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THE FUNCTION OF SYMBOL IN THE NOVELS OF RÓMULO GALLEGOS

A DISSERTATION

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THE FUNCTION OF SYMBOL IN THE NOVELS OF

RÓMULO GALLEGOS

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THE FUNCTION OF SYMBOL IN THE NOVELS OF RÓMULO GALLEGOS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The critics and theorists, no matter how diverse their definitions of symbol, agree that symbol-making is our natural activity and our condition. Cassirer, in his The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, tells us that man is a symbolic animal whose languages, myths, religions, sciences, and arts are symbolic forms by which he projects his reality and comes to know it. The concept of symbol is inextricably bound to reality, yet, "the symbol remains, calling for explanation and resisting it. Though definite in itself and generally containing a sign that may be identified, the symbol carries something indeterminate and, however we try, there is a residual mystery that escapes our intellects."[1] If symbol, reduced to its simplest terms, may be any object which suggests a larger meaning than itself, all literary works, whether in whole or in part, are literary symbols in the

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[1]William York Tindall, The Literary Symbol (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955), p. 11.

sense that they are an embodiment. The very function of language, the most basic of symbolic forms, is the assignment of meaning to those factors and concepts about us. There is, however, even in this one-to-one correspondence that factor which is basic in symbol: the overtones or suggestions of meaning, that composite image of concrete and abstract which forms "the meaning beyond" implicit in every symbol. Hence the inevitability of interpretation; indeed the literary symbol may be considered a formula by which the author is given more freedom (released from the concrete) in the interpretation of his reality. It is this aspect of the literary symbol that is most relevant with regard to the works of Rómulo Gallegos.

The Latin American novel, perhaps more than any other, has always been closely bound to its own geographic, ethnic and cultural reality. Its social nature has more often than not resulted in the employment of the novel to diffuse the ideals of the author. For better or worse, this is the tradition of the Latin American novelist: "En una vida colectiva que casi no ha sido otra cosa que transición violenta y crisis, el novelista no ha podido ser sino un partidario. Está contra esto o contra aquello, y quiere que su novela sirva para esa lucha."[1] This pattern of the escritor responsable acting within the novelistic framework of a "literatura

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[1]Arturo Uslar-Pietri, Letras y hombres de Venezuela (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1948), p. 135.

comprometida en su conjunto"[1] was established with the Periquillo sarniento and continues to the present day in the novels of Icaza, Alegría, Azuela and Gallegos. It is not by chance that the first American novelist turned his view inward and took as his theme the immediate factors of his environment. The drama of the discovery and conquest was contagious. The conquerers and early colonists were drawn close to their own sphere by the immediacy of the daring exploits of their time and the daily drama being lived in the New World. The fantasy of the chivalric and pastoral novels so popular in Spain found no public in this hemisphere; the new Americans were daily displacing such fiction with their own reality. The view of the novelist, too, has remained fixed on the authenticity and reality of his own continent.

How, then, does the Latin American novelist, and the Venezuelan novelist in particular, interpret this reality to which he is inextricably bound in the role of the escritor responsable? His environment is one of extremes, especially in the case of Venezuela, where chaos has been one of the most constant characteristics of the country's social, political and economic structure. Despite (or even because of) this national instability, "la novela venezolana refleja más que muchas, quizás más que ninguna de las de América, el medio en que se desenvuelven sus dramas."[2]

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[1]Ángel S.J. Damboriena, Rómulo Gallegos y la problemática venezolana (Caracas: Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, 1960), p. 34.

[2]Luis Alberto Sánchez, Proceso y contenido de la novela hispanoamericana (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1953), p. 66.

Perhaps this is a result of the violent intensity of the Venezuelan milieu, where compromise and arbitration have never found a place:

> La oposición política no era entre nosotros un juego de partidos y de sutiles conceptos, un desafío de ideas que se resuelve y arbitra en las tribunas del Parlamento ... sino un combate cruel y rencoroso en que estaba comprometida la vida.[1]

The Venezuelan writer is allowed to be no less accountable than any of his compatriots. In his art as in his life he is expected to take sides; indifference is a luxury he cannot afford, because "el novelista, el poeta, son además, hombres. Como hombres, y como escritores, tienen una responsabilidad. La indiferencia es mal síntoma."[2] His is a serious role bound to the responsibility of the treatment and interpretation of his reality. Whatever form he may choose or however he may disguise it, more is expected of him than mere literature; for good or bad this is the tradition to which he is bound: "El novelista puede estar, aparentemente, escribiendo pura ficción. En realidad está tocando entrañas."[3]

As a direct consequence of this tradition of the writer responsible to more than his art alone, a Venezuelan critic has pointed out the preponderance of the <u>personaje-</u>

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[1]Mariano Picón Salas, <u>Formación y proceso de la literatura venezolana</u> (Caracas: Editorial Cecilio Acosta, 1940), p. 11.

[2]Germán Arciniegas, "Novela y verdad en Rómulo Gallegos," <u>Cuadernos Americanos</u>, Año XIII, No. 4 (julio-agosto, 1954), 39.

[3]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 38.

símbolo, whose nature lends itself to the exploitation of ideals: "Casi siempre el héroe tiene mucho de ser abstracto, de personaje de una epopeya moral que personifica el bien, el progreso o la justicia contra el atraso y la barbarie."[1] This tendency toward the symbolic protagonist is, for the same critic, "uno de los caracteres que mejor revelan el indudable primitivismo, que es uno de los aspectos más curiosos y atractivos de la novela hispanoamericana de los últimos tiempos."[2] What is "attractive primitivism" for one critic is a defect for many others, who see in the works of Icaza, for example, an abuse of symbolic protagonists with little merit other than as tools for the author's social propaganda. If the latter tendency has been a general criticism of the Latin American novel as a whole, Gallegos has not escaped unscathed. One of the most constant criticisms of his work has been that his symbols are too elemental. According to a contemporary critic: "Los símbolos--exagerados hasta por el nombre de los personajes: la barbarie de Doña Bárbara; la santa luz, el santo ardor del civilizador Santos Luzardo, etc.--son demasiado evidentes."[3] This critic continues to say that the symmetry of certain incidents (the taming of the mare and Marisela in parallel processes, for example) is

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[1]Uslar-Pietri, op. cit., p. 135.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Enrique Anderson Imbert, Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1961), II, 85.

too elemental, that many scenes are too violent and deliberately sensational, yet, "con todo, Doña Bárbara es una gran novela."[1] A great novel, yes, because the symbols are not constructed by merely applying symbolic names to characters and chapter headings. Gallegos' symbols are not those of Icaza; they are not the purely formal creation of an author to voice his social and political propaganda.

If Gallegos' literary symbols are not, then, to be dismissed so lightly, they must be studied in the consideration not only of their construction, function and literary value, but also with regard to the author's self-expressed preoccupation with the role of symbol in his novels. For, as Lowell Dunham states, "no es extraordinario el empleo del símbolo en poesía o en prosa, sí es significativo que un autor apele a ese recurso y lo convierta en clave de su modo de expresión."[2] Professor Dunham goes further to explain the influences which contributed to the development of this characteristic in Gallegos: the author's wide reading in the field of philosophy, where the symbol is so widely employed, his long years in the teaching of this subject, and his interest in mathematics, all of which might have contributed to the author's "predisposición a concebir la realidad a través del símbolo."[3]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Lowell Dunham, Rómulo Gallegos, vida y obra (México: Ediciones de Andrea, 1957), p. 291.

[3] Ibid., pp. 291-292.

