

## ARTICLE

**THE CULTURE OF THE LATIFUNDIA<sup>1</sup>**Mulino Giannattasio, Alexandra <sup>\*a</sup><sup>a</sup>. Escuela de Educación, Universidad Central de Venezuela.

\* Corresponding author (amulinogiannattasio@gmail.com)

**PUBLISHED:** 08/07/2021**COPYRIGHT NOTICE:**© 2021 by author. Licensee ERUDITUS. This article is an **open access** article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).**CITE THIS PAPER:**Mulino Giannattasio, A. 2021. "THE CULTURE OF THE LATIFUNDIA" Journal of Social Sciences: Transformations & Transitions (JOSSTT) 1(01):03. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52459/josstt3210103>**ABSTRACT**

*Researching for socio-educational transformation implies elucidating the hegemonic cultural, political and economic problems of a social formation; in this case, of the Venezuelan social formation. In the field of education, the dominant approaches obfuscate the political stance of teachers by minimising their potential as organic intellectuals capable of transforming their environment. Both naïve empiricism and idealism permeate the sociological and pedagogical reflections that legitimise the colonial and neo-colonial phases established by the culture of the latifundia. This article takes a look at the culture of the latifundia as a structural and cultural remnant of Spanish colonialism as found in the novels of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Social and educational changes must start with an analysis of the roots; that is, the epistemic-theoretical and cultural foundations that constitute the processes of institutionalisation of Venezuelan education, with the ultimate purpose of discovering the conceptual and methodological devices that hinder the qualitative leap needed in the socio-educational task, which is mainly political-ideological.*

**KEYWORDS**

Latifundia, Colonial &amp; neocolonial state, Curriculum revolution, 19th century, Venezuela

---

<sup>1</sup> This work was inspired by the works of Rodolfo Quintero: Antropología del petróleo and Cultura del petróleo [Anthropology of Oil, and Culture of Oil]. The author has called the socio-anthropological norms and values generated in the context of outward development in Venezuela the "culture of the latifundia".

## SOME PRELIMINARY NOTES

From the 1930s until well into the 1960s, a group of Venezuelan intellectuals investigated the problem of the latifundia on a Marxist theoretical basis. Among others, the most notorious studies have been those of Miguel Acosta Saigne, D. F. Maza Zavala, Federico Brito Figueroa, Rodolfo Quintero, Ramón Losada Aldana and Salvador de la Plaza. The main concern of these social scientists was to characterise land tenure in order to propose a longed-for agrarian reform with the aim of reversing the miserable conditions of peasants degraded to the status of day labourers, illegal farmers, *conuqueros* (small farmhands), *peons*, etc., who were far from leading a dignified life according to the genuine ideals of the Federal Revolution under the motto of General Ezequiel Zamora: Land and free men. In this connection, Maza Zavala has pointed out:

... I believe that Guzmán Blanco and Guzmanism represent the frustration of the objectives of the Federal War. Guzmán represents an alternative to the pre-federal oligarchic stage. But he also represents, so to speak, the oligarchy's formula for frustrating the aspirations and the deepest demands of the great mass of the people who had nurtured hopes behind the banners of Ezequiel Zamora. By pretending to fight the oligarchy, Guzmán rather strengthened the bases of the oligarchy and saved it... That is to say, these are not the authentic liberals. They are not the people who proposed and offered to transform the country... (Blanco Muñoz, A. 1986)

Federico Brito Figueroa felt the same way. According to his research, Juan Vicente González, ideologue of the Venezuelan oligarchy, wrote in *El Heraldo*, in its edition of 31 January 1861, a judgement that revealed contempt for the "fiefdomed" rural population: (Brito Figueroa, F. 2015)

On the first day of the siege of San Carlos, while Zamora was in the house of the Acuña family, he jumped with a picket to open a gap to other immediate houses, and as he began he received a bullet in the eyebrow of his right eye, which knocked him lifeless. Lucky bullet! Blessed a thousand times be the hand that directed it. This was written by someone who always sensed that something more important than "new men and republican alternability" were the aspirations of the "shirtless, the *cotizudos* (*espadrilles*-wearing) and the backpack shirts". (Brito Figueroa, F. 2015)

In other words, the structural study was accompanied by political-ideological and ethical positions that attempted to reverse the social consequences of Venezuela's pre-capitalist economic structure. In the words of Miguel Acosta Saigne:

What do the Venezuelan left-wings express when they pronounce, as they have done, for an agrarian reform? The following: the distribution of land to the peasants, for whom, as we have indicated, the immense properties confiscated from Gómez are available; the promulgation of a

Land Law which will put a stop to the abuses of the landowners and which, in accordance with the land problems of the country, will achieve the improvement and protection of the hitherto dispossessed farmers; the establishment of abundant and equitably distributed credits, which will free the current small proprietors and those endowed with land from the influence of the latifundistas (large landowners); the opening of roads to enable the transport of any quantity of products, without the need to resort to the intermediaries, large landowners or not, who at present monopolise transport operations; the redemption of the enormous debts of peasants subjected everywhere to the greed of the large landowners; the redemption of the wastelands, arbitrarily occupied by those who then exploited the tenants; an intense work of agricultural technification and popularisation, etc. (Acosta Saigne, M. 2009)

Now, with respect to this last quotation, the following question arises: did the generations of Venezuelan intellectuals of the early and mid-20th century aspire to transform land tenure in the hands of a few? Basically, communist intellectuals undertook theoretical and political struggles with the aim of reversing the problem of underdevelopment in the country.

