

ESSAYS

ENSAYOS

COLUMBUS DISCOVERED

(First part)

Fredo Arias

The discoverer perceives relationships
or functional analogies
where no one saw them before,
just as the poet perceives the image
of a camel in a cloud
that scuds across the sky

ARTHUR KOESTLER
(*The Sleepwalkers*)

It is probable that 1969 Vasconcelos Prizewinner Salvador de Madariaga (1886-1978) has written the best monograph on Columbus: **Vida del muy magnífico señor don Cristóbal Colón.** (1940).

It is interesting to observe how Christopher, similar to the name change from Quesada to Quijana to Quixote, was named Colom by reason of his Sephardic origin (Catalonian Jew); in Genovese society, Colombo; when he deals with the Portuguese, Colom; when he deals with the Castillians, Colomo and when he finally obtains his commission as an Admiral: Don Cristóbal Colón. The Germanic world prefers to call him Columbus because for them **colon** has a more literal meaning. He is also made out to be an Italian although Columbus never wrote nor spoke the Italian language.

Although Madariaga rejected psychoanalysis, his study is thoroughly psychological and in it he discovers the paranoid character of the Admiral.

DELIRIA OF GRANDEUR

He demanded that the King and Queen give him "such outrageous privileges and titles such as Admiral of Castille, until then reserved for the greatest figures of the Kingdom". He also believed himself chosen by God to carry out a mission on earth:

"In his burning heart he felt the tension of imaginative passions - ambition, envy, resentment, revenge, but above all of these, power, power over all the world. The King and Queen were his friends, but his friends from top to bottom. He loved them with a passionate hate. He bowed down before them, he knelt before them with infinite pride. As his body bent and he lowered himself before their royal feet, his soul soared in triumph over their crowned heads in dreams of victory."

Let us observe the vision he had during his shipwreck in Jamaica during his last trip, which he related to the King and Queen in reproach for having stripped him of power:

"I went to sleep tired and whining: I heard a very pious voice saying. Oh, you are so stupid and slow to believe and to serve your God, everyone's God! What didn't He do for Moses or his servant David? From the time you were born, He always had a great mission for you. When He saw you at an age that pleased Him, He made your name ring out wonderfully on earth, in the Indies, that are such a rich part of the world, and He gave them to you to have; you divided them up as you wished, and He gave you the power to do it. To the chains of the great Ocean

sea, He gave you the keys; and you were obeyed in so many lands, and earned such honored fame among Christians. What did He do for the highest people of Israel when He got them out of Egypt? Or for David, a shepherd, who He made King of Judea? Go back to Him, recognize now your sin: His mercy is infinite; your old age will be no impediment to anything important: He has very great tenements. Abraham was over one hundred years old when he fathered Isaac, and was Sarah a young woman? You call for doubtful assistance: answer, who is it that has hurt you so much and so many times, God or the world? The privileges and promises that God gives, He does not break, nor after the service has been rendered does He say, that was not my intention, and something else was understood, nor does He make you suffer for showing strength: He goes by the book: everything He promises He grants, and more: is this common? I have said what your Creator has done with you and does with everyone; now just show half a sign of the efforts and dangers you have gone through in the service of others. I heard it all half conscious as I was; but I had no reply for such true words, except to cry for my sins. He ended his speech, whoever he was, by saying: do not be afraid, trust: all these tribulations are written on marble stone, and not in vain."

DELIRIA OF PERSECUTION

"He lived with the constant fear that reality would destroy all his faith in one blow, or that it would steal his precious secret from the chest where he had it triple locked with caution. Under pressure from this fear, his innate cautiousness became bitter and was turning into suspicion, sometimes into almost a complex of persecution.

He at first proceeded in a guarded manner, because he had news that the King of Portugal had sent three caravels to meet him, from envy, according to what he believed. These three Portuguese caravels never cease to have an air of imagination about them, as though they had only sailed through the ocean of his unending fantasy."

MASOCHISTIC PROVOCATIONS

Columbus' delirium of grandeur made him feel superior to the King and Queen, assuming powers he did not have and simply disobeying the provisions of the Capitulations. Slavery was against royal orders; not paying the salaries of the people who went with him; shorting Rodrigo de Triana on his pension of 10,000 maravedis for having been the first to spot land; all this caused general animosity toward him.

The result of his provocations, manifested in poor management, would result in rebellion by his people, in his jailing and later in being prohibited by the King and Queen from governing what he had discovered.

The paranoid individual tends to be intelligent but self-destructive due to an oral masochistic adaptation suffered in early infancy: an unconscious enjoyment of the idea of dying from hunger or thirst. Another of his unconscious enjoyments was the idea of being rejected and killed. This paradox was captured by Calderón de la Barca in **La vida es sueño** (Life is but a Dream) in the words of Rosaura:

A philosopher once said
that there was so much
enjoyment in lamenting
that in order to complain
misfortunes had to be searched for.