Whatever the influences (and these can only be estimated), or the formative process, Gallegos is a man who thinks symbolically, who sees symbolic value in all that surrounds him, no matter how trivial it might seem to another. But it is not enough for the symbol to exist and be perceived; first there is the matter of the artistic selection of the symbol figure or element. In his essay, "Como conocí a doña Bárbara," Gallegos gives us a clear insight into this selective process, which is divided into three stages. The first of these is the selection of the scene, the geographic framework. In keeping with his method of careful documentation, Gallegos recounts that in April of 1927 he was writing a novel whose protagonist was to spend a few days on a ranch in the llano and that it was the author himself who had to travel to the Apure region. There, as he meditated for the first time on the immensity and melancholy of the llano, the spectacle "tomó forma literaria en esta frase: --Tierra ancha y tendida, toda horizontes como la esperanza, toda caminos como la voluntad."[1] The artist had already selected one of his principal protagonists: "Y en efecto, ya lo tenía: el paisaje llanero, la naturaleza bravía, forjadora de hombres recios."[2]

But Nature is never the sole protagonist in a Gallegan

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[1]Rómulo Gallegos, "Como conocí a doña Bárbara," Una posición en la vida (México: Ediciones Humanismo, 1954), p. 528.

[2]Ibid.

novel: "El personaje viene luego, casi siempre como una respuesta a ese ambiente."[1] The second stage in the selective process is the search for human protagonists, or as Gallegos says, his characters seek him out:

> Una vez más, en el limbo de las letras todavía sin forma, hubo personajes en busca de autor. A Pirandello lo encontraron los suyos en un escenario de teatro, alzado el telón, sin público en la sala; a mí se me acercaron los míos en un lugar de la margen derecha del Apure...[2]

As the author talks with the natives of the region, a Sr. Rodríguez in particular, he is told the story of a lawyer who returned to the region to administrate his property and of his eventual fall into the depths of alcoholism and ruin. A not too uncommon story, but the creative processes of the author have already grasped in it a symbolic quality with relation to the llano:

> Un caso vulgar de enviciamiento, quizás; pero ya estaba en presencia de un escenario dramático--el desierto alimentador de bravura, amparador de barbarie, deshumanizador casi--y fue como si quitándole la palabra al señor Rodríguez, alguien se me hubiera plantado por delante, diciéndome, con voz tartajosa:
>
> --Esta tierra no perdona. Mire lo que ha hecho de mí la llanura bárbara, devoradora de hombres.
>
> Me lo quede mirando. No estaba mal como personaje dramático y le puse por nombre Lorenzo Barquero.[3]

The talkative native continues, introducing another figure of local interest: "--¿Ha oído hablar de Doña...? Una mujer que era todo un hombre para jinetear caballos y enlazar cimarrones. Codiciosa, supersticiosa, sin grimas

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[1]Uslar-Pietri, op. cit., p. 137.

[2]Gallegos, op. cit., p. 526. [3]Ibid., p. 529.

para quitarse de por delante a quien le estorbase y..."[1] Once again, the author's creative process has already begun to dominate the simple story being told him; now he has joined in symbolic parallel his two main protagonists, the natural setting and the woman who will personify it: "... pues habiendo mujer simbolizadora de aquella naturaleza bravía ya había novela."[2]

In the third and final stage, a further symbolic transference is made. The figure chosen to personify the natural setting will also symbolize a factor of the national circumstance: "La mujerona se había apoderado de mí, como sería perfectamente lógico que se apoderara de Lorenzo Barquero. Era además un símbolo de lo que estaba ocurriendo en Venezuela en los campos de la historia política."[3] Thus one sees the three stages in the development of the author's symbolic process as: 1) the selection of the natural setting, the "escenario dramático"; 2) the selection of human protagonists who personify the natural forces which surround them; and 3) the fusion of setting and character to symbolize a more universal aspect of the nation as a whole.

The method of selection and the formative process are, then, always based on reality, as the author himself affirms:

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[1] Ibid., pp. 529-530.

[2] Ibid., p. 530.

[3] Ibid.

> Me apoyo en la realidad. Sin ella no podría hacer nada. Yo busco mis símbolos en la realidad. No creo a un personaje para servirme de símbolo. Procuro encontrar al personaje de la vida real que encarna el símbolo que quiero presentar.
>
> Uso la realidad como un trampolín para saltar más allá, pero siempre el primer empuje viene de la realidad.[1]

It is through living symbols of his reality, "personificaciones de la tragedia venezolana,"[2] that Gallegos exploits that most constant theme of his work: the analysis of the problemática venezolana. Those critics who find Gallegos' symbols too evident or exaggerated have been overruled by the acceptance of the Venezuelan people in much the same way that the Argentine gauchos accepted the figure of Martín Fierro, read and discussed his adventures around their campfires, and talked of him as if at any moment he might come to life before their very eyes. Thus, whether she is the Doña Pancha of real life[3] or the Doña Bárbara of fiction, her authenticity (like all of Gallegos' symbolic protagonists) has been recognized by the Venezuelan people, "...en razón del poder de contagio de sus símbolos y de la entrañable relación que éstos tienen con nuestra circunstancia histórica, social, psicológica, económica y geográfica."[4] Picón

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[1]Interview with Rómulo Gallegos, June 22, 1960.

[2]Gallegos, op. cit., p. 532.

[3]For a detailed study which identifies the local figures whom Gallegos immortalized in Doña Bárbara see John E. Englekirk, "Doña Bárbara, Legend of the Llano," Hispania, XXXI, No. 3 (August, 1948), 259-270.

[4]Juan Liscano, Rómulo Gallegos y su tiempo (Caracas: Dirección de Cultura Universitaria, 1961), p. 212.

Salas recalls that the figure of Doña Bárbara seemed to take a spiritual hold over the people:

> En Venezuela donde el libro circulaba en los más trágicos días de la Dictadura gomecista, el símbolo de "Doña Bárbara" parecía ampliarse hasta caber en él todos los malos sueños, toda la represión y la tétrica angustia que pesaba sobre el alma criolla. Por uno como proceso de transferencia espiritual, se vió en la diabólica varona, vengativa, cruel y oscura, la imagen de la tiranía.[1]

Gallegos' symbolic protagonists are, in fact, so true to the Venezuelan milieu that a recent critic prefers to refer to them as "constantes del carácter nacional."[2]

We have spoken of selection of symbol, which in itself implies purpose. It is to be remembered that Gallegos is, above all, a serious writer. A study of his symbols cannot be dismissed without going far beyond symbolic names and characters. While many authors take great pains to disguise their symbols and go to great lengths to obscure the meaning until it is virtually inaccessible of meaning beyond studied speculation, Gallegos' symbols are often stated directly. This practice is in keeping with the function of his symbolic style, which is neither the result of accident nor a stylistic search for literary refinement. Gallegos does not employ the symbol in an escape into "pure art," into an ivory tower existence; he is too closely tied to his own

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[1]Picón Salas, op. cit., p. 219.

[2]Liscano, op. cit., p. 212.

reality. The major function of his symbol would indeed horrify the French Symbolists, who maintained that "pure literature" could not instruct, could not deal with the factors of daily life without destroying its aesthetic value. With Gallegos, on the other hand, the raison d'être of his symbol lies in its instructive nature. Professor Dunham has pointed out that, in many respects, the manner of perceiving reality through symbol situates Gallegos within the oriental tradition, so strong in Spanish literature, of the apologue, fable and parable.[1] The moral inherent in these genres is inherent in the novels of Gallegos. He is by nature a teacher ("algo además de un simple literato ha habido siempre en mí"[2]), and his symbol, however simple or complicated, is a means of interpreting "la realidad circundante" according to this nature. Through the symbol he analyzes, interprets, and ultimately offers solutions, for he is endowed with an innate optimism: "Elemento simpatiquísimo, y aún, considerado del punto de vista humano y pedagógico, quizás el más importante, en nuestra novela, ese anhelo de 'nueva vida', de 'purificación', de 'entrega de sus obras'".[3]

Those ideals innate in the young essayist reached few of the people in the poorly circulated La Alborada, and Gallegos soon discovered a more effective form of communication,

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[1]Dunham, op. cit., p. 295.