In the case of the Partido Revolucionario de Venezuela (PRV), founded in Mexico in February 1927 by Carlos León, Gustavo Machado, Julio Silva Márquez, Pedro Brito, Carlos Aponte and Pío Tamayo, an attempt was made to initiate, in broad anti-dictatorial and anti-imperialist programmatic lines, the "emancipation of the peasantry from the tutelage of the landowner. This does not mean that the land is going to be stolen, but rather that the landowners should not treat the peons as slaves; that there shall be no uncultivated land, and that vacant lots will be distributed among the landless who wish to cultivate it". (Sierra, M. F. 2006)

In the case of the centre-right political-ideological line, represented by the parties Partido Democrático Nacional (PDN) and Acción Democrática (AD), the same anti-feudal struggles were also undertaken, although they never went beyond simple reformism.

So, throughout the 20th century, both radical and reformist parties aspired to a just agrarian reform for the landless peasantry; however, the central objective was always developmentalist; that is, they focused their hopes on the development of old-dated, semi-feudal productive forces.

In relation to the above, we may ask: Did pre-capitalist relations of production generate any cultural substratum? Did the political struggles of the scholars of the time intend to reverse the value structure, the imaginary, the social representations (re)created by the latifundia? Could this latter question also be addressed to the intellectuals of the late 19th century? In this respect, I think it important to unravel some socio-pedagogical indications by the sociologist, historian, and jurist José Gil Fortoul. (Mulino, A. 2017)

## THE SOCIOLOGICAL PROPOSAL OF JOSÉ GIL FORTOUL

The claim to found a Venezuelan sociology has a long history. I would locate this demand in the theoretical-political and ideological proposals of José Gil Fortoul, Lisandro Alvarado, Adolfo Ernst, Miguel Acosta Saigne, Federico Brito Figueroa, Ramón Losada Aldana, D.F. Maza Zavala, Luis Antonio Bigott, Rodolfo Quintero, among other eminent intellectuals. The central concern of all of them was to break away from the dominant theoretical and social tendency of the metropolitan centres in order to rethink social relations from the national standpoint. This is the reason why their writings, fieldwork and political action took precedence over the universalist pretensions of the scientific method. In other words, they did not lucubrate theories by imitating Eurocentric premises. On the contrary, through comparative ethnography, political-ideological and cultural practice, related to the peasantry and popular sectors, they sought to recreate what Miguel de Unamuno called intrahistory.

It was precisely through the social and human sciences that the generation represented by José Gil Fortoul sought to explain and transform the contradictions of a State in the hands of caudillos and macheteros, with the aim of achieving the much sought-after modernisation from a national and nationalist —not chauvinist— perspective. Thus, they supported their research on comparative ethnography, in order to overcome some of the colonial and neo-colonial premises that had shaped so far the rationality of the political, social and economic structures of the Venezuelan social ontology, such as, for example, (a) the binary relation superior race/inferior race and (b) the socio-geographical continuum from dated to modern societies.

The writer from Lara vindicated the mestizo race in front of the notional dualism of the races; on the basis of this generality, he reworked the sociological and historical thesis against the Eurocentric conception of official history. Thus, in the face of the typifications established by colonial and neo-colonial geography and sociology, he affirmed that it is not possible to classify societies as old or modern, since they depend on their own structural development; in this way, he legitimised contextual research on the basis of multilineal evolutionism and sociological relativism.

Gil Fortoul's sociological contribution was central; however, can it be said that he made a decolonising breakthrough in the field of Venezuelan social thought?

*Memoir presented by the Minister of Public Instruction José Gil Fortoul to the Congress of the United States of Venezuela in its ordinary sessions of 1912*

José Gil Fortoul's sociological proposal attempted to make a decolonising breakthrough by valorising the notion of the mestizo race in socio-cultural terms to the detriment of biologicist reductionism according to

the craniological technique. In the field of social sciences, he delegitimised the racist classification imposed by Spanish colonialism and regulated by Anglocentric perception. By dismantling the pseudo-scientific conception of the supremacy of the white race, he developed social studies in a socio-anthropological context by relativising the hegemonic view imposed by scientism. In fact, comparative ethnography and multilinear evolutionism permeate his historical and sociological writings.

In my view, it is important to notice that his theoretical and ideological foundations did structure the aforementioned Report presented to the Congress in 1912. First of all, the notion of teaching was central to the rationality of his report. He explained that education is a harmonious system—in functionalist language, a system with corresponding subsystems in equilibrium according to a general plan. The influence of the neo-classical conception of methodological and Durkheimian equilibrium in sociology is evident.

Within his nuclear conception of education, he called the subsystems of formal education: higher education, secondary education and primary education. The author from Lara considered that the fundamental difficulty of public education lay in instruction.