Columbus was not just looking for islands, for Nippons, Cathays, gold, pearls and slaves, but also misfortunes that he himself was searching for unconsciously so he could revel in his never-ending complaints. His life is one long complaint. Let us examine an example of his oral regression during his second voyage. He writes in **Paria**:

"I had always read that the world, land and water, was spherical [...] Now I saw such deformity as I had said, and therefore thought this about the world, for I was mistaken because it was not round in the way they had written; rather it was shaped like a pear that was all round, except there where it has a **nipple** where it is higher, or like where you have a very round ball but instead of that it was like a **woman's breast put there**, and this part of the nipple was the highest and closest to the sky, and this would be below the equator, down in the Ocean sea at the end of the Orient: what I call the end of the Orient is where all land and islands disappear..."

Freud called the rebellious, stubborn, obsessive, compulsive individual anal-sadistic. It is quite a coincidence that Columbus would be anal-sadistic. But any sadist is also an unconscious masochist. This explains why Columbus brought about most of his own misfortunes, then went on to complain about royal thanklessness.

The most important trait about Columbus' conduct is not so much his obstination nor his obsessive behavior, but his creation of a set objective, knowing that there were islands beyond the Western ocean and having supposed that beyond those islands there was an even larger one: Japan, and then China, the continent of Marco Polo.

This constantly occurring phenomenon in the scientific process is called **Serendipity** by Germanic peoples, a word

derived from the Persian story **The Three Princes of Serendip**, which means for someone to receive an unexpected gift when they are searching for other valuable and pleasing things.

The Hungarian Jewish thinker Arthur Koestler (1905-83), in **The Sleepwalkers**, tells us about Kepler (1571-1630), discoverer of the three laws of cosmology, who admired Columbus:

"Johannes Kepler proposed to reach India and discovered America. This is a phenomenon that repeats itself again and again along the road to knowledge. But the result has nothing to do with the motive. **A fact, once discovered, has an existence of its own and is related to other facts whose discoverers would not even have dreamed of them.** Apollonius of Pergamus described the laws of useless curves that are produced when a plane cuts across a cone at different angles: centuries later it was proven that those curves represent the path followed by planets, comets, rockets and satellites.

One cannot avoid the feeling - wrote Heinrich Hertz - that these mathematical formulas have an independent existence and intelligence of their own, that they are wiser than we are, wiser even than their discoverers, that we get even more out of them than what was originally known for them to have contained.

This confession of the discoverer of radio waves sounds suspiciously like an echo of Kepler, who in turn echoed Plato, who in turn echoed Pythagoras: "I believe that **everything found in nature and in the beautiful sky is found in symbols in geometriam.**"

Lets us look at what Kepler explains in the preface to his **New Astronomy**, which according to Koestler "represents a unique revelation of the way in which the creative spirit works":

"What interests me now is not just to communicate everything I have to say to the reader, but above all to show him the reasons, subterfuges and fortunate luck that led me to my discoveries. When **Christopher Columbus, Magellan and the Portuguese** relate to us how they were lost on their voyages, we not only pardon them; we would be sorry if we did not have these stories, because without them a lot of entertainment value would have been lost. Therefore, please do not criticize me if moved by the same consideration to the reader, I follow the same method."

Koestler himself in the preface of his book recognizes the change undergone by human culture during the 16th and 17th centuries due to Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo. The scientific phenomenon experienced by Columbus took two centuries to gestate:

"The revolution in technology brought about by the discoveries of those men was an accompanying and unexpected byproduct; their goal was not to conquer nature but to understand it. Despite this, their cosmic research destroyed the medieval vision of an immutable social order in a walled universe with its fixed hierarchy of values, and completely transformed the landscape, society, culture, customs and overall concepts of Europe, just as if a new genus had come forth on our planet."

Madariaga never explained why Columbus was so sure that there were islands to the West "as though he had them locked up in a room and had the key" as Las Casas had said. Let us look at the sureness about his islands:

"The Commission held meetings to hear out Columbus. Las Casas says this positively. One of its members, the only one whose name is known to us apart from Talavera, says that the commissioners "spoke with said Admiral about a trip to said islands"; and even adds that 'they all agreed that it was impossible that what this Admiral was saying could be true.' What was Columbus saying? Today we can answer this question with a greater possibility of precision than Columbus' early biographers, who were still full of errors, and even later ones, who were still no less enveloped in self-created romantic and sentimental clouds. Columbus could only have spoken before the Commission as though he were a Marco Polo, a Toscanelli or according to Esdras. It is more probable that he used a mixture of all three. It is almost a sure thing that he used these three sources because he was impulsive; but he also never mentioned Toscanelli nor presented the famous map because he was cautious. This is gleaned from the logic of this case, because although in Castile he felt reasonably secure, a letter and a map, obtained through means he knew well, did not need to be brought out before a commission of astronomers and navigators who could get a bit curious about how they might have fallen into his hands.

(...)

This itinerant discoverer referred to himself from the outset as "Sir Christopher Columbus", before anyone had given him authorization to call himself that. The first condition recorded in the document is that their Highnesses are to make "the aforesaid Sir Christopher Columbus their Admiral in all islands and continental lands which might be discovered or won by his hand or efforts in said Ocean seas".

