

cerns more than anything else. Use Richard's compilation for what it is worth, but beware his assumptions and biases.

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*Golden UFOs: The Indian Poems / Los ovnis de oro: poemas indios.* By ERNESTO CARDENAL. Translated by CARLOS and MONIQUE ALTSCHUL. Edited by RUSSELL O. SALMON. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992. Illustrations. Glossary. vii, 433 pp. Paper. \$19.95.

Ernesto Cardenal is a major Latin American poet whose literary achievement now, in the wake of the Sandinista electoral defeat of 1990, can be evaluated with less political passion and bias. As Russell Salmon's fine introduction suggests, this ample, bilingual edition brings together Cardenal's volume *Homenaje a los indios americanos* (1969) and, it is claimed, all his other Indian-centered poems to constitute the most complete presentation of his treatment of the theme in a single volume. As such, this volume emerges as a major consolidation within the canon of Cardenal's work, an epic of Amerindian America involving Cardenal's poetic synthesis of Pound, Neruda, Vallejo, Thomas Merton, and (I would argue) even his political-poetical uncle-nemesis, Pablo Antonio Cuadro. The book reveals itself and that canon to one of the richest and fullest combinations of history and myth amassed by any Latin American writer in this century.

To be sure, myth is the more crucial element. Cardenal draws on historical sources but subsumes them in the function of mythic structures linking pre-conquest conflicts and harmonies to future struggles and dreams, culminating in a vision of a Marxist-Christian reconquest of the Indian lost world by Indian and mestizo descendants able somehow to make the kingdom of God concrete in this world. All this is to say that a full understanding of the exemplary qualities of this volume and Cardenal's achievement requires an understanding of the author's poetic mode that extends beyond the usual concerns with his exteriorism to his internalization of religious belief and practice.

*Homenaje a los indios americanos* emerged from Cardenal's studies of pre-Columbian Amerindian cultures. Spurred to write of the Amerindians through his contacts with Thomas Merton in Kentucky, Cardenal came to project classic Mayan cities as peaceful, classless societies whose values more or less coincided with, and actually enriched, the Christian ways he was seeking to propagate in his utopian community on the island of Solentiname. That community turned from peaceful contemplation to an active resistance of worldly evil, and was virtually destroyed in 1977. The evolution of the values Cardenal projected onto the Indian world and Solentiname would next extend to the Sandinista Revolution itself, and certainly to the Ministerio de Cultura, which the poet headed during the first several years of the revolution.

Thus Cardenal's Indian poems are directly tied to his religious and political evolution; even, it could be argued, to his movement from a nonviolent vision of historical redemption to his recognition of the need for what he considered retaliatory violence to rebuild not only his community but Nicaragua itself. Without this and additional background (including Salmon's important but too-truncated discussion of the role of Sandino and of Cardenal's anti-Somocista rebel friend Adolfo Baez Bone in the constitution of his mode of political poetry), it is difficult to understand the thematic and narrative unities that underlie this great variety of poems about Indian groups throughout the Americas. And in this sense, Salmon would have done well to extend his excellent introduction to the questions he and the text itself raise.

Salmon worked directly with Cardenal to bring the materials together, with a sense of order and a concern for detail that are commendable. The editor and translators have also done a remarkable job of resolving problems such as the translation of localisms, Indian terms, and the like. The glossary is indeed indispensable; but I do believe that the English translation, as contextualized by its supporting materials, can stand as a contribution to global culture.

I also insist, however, that the editor leaves a certain discontinuity between the Indian poems and the overall treatment of Cardenal's technique, historical moment, and world view. Some consideration of the work's implications for what might be called a multilayered Sandinista or exteriorist figuralism would cast some additional light on how the texts in this volume operate and how they fit into larger poetic, religious, historical, and political frames. In this sense, as Jorge Valdez has noted, what seems lacking in Cardenal's *Homenaje* is a historicist perspective on how the classic Mayan cities fell, and how the values Cardenal had come to admire might reemerge in modern society. It is just this perspective that would emerge only later, as Cardenal began to move toward the ideological militancy that registered increasingly in his poems, including some of the Indian ones, especially during the late 1970s. This evolution and its problems are crucial in answering so many questions that still lie before us in work on Cardenal, as well as on revolutionary ideologies and poetry in Nicaragua's recent history. Salmon contributes some rich suggestions, especially the connection he makes between the poet and the virtually forgotten Sandinista intellectual and militant Eduardo Contreras. But readers are left wanting more.

These caveats stated, it is worth noting that the translation of this major body of work has been long overdue; but it was worth the wait, given its quality and Salmon's fine editing. The appearance of this volume will have special resonance in the wake of 1992 and also as the quincentenaries of various events of the conquest approach. As a richer field of Cardenal and Central American literary interpretation develops, the book will be a constant source of interest and reference.

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