Since the central difficulty lay in instruction, his office took in the task to update the curricula and syllabuses. In order to achieve this goal, he concentrated all his efforts on pedagogy as a science. He emphasised that pedagogy must offer didactic resources in order to make instruction possible. In his view, pedagogy as didactics must base its rationality on the scientific method. Note how the logical arguments situate the teacher and the school in a State-mandated curriculum; this was exactly his intention as Minister during his tenure. He insisted on the need to create the *magisterio* as a teaching institution with its respective school museum and pedagogical library. He also stated that the architectural characteristics of the school building should be in line with the interests of pedagogical methods.

However, it is clear that the author did not go beyond the rationality of the scientific method. His vision of education stalled in front of the values and norms of Positivism. Perhaps, when he proposed not to apply the scientific method to the letter, but rather to define methodologies from the root in accordance with the needs of the socio-cultural context, he nonetheless was favouring relativist positions as those that he defended in his socio-historical treatises. As a result, the aforementioned Memoir did not go beyond the rational limits offered by the canons of Positivism.

## **THE LATIFUNDIA: A SOCIOLOGICAL READING**

In 1912, the Venezuelan economy was still anchored in the outward development model:

The traditional agrarian economy had responded to the needs of foreign trade with the export of coffee and cocoa, basically..., while internal economic activity was subsistence with limited access to the market... The local market was only as far as the periphery of the haciendas and ranches, or among independent conucos (small-scale farms) with traditional practices... The artisan and small industry modestly supplied the articles of popular consumption and some work tools... Imports were the means to obtain special articles of restricted consumption, inputs and consumer goods. (Maza Zavala, D. F. 2001)

The characteristics of the agro-export economic structure had generated socio-cultural practices that determined important socialisation processes that the school did not manage to overcome from the standpoint of its ideal of citizenship. In the aforementioned Memoria, an attempt was made to modernise national education by implementing the scientific method and imitating foreign pedagogical models, such as the Naas School in Sweden that was taken as a prototype; but the culture and anthropology of the latifundia, regulated in social practices that still survive, was an important issue not to be reversed by the curricula.

In fact, this concern is not to be found in the document under study, but rather in the novels of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Luis Manuel Urbaneja Achelpohl, Manuel Vicente Romero García, Julio Ramos, Julián Padrón, José Rafael Pocatererra, Rómulo Gallegos, among others, defined, through stories and novels, the socio-anthropological particularities of the Venezuelan people under the structure of the latifundia as the dominant economic and social concept. In short, the normalist (official magisterio teacher) was defined according to the parameters of pedagogy as a science, set to refining didactics in order to achieve effectiveness in the instructional process, but without dealing with the cultural determining foundations.

Meanwhile, a writer such as Urbaneja Achelpohl, in *La escuela mixta* (Urbaneja Achelpohl, L.M. 1990), for example, described the dynamics of a little school in Caracas at the beginning of the 20th century by highlighting the psychosocial and cultural traits of a teacher "misia Ana" and her environment, without dwelling on the pedagogical-didactic foundation as presented by Gil Fortoul:

The teacher, misia Ana, was not yet forty and was the widow of one of the many champions of our social earthquakes, by virtue of which, as a pension, she had been given the management of the mixed school years before... Presumptuous in her dress, a lover of rouge and powder..., a foppish talker, physical in her language, as the people from the suburbs say..., she had studied manners, a lot of mimicry, and ready to roll her eyes for almost anything... The girls from the neighbourhood came to her with their love affairs, and she was always a kind confidant. (Urbaneja Achelpohl, L.M. 1990)

Julián Padrón, in *Clamor campesino* (Padrón, J. 2010), denounced the networks of power that formed bosses, patrons, foremen, in permanent abuse and robbery of the people tied in semi-servile conditions to the land:

Two males and one female are the children left to General Saturio Cuaima... The boys grew up without a mother and without education, under the moral influence of the father..., only restrained by the fear of actions that are not to the general's liking. On the other hand, all actions that benefit the interests of their father or go in favour of his instincts, even the most unjust and reprehensible ones, are for them an incitement to delinquency for the sole desire to enjoy the master's grace. (Padrón, J. 2010)

José Rafael Pocaterra, in *Memorias de un venezolano de la decadencia* (Pocaterra, J. R. 1990), denounced the depraved life on the outskirts of Cumaná and the immoral actions of a commander of arms and a police chief in the face of the just demands of General Zoilo Vidal, then president of Sucre State; the year was 1909:

[General Zoilo Vidal] hated vice, persecuted gamblers and fought the macán (a kind of low-life bar) that was on the outskirts of Cumaná... In this macán, maracas, cuatro guitar, drums and bandolas were played day and night... The macán is a kind of scourge of God... And the Commander of arms, Julián Oliva, and Colonel Pepe Castro, chief of police, made an example of the scandalous and dissolute. President General Zoilo Vidal... decided to descend into the den of shamelessness and scandal... and so the macán ended forever in his government... But he was opposing to superior spheres, and he was summoned by the president [General Juan Vicente Gómez]. In his presence, he was showered with praise for his industriousness and zeal. He was congratulated and very attentively dismissed. But on leaving the presidential mansion he was reduced to prison and shackled with heavy crickets in a cell dungeon. (Pocaterra, J. R. 1990)

A number of novels and accounts of this tenor could be cited to show that the aforementioned Memoria failed to subvert the cultural substratum generated by the agro-export latifundia economy, a scourge that has deformed national growth and development not only in material terms but also in the shaping of social people with historical awareness. The ignorance of Venezuelan socio-anthropological structures resulted in the educational socialisation process on the basis of alien and therefore alienating academic cultures.