[2]Gallegos, op. cit., pp. 532-533.

[3]Ulrich Leo, Estudios filológicos sobre letras venezolanas (Caracas: Editorial Elite, 1942), pp. 34-35.

that of the novel:

> El pueblo está harto de oír en la plaza al orador que habla de la república, de la gloria, de los héroes y de muchas otras cosas de ruido y tambor, y esto le hace el efecto de una retórica vieja. No le soluciona los problemas elementales de su vida. Viene en cambio el novelista, y habla al pobre negro de sus cosas, acompaña al llanero cantando claros galerones, comparte con los humildes el embrujo, la magia, la canaima de la selva, y ayuda a aclarar el imperio de doña Bárbara y las cosas del míster. Éste es un lenguaje que se entiende. El novelista es un camarada, un amigo, el hombre a quien el pueblo quisiera ver en la silla de Caracas.[1]

Gallegos never abandoned the ideals of the early years; he merely adopted a new method of presentation. Much in the manner of Ricardo Palma, who described his "recipe" for the tradición as being a "píldora plateada" which when swallowed mellowed the instruction, so Gallegos has sugar-coated the bitter pill. Through his novel he has reached the people, presented a sane and healthy perspective, has preached order, education and civilization; and at the same time he has softened the lessons he wished to teach. By means of the symbol, based on the concrete, the understandable, he has "implied" the abstract concepts so difficult to instill in his people. Through his symbol he has continued to search for a national code of values and to find the means of making it understandable and acceptable. By the very essence of the symbol as that which states and yet implies beyond the concrete, Gallegos has reached the masses with a medium that they can comprehend. The rapport between Gallegos and his readers has

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[1]Arciniegas, op. cit., p. 38.

been illustrated by the humble cabrestero (cowboy), whom the author incorporated into Doña Bárbara, using his real name, María Nieves. It was later related to Gallegos that when harrassed in any manner, the cabrestero would say with great dignity: "--Respéteme, amigo. Que yo estoy en Doña Bárbara."[1] Certainly, if one of the criteria of judging a literary work is in relation to the purpose of the author, it is in justified self-criticism that Gallegos evaluates this proud reply as his most gratifying praise. And this reply is significant not only for the author but for the public as well. The respect of Gallegos by his countrymen and the acceptance of his literary creations by them is more important to the man than the author if the people have gained a better understanding of their national and cultural reality. Thus, to the question, "¿por qué no se quedó tranquilo y sin vergüenza, en su casa, Rómulo Gallegos, haciendo coplas y contando historias?",[2] the author himself has supplied the answer:

> Porque no soy un escritor de novelas ni para solazarme en humanas miserias, ni para evadirme de la realidad; sino antes bien para captar y fijar en obra estimuladora de algún interés, los rasgos característicos de la cotidiana sobre los cuales debemos poner atención; pero tampoco un realista, de posición asumida dentro de un encasillamiento exclusivamente artístico, que se limite a copiar y a exponer lo que observó y comprobó, sino que, por obra de costumbre docente ... aspiro a que mi mundo

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[1]Gallegos, op. cit., p. 531.

[2]Arciniegas, op. cit., pp. 37-38.

> de ficción le retribuya al de la realidad sus préstamos con algo edificante.[1]

This is a reply to the critics who have labeled his medium as too evident, too antiquated in the light of 20th century literature. Gallegos does not desire to be obscure; his very purpose lies in clarification, his style in that order and equilibrium which so characterize the man as well as the author. Direct statement of symbol is no more of necessity a vice in literature than calculated obscurity. A novel which presents a living symbol, clearly comprehensible, is not necessarily inferior to the novel which must be read several times before the pieces fit together and the reader gleans a shred of understanding. The lines cannot be so clearly drawn. Then, too, direct statement is to be expected given the selective process of the author. The ever-present reality as a point of departure is too thoroughly a part of the author's artistic make-up. When asked why he attached special significance to a certain character, he answered: "¿Un caso frecuente en todas partes? Sí. Pero un caso dramático que allí tenía un sentido especial."[2] It is, then, this sensitivity of immediacy, of the vitality of a certain person, place or situation that draws him to his symbols.

What is symbol to Gallegos? In his most extensive

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[1]Gallegos, "La pura mujer sobre la tierra," Una posición en la vida, p. 416.

[2]Ibid., p. 412.

work of self-criticism, the essay "La pura mujer sobre la tierra," he states emphatically:

> En la gestación de mis obras no parto de la concepción del símbolo--como si dijéramos, en el aire--para desembocar en la imaginación del personaje que pueda realizarlo; sino que el impulso creador me viene siempre del hallazgo del personaje ya significativo, dentro de la realidad circundante.[1]

Here again is the careful intention behind the symbol, not plucked at random from the air as a device to voice the author's views. For Gallegos the symbol is not only based on reality, it must <u>be</u> real, it must exist and be found, and only then does he consciously as an artist carry it into the "más allá". In his own definition of the symbol, he shows that nothing could be more adverse to his literary concepts than the artificial symbol, existing only as a tool of the immediate artistic needs of its creator:

> Porque para que algo sea símbolo de alguna forma de existencia, tiene que existir en sí mismo, no dentro de lo puramente individual y por consiguiente accidental, sino en comunicación directa, consustanciación con el medio vital que lo produce y rodea. Símbolos que sólo se alimenten de conceptos e imaginaciones del autor, en muñecos paran desde que intentan echar a andar.[2]

The above statement is the most direct that Gallegos has made on his own concept of the literary symbol. But in it he speaks only of the symbolic protagonist and of his function. If we are to establish that the signature of Gallegos' style and the chief merit of his literary works lies in what one of his countrymen calls "el realismo poético

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[1]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 404. [2]<u>Ibid</u>., pp. 404-405.

de una armonía de símbolo y selección,"[1] the study of symbol must go beyond the creation of the symbolic protagonist (even though the maximum expression might lie there). For Gallegos is more than a translator of his national character from the living symbols he sees about him. He is a gifted interpreter and humanizer of the spectacular natural setting, an objective socio-philosopher with a firm but sympathetic finger attuned to the pulse beat of his people in a constant desire to better their condition by better understanding them. The real merit of Gallegos as an artist lies not in one outstanding role, but in his power of blending all of these qualities of the man and the novelist into an artistic whole. The faithful transcription of reality, no matter how valid nor how artistically done, can never rise to the level of great literature. Gallegos does not stop at this point nor at the point of merely extending a character which he encounters in real life. The analysis and the evaluation of his use of symbol lie in the study of his ability to elevate to a higher aesthetic level those characters, circumstances, actions and values which he takes from material reality. It is in this way that the symbol justifies the definition of

> an object which is represented so that it seems real; and second, an object which embodies special significance as the result of the way it acts upon or is acted upon by other objects, and, especially

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[1]Orlando Araujo, Lengua y creación en la obra de Rómulo Gallegos (Buenos Aires: Editorial Nova, 1955), p. 236.

the characters, in a story, a poem, or a play.[1]

The crucial ideas in this definition are reality and relationship. The symbol does not exist in isolation, nor is it of one piece. The very concept of symbol implies a double personality: convincing reality on one hand and on the other the evocation of that which cannot be directly (realistically) expressed. It is in this dual nature, "que brota del fondo de la existencia irracional y la abre a la expresión poética, salvándola casi de la prisión del silencio eterno,"[2] that "the symbol takes on more than literal significance by being what it literally is and by being related to other things."[3] Relationship is a key to the study of technique in Gallegos' use of symbol, relationship not only within the limit of one novel, but within the context of all the novels, for, "la obra de Rómulo Gallegos se presenta como un ciclo, es decir, como un conjunto de escritos comunicantes entre sí y alimentados por motivaciones permanentes, y no como una sucesión de textos independientes unos de otros."[4] Gallegos' works contain a variety of symbolic constants which recur with fairly fixed value. Their relevance may be tested both in association to the structure of an individual novel and to

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[1]Marlies K. Danziger and W. Stacy Johnson, An Introduction to Literary Criticism (Boston: D.C. Heath and Co., 1961), p. 30.

