

## The gods that failed

失败的上帝

A writer's recantation highlights the intellectual failures of the Latin American left

作家的改口显示拉美左派的理论失败。

LEAVE aside Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and no writer has done more to shape the mental image that both locals and outsiders have of Latin America than Eduardo Galeano. In 1971 the then journalist published "Open Veins of Latin America", a scorching tirade against foreign exploitation. Now in its 84th impression in Spanish, it remains a fixture on the exiguous shelves devoted to Latin America in bookshops in Europe and the United States. In all, it has sold over a million copies. Hugo Chavez gave it to Barack Obama when they met in 2009.

除了马尔克斯，没人能在塑造拉美精神意象上做得比爱德华多·加莱亚诺更多。1971年，当时的记者出版了《拉丁美洲被切开的血管》一书，在书中作者用长篇大论激烈地反对了外国的剥削。到现在它已再版了84次，但仍是美国和欧洲书店中关于拉美的畅销书籍，其销量已逾百万册。2009年，查韦斯与奥巴马会面时曾将此书赠与后者。

"Open Veins" is written in powerful prose, with intoxicating passion. But it is also a work of crude propaganda, a mix of selective truths, exaggeration and falsehood, caricature and conspiracy theory. It is the bible of "dependency theory", the notion dear to the left that "underdevelopment in Latin America is a consequence of development elsewhere, that we Latin Americans are poor because the ground we tread is rich in resources."

该书以散文写就，饱含令人沉醉的力量。但它是天然的宣传，是选择性真理的集合，是夸张是虚假也是讽刺画和阴谋论。它是“依赖理论”的圣经，有着“拉美的欠发达是因为其他地方的发达，拉美的贫穷是源于我们土地的富有。（引自原文）”的珍贵见解。

The message is one of anti-capitalism as well as anti-imperialism. Mr Galeano brackets as "mechanisms of plunder" both "the caravelled conquistadors and the jet-propelled technocrats; Hernan Cortés and the [US] Marines; the agents of the Spanish Crown and the International Monetary Fund missions; the dividends from the slave trade and the profits from General Motors." He dismisses all possibility of reform; Cuban communism offers the only route to salvation.

该书反对资本主义也反对帝国主义。加莱亚诺用“掠夺机制”和“卡拉维尔征服者、喷气推进式科技主义者；荷南·科尔蒂斯、美国海军；西班牙王室和货币基金组织的代理人；奴隶贸易的分红和通用汽车的利润”加以注解。他将所有改革的可能从考虑中剔除，古巴的共产主义是唯一的拯救途径

So when Mr Galeano let slip, in remarks at a recent book fair in Brasilia, that today he would find "Open Veins" unreadable, it was almost as if Jesus's disciples had admitted that the New Testament was a big misunderstanding. He added that when he wrote the book he lacked "sufficient knowledge of economics and politics" and that it belongs to "a past era".

所以当加莱亚诺在最近巴西利亚的书展上无意中表示《切开的血管》已不具备可读性时，就像耶稣的门徒承认新约是一个巨大的误读一样。他补充道他在写作本书时缺乏必要的经济政治知识，而该书属于过去。

Indeed so. Asia's economic development and Latin America's commodity-fuelled economic boom of this century expose dependency theory as simplistic nonsense (although it still has adherents in Latin American Studies departments). Social democracy, as practised in

Brazil, Chile and Mr Galeano's own Uruguay, has offered more to the Latin American masses than the Castros' bankrupt police state.

确实如此。本世纪亚洲经济增长和拉美商品经济繁荣显示出依赖理论纯粹是胡说八道。（虽然在拉美的研究机构该理论仍不乏追随者。）巴西、智利和加莱亚诺的乌拉圭仍在摸索着社会民主，而这给拉美带来的麻烦远远多于卡斯特罗破产的集权国家。

But the contention of "Open Veins" that Latin Americans are poor because someone—multinationals, local capitalists or the United States—is stealing their wealth retains a profound resonance in the region. It lives on in the rhetoric and actions of governments in Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and Argentina. The political recipe has modulated, however. In place of Cuba's armed revolution, the formula now is one of "radical democracy"—or "populism", as its detractors often call it.

《切开的血管》中提到拉美的贫穷是因为一些跨国公司、当地资本家或美国正在窃取他们的财富，而这引起了广泛的共鸣。这样的论断是基于委内瑞拉、玻利维亚。厄瓜多尔和阿根廷政府的说辞和行为。那些政治做法已被调整，但是取代古巴武装革命的方式却是“激进民主”或者说是批判者口中的“平民主义”。

This has involved charismatic leaders winning power through elections by claiming to champion "the people" against their oppressors. They then hold on to power by ruthlessly seizing control of all state institutions in the name of the majority and by rewarding their followers with jobs and benefits via an expanded public sector.

这涉及到那些魅力非凡的领导人通过声称冠军属于人民来打压对手从而赢得选举获得权力。之后他们借着“多数人”的名义无情地控制所有国家机构并且通过扩展公共部门给其追随者安排工作和其他利益，从而牢牢掌控权力。

The theoretical champion of radical populism, its mobilisation of plebeian masses and its confrontation with the established order was Ernesto Laclau, an Argentine political philosopher who lived in Cricklewood, a placid north London suburb. He argued that populism was an antidote to the capitalist domination of liberal democracy and to the hegemony of technocratic "administration" over the realm of "the political". Laclau died, aged 78, in April. He remains influential. Ricardo Forster, a friend and sympathiser, was this month named by Argentina's president, Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, to the new and Orwellian post of "strategic co-ordinator for national thought".

激进平民主义的理论胜利动员了广大民众并且与拉克劳提出的规律相悖。（拉克劳住在平静的伦敦北郊是一位阿根廷政治哲学家）他认为平民主义是针对自由民主的资本主义统治和政治领域中技术统治霸权的矫正措施。4月，拉克劳逝世，享年78，但其理论仍有一定的影响力。本月阿根廷总统费尔南德斯任命其好友也是支持者的福斯特为新一任的“民族思想战略协调人”。

Yet Laclau's radical populism contains the seeds of its own downfall, both because it relies on individual leaders (Chavez's successor, Nicolas Maduro, lacks his mentor's charisma) and, above all, because it offers no economic answers. Chavista Venezuela, sitting on vast oil reserves, has proved incapable of organising a reliable supply of toilet paper, a product that even theoreticians need. Having run short of hard-currency reserves, Ms Fernandez's Argentina has begun to cut subsidies and make its peace with its foreign creditors, prompting Mr Forster and his friends to warn against a "conservative restoration".

然而拉克劳的激进平民主义从一开始就埋下了失败的种子。不仅是因为该主义的成功依靠领导人的个人因素（查韦斯的继承者尼古拉斯·马杜罗缺乏其前任的魅力）也是因为这一主义

难以交出满意的经济答卷。查韦斯手中的委内瑞拉拥有大量的石油储备但却难以稳定地组织供应那些连老学究都需要的厕纸。由于缺乏硬通货储备，费尔南德斯执掌的阿根廷开始削减补贴并与外国债权人和平相处，而这促使福斯特和他的朋友们开始提防“保守恢复”

Mr Galeano's recantation and the mounting difficulties of radical populism are reminders that capitalism is the only route to development in Latin America. The task for its proponents is to show that it can be a tool not just to create wealth but also to overcome extreme inequality.

加莱亚诺的改口，激进平民主义困难的增加暗示着资本主义是拉美发展的唯一途径。其支持者的任务就是展示资本主义不仅是创造财富的工具也能解决极端不平等的现状。