

Group of 77 arguing for changes in the international economic order? And, in view of Colombia's subsequent identification with the Contadora proposals for Central American affairs, one can ask if the section on Colombia's relations with the United States is not just a bit overdrawn. Nevertheless, this is a usable, readable survey which avoids polemics and the temptation to seek scapegoats for complicated Colombian realities.

Jaime Manrique

COLOMBIAN GOLD

(New York: Avon, 1984), 180 pp.

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Jaime Manrique wrote his second novel, *Colombian Gold*, in English. The work of this contemporary Colombian writer exemplifies the dynamics of what can be coined "inter-American literary relations," the increasingly intense and creative dialogue that is developing between writers and artists of North and South America, and that is becoming a structuring element of their artistic production. Manrique is part of a stellar circle of Latin American and American writers and painters in New York, a group that generates a body of work consciously elaborated to express the symbiotic North-South experience. Central to this experience is the city, and Manrique has said in an interview, "New York is not a city, but a state of mind. It's an intergalactic place that belongs nowhere. In spite of the fact that it is located in the United States, I don't consider it representative of this continent in any way. It's a city that only obeys its own laws. For every rootless person, New York is a perfect place".

Through the filter of displacement, home becomes an obsession, which Manrique translates into stark, expressionistic images very analogous to the primal energy of Bill Sullivan's impressive volcano paintings of Ecuador. Bill Sullivan, the

American landscape painter, is one of those to whom the book is dedicated, and who is a leader of the group of New York artists to draw on Latin American motifs for their own work. As Jaime Manrique writes of Colombia in the contemporary mode of William Burroughs, Jerzy Kozinski, Nabokov and Conrad, Sullivan puts an almost industrial clarity into the Latin American landscape. When the protagonist of *Colombian Gold*, Santiago, walks in the streets of Bogota after a long absence, the narrative reads: "Santiago was more familiar with Paris and New York than Bogota. He turned onto the Carrera Séptima, the spine of downtown. For someone who had lived abroad, entering Bogota was like stepping into a time machine. Tall, narrow buildings stood at attention like soldiers in the half-empty streets. Indian women, wrapped in heavy, dark ruanas, lingered on corners, shielding scuzzy, disheveled children from the cold. Mal...boro, Mal...boro, they chanted".

Manrique's book is an indictment of contemporary Colombian society, so powerful that the author openly admits he is afraid to return to Bogota because the viper Caridad, the female lead character, is easily identified as the former head of DAS, the Colombian secret police. On the surface, *Colombian Gold* is one of the many drug exposes that link narcotics traffic to the inner circles of Colombian political and social life.

Santiago Villalba is the bastard son of one Colombia's wealthiest oligarchs. He returns to Colombia to his father's deathbed and the rage he has harbored against his father for a lifetime explodes — he smothers the dying man in his hospital bed. This episode launches Santiago into a nightmare world of death and drugs that ironically places him in the corrupt role for which his father had been preparing him to assume. He is forced to represent both the family drug business and the repressive Colombian government in its attempt to control political terrorists (in the book called the F-69, a transparent pseudo-acronym for the M-19). Santiago's lovely, emotionally disturbed wife, who is used in the novel to represent the wreckage of Colombian bourgeois womanhood, falls victim to the violence. Santiago is framed by Caridad and her gang. In an apothecic finale, Caridad tries to kill Santiago as he prepares to leave Colombia, supposedly with her, at the airport. He is saved by the F-69, one of whose members is Santiago's Indian maid Blanca, whom he raped. This is a story of rape,

of a country and of a people that Manrique looks on with love and despair.

The subject matter lends itself to the highly stylized melodramatic tone of the novel, which in its use of cinematographic technique recalls the soap opera novelettes of Manuel Puig. There is a consciously crafted effect of the TV thriller, linking this work to the fiction of a whole group of Latin American writers that use the devices of cinema in the narrative. Manrique admits to a fascination for the movies and he points to the visual quality of his fiction. It is not inappropriate to compare him to Buñuel for the surrealist, macabre effects that he is adept at creating.

The movie motif relates closely to the theme of carnival and the mask in his book. Indeed, the first chapter is titled "Carnival" and contains one of the most interesting literary renditions of Carnival of Latin American fiction. In Bogotá, the protagonist dwells on the seamier face of the city with cocaine induced clarity. In this attention to street life, Manrique demonstrates definite literary ties to his precursors Osorio Lizarazo, the father of contemporary Colombian city fiction, and Manuel Mejía Vallejo. The carnival, and by metonymic association, the mask, is an appropriate metaphor for a society ruled and manipulated behind closed doors. The mask is also representative of the alienation that is the central theme of the book.

Another important thematic element in this novel is that of patricide, which also has its tradition in contemporary fiction. The search for, or death of, the "father," connoting tradition, authority and roots, is a refrain of post-Modernist fiction from Joyce on. In this book the motif takes on bizarre dimensions when Alvaro Villalba's corpse returns to haunt his son. Corruption is not excised, even with the purifying rot of death.

Jaime Manrique is a writer of talent and conscience whose next novel is an event to be anticipated.

Rafael Humberto Moreno-Durán FINALE CAPRICCIOSO CON MADONNA

Barcelona, Montesinos, 1983

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Cierra la trilogía *Femina Suite* este *Finale Capriccioso con Madonna* no menos erótico ni deslumbrante en su lenguaje que los títulos anteriores, *Juego de Damas* (1977) y *El Toque de Diana* (1981). La novela, dividida en dos partes que se denominan "Ménades" y "Carnal y Laudatoria", está constituida en realidad por dos párrafos extensos que refieren la incursión de Enrique Moncaleano Junior en las alcobas abandonadas de su casa, condenadas desde los tiempos en que el escándalo dividió a su familia, y las conversaciones que mantiene con su padre verdadero, Justus, viejo don Juan que habita los altos de la casa y que en ese momento disfruta de la compañía de Laura Dávalos, su última y más hermosa conquista.

Vista de este modo, la novela es la conjunción y la proliferación de varias historias. En la primera parte, "Ménades", Enrique Moncaleano rememora su reciente fracaso amoroso con dos mujeres, Irene y Myriam, con las cuales convivía al mismo tiempo. Dicha situación, no exenta de cierta agria comicidad, da origen a una de las más complejas escenas eróticas de la literatura continental. Para Moncaleano la unión de los tres cuerpos dibuja, unas veces, el triángulo teológico cuyo centro es el ojo de Dios, y, otras, el reloj cuyas doce horas están representadas por cada una de las extremidades de los participantes. Estas analogías se constituyen a partir de numerosas referencias bíblicas o filosóficas, y, como ya es propio del estilo de Moreno-Durán, confieren una dimensión carnal a los valores establecidos, de tal forma que el encuentro de los cuerpos viene a ser una parodia de la cultura y, por tanto, su acusación más profunda. Algo