Psychoanalysis has shown the importance of *lapses linguis* in showing unconscious intentions. Let us look at what Madariaga has set forth:

"The other strange part of the Capitulations is still more dramatic, even though analysis reveals that it really has little substance. The first phrase reads as follows: "The things petitioned for and that your Highnesses give and grant to Sir Christopher Columbus, as some compensation for **what he has discovered** in the Ocean seas, and for the voyage he now, with the help of God, is to make across them in the service of your Highnesses". We observe in passing how typical this "as some compensation" is of our man Columbus. They make him an Admiral, Viceroy and Governor and be knighted him, but all this, in addition to the tithe and eighth part, is no more than some compensation in exchange for a hypothetical world that he is to discover. It can well be seen that this phrase was dictated if not written by the itinerant discoverer himself. But what has bothered chroniclers and historians in this paragraph are the words '**what he has discovered**'. They are so incredible that early academicians, considering them to be an error, corrected them by changing them to '**what he is to discover**'.

Nevertheless, the original document puts them in the past tense, and building upon this unusual past tense, more than a few columbists have allowed themselves to be seduced by the story of a pre-discovery of America that **Columbus had secretly made before making the official discovery**. It must be said that there is no lack of evidence to support this fantasy, including Las Casas' repeated references to the sureness with which Columbus spoke of the Indies to be discovered 'as though he already had them locked up in his chest' or 'as though he had already been there'. But this whole fairy tale comes tumbling down with

no more than a reading of the log of the first voyage, written by Columbus himself, because it is evident that all he is seeing surprises, intrigues and delights him, and at times is disappointing, but in any case is all new to him. The only explanation for these words in the Capitulations is to be found in Columbus' Quixotic psychology. 'He embraced his imagination' and never let it go even though barefoot friars were begging him to, as Cervantes said of Don Quixote. So sure was he of his dream that in the document with which he was making the King and Queen pay so dearly, he put it down as accomplished fact and discovery. Just as he had called himself Sir Christopher Columbus before he had even been given the title, he also called the 'Indies' discovered before even setting sail to go out in search of them."

Luis de Ulloa in his book *El predescubrimiento Hispano-Catalán de América en 1473*, (1928), argued very forcefully that Columbus had already been in what later was called America, but could not prove it, according to Madariaga.

It is not until 1986 that the current Duchess of Medina Sidonia allows her relative, Professor Juan Maura, to examine the Duchy's archives that some information on Christopher Columbus comes to light, written in 1544 by Pedro Barrantes Maldonado, chronicler of the Duke of Medina Sidonia, who according to Madariaga was Don Enrique and according to Barrantes was Don Juan de Guzmán, that indicates that Columbus had been shipwrecked on the islands to be known afterwards as the Antilles way before the voyage of the three caravels. Let us look at what Barrantes said:

"Chapter III. How the King and Queen sent Christopher Columbus to discover the Antilles in the Ocean sea.

The King and Queen being at Santa Fe, this year of 1492. It happened that Christopher Columbus, a foreigner from the nation of Milan, a man of great resourcefulness without much education but astute in the art of cosmography and the design of the world, having set out from England in a ship, and being caught by a storm, came upon the island now known as Santo Domingo, and knowing this land to be rich in gold, with most of those who had gone on the ship dying of wretchedness, hunger and disease, and himself giving an account of this land to the King of England about what he had seen there, begging him to send him to discover. Since he was given no credit in this, he came to Portugal and begged the King of Portugal for the same thing, where not believing what he said they paid no attention to him and from there he came into the service of the Duke of Medina, Don Juan de Guzmán, and in telling him about the case and at how little cost that island rich in gold could be conquered, he decided to send a navy to discover it at his cost, but because he left the service of the King and Queen out of favor, he abandoned the purpose he had of entering into such dubious enterprise."

Now let us observe what Madariaga says:

"Thus reinforced and confirmed in his faith, Columbus set out for the Court, taking for greater security a sort of Franciscan visa in his passport. The Court then was at Seville, where the King, very pleased with his recent capture of Setenil, had come to spend the winter close to his main counselor and chief manager of the army - the Queen. Columbus did not go first to see the monarchs; he first went to knock on the door of the most powerful of Spanish magnates, the Duke of Medina Sidonia. Don Enrique de Guzmán, the second Duke, was then the head of a family that had carved out the most splendid feudal dominion in all the Peninsula; so therefore he was the

richest man in Spain, and in fact reigned over a wide area around the port of Sanlúcar. If he had only wished, this great lord would have been able to take over the entire enterprise of discovery; but he either did not wish to or for an unknown cause he was unable to do it, and that is how he leaves the historical scene as far as Columbus is concerned, with all the pomp and dignity of such a great lord, but without the wreath of American laurel that his memory would always wear if he had listened to that blue-eyed, red-haired, hot-tempered dreamer who spoke to him of new islands and new continents to be discovered."

I trust that the Duchess of Medina Sidonia will allow a check of the 16th Century manuscript written by Barrantes, with the 18th Century copy which she had lent to Maura, when the latter searching for Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca who had been a servant of the Duke's, found out the secret of the Most Excellent Sir Christopher Columbus.

Mexico City
October 1990

COLUMBUS DISCOVERED

(Second part)

Was Alonso Sánchez
the Discoverer of America?

Fredo Arias

But the warping,
the hiding
of the true identity of a people
such as those mentioned here,
seems to me to be a unique phenomenon
and therefore of fascinating interest.

AMERICO CASTRO
(*De la edad conflictiva*)

Here on the threshold of the 21st Century, we Hispanic people are still holding on to mythological histories, cherished illusions and fanciful legends even though our scholars have already tired of proclaiming their falsehood. Américo Castro (1885-1972), before writing *La realidad histórica de España*, had understood that the Iberian idea was no more than a wish to show that anything was more noble because it was more ancient. "The Iberians are dumb archeology known through Rome". Something similar to the Aztecs who are also dumb archeology known through the interpretations of our first Spanish missionaries and Indians who wrote them down in Spanish. The desire to base a nationality upon the Iberian or the Aztec does no more than to show the poetic inclinations of our people.

Just as we have ceased being Indians, Blacks and Spaniards to become Hispanic Americans, the current inhabitants of Spain ceased being Romans, Goths and Semites - these last in Phoenician, Arabic and Jewish versions - to become "Spagnols", a Provençal word meaning: "from Hispaniae".

In *De la edad conflictiva*, Castro tells us of the desire of Hispanic historians not only to make Spaniards into descendants of the Iberians, but what is even worse, to make the Iberians into Spaniards:

"No one thinks - let us repeat - that if the prehistoric Iberians and Celtiberians were already Spaniards; the Celts from Transalpine Gaul had to be Frenchmen; and those from Cisalpine Gaul, Italians. And instead of confronting this problem which is skirted by all these "Iberian lovers", Spanish colonization in the Indies is compared to Roman and Muslim colonization in the Iberian Peninsula. There are those who claim that the Celtiberians and Tartesians did not become Romans nor Oriental Muslims for the same reason that American Indians and Mestizos did not lose their makeup and character and remain Mexicans or Peruvians." [Mexicas or Incas].

The most noble houses of Spain have no Iberian roots. The House of Medinaceli is derived from an Arabic place name just as La Mancha, Alcalá or Gibraltar. Medina-Sidonia is half Arabic and the other half is as Phoenician as are Málaga and Cádiz. Iberian heritage is notable by its absence in our culture today. However, the name Hispaniae, given to us by Rome, includes the entirety of the misnamed Iberian Peninsula and it is indeed appropriate since we speak romance and our culture is Hispanic.

Regarding the Medina-Sidonias, 1971 Vasconcelos prizewinner Joaquim Montezuma de Carvalho wrote an article on Columbus entitled *Terá sido Cristóvão Colombo um*

pirolas? on April 18, 1991 in the *Correo de Manha* newspaper in Lisbon, related to my article *Columbus Discovered* (1st Part) both of which he had sent to the Duchess of Medina-Sidonia, Doña Luisa Isabel Alvarez de Toledo y Maura. In these articles the Duchess is asked to confirm the existence of a 16th Century document as to whether Columbus had told the Duke (1484) that he had already been shipwrecked on what was known later as the Island of Santo Domingo, but not beforehand as the Duchess asserts. It is only logical and natural that Barrantes should speak of the Island of Santo Domingo in 1555, because it had already been called first, Hispaniola and then Santo Domingo for 63 years.

The Duchess replied to Montezuma, confirming the existence of the 16th Century document written by Pedro Barrantes de Maldonado. But the most surprising thing about this letter is the cherished illusion of the Duchess that the history of Spain remains the same even though it is false and worthless just like the 500th Anniversary of the Discovery of America in 1492. Let us analyze these fragments of the letter:

"Medina Sidonia
P. Duque Niebla, 1
SANLUCAR BDA (CADIZ)

Sanlúcar, July 28, 1991.

Sr. D. Joaquim Montezuma de Carvalho
Lisbon

My Dear Sir:

Thank you very much for your articles. Yes, it is true that Juan Maura obtained these facts. Barrantes got the news from an old servant who had known Gómez de León, the Duke's chamberlain, who had been present at the

briefing that was held at the Seville Palace. [with Columbus].
(...)

I have studied the subject deeply, and the fact is that Santo Domingo belonged to some islands granted by Enrique IV to Diego de Herrera in 1463, who as husband of Inés de Pereza was already Lord of the Canaries, islands which by all indications went all the way to the West. So then he was offering something that already had an owner."

It is a day for celebration for the small community of Hispanic historians when documents on celebrities of old appear, provided they do not interfere with established dogma or with the idea that we modern Hispanics have of our past or our fabled roots. How much wouldn't we give to get back the Ship's Log for Columbus' First Voyage that the convert Bartolomé de las Casas had in his hands! The most shameful thing about the case is that the logs for the second, third and fourth voyages that still remained in the 16th Century have also disappeared. It would not be at all strange if one day the four logs were to be found together in the secret archives of some library. This is a cherished illusion or a fantasy wish of my own.

In 1989 Antonio Rumeu de Armas published the **Libro copiador de Cristóbal Colón** in facsimile and later transcribed it in volume II of the same work. This book was bought by the Spanish Government from a bookseller in Tarragona. Documents VII and VIII are two unpublished letters from Columbus to Ferdinand and Isabella written on the island of Hispaniola, on February 3, 1500. They confirm the paranoid and eclectic character of that magnificent Sir. Let us examine document VIII:

"...for Our Lord, in his infinite kindness, has performed through me [by way of me] for your Highnesses, (...) that I am hoping for the victory of that true God, who is three in one and full of charity and of wisdom; just as He has miraculously given me all other things against the opinion of everyone, and He will be just as pleased as if the temple of Jerusalem were to be built with wood and gold of Ophir, now that with this it is restored unto the Holy Church and rebuilt even more luxurious than it was before."

Américo Castro, in *De la edad conflictiva*, asks:

"What would the intimate Christianity of some converts be like?" How would their ancestral habits intertwine in their souls with new forms of faith which cannot be passed off out of hand as insincere? It is likely that in those who are well versed in both old and new Law (the case of Arias Montano), there would be personal and very subtle adjustments which were shown in a reluctance to infringe Jewish precepts, which after all were not at all harmful to Catholic beliefs. But it will never be known how far these syncretisms went in those who were not subjected to the torments of the Inquisition. And even then, who knows?"

With Columbus' Sephardic origin and paranoia being confirmed by this letter of 1500, Madariaga's opinion still stands that despite the *lapsus linguis* of the Capitulations: "What he has discovered", Columbus had not been to the islands later known as the Antilles before 1492.

Barrantes de Maldonado's document is quite clear on what Columbus said in 1484 to Don Juan de Guzmán, Duke of Medina-Sidonia:

"Being caught by a storm, he came upon the island now known as Santo Domingo, and knowing this land to be rich

in gold, with most of those who had gone on the ship dying of wretchedness, hunger and disease, and himself giving an account to the King of England about what he had seen there, begging him to send him to discover."

Why was Columbus asking to be sent to discover something he had already discovered? What Barrantes says: "to send him to discover" what Columbus supposedly had already discovered, was the news that this historian picked up from a servant of Gómez de León, the Duke's chamberlain, who was present at the briefing, as Doña Luisa Isabel says in her letter. But it will never be known if that was exactly what Columbus said to the Duke, unless we believe in this other *lapsus linguis* of the Admiral's that denounces him as someone who knew something that he tried to pass off as his own even though it wasn't.

The only thing that could resolve this enigma and bring together opposing opinions is the possibility that Columbus might have known the true discoverer of the Caribbean islands and plagiarized his story for his own benefit, honor and glory.

Professor Juan Maura calls our attention to what Martín Fernández de Navarrete (1765-1844) put down in *Colección de los viajes y descubrimientos que hicieron por mar los españoles desde fines del siglo XV*. (Biblioteca de autores españoles. Atlas. Madrid, 1954. Vol. 1, p. 28):

"The fable that a pilot from Huelva called Alonso Sánchez, sailing from Spain to the Canaries around the year 1484, was cast by a storm all the way to the island of Santo Domingo, and that upon returning to Tercera he informed Columbus of his voyage and route, was heard by the Inca Garcilaso from his father, who had served Ferdinand and Isabella and the contemporaries of the first discoverers and conquerors. Don Bernardo Alderete, Rodrigo Caro, Don

Juan de Solórzano, Don Fernando Pizarro and others who came later got it from the Inca. Francisco de Gómara and Father Josef de Acosta related the event without mentioning the discoverer."

Thanks to what the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1539-1616), author of *Comentarios reales del Perú* had said, the hypothesis that the true discoverer of America for Europeans was the Andalucian Alonso Sánchez was strengthened, because he had been cast away to the Western islands and returned to tell others about it including Columbus, confirming the poetic visions of Seneca, the Toscanelli Map and all those signs of carved wood and broad-faced drowning victims found in the Atlantic.

In *Vida del muy magnífico señor don Cristóbal Colón*, Madariaga says that the latter, upon his failure to convince the King of Portugal about his project, went off to Spain in 1484, precisely the same year that the news of Sanchez' shipwreck was found out. The interesting thing about this is that what Columbus told the Duke of Medina-Sidonia agrees with what Sánchez supposedly told Columbus himself. The island of Tercera of the Azores group belonged to an area of Portugal where Columbus had friends and relatives who could give him information, and where he had resided since 1476, having married a Perestrello, daughter of the captain of the island of Puerto Santo, the largest island of the Madeira group, halfway between the Azores and the Hispanic peninsula.

The business about "giving an account to the King of England about what he had seen there, begging him to send him to discover", possibly could have been a trick by Columbus to provoke the Duke of Medina-Sidonia's zeal. Four years later, in 1488, with delay from Castille, Columbus sent his brother Bartolome to see Henry VII, King of England,

who "laughed at everything Columbus said", according to Oviedo.

Madariaga was right when he said about the Admiral:

"There is no doubt that Columbus managed the truth with notable caution; but anyone who accuses the discoverer of America, or for that matter any man, whomever he may be, of a constant inclination toward lying, forgets the most elemental subtlety; not only of Columbus' character, but about human nature, for the human preference for a minimum of action gives us all to telling the truth so long as there is no reason not to."

In his **Estudio histórico-crítico y Edición**, (1989) volume I, Antonio Rumeu de Armas says:

"Though it would be risky to predict the course of future developments, we do not hesitate to affirm that one of the most memorable and significant facts about the Celebration of the 500th Anniversary of the Discovery of America from the historical standpoint will no doubt be the appearance of Christopher Columbus' Copybook (1492-1503)".

It is now probable that the most important fact for the Celebration of the 500th Anniversary of the Birth of Hispanic Culture is the discovery made by Juan Maura in 1986 of Pedro Barrantes de Maldonado's document in the archives of the Duchy of Medina-Sidonia.

Mexico City
October 1991

COLUMBUS DISCOVERED

(Third part)

The birth of
Hispanic-America

Fredo Arias

TO SOR JUANA

When will it end?
Isn't it enough for you to see
that in the glittering flow of your arteries,
two worlds are subtly
fluctuating?

LUIS VERDEJO LADRON DE GUEVARA
(1714)

This is the last one of three essays on Columbus, that like caravels were put to sail in the mysterious sea of historical incomprehension, but I trust that in spite of under currents and frightful winds, one day they will arrive yonder in the horizon to some isles different to those I had fancied.

Americo Castro (1885-1972) in his essay **The meaning of the Spanish civilization** (edited by José Rubia Barcia. University of California Press, 1976), stated:

"But historical science, or the science of the human culture, aspires to a special kind of clarity based on the perception of the meaning of human accomplishments, ordering them according to the perspective of their values.

A human fact can never be reduced to the conceptual plan of a definition that attempts to include its whole content, as is the case with mathematical or physical definitions. An historical fact always signifies something, that is, it acknowledges an end or value which transcends it. One cannot define a Gothic cathedral as he would define a material object, because it is only possible to perceive its esthetic, religious, and social values. I recall this only to make it clear that Spanish civilization, that great aggregate of history, cannot be made up of a mere enumeration of facts, but rather, consists in the **exposition of its meaning and values**, in order that the tones of that civilization which developed in the Western world may be made audible."

Thanks to the reasoning of this great historian, certain prejudices can be observed in some writers. Jared Diamond in his article **The Latest on the First**, published in **Discover** magazine for January, 1990, tries to embroil the vital essence of the discovery of the New World in the XV century:

"Every year we celebrate the discovering of America by Columbus, but it is clear that when Columbus landed, America was well known by millions of people -the American Indians- some of whom were there on his arrival. The ancestors of these Indians were the ones who first found the New World."

It would be easy to convince Diamond of his anachronisms, for the Eastern Asiatic Cro-Magnon did not even have the slightest idea of his orientation on earth and that he was emigrating to some areas that after time would come to be known as the New World and America. Today it is speculated that the men who were given the name of **Clovis** emigrated from Siberia through Alaska during the glacial thaw 12,000 years ago, and would have populated this whole continent

within the space of 1,000 years. Now anthropologists have extended the presence of the Clovis to 28,000 years in the New Mexico caves.

The American historian Samuel Eliot Morison in his book **The Oxford History of the American People**, recognizes that Columbus' discovery was effective because the Scandinavians, even though they populated Greenland and may have even gone as far as Newfoundland, had no goal -mistaken or not- like the Castillians. This obvious vacuum in the discoveries by the Nordic races has given as negative psychological compensation, the counterfeiting of the "Kensington Rune" stone, the "Beadmore" weapons and the map of "Vineland", made by some students at Yale University to show Germanic presence in America before the Spanish. And as positive psychological compensation, space exploration. The Slavs and Anglo Americans are saying: "We were not the first ones to explore the planet, but we are the first in the planetary system."

It is true that Columbus, when he boasted of having been shipwrecked on the shores of this continent before the sailing of the three caravels, according to Pedro Barrantes de Maldonado (1544), historian of the Duke of Medina Sidonia, something happened to him that did not happen to Eric the Red and previously to the Australoids from Patagonia, the Melanesians of Lagoa Santa and the Clovis cavemen, because he knew where he was with relation to the rest of the planet. Columbus trusted that the world was spherical by the Toscanelli map, wishing to get to the spices area and when he found out about Alonso Sánchez de Huelva's shipwreck in 1484, he did not stop until he convinced his potential backers that he could get to Cipango and Cathay (Japan and China) going West, thus eliminating the long voyages of the Portuguese. It is known that Columbus never realized that he had discovered for Western Asians what we now know as

America, during the voyage he made with the Pinzón brothers. Rather the skippers Juan de la Cosa and Amerigo Vespucci were the ones who noticed something unknown and put it on their maps.

It may be seen from the documents cited by Nelson Verissimo in his essay **Buscar o levante pela vía do poente** (taken from **Revista Isléia** No. 5, Jul.-Dec. 1989, Madeira) that Columbus was not the only one to find out about Alonso Sanchez' shipwreck in 1484:

"Hernando Colon and Las Casas admit that a belief in the Western islands was very common in Madeira and that some had already searched for them. They also assert that in 1484 the Admiral (Columbus) found out that an inhabitant of Madeira had asked the King for a caravel to discover land to the West. This has to do with the arrangements by the Madeiran Fernão Domingues do Arco with Don Joao II, from whom he obtained the promise of becoming Captain of any island he might discover according to a letter dated July 30, 1484.

Among other events, this reference and other planned expeditions, like the one by Fernão Alonso do Estreito from the Island of Madeira, to a '...great island or islands or continental mass which by its shore is supposed to be the island of the seven cities', confirms that in the Atlantic islands there was a firm belief in the existence of land to the West. This may have been as mythical or legendary islands or as an expression of a more definite knowledge of the Western islands, which explains that what Columbus was interested in was not unknown by Portuguese navigators who were always around this part of the Atlantic."

What a coincidence that after ten years of not having navigators requested permission to discover from the King, all of a sudden the Madeiran Domingues do Arco requests permission, and two years later Fernão Dulmo, Captain of Terceira, the island to which Alonso Sánchez de Huelva supposedly returned to in 1484 according to the Inca Garcilaso, requests permission from the King of Portugal. Let us go back to the documents cited by Nelson Verissimo:

"Proof of this are several letters of donation of islands for discovery to Joao Vogado (1462); Gonçalo Fernandes (1462); Joao Gonçalvez da Câmara (1473); Fernão Teles (1474); Fernão Domingues do Arco (1484); and Fernão Dulmo and João Afonso do Estreito (1486)."

The result of all of this is that in 1492 a hundred Christians from the Hispanic peninsula landed on the islands to be called later the Antilles. The moment some Asians discovered some other Asians, from that moment on there were some who were the discovered, who had to meet with the discoverers at the time of discovery.

Some Hispanic Americans from Mexico, identified with the Clovis, have proposed to UNESCO that the Encounter of Two Worlds be celebrated on October 12, 1992, as if saying "we are not passive, on the contrary, we came out to meet them". The majority of Spaniards are identified with the first explorers who discovered, what we now know as the Caribbean islands, for the Western Asians or Europeans. Both positions are obvious from their own perspective. Besides, such worlds do not exist, because Marco Polo could have gone from China to Siberia and from there to Alaska if he had so desired. There is only an Asiatic world of which America is a part, both geographic and ethnically. The Clovis is just as much a Mongol as the Hun who invaded Western Asia or Europe.

The most interesting thing about the matter is that the marriage that occurred in America between Western and Eastern Asians, between Spaniards and Clovis, bore its ethnic fruit, as it was borne in Central Asia between Tartars and Germans. There, the Slavic race was created, and here, the Spanish-American.

The Slavs do not recall the date of their birth and therefore do not celebrate it. We Spanish-Americans do remember the date of our birth, but some of us prefer to celebrate the Discovery and others the Encounter, which in the final analysis turns out to be the same thing: not looking any further than the end of Columbus' nose.

At the Presentation Ceremony for the **500th Anniversary Program** in Paris on March 13, 1989, Miguel León Portilla suggested:

"since the start of the encounter, their mutual contributions, cultural combinations and the appearance of new mixed-race nations have been felt among all the peoples of the earth."

Portilla did not forget what our father Bolívar had said:

"We are not Europeans, we are not Indians... we are a small human kind, we have a separate world surrounded by the vast seas, new at practically all the arts and sciences, though in a certain way, old in the customs of civil society."

Joaquín García Icazbalceta (1825-94), in the introduction to his **Collection of documents for the History of Mexico (1858)**, (Facsimile edition by Porrúa, México, 1971), said:

"Without having a particular predilection toward any especial epoch of our history, and having the intention of embracing it all, from the most remote times until the year of 1810, I am publishing now a series of documents from the XVI century, as the most interesting one of our past, in which an old country disappeared and a new one was formed; the same one that exists in our day and of which we are part. It was only fair, then, to assist, before anything else, to **the birth of our society.**"

Let us observe what José Vasconcelos (1882-1952) said in **Brief History of México (1967)**:

"The synthesis obtained by the endeavours of the missionaries in the New World as it is manifested in Humboldt's work on XVIII century New Spain, is remarkable not only because of **two strange races a new one was born** that was integrated into Christian culture, but also because for the Spaniards it was a motive of fusion and unity. In the Hispanic peninsula provincial differences subsist in spite of the religious unity. Once in America the Aragonese, Castilian and Vasque became Spanish. The native languages were forgotten and in the Continent only Castilian prevailed [and Portuguese in Brazil]. Therefore, Hispanic proper became an homogeneous and organized nationality which appeared as a matter of fact in the New World. The same thing happened with the aborigines of the New World whom, before the conquest had not the slightest sense of nationality, scattered as they were in tribes with dialects that did not permit them to communicate with one another and often separated radically by a constant state of war."

Salvador de Madariaga (1886-1978), at the celebration of four and one half centuries of the founding of Mexico City, wrote

an article that I requested from him which he titled **The True Founding of Mexico**. There he speaks of our birth:

"Perhaps in all of human history there is no single nation - not even Perú- that can equal Mexico in the nobility of its arrival into the world as a modern nation. This is due to the fact that the encounter of the two nations that spawned it takes place in a uniquely elevated environment; it is so embarrassing to think that because some are not at that level, and others lack the good faith necessary to bring out the true history, this history that seems legend, this legend that turns out to be history -the joining of the two peoples that conceived Mexico- is reduced so many times to the level of stories told again and again of loads of gold and burning feet and bleeding hearts, when their essence is the encounter of two noble mysteries; two mysteries which because of their status, are conceiving nobility."

Arturo Uslar Pietri, in his speech **Cortez and the Creation of the New World** (1985), given upon the 500th Anniversary of the birth of our hero, said:

"What is starting to come forth is not a New Spain, as the conquistadors would have wanted, nor will it remain Old Mexico. It is going to be neither one nor the other, but rather a birth of a vast confluence which reflects the legacy of its makers, with their conflicts and unresolved contradictions in the multiple and unending process of cultural mixing in America, which has made the problem of its identity so tearing and so real."

Now, then, are we Hispanics going to allow our history to continue treating unfairly, that Andalucian skipper who was perhaps the first to be cast upon the islands later to be called the Antilles and who maybe returned to tell about it before dying?

It would be an injustice equal to a refusal to acknowledge that the history of another Alonso who one day left through the gateway of a pen to find his adventures in the ancient and well-known field of Montiel, belonged to Miguel de Cervantes, and to allow any Avellaneda to usurp it as his own for his own benefit, name and glory.

Historians are very brief with Alonso Sanchez de Huelva:

"...sailing from Spain to the Canaries, around the year 1484, he was cast by a storm onto the island of Santo Domingo, and returning to Tercera [Azores] he informed Columbus of his trip and route."

The rest of the story of Alonso, the "forgotten one", according to the Freudian law of unconscious repetition compulsion, is reiterated by Columbus to the Duke of Medina Sidonia as his own. Upon reading Barrantes (1554):

"...out on a ship and beset by a storm, he arrived at the island which is now called Santo Domingo and finding this land to be rich in gold and returning to Spain and part of those who went on the ship dying of their wounds, with just he himself remaining and telling about that land..."

How is it that there was not even a single witness to Columbus' supposed shipwreck? Not even his son Fernando mentions it in **History of the Admiral**. Nonetheless, the history of Alonso Sánchez was known by everyone in the Court of Ferdinand and Isabella, according to the Inca Garcilaso.

What happened to Alonso Sánchez when he arrived dying at the island of Tercera after having been shipwrecked in the Western islands? Columbus spoke zealously of them as though he knew them, "as though he had them locked up in a room

under his own key", (...) the commissioners of the Crown of Castille "talked with the said Admiral on his trip to said islands", according to Las Casas.

Psychoanalysis, Castilian and Portuguese documents have made me infer that only Alonso Sánchez de Huelva could have informed the Portuguese navigators, and therefore Christopher Columbus, of the existence of islands westward.

Mexico City
October 1992



En el año de 1992, en la Ciudad de México, se realizó una conferencia titulada "Alonso Sánchez de Huelva y el descubrimiento de América". La conferencia fue organizada por el Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas de la Universidad Nac-

COLON DESCUBIERTO

(Primera parte)

Fredo Arias

El descubridor percibe relaciones o analogías funcionales donde nadie las vio antes, o en otra cosa, así como el poeta percibe la imagen de un camello en una nube que se desplaza por el cielo.

ARTURO KOESTLER
(1905-83)
(Los Sonámbulos)

Es probable que el Premio Vasconcelos (1969), Salvador de Madariaga (1886-1978), haya escrito la mejor monografía sobre Colón: **Vida del muy magnífico señor don Cristóbal Colón**. (1940).

Es interesante observar cómo —al igual que el cambio de apellidos Quesada, Quijana, Quijote— Cristóbal, por su origen sefardita (hebreo catalán), se llamaba Colom; en el ámbito genovés, Colombo; cuando negocia con los portugueses, Colom; cuando con los castellanos, Colomo y cuando al fin consigue las capitulaciones de almirante: Don Cristóbal Colón. El vulgo germánico prefiere llamarlo Columbus, porque para éste **colon** tiene un significado literal. Además se le antoja italiano aunque Colón jamás habló ni escribió en toscano.

Aunque Madariaga renegaba del psicoanálisis, su estudio es netamente psicológico y ahí descubre el carácter paranoide del Almirante.