[2]Ulrich Leo, Rómulo Gallegos, estudio sobre el arte de novelar (Mexico: Ediciones Humanismo, 1954), p. 18.

[3]Danziger and Johnson, op. cit., p. 30.

[4]Liscano, op. cit., p. 208.

his literary endeavor as a whole. Some of these constants are complex, some more simple. They may be constants of character, theme, structure, image and metaphor, or purely linguistic formulae such as the symbolic chapter title which is repeated as the last line of the chapter or the use of abstract terms as part of a character's name to show a certain personality trait.

The symbol itself, often difficult to define and to distinguish from metaphor, is best characterized by its stable and repeatable character:

> ...for when an image is employed as metaphor only once, in a unique flash of insight, it cannot accurately be said to function symbolically. It acquires a symbolic nature when, with whatever modifications, it undergoes or is considered capable of undergoing recurrence.[1]

It is then, by a study of recurring symbolic constants that Gallegos' use of the literary symbol will be analyzed and evaluated.

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[1]Philip Wheelwright, Metaphor and Reality (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), p. 93.

PART I. THE FORMATIVE PERIOD

CHAPTER II

THE EARLY NOVELS

Reinaldo Solar, 1920

The genesis of Rómulo Gallegos' literary career was truly in keeping with the Hispanic tradition. His first literary pieces, essays, were published in the short-lived magazine, La Alborada, which he founded with four friends. Both the title of the magazine and its motto, "Sustituir la Noche por la Aurora," are indicative of the surge of hope for a national regeneration which followed the overthrow of Castro by Juan Vicente Gómez in 1908. The benevolent attitude of Gómez during his first year in power caused the youthful Gallegos to exclaim in the inaugural essay of La Alborada: "Ya podemos pensar alto y debemos ser sinceros."[1] These hopes were soon dashed as Gómez, more secure in his power, began to tighten censorship of the press. The life of the magazine very nearly paralleled the brief interlude of hope that proved to be merely an interim between crushing dictatorships; La Alborada ran only eight issues in the year 1909, but it allowed Gallegos a beginning, an opportunity to express

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[1]Gallegos, "Hombres y principios," Una posición en la vida, p. 14.

those ideals and values which he would continue to espouse in other literary forms. The death of La Alborada marked the initiation of the author's transition, first to the short story and finally to the novel--a form which has always afforded Hispanic writers a more subtle framework when heavy censorship has countered any sort of direct social criticism.

The circle that founded the ill-fated magazine, its principles and the atmosphere of frustration and failure that surrounded the young Venezuelan intellectuals of his day were the inspiration for Gallegos' first novel. We know from the author's own insistence that his inspiration always comes from "la realidad circundante." In this sense Reinaldo Solar is the most immediately personal of all his novels. Gallegos has stated that the protagonist, Reinaldo, was inspired by the brilliant but erratic financier (and writer) of La Alborada, Henrique Soublette;[1] and it is obvious that the multitude of fervent, theory-filled discussions were based on the conversations of the youthful group who struggled together to form a system of values and in an oppressive atmosphere. It is the author himself who best describes the idealism, growing social conscience and disillusion of the group:

> Éramos cinco[2] en una misma posición ante la vida y paseábamos nuestro cenáculo errante por todos los

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[1]Dunham, op. cit., p. 205.

[2]The Alborada group was composed of Julio Horacio Rosales, Gallegos, Soublette, and Salustio-González Rincones and Julio Planchart; the latter two were the inspiration for Antonio Menéndez and Manuel Alcor, Reinaldo's counter-figures in the novel.

caminos de buen mirar hacia paisajes hermosos...
Éramos cinco y a todos se nos ocurría imaginar, como a todos los jóvenes les acontece, que con nosotros comenzaba un mundo nuevo, originalísimamente nuestro donde ya sí valía la pena vivir.
Teníamos alimentada nuestra mocedad con la milagrosa sustancia de las buenas letras devoradas o saboreadas y estábamos adquiriendo la costumbre de enderezar las que luego fuesen nuestras hacia la dolorosa alma venezolana ... tendíamos la vista por la Venezuela que nos ofrecieran las perspectivas y aprendimos a que nos doliera el corazón por sus campos desiertos, sus tierras ociosas, su gente campesina al desabrigo de los ranchos mal parados en los topes de los cerros, allá y allá... Y ya teníamos sustancia de sensibilidad para nuestro dolor de patria.[1]

According to the author, he wrote El último Solar in 1913, the year following Henrique Soublette's death, "... por lo cual la novela venía a ser como un homenaje a su memoria."[2] First published in 1920, El último Solar was revised and given definitive form by the author under the title of Reinaldo Solar in 1930. This definitive edition, "muy superior al texto original, más conciso y mejor organizado,"[3] is the edition employed for this study rather than the first.

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[1]Gallegos, "Mensaje al otro superviviente de unas contemplaciones ya lejanas," Una posición en la vida, pp. 374-376.

[2]This information and the following appear in a translators' note in the work of Lowell Dunham, op. cit., pp. 217-218: "Esta primera novela la envió Gallegos a un certamen abierto por el Ateneo de Buenos Aires, aquel año o alguno inmediatamente posterior--no recuerda la fecha con precisión--en el cual fue galardonada con el primer premio una obra del argentino Martínez Zuviría, (Hugo Wast) y se le dio el accésit a la obra En este país, de Urbaneja Achelpol... Todos los 'cuentos' publicados en Actualidades en 1919 y que luego aparecen en 1920 en El último Solar no eran sino capítulos de la novela inédita que Gallegos iba publicando como relatos independientes y con los cuales salvaba el apremio de entregar un cuento semanal."

[3]Dunham, ibid., p. 210.

Although the revision was a literary improvement, it is important in the analysis of the work to remember that the novel was conceived a scant four years after the Alborada debacle and the year following the death of Soublette. The author was inspired, then, not by a distant reality, as the publication date would lead us to believe, but by the vivid and immediate reality which is consistently the basis of his symbolic process.

Reinaldo Solar has been criticized for many novelistic deficiencies; in fact, some have called it more essay than novel, "un simple ensayo de tanteo."[1] What is important to this study, however, is that despite the inevitable faults of a first novel, Gallegos' symbolic pattern is unquestionably established in Reinaldo Solar.

In this work there appear the major symbolic devices of character, structure and theme which will characterize the later novels. Taking the first of these as a point of departure, one finds that the critics of the novel have seen in the protagonist, Reinaldo, the central symbol-figure of the work but have not agreed in their interpretation. For instance, Ratcliff seems to see nothing more than "the recital of the decline of a once distinguished family, and vigorous social elements";[2] Torres-Rioseco has called the protagonist

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[1]Andrés Pardo Tovar, "Rómulo Gallegos, novelista de América," Revista de las Indias, Época 2ª, Nos. 66-67 (junio-julio, 1944), 171.

[2]Dillwyn Ratcliff, Venezuelan Prose Fiction (N.Y.: Instituto de las Españas en los Estados Unidos, 1933), p. 245.

"un enfermo del mal del siglo, un producto típico de L'Education Sentimentale, adornado con una apariencia byroniana."[1] Another critic has seen in Reinaldo

> un auténtico representante de las generaciones venezolanas sacrificadas en el sopor de la tiranía de Gómez ... un típico "fin de casta" ...; resulta así un producto típico de nuestras dictaduras tropicales, pero un producto frustrado y negativo que no encarna las virtudes de la raza ni la realidad vernácula, sino que simboliza toda una etapa de imitación europeizante y de absoluta desadaptación intelectual y biológica.[2]

Julio Planchart, to whom the novel is dedicated, calls it "la concentracion de la ideología de La Alborada,"[3] and Prof. Dunham goes further to state: "Es La Alborada en novela."[4]

I think that the contradictory analyses and evaluations of both the symbolism and the literary merit of the novel stem from a desire on the part of the critics to find a single explanation of the symbolism, a singleness of purpose that simply is not in keeping with the character of the novel. The basis of the novel is realistic: the Alborada group and more particularly its central figure, Soublette. But given the symbolic process of Gallegos as it has already been discussed, the implications of the central symbols of

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[1]Arturo Torres-Rioseco, Novelistas contemporáneos de América (Santiago de Chile: Empresa Ercilla, 1939), p. 93.

[2]Pardo Tovar, op. cit., pp. 171-172.

[3]Julio Planchart, Temas Críticos (Caracas: Imprenta de la Dirección de Cultura, 1949), p. 439.

[4]Dunham, op. cit., p. 205.

the novel go beyond this immediate reality. The Alborada group will reflect its physical and spiritual environment, but it will go further to symbolize or crystalize the national circumstance and not one but several constants of national character which were preoccupying the youthful Gallegos. Prof. Ratcliff laments that the novel is "... crowded with episodes, scenes and characters,"[1] and other critics dismiss the many dialogues on national art, politics, and sociology as damaging to the merit of the work. But it is precisely in this multiple aspect of the novel and through these dialogues that the author establishes symbolic atmosphere and explores the psychology of his symbolic characters. The key to the interpretation of Reinaldo Solar lies in the fact that the novel is a composite, although at times in embryonic form, of the moral, psychological, political, philosophical and sociological themes which, treated with more detailed singleness of purpose, have formed the substance of Gallegos' mature novels. Reinaldo Solar continues the search begun in the essays, a search carried on basically through the use of literary symbol in the novels, for a code of values and the solutions to the problems confronting the national destiny. This is doubtless what Prof. Dunham means when he calls the novel "La Alborada en novela"; and he goes on to correctly state:

> Reinaldo Solar no es la mera tragedia personal de Reinaldo, de Alcor y de Menéndez, todos hombres de

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[1]Ratcliff, op. cit., p. 242.

> talento; es, en un amplio sentido, la tragedia personal de la generación de Gallegos; es el tema del fracasado desarrollado dentro de la proporciones de una novela.[1]

One might go on to add that it is the theme of the fracasado and all of its causes and implications: the incapacity, both individual and national, to find a constructive direction of action, to channel efforts toward civil rather than military ends; inconsistency and incapacity to complete a project; the desire to flee from the national circumstance rather than stay and try to find solutions; the decline of the landed aristocracy and the rise of a new mestizo class which is gradually replacing it; the theme of the "alma dormida" of the Venezuelan people and the need to awaken it. All of these themes are present in Gallegos' first novel; they are explored through the central characters, but basically through the dialogues which present the inner workings of their tortured minds more than through narrative action. It is in this way that the author transmits "... una sensación de opresión, de angustia, de inmovilidad exasperante, de vaguedad, de acciones inconclusas y frases dichas a media. Por momentos se vive en un ámbito de pesadilla."[2] Reinaldo Solar portrays the anguish of a generation, of the race, in multiple form, captured in such vividness that Prof. Dunham considers it: "More accurate than history, more vivid and compelling than sociology or political science, Reinaldo

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[1]Dunham, op. cit., p. 204.

[2]Liscano, op. cit., p. 62.

Solar could well be called the most Venezuelan novel of its time."[1]

And Reinaldo could well be called the most typical Venezuelan of his time. As the central symbol he is the complex embodiment of the faults and greatness of his national character. Our first introduction to Reinaldo is, symbolically, at break of dawn. The valley of Caracas is still in semidarkness stirred only by the sounds of an early cart getting underway, the crowing of cocks and the voices of parrots mingled with the isolated voices of campesinos. The dawn is lighting up mount Ávila, which dominates Caracas and so many scenes in the novel.[2] Much is promised in the opening paragraphs: this is to be a new beginning for our protagonist, who is "el último Solar," the last light or energy of his aristocratic family; this is a memorable day "que marcaría en su vida tránsito y renovación."[3] Reinaldo is

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[1]Dunham, "The Strange Case of Lisandro Alvarado," Hispania, XL, No. 4 (December, 1957), 426.

[2]Gallegos explains that Mt. Ávila was a beloved and idealistic haunt of the Alborada group: "El Ávila nos prestó los empinados sitios de sus cumbres para los elevados sueños de ímpetus alardosos... Fue él [Henrique Soublette]--hagámosle justicia--quien descubrió que el Ávila de nuestras contemplaciones desde los arrabales caraqueños tenía cumbres y picachos a los cuales era conveniente treparse con frecuencia para respirar alturas..." "Mensaje a otro superviviente," Una posición en la vida, pp. 375, 376.

[3]Rómulo Gallegos, Obras Completas, Vol. I: Reinaldo Solar (Lima: Editora Latinoamericana, 1960), p. 7. All subsequent references to the novels are to this 10 volume edition published under the auspices of the 3erFestival del Libro Venezolano. For clarity the title of the individual novels will be used rather than volume numbers.

described as "ávido de empezar con el día la nueva vida que se había propuesto."[1] He has returned to the bosom of Nature, "al goce de los deleites sencillos, a la vida simple, pero sana e intensa de los sentidos."[2] The setting is the family solar just outside Caracas, "Los Mijaos," or all that remains of it, for it is sadly in neglect. Thus in a few paragraphs, the author has joined the central symbol in the protagonist, Reinaldo, the last Solar, the last of his noble line, with the last possession of the family. By trying to reestablish the ruined land he will also try to reestablish his own life and give it new meaning. But immediately the faults of both owner and land are simultaneously brought to light: Reinaldo, jubilant at the luxuriant natural setting around him is confronted by a disconcerting incongruence, a miserable, mangy dog, also, unbelievably for Reinaldo, a product of "la tierra, madre generosa de abundancia y de salud."[3] "Los Mijaos" also has not been treated well by Nature nor by its owners, who have too long neglected it in the hands of a mayordomo. This theme of the treason against the land, and its eventual loss to a new mestizo class whose greater love and respect for land is finally rewarded, is a major theme in the Gallegan cycle.

In a few scant paragraphs, Reinaldo's character, purpose and project have been introduced masterfully. The symbol of this young man, returned to the family solar, to re-

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid., p. 8. [3]Ibid.

sow it, to begin anew, to return to what was the source of the greatness of his family, is reinforced by a mystic incident which is carefully underlined by the author. Through flashback technique Gallegos prepares the foundation upon which the incident can be analyzed: Reinaldo is essentially a mystic, an inclination evident from early childhood. These early leanings were exploited by Ana Josefa, Reinaldo's devoutly Catholic mother, who saw to it that her son was amply tutored in prayer and readings by a friend, Elena, around whom a legend of devotion and selflessness was woven. But the precocious Reinaldo soon began to look upon his religious tutor in a different light, "los ojos encendidos de deseos."[1] The boy's inner turmoil tortured him with the sin of his desire for the older woman and finally turned to fantasy: "él era un santo; Elena también, y, sin mengua de la santidad, se amaban, con un amor místico que placía al Señor."[2] This mystic sensitivity grew to fever pitch, as Reinaldo, inspired by Kempian asceticism devoted himself to rigorous fasts and long hours of prayer, at the same time basking in his mother's belief that he would be a saint, if he was not already one. But Reinaldo's erratic temperament, and this is perhaps the most dominant of his characteristics both as a youth and throughout his life, forestalls consistency and dedication of purpose. What he begins, what he is desperately involved in, he can drop at the most insignificant provocation:

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[1]*Ibid.*, p. 14. [2]*Ibid.*, p. 15.

> Pero sucedió que un día, al sentarse frente a él, Elena dejó ver una bota sujeta con un solo botón, el único que le quedaba, y a través de la abertura, la media rota. Fue un remedio heroico para el mal de amor; pero junto con éste lo abandonó, de pronto, el sentimiento místico.[1]

What Reinaldo abandoned was mysticism of the traditional or Catholic variety, but he remained a mystic, as is substantiated by the central incident of the first chapter: in the presence of his laborers, under the emotion of the return to his own land, Reinaldo candidly insists on milking a cow, a labor too rustic for the young aristocrat according to the incredulous campesinos. Then, in a further gesture, Reinaldo raises a gourd of milk to toast the health of the unborn son of a peasant woman, whose father doffs his hat and says: "Que Dios se lo pague."

> Esto era más de lo que necesitaba Reinaldo para abandonarse a la emoción que le estaba bullendo en el pecho. Él también había tomado en serio su jovial ofertorio, a causa de que, cuando levantaba la jícara rebosante de leche, había visto aparecer el sol y su frente había recogido el primer rayo de luz. El natural acontecimiento y el ingenuo ademán del campesino cobraron para él las proporciones de una señal mística: bajo la rústica techumbre del establo, en el bucólico ambiente oloroso a boñiga y a cogollos recién cortados, rodeado de caras humildes que sonreían con una pura sonrisa de asombro, él acababa de celebrar un rito solemne, que tenía el sabor arcaico de las olvidadas religiones de la Naturaleza.[2]

This scene is charged with symbolic meaning, for it presents Reinaldo's character in miniature, his erratic nature, his fervor captured by a simple gesture and reinforced by the ray of light striking his forehead at the propitious

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid., p. 11.

moment: two simple and rationally explainable events, the common, courteous phrase of the campesino in reply to a gracious gesture--"Que Dios se lo pague"--and the first ray of light descending now beyond the barrier of Mt. Ávila and striking Reinaldo's forehead. But these two events, expanded out of proportion by the precocious imagination of Reinaldo and the jubilance of the moment form a "mystic sign" for the youth. He has been singled out, purified, chosen. Reinaldo, throughout the remainder of his life, will act as if he were a chosen man, if not by God in the traditional sense, by his own god, by his intellect and talents, by the purity of his ideals and the grandioseness of his projects. This Venezuelan stable is the scene of his rebirth "en el seno de la Naturaleza redentora," the manger from which he will initiate "la obra de la reconstrucción de su ser moral, como una planta que, deformada por el cultivo, volviese a la selva originaria a recuperar el vigor de su antigua condición salvaje."[1] His worshippers, his reyes magos, are the "caras humildes que sonreían con una pura sonrisa de asombro"; his sacrament is significantly the pure fresh milk drawn by his own hand and toasted in a gourd in a manner which arouses the sense of a Bacchanalian act of "las olvidadas religiones de la Naturaleza." This curious mixture of Christian and pagan emotions is significant of Reinaldo's heterogeneous nature; it is further significant of the protagonist's tragic course, for

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[1]Ibid., p. 12.

Reinaldo will find that the pure white milk cannot be drunk from the Bacchanalian gourd. He is not prepared for the cruel inconsistencies of his ambiente, and he will find that the "bucolic odors of boñiga" will supplant the fresh aroma of the "cogollos recién cortados."

The stable scene both crystalizes the symbolic character of Reinaldo and launches the symbolic structure of the novel, whose unity is built around the Messianic pilgrimage of the protagonist through a world of chaos, of which he is partly responsible and partly victim, to inevitable darkness and death. Reinaldo's basic mission on this pilgrimage is to find himself, to orient his meaning in life through some project into which he can channel his abundant energies and talents toward a fruitful end; but it is a negative journey in an oppressive atmosphere that will gradually asphyxiate him:

> Luego yo: en mí renacen o quieren renacer los antiguos bríos de la familia; pero son fuerzas que no encuentran su trayectoria... Esto hay que tomarlo en serio, porque es una verdadera tragedia. Estos entusiasmos míos, seguidos inevitablemente de abandonos totales; estas alternativas de consagración y renuncia son los últimos esfuerzos de un organismo que se siente morir y queriendo producir movimientos sólo produce convulsiones.[1]

Reinaldo is truly the victim of his Messiah complex. It pushes him to attempt superhuman projects which can only end in failure: "... se siente un flamante Jesús poeta que habla bellamente de cosas de las cuales empieza a dudar."[2]

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[1]Ibid., p. 19. [2]Ibid., p. 17.

Inspired by the books which his schoolmate Menéndez introduces to him and which he devours as fervently as he did the Imitatio Cristi of earlier years, Reinaldo exclaims: "--Te prometo que entregaré todo mi corazón a una obra sobrehumana. Yo me siento capaz de llevarla a cabo. ¡Yo también llevo un dios en mi interior!"[1] Despite his belief in his own sanctity of spirit and purpose, Reinaldo is the victim of "ese venezolanísimo sentimiento mesiánico," which Gallegos examines and condemns in his essay "El mundo es del justo";[2] for Reinaldo is, curiously enough, looking for his own Messiah: "De allí en adelante se entregó a buscar aquella obra sobrehumana, devorando los libros que el amigo le recomendaba, con la esperanza de encontrar en ellos la palabra mágica que le mostrase su camino."[3]

In keeping with his character, each new book impels the protagonist in a new direction. It is necessary to note here that the device of allusion to literary works is not used by Gallegos as mere erudition as some critics have complained; it is a thematic reinforcement of the unstable and highly impressionable character of Reinaldo, as when, for example, he announces to his family after the reading of Tolstoy's Resurrection that he intends to parcel out sections of his land to the peasants and, further, to search the

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Una posición en la vida, pp. 159-161.

[3]Reinaldo Solar, p. 17. Italics mine.

houses of prostitution for a creole Maslowa to redeem. Literary allusion of a different nature is employed in the constant references to the novel which Reinaldo is writing. Symbolically entitled Punta de raza, it is Reinaldo's own story, for he, like his protagonist, belongs to a family and a class that is becoming extinct. His identification with his protagonist emphasizes his own crepuscular character as the last of the Solares, his emotional fluctuation and his unstable contact with reality:

> Pero sería imposible precisar si se usurpaba los sentimientos de su personaje o, por lo contrario, construía éste con los propios, porque Reinaldo Solar vivía la vida de sus ficciones y éstas la tomaban de la suya, en un flujo y reflujo continuo de emociones...[1]

Reinaldo's continual flux of emotions and energies leads him to one futile project after another. As the novel opened he was dedicated to the rebuilding of his estate, begun with the dismissal of the mayordomo, Juan Sevillano, who has gradually been taking the best land for himself. He is replaced by an Argentine agronomist whose duty will be to convert the sugar cane into wheat fields, despite the warning of Reinaldo's uncle that the change will end in bankruptcy. This scheme is carelessly abandoned when Reinaldo decides to devote himself to a more transcendental project which will surpass "la medida de las posibilidades humanas": the founding of a new monistic religion. But he is soon brought back to earth by his attraction for the beautiful América Peña, an

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[1] Ibid., p. 13.

Indian, in whom he will sow the seeds of a biologically vigorous race. Through all his schemes, Reinaldo espouses the cause of multiple action: "Sólo el imbécil gasta la vida en llevar a cabo un solo propósito. La verdadera constancia está en no perseguir dos días el mismo ideal. La actividad es una, pero la acción ha de ser múltiple."[1]

The narrative account of Reinaldo's multiple actions in the form of abandoned projects is but one means of developing his character. The device of the counter-figure is employed much more vividly and is a favorite of Gallegos. In this novel the author employs the counter-figure in two capacities: first, as a counter-balance for Reinaldo's character (in this way the figure becomes a lesson in reverse), and second, to reflect Reinaldo's influence on the secondary characters. Structurally Reinaldo is the "solar force" of the novel, and all the other characters orbit around him at one distance or another depending on their intimacy with him, their strength of character, etc. Nearest in this orbital scheme are the members of his family. The mother, Ana Josefa, pious and doting on the son, seems to want little more of her daughter than a promise not to leave the family home while the mother is alive. Carmen Rosa, the sister, is better drawn. She is the personification of the Latin American woman, poorly educated and ill-equipped to deal with the realities of life. She is a delicate, romantic

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[1]*Ibid.*, p. 53.

soul torn between three kinds of love: the complete devotion to her brother (although she, better than the mother, senses that Reinaldo is driving the family to destruction), her mundane love for her cousin, Pablo, and a mystic love that, agitated by the ignorant priest, drives her toward the convent. Carmen Rosa's trajectory in the novel is a constant struggle against growing away from her brother, whom she adores and who is violently opposed to her mystic leanings. Her frustrated love for her cousin is symbolized by the sensuous orchids which he helped her plant and which throw her into a fit of despondency when they bloom each year. Carmen Rosa's spiritual retreat is the corral or tiny patio where the orchids bloom and where she vacillates between "una violenta ansia de gozar la vida," and "la idea insidiosa" imposed by the priest that she should enter the convent. Carmen Rosa's spiritual torment and frustration, her mixed desires and the restrictions imposed upon her by mandatory loyalty to her mother and brother are presented in a dream which represents in symbolic condensation Carmen Rosa's predicament and the tremendous force her brother exercises in her life:

> Era un convento de la orden de Flor de Mayo. Las monjitas vestían hábitos muy raros: blancos, lilas, morados, amarillos, y todas tenían nombres de orquídeas. Todas las mañanas aparecía una nueva monjita, y la comunidad iba aumentando, cubriendo todo el jardín, llenando todos los rincones. Cierto día apareció una nueva hermana de hábitos blancos que imitaban la forma de una paloma: era la hermana Espiritusanto. Aquello anunciaba desgracia, y la campana del convento empezó a doblar. ¿Por qué se había empeñado Reinaldo

> en que tuviera aquella mata de mal agüero, que florece raramente y sólo para anunciar desgracia? ¡Reinaldo tenía unos caprichos! No la había dejado meterse al convento. ¡Reinaldo era el sol! Era el sol; su madre lo aseguraba...[1]

Reinaldo's dominant personality exercises great power outside the family circle. Early in the novel he is reunited with Felipe Ortigales, a twisted shadow of a man, broken in health and spirit, almost unrecognizable from the school days when Reinaldo first knew him. Ortigales is perhaps the most vivid example of Reinaldo's influence on others; his pathetic spirit and body undergo an incredible change for the better. He becomes the sounding block for Reinaldo's schemes and seems to come alive with his fervent ideas. It is Ortigales who brings Reinaldo's attention to América Peña, and the poor fellow is repaid for his childlike confidence in Reinaldo when the latter decides to take advantage of the girl's preference for him. What at first had seemed the salvation of Ortigales, the infectuous vigor of his friend, now becomes his downfall. But Reinaldo's magnetism is not easily broken, and Ortigales, despite a growing hatred for Reinaldo which is destroying him spiritually, "no podía negarse a nada que le propusiera Reinaldo."[2] Reinaldo's strength and intelligence overcome Ortigales, who fatalistically succumbs to a superior force. Every moment in contact with him leads Ortigales nearer to complete neurosis, until, finally, he is tormented in his sleep (as was Carmen

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[1]*Ibid.*, p. 146. [2]*Ibid.*, p. 52.

Rosa) by the thunderous voice of Reinaldo shouting: "La vida es del fuerte! ¡El mundo es mio!"[1] Even when Reinaldo, so insensitive that he is unaware of Ortigales' love for América, takes him to see the cabin that he is building her as a temple of their "cult of free love," Ortigales is powerless. On the verge of suicide, he is compelled to listen, "embobado," and to Reinaldo's ecstatic vision of what he will experience with América, Ortigales can only answer: "He sentido vértigo oyéndote."[2] When Ortigales confesses that he is deeply in love with América, Reinaldo suffers a similar metamorphosis as with the sudden disgust of his religious tutor: he feels physically ill that Ortigales should love the woman with whom he has chosen to create a new race, for his dream is sullied and he decides to break with her. He sadistically suggests that Ortigales accept the girl, that he can prove himself above petty morality by marrying her although Reinaldo has robbed her of her virginity; and then, he is horrified by his own sadism "cuando advirtió que la idea diabólica parecía haber infundido a Ortigales una consoladora esperanza."[3] Ortigales is the personification of the "alma sepultada, totalmente abolida." He is beyond pride as Reinaldo tosses him the second hand love of América. The following scene, taken at this point of the relationship of the two, shows vividly the extent of Reinaldo's hypnotic power over one irresistibly drawn to him:

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid., p. 57. [3]Ibid., p. 58.

> Contagiado de la vehemencia de Reinaldo Solar, Ortigales sentía correr por su espinazo los escalofríos de lo sublime. Pero no se abandonaba por completo a esta emoción; un pensamiento se lo impedía: ¿sequiría Reinaldo pensando llevarse a América Peña? Por fin, se decidió a averiguarlo:
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> --¿Y America? ¿Desistes de ella?
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> --¡Bah! He desistido hace tiempo. El amor enerva, y yo necesito todas las fuerzas de mi espíritu. Mi obra las reclama.
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> Poco faltó para que Ortigales se le echara al cuello. Profundamente emocionado, se quedó viéndolo, sin poder hablar. Al cabo de un rato, murmuró:
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> --¡Eres el Superhombre![1]

And with this Ortigales is abandoned by Reinaldo to suffer the unanswerable anxiety of whether the son born to him and América is his own or Reinaldo's.

Reinaldo's effect is even more lethal on the young painter of gentle spirit, Rivero, who "desde un principio fue completamente adicto a Reinaldo."[2] Like Ortigales, Rivero met Reinaldo in a period of complete disillusion in his life. The young artist, weak and sensitive, places all his trust in Reinaldo, who inspires him to paint again. Reinaldo's precocious imagination is transported by the scene of four blind and lame beggars tilling a small plot of land: this could well be the symbol of national art, blindly scratching the surface, not descending to the true subsoil of the spirit of the race. Rivero is inspired to renew his artistic efforts by painting what his friend has suggested,

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[1] Ibid., p. 62. [2] Ibid., p. 82.

significantly as much for Reinaldo as for himself:

> --¿Ves lo que te he dicho? Eso es Reinaldo Solar. Quizá no llegue jamás a realizar una obra completamente suya; pero haber producido ese entusiasmo, haber devuelto la confianza en sí mismo a quien la había perdido, es también hacer obra.[1]

The inspiration to create a piece of truly genuine national art which so enthralled Rivero is destroyed by Reinaldo's denial of national loyalty. Feeling "la angustia del nuevo desarraigamiento," he decides to abandon the country, to travel to Europe, to find a new atmosphere in which to create, to undertake "la conquista del Viejo Mundo, emprendida por el arte americano y para el arte americano."[2] At the end of Part I, Reinaldo departs for Europe, eager for the new conquest but with mixed emotions. This is another in his chain of abortive projects: the ultimate escape, the rejection of country, race and culture. This negative patriotism, which is the theme of Héctor Murena's El pecado original de América, may be considered a variation of the Messiah complex--where before Reinaldo looked to literature for "la palabra mágica," now he begins "la eterna expedición al Dorado":

> El Dorado fue la ficción inventada por el indio para internar y perder al español, y la gota de sangre del indio que tenemos en las venas es lo que nos hace pensar hoy en la fuga a Europa, que es otro Dorado...
>
> --Es amor a la aventura, al gran esfuerzo de un momento, por incapacidad para el pequeño de todos los días. Reinaldo Solar caracteriza perfectamente este caso nacional.[3]

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[1]Ibid., p. 87. [2]Ibid., p. 101. [3]Ibid., p. 108.

Among the secondary characters, Menéndez is the most outstanding counter-figure to Reinaldo. It is through Menéndez that Gallegos voices a lesson in opposition to Reinaldo's fracasos and inconsistencies. Menéndez, the epitome of "la paciencia de quien se ha impuesto una tarea y ha de llevarla a cabo," constantly rebukes Reinaldo's flighty attitudes and extravagances. In Menéndez, "el espíritu mesurado y lúcido, la ecuanimidad, la transparencia del carácter, sin complicaciones, vaguedades ni contradicciones,"[1] Reinaldo recognizes his counterpart, and the personality of his friend gradually becomes intolerable to him. It is Menéndez who sees through the wasted talents of Reinaldo and best analyzes him: "Éste no tiene remedio. Es lástima; de él podría decirse como ya se dijo de Byron: a su nacimiento asistieron las hadas de todos los dones, pero faltó la del juicio."[2]

Manuel Alcor, like Menéndez, was "un joven de propósitos firmes y tenaces."[3] A product of "aquel ambiente letal" of the provinces, he accomplished his dream of escape to the capital only to find his literary career stifled by the vengeance of his financial backer when he refused to dedicate his first work to him. These two friends, so distinct from Reinaldo, are drawn in orbit around him, caught by the contagion of "aquella animosa alma siempre en tensión de ideales, por la sugestión de aquel alucinado que iba por el mundo con

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[1]Ibid., p. 69. [2]Ibid., p. 70. [3]Ibid., p. 71.

la lámpara del encendido corazón, buscando su camino."[1] The interaction of the three, especially in their heated discussions, forms the basis for definition of character and thematic development.

Part II begins with Reinaldo's return from Europe--his self-imposed exile has lasted only two months, though its effect will be far reaching on himself, his family and friends. The circular pattern of the novel becomes increasingly defined in Part II. The symbol of Reinaldo is built around light and solar imagery,[2] and similarly the pattern of the novel parallels the solar course: Part I opens with the rising sun (paralleled by Reinaldo's growth of activities and steadily growing magnetic force over family and friends); Reinaldo reaches his zenith as he departs for Europe, renouncing all his past failures and completely sure of success; Part II, beginning with his return (since he has not found success in Europe, he has returned to the scene of his original failures and the inevitable ones to come) will complete the circle of Reinaldo's gradual decline, as he becomes a crepuscular figure traveling toward the darkness of the setting sun that was so hopefully dispersed as the novel opened. His trajectory is one of decline and he carries all those who

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[1]Ibid., p. 85.

[2]For a detailed study of the use of light in Reinaldo Solar, La trepadora, Doña Bárbara and Cantaclaro, see José Vila Selma, Procedimientos y técnicas en Rómulo Gallegos (Sevilla: Publicaciones de la Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos de Sevilla, 1954), pp. 9-39.

orbit around him into the same darkness of fracaso. Their ultimate failure is only a matter of degree.

When Reinaldo returns from Europe, he is more fired with zeal than ever, "convencido a buena hora de que no vamos a componer este país con versos y novelas."[1] He will no longer be content with trivial projects, for he is driven by "una fuerza ciega y loca... No sé a dónde me llevará; pero tampoco quiero resistir a su influjo."[2] Now he is hopelessly neurotic, tortured by the constant reminder of Menéndez's warning, "Hombre de acción es todo aquel que trabaja en su obra y la lleva a cabo,"[3] and by the deadly symbolism of a recurrent dream which foreshadows his own end:

> Tengo un miedo atroz a sobrevivirme; siento que me sobreviviré, que me quedaré sin una ilusión, sin un ideal, como el árbol de mi sueño se queda sin hojas. Pero así como éste hace esfuerzos desesperados para alimentar la única hoja que le queda, así yo me aferro a este ideal, a este propósito de ahora, que tal vez sea el último.[4]

This last project is the one Reinaldo clings to most tenaciously and the one failure which he cannot endure. Caught by the desire to fulfill his duty to his country, he evolves the idea of a Civic Association, whose motto is "Hacer Patria." The utopic cause is first espoused by a group of students who, inflamed by Reinaldo's oratory and his fervor, look to him as a national saviour: "Nosotros le esperábamos a usted. Es decir: esperábamos al hombre de la buena nueva. Yo he visto en usted a ese Mesías."[5] Reinaldo's illusions

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[1]Reinaldo Solar, p. 114. [2]Ibid., p. 116.
[3]Ibid. [4]Ibid. [5]Ibid., p. 128.

soon vanish before the power of selfish interests which gain control of his Association. He who promised salvation for others can find none for himself. His family fortunes are lost and he is forced to sell the estate; the inevitable family rift is aggravated by his entanglement with the lovely Rosaura, which ends with her broken marriage and complete disgrace. With the financial ruin of the family, Carmen Rosa's entrance in a convent is assured. Reinaldo's flight to Europe had fallen upon Rivero "como una definitiva losa de desengaños,"[1] and the news of his death brings Reinaldo to the realization and responsibility of his effect on others:

> Y todo esto--se decía a sí mismo Reinaldo--es la obra de esos cambios de dirección, de una de esas contradicciones de mi voluntad. Nuestra vida no nos pertenece a nosotros solos, es también una propiedad de los demás. Yo he cometido un verdadero despojo con ese pobre Riverito, que se apoyó en mí para andar su camino.[2]

The prophecy of his dream is being fulfilled: Reinaldo, the last waning leaf of his dream (and family) tree, is spiritually dead. As he attends the formal act of installation of the Association, he listens from a distant corner of the room and realizes that he no longer has part, place, or power in his own creation. He is struck by a miniature of the Winged Victory of Samothrace, which, blind and with wings outstretched to fly, is the symbol of the act being completed before him:

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[1]*Ibid.*, p. 164. [2]*Ibid.*, p. 165.

> ... parodia de un gran esfuerzo que tendía las alas sin ver hacia dónde, era aquella sesión en el cual unos hombres descreídos y abúlicos y otros hombres de negada moralidad iban a declarar fundada una institución utópica que no pasaría de las páginas del acta de instalación, como no abandonaban la repisa del rincón las alas de la estatuilla.[1]

The symbol of the statue is juxtaposed with another, introduced directly by: "Era también un símbolo." This abrupt collocation of elements is charged with dramatic impact for both reader and protagonist. The symbol is now Rivero's painting, inspired by Reinaldo but unfinished. The symbols of statue and painting synthesize the final evaluation of Reinaldo's Messianic pilgