although

The white man's path

the old  
forms still  
retain their

forms  
(hollow)

Over the steel cliff  
Into the

Mouth of oblivion.

Poor man in a white land,  
broken hand,  
handout,  
you see what happens  
if you sit it out  
quietly,  
you see what  
happens if you roar,  
fight back,  
you see what  
happens, poor man  
in a white land,  
you see.

-- Hugh Fox

Lima-Los Angeles, 1968

\* \* \*

Translation Notes:

- Page 12, Lines 41-2: "What am I? I am the wandering spirit."  
P. 13, L. 1-2: "Boanerges, sons of thunder."  
P. 13, L. 14-5: "I saw four stars never seen before except by the first people."  
P. 13, L. 18: "What God wills."  
P. 20, L. 39-40: "They hung two Indians, a virgin and another one, recently married ... because they were very beautiful ...."