Thus, any pedagogical and curricular revolution must first have an in-depth knowledge of the socio-anthropological structures in order to re-create a national pedagogy that goes beyond didacticism and the merely historiographical. In Venezuela, this meant to re-create a pedagogy that implodes the cultural deformations resulting from our situation of economic dependence. In this regard, the words of Rogelio León in the Prologue to the novel *Clamor Campesino* by Julián Padrón are of capital importance: "Sixty-four years later, Caripe is still talking, living, working and ambitioning almost entirely as in Padrón's time; even Saturio Cuaima, now educated and modern, mobile phone in hand and with his yacht on the port club, is still

going about his business with an old ID card in his pocket and a good connection to open any door with the keys of the political power". (Pocaterra, J. R. 1990)

***The culture of the latifundia in Venezuelan novel writing: Todo un pueblo, by Miguel Eduardo Pardo, 1899***<sup>2</sup>

Miguel Eduardo Pardo was born in Caracas in 1868 and died prematurely at the age of 37 in Paris in 1905. He was a writer with a clear social conscience. He mainly wrote novels, essays, newspaper articles and chronicles on the urban social dynamics of Venezuela at the end of the 19th century. His sociological perspective gives us important insights into the culture of the latifundia as expressed in the urban social relations of the time. Explaining the social relation of production in his emblematic novel *Todo un pueblo* allows us to characterise this cultural substratum. This facilitates the elaboration of a realistic curricular transformation in order to overcome the lumpen and functional socio-anthropological remnants of pre-capitalist economic structures that still define us as a society.

***Julián Hidalgo, the untamed land***

The main character of the novel in question is Julián Hidalgo. He represents the land as wounded during the process of conquest and colonisation; that is, the social relations broken, shattered, violated by the rationality of the original accumulation of capital; he also represents the original man who disappeared under the effects of the sword and the cross of a culture that proclaimed itself superior because of its military advantage: the armour, the iron, the horse and the hunting dog. His father, José Andrés Hidalgo, was killed in obscure circumstances, as was his entire lineage. Symbolically, he represents the fallen Native South-American. According to Pardo:

Insurrectionists of such stature, brave guardians of their women and their lands, were the predecessors of the first anonymous Native whom the invader surnamed "Hidalgo". The Indian, subdued but not tamed, hid his hatred in who knows what corner of his soul and passed it on to his children. José Andrés received it in its entirety, and José Andrés' grim rancour wandered through the conquered city until it found a warm nest in the very young womb of Susana Pinto, a child of premature, unforeseen, involuntary, volcanic passions... From that man's rancour and from the fierceness of a female of precocious youth, Julián was born and he

---

<sup>2</sup> For this brief comment I have used the 1941 edition of the Editorial Cecilio Acosta. The prologue was written by J. M. Vargas Vila with the title *Cómo murió Miguel Eduardo Pardo* [How Miguel Eduardo Pardo died]. The Colombian writer, in the midst of a moral and political defence of Pardo, indirectly denigrated two Venezuelan intellectuals: Jesús Semprún and Manuel Díaz Rodríguez. They are easy to recognise in Pardo's work: Jesús Semprún is represented by Julián Hidalgo and Manuel Díaz Rodríguez by Anselmo Espinosa. The caricatured image of Díaz Rodríguez is regrettable, and the very intention was to hurt him. Semprún has been described in his sour and harsh manner, which does not do him justice. He appears as a resentful man, his feelings as an honest and politically left-wing man blurred.



was born rebellious as he was born ugly: by atavisms of race, abruptly breaking the entrails of an almost childlike mother who could not give him to the world. (Pardo, M. E. 1941)

### *Anselmo Espinosa, the one who sullied the roots*

Anselmo Espinosa symbolises the conqueror, the subjugator of a fallen race. Of obscure origin, he made his way by crushing his fellow men, who did not exist for him. He amassed fortune. He made a name for himself, a social standard, a political position. Nevertheless, he was never able to clean his dubious race and class origins. This is how Pardo described him:

Anselmo Espinosa was brutally born on the rotten rags of an immigrant shop... The parents of the boy that was born by chance, by surprise, in Villabrava, had arrived to farm fertile land, not far from the city, and soon became owners of the farm... Suddenly, the woman died... Then, the man settled, with the product of his savings, which were not few, in a populous neighbourhood of the capital... When the industrious and active Mr. Espinosa died, the fortunate Anselmo, who was "flourishing" in his thirties, became the owner of the highly respectable heritage...

Later, he married Juana Méndez Hidalgo, a cousin of Julián's father, José Andrés, more for the dowry than for love. A lecherous and envious man, he lusted after the Indian woman to the point of dishonouring her once his own wife was dead. He paid for this stain with his life at the hands of Julián in revenge for the sullied memory of his father and of his people, "with the pallor of hatred on the countenance of the Indians of his race". (Pardo, M. E. 1941)

### *Isabel Espinosa, synthesis of the clash of races and cultures*

Isabel was a Creole, a synthesis of the inevitable crossbreeding of the forced conquest. Sweet, naive, she loves her father as much as she loves the untamed Indian, whose blood also runs through her veins. Being Julián's fiancée, she struggles between those two opposing forces that cross and mark her being. A being that became a people in the contradictory search between origin and cleanliness of blood, in the ignorance of those who were considered inferior: the Indian, the brown, the black, the mulatto and an endless number of castes appropriate to colonial vigilance. Although their own roots are as dark as that year 1498 when they arrived in the mainland. Pardo, with clear bitterness, writes:

... if an inspector of races and human beings were to come to this country of impure mongrels, where at every step there is an ennobled person without nobility, to judge hierarchies, titles, names, conceits, pretensions and natural genealogies, he would end up finding such a heap of

plebeianism that not even the highest and most powerful eagles would be able to reach its summit... (Pardo, M. E. 1941)

### *Villabrava, the Caracas of Pardo*

Uneven, steep, madly twisted on the slope of a hill; broken at times by spontaneous gushes of foliage; barely able to stand on the abutments of its bridges; heated by an irritating and eternal summer sun, shaken at times by frightful earth tremors; punished by torrential rains, inclement floods; boisterous, revolutionary and conceited, Villabrava city was one of a kind, with spikes and trimmings of a European village, despite its narrow streets and its stubby houses, full of flowers and mould. (Pardo, M. E. 1941)<sup>3</sup>

Villabrava, the city of Julián; Caracas, the city of Pardo; both capitals straddling the line between the conventual and the modern, between Madrid and Paris. The reforms of the illustrious American, those of the "tremendous leveller" (Pardo, M. E. 1941), led an anonymous poet to recite the clamorous verse:

Villabrava was the homeland of  
the flamboyant legendary triumphs,  
the blessed homeland,  
the one set to awaken the condors  
on the anointed mountain... (Pardo, M. E. 1941)

The "tremendous leveller" transformed the provincial capital of Villabrava, made of narrow and dusty streets, flat and red-roofed houses, strewn everywhere with convents and churches, into a dynamic and modern city with a Central Square (Plaza Bolívar), several clubs: the Criollo and the Villabrava (Club Caracas); with daily newspapers: El Temporal, El Augusto, etc.; roads and academies; railways and athenaeums; restaurants and schools; a tram; a horse racetrack; ladies' parlours; among other infrastructures of civilisation... The best of all is that he exterminated the caciquismo (the local bosses' system). (Pardo, M. E. 1941)

On the other hand, the main character, Julián Hidalgo, in his craving for social justice, in his historical awareness, underlined a press release revealing the political essentiality of the great enlightened caudillo and of the population in general, whom he personified:

---

<sup>3</sup> A reference to Antonio Guzmán Blanco.

If for nothing else one of Villabrava's few authoritative newspapers said: There is no justice here! But even if there is, the laws are impotent when the heart of a country is corrupt, as ours is, corrupt to the core. (Pardo, M. E. 1941)<sup>4</sup>

*That is not the people; that is the plebs* (Pardo, M. E. 1941)

Pardo, through Julián's words, clearly differentiates the people from the plebs. This is a sociological issue of the utmost importance for characterising the class structure of Caracas, of Villabrava, in that historical moment.

For the author, the people are:

...the true *villabravense* people, eminently hard-working; the one who handles money and is honest; the one who is hospitable in his home; the one who behaves decently at the table, in the bar is sober, and in the street correct; who is august in the temple, and formal in society; and in the workshop is capable of any labour and of all the efforts of a great race... (Pardo, M. E. 1941)

Unlike the plebs:

... who in the theatre make scandal; that who steals in the gambling den; who lives on the flip-flops of prostitution; and gathers behind the windows of ballrooms to hurl bloody words on the honourable ladies. (Pardo, M. E. 1941)

There were still another kind of shameful people, certainly not despised in the country, but efficiently and gloriously carried out, without any fuss or worry, by active, industrious and distinguished gentlemen who were pompously called "financiers". The Ministers of Finance! (Pardo, M. E. 1941)

...in Villabrava people devoted themselves to the cultivation of politics, letters, law and generalship... (Pardo, M. E. 1941)

But where the Villabravans were to be seen was in Paris... all smarts, all *lyons*, all dandies, all *spotstmans*, aesthetes, decadent, blond, ravishing, playing the aristocrats and fatuous and provoking the ironic smile of women when they saw them passing by sucking, as their only intellectual food, the fists of their fashionable walking sticks. (Pardo, M. E. 1941)

Pardo differentiated very well the popular sectors and the traditional middle class of the Venezuelan social structure, from the lumpen of the proletariat and the lumpenbourgeoisie; the latter being social sectors

---

<sup>4</sup> Regarding this quotation, Miguel Eduardo Pardo wrote in a footnote: "This clipping is kept as are many others referring to bloody events that took place around the time this book was written. The author will probably need them to show them to unbelievers".

arising from the very dynamics of the accumulation of capital in the framework of outward development; and he directed his batteries against the alienated petty bourgeoisie as the final product of the culture of imports.

*Evil had its genesis in the misty distance of a great crime* (Pardo, M. E. 1941)

Villabrava revealed at all times the deep and profound sadness of the "vanquished races". A colony without aspirations, without enthusiasm, without faith; a colony forgotten by universal joy, humiliated by oppression, reviled by three centuries of whipping... That was Villabrava.

Pardo, through the words of Julián Hidalgo, reveals the origin of the social deformation manifested through its vices, as Julián exposed it publicly during a conference where he was almost lynched by an audience wounded in their self-esteem:

We want a model Republic and we don't know our civic duties; we talk about progress and we destroy public urinals because they get in our way; we boast of being civilised men and we get into an argument in any public place, no matter how respectable it may be; we ask for circumspection from our comedians and we form dreadful shouting mobs in theatres; we ask for guarantees for our beliefs and we insult and molest the ladies in the very temples; we make up a social centre and we smash it to smithereens at the first occasion for a quarrel; we demand that the ladies go to the cafeteria like in the big cities, but we have to keep them away from bravado men willing to throw them out with a revolver; we open the windows of a dance hall where our sisters and our wives are while we encourage the disorder of the public outside and take pleasure in their insults and their vulgar whistles; we want a free press and at the first sign of change we condemn the press as a den of defamation... Here, it turns out that patriotism... is elastic and accommodating to all forms of party, if not to all the expediencies of the moment. (Pardo, M. E. 1941)

Three centuries of colonial oppression, under the most dastardly racial classification by way of sophisticated social control, was the result of the perverse logic of the original accumulation of capital, which had turned the other, the non-man, the brown, the black, the Indian and an infinity of human types, into social pariahs. The values and norms that shaped them turned them into outcasts. A consequence of the dominant pre-capitalist relations of production reinforced, over time, by a dependent capitalism. This is the root of the evil that Pardo denounced, expressed with patriotic pain by his main character Julián Hidalgo.

*It is a people lost for the ideal* (Pardo, M. E. 1941)

Broken law, violated respect; enthroned impudence; irritated envy; lost social consideration; prostituted sentiment; humiliated characters; civilisation reduced by the impudence of the vile, and progress by the external appearance of the cities... Villabrava is a people "lost for the ideal".

Now, how is it possible to achieve the republican "ideal" on the basis of the consciousness of Villabrava's "outcasts", i.e. of that Caracas? The author clearly differentiated between the ideological characteristics of the people and the plebs, a key sociological issue in order to understand why it was impossible to achieve the modern ideal in one sector of the population; in this situation, the State could only promote projects to modernise the public sphere. It so happened that the structural characteristics of the dependent, insufficient, unstable and deformed Venezuelan capitalist social formation, as a result of the logic of the original accumulation of capital, generated a class structure that was only functional to the values and norms of the hegemonic international market, and contrary to an autochthonous development of the productive forces. In this way, the dominant capitalist relation of production, subordinated to foreign capital, failed to absorb the prevailing pre-capitalist relations of production generated during Hispanic colonisation. A problem of a structural character that was expressed very acutely in the social classes. The author of the novel in question differentiated the organic, old social classes, as opposed to the values and norms of the proletariat, the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie, which appear as an inorganic or disfigured social synthesis. This is simply a consequence of the insertion of our social autonomous construction within the imperialist division of labour, in the framework of outward development. For this reason, Pardo, through the words of his main character, Julián Hidalgo, exposed with horror: "We want a model Republic and we don't know our citizen duties well; we talk about progress and we destroy public urinals because they get in our way..."

### *Some partial judgements*

The culture of the latifundia is the anthropological and social expression of pre-capitalist and capitalist production relations that function within the framework of foreign imperialist capitalism in the context of outward development. The structural elements are evident in the very conception of the world that is expressed through practices alienated to values, norms, roles and status alien to the autochthonous class condition and position on the scale of social stratification. For this reason, André Gunder Frank argued that in dependent capitalism we find lumpenproletariat, petty-bourgeois lumpen and lumpenbourgeois, whose interests are subordinated to the considerations of the international market that shape them. These sectors are declassed because they respond to a foreign economic-social and anthropological rationality that is contrary to the natural national development. Instead, these class sectors reproduce the subcultures of the transnationals, also different from the organic cultures from which the foreign classes originate. Gunder Frank overcomes the economistic view of mechanistic Marxism by relativising the orthodox relationship between classes and the productive system. So, during the Spanish conquest and colonisation, the

repartimientos and encomiendas engendered the latifundia not only as an economic unit of production but also as a subculture by creating a militaristic point of view focused on the figure of the caudillo (caciquismo); this is an evil that also struck Spain, as denounced Joaquín Costa, the greatest exponent of the Regenerationist Movement. Therefore, throughout the Hispanic Colonial cultural heritage (16th-19th centuries), the Early Transnational period (19th - early 20th century) and the Post-War (mid-20th century), all along the phase of transnationalisation of capital, a lumpen class structure was created that slowed down and deformed the diverse progressive Latin American socio-political and economic processes; instead, the lumpen, with its sectarian and false patriotic image was established.<sup>5</sup>

## ANNEX

### *Some arguments for a prospective study of the latifundia culture*

#### • Thesis 1

The Republic of Colombia as a Bolivarian project aspired to depart from the objective needs of capital accumulation necessary for the formation of national states according to the political interests legitimised by England. The geopolitics proposed by the Liberator, in close relation to the pedagogical practice devised by Simón Rodríguez, among other socio-political facts, were against the interests of the rising bourgeoisie and the very logic of the expanded reproduction of capital, already frankly monopolistic in character. However, with the leadership of José Antonio Páez, liberal and conservative enemies of Simón Bolívar justified, in political-administrative terms, the plot of La Cosiata.

#### • Thesis 2

As from the beginnings of 1825 and until its consummation in 1830, the movement of La Cosiata, together with other socio-political actions, facilitated the formation of the Venezuelan National State, but according to the interests of the liberal and conservative oligarchies, in a clear break with the radical struggles undertaken by the Patriotic Society, and the Bolivarian ideology of the Republic of Colombia.

#### • Thesis 3

Since the middle of the 19th century, the Venezuelan economic and social formation was linked as a neo-colonial nation to the international division of labour; in consequence, its productive structures were shaped according to the characteristics of the circulation of capital from the metropolitan centres. Therefore, the principal means of production: land and its tenure, the latifundia, became,

---

<sup>5</sup> Lumpen are defined as those social sectors that defend interests alien to their own socio-economic and historical situation and location; they act as "mercenaries", that is, they respond only to their own immediate interests; they do not recognise or identify themselves with political-ideological ideals that dignify man; ultimately, the human condition of these sectors is primary. An example of this can be seen in the actions of the former Salvadoran Vice-Minister of Defence, Inocente O. Montano, one of those responsible for the assassination of the Jesuit and Rector of the Central American University, Ignacio Ellacuría - and seven others - on 16 November 1989.

according to the interests of hegemonic circulating capital, a structure functional to the interests of the international market.

• **Thesis 4**

The latifundia founded and shaped a colonial and neo-colonial culture and anthropology in Venezuela as a nation in the margins, since the 16th century until well into the 20th century.

• **Thesis 5**

In sum, the reconstruction of the Venezuelan sociological memory must consider the following fundamental aspects:

- 5.1) The structures of Venezuelan economic-social formation as a colonial and neo-colonial nation.
- 5.2) The figure of the cacique in the latifundist structures. The cultures of abuse, overexploitation and racism. The superior/inferior race dualism.
- 5.3) The culture of the peonaje, former members of the lower castes organised by Spanish colonialism. Around the peonaje, cantinas or macanes, cockfight houses and patrons' bodegas emerged.
- 5.4) The cultural traits of the Venezuelan "middle class".
- 5.5) The emergence of an "importing bourgeoisie". Sociological and cultural aspects of this class.

• **Thesis 6**

In order to elaborate a national sociology, it is necessary:

- 6.1) To found an epistemology of decolonisation.
- 6.2) To elaborate a sociological thinking by dismantling the cultural traits of the latifundia: the caciquismo and racism inherited from the Colony.
- 6.3) To understand the cultural impact of the latifundia in the conformation of the Venezuelan petty bourgeoisie and the importing bourgeoisie of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

**FUNDING:** The authors did not receive any external funding.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST:** The author declares no conflicts of interest.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT:** Dr. Miguel Acosta Saigne, to his memory.

**REFERENCES**

1. Blanco Muñoz, Agustín 1986. "Venezuela: historia de una frustración" [Venezuela: History of a Frustration]. "Habla D. F. Maza Zavala". Cátedra "Pío Tamayo"/CEHA/IIES/FACES/UCV, Caracas, p. 34.
1. Brito Figueroa, Federico 2015. "Historia económica y social de Venezuela" [Economic and Social History of Venezuela]. Volume I, BCV/EBUC, Caracas, p. 327.
2. Acosta Saigne, Miguel 2009. "Latifundio" [The Latifundia]. Fundación Editorial El Perro y La Rana, Caracas, p. 19.
3. Sierra, Manuel Felipe 2006. "Gustavo Machado." Biblioteca Biográfica Venezolana, El Nacional, BanCaribe, Caracas, pp. 31-32.
4. Mulino, Alexandra 2017. "Apuntes sobre sociología de la educación (popular) venezolana" [Notes on Venezuelan sociology of (popular) education]. In: Gregorio Valera Villegas (Compiler). Filosofía del arte, el amor y la pedagogía [Philosophy of Art, Love, and Pedagogy]. Ediciones de la XIV Jornada de Investigación Educativa y V Congreso Internacional de Educación, CIES, Escuela de Educación, UCV, Caracas. [Article modified and corrected by the author].
5. Maza Zavala, D. F. 2001. "La economía venezolana: retrovisión y perspectivas" [Venezuelan economy: back vision and perspectives]. In: Nueva Economía, year X, no. 16, p. 66.
6. Urbaneja Achelpohl, L.M. 1990. Selección de cuentos [Selection of Short Stories]. Monte Ávila Editores, Caracas.
7. Padrón, Julián 2010. Clamor campesino [Peasant Outcry]. Fundación Editorial El Perro y La Rana, Caracas.
8. Pocaterra, José Rafael 1990. Memorias de un venezolano de la decadencia [Memories of a Venezuelan from the Decadence]. Volume I, Biblioteca Ayacucho, Caracas.
9. Pardo, Miguel Eduardo 1941. Todo un pueblo [Quite People]. Editorial Cecilio Acosta, Caracas, 1941, p. 34,65-68, 71, 72, 76-78, 83, 86, 87, 89, 204.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Acosta Saigne, Miguel. Latifundio. Fundación Editorial El Perro y La Rana, Caracas, 2009.
- Albornoz, Orlando. "La producción de conocimientos en sociología". In: Romero Salazar. La sociología en Venezuela, hoy. Asociación Venezolana de Sociología. LUZ, Maracaibo, 2001.
- Balibar, Étienne. La filosofía de Marx. Nueva Visión, Claves, Buenos Aires, 2000.
- Blanco Muñoz, Agustín. Venezuela: historia de una frustración. "Habla D. F. Maza Zavala". Cátedra Pío Tamayo/CEHA/IIES/FACES/UCV, Caracas, 1986,
- Bermúdez Romero, Luis. Hacia la universidad postmoderna. Nuevo Orden y Educación. Universidad de Carabobo, Valencia, 1999.
- Briceño León, Roberto y Sonntag, Heinz: El legado de la sociología, la promesa de la ciencia social. Immanuel Wallerstein. UNESCO, CENDES, UCV, Nueva Sociedad, Caracas, 1999.
- Brito Figueroa, Federico. Historia disidente y militante. Plaza y Janés, Colombia, 2000.
  - Historia económica y social de Venezuela. Tomo I, II, III, Caracas, UCV, 2011.
- Caldera, Rafael. Idea de una sociología venezolana. El Cojo, Caracas, 1953.



- Castro, Gregorio. Sociólogos y sociología en Venezuela. UNESCO y Fondo Editorial Tropicys, Caracas, 1988.
- Egido, José Antonio. “Aportes de los académicos comunistas en la construcción de la universidad venezolana”. In: Lecturas disidentes. UBV, Caracas, 2017.
- Maza Zavala, D.F. “La economía venezolana: retrovisión y perspectivas”. In: Nueva Economía, año X, n° 16, 2001.
  - Prólogo. In: Ramón Losada Aldana. Dialéctica del subdesarrollo. UCV, Caracas, 1967.
  - Aspectos conceptuales del subdesarrollo y sus relaciones con el desarrollo, Editorial Nuestro Tiempo, México, 1978.
- Moreno, Amado y Pineda, Nelson. Sociología y política. Enfoque latinoamericano. Publicaciones de la Universidad de los Andes, Mérida, 1997.
- Mulino, Alexandra. “Elementos para una teoría social venezolana, a propósito de Genero Guaithero Díaz”. In: Lecturas disidentes. UBV, Caracas, 2017.
  - “Apuntes sobre sociología de la educación (popular) venezolana”. In: Gregorio Valera Villegas (Compilador). Filosofía del arte, el amor y la pedagogía. Ediciones de la XIV Jornada de Investigación Educativa y V Congreso Internacional de Educación, CIES, Escuela de Educación, UCV, Caracas, 2017.
- Pocaterra, José Rafael. Memorias de un venezolano de la decadencia. Tomo I, Biblioteca Ayacucho, Caracas, 1990.
- Padrón, Julián. Clamor campesino. Fundación Editorial El Perro y La Rana, Caracas, 2010.
- Pardo, Miguel Eduardo. Todo un pueblo. Editorial Cecilio Acosta, Caracas, 1941.
- Parsons, Talcott. El sistema social. Revista de Occidente, Madrid, 1976.
- Parra Luzardo, G. Condiciones y perspectivas del crecimiento económico en Venezuela. BCV, Caracas, 2002.
- Querales, Aracelis. Domingo Felipe Maza Zavala. El hombre y su pensamiento. FACES, UCV, Caracas, 1994.
- Quintero, R. Antropología del petróleo. Caracas: BCV, 2014.
- Sierra, Manuel Felipe. Gustavo Machado. Biblioteca Biográfica Venezolana, El Nacional, BanCaribe, Caracas, 2006.
- Sweezy, Paul. Teoría del desarrollo capitalista. FCE, México, 1984.
- Touraine, Alain. Crítica de la Modernidad. FCE, México, 2000.
- Urbaneja Achelpohl, L.M. Selección de cuentos. Monte Ávila Editores, Caracas, 1990.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

*Alexandra Mulino was born in La Victoria, Aragua State, Venezuela. She is a Sociologist by the Universidad Central de Venezuela, and holds a degree in Education, specialised in Social Sciences, a Master's degree in Philosophy of Human Sciences, and a PhD by the University of Salamanca. She is currently an Associate Professor at the School of Education, and Head of the Centre for Educational Research of the Universidad Central de Venezuela, where she researches on the History of Ideas in Venezuela and on Social, Human, Natural and Philosophical Sciences of the 19th – 20th Centuries. Postgraduate lecturer at the Bolivarian University of Venezuela in the area of Development Theories. Researcher at the Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos Rómulo Gallegos (CELARG) for a Reconstruction of the General Social Memory and Venezuelan Education from Late 19th to Mid-20th Centuries. Former Head of the Chair of Sociology of Education and former Director of the Revista de Pedagogía (Journal of Pedagogy), UCV. Former editor and researcher at the Centro Rodrigueano de Investigación Social para la Latinoamericanidad (CRISOL).*

*Some of her books include *Lecturas disidentes [Dissident readings]* (author and editor), which received the Premio Municipal Libertador al Pensamiento Crítico (Critical Thinking Municipal Award) in 2017, and *Cartas a Miguel de Unamuno (Letters to Miguel de Unamuno)*, 2019. She was conferred the Order José María Vargas, Third Class, by the Universidad Central de Venezuela in 2019. She has published a number of articles in specialised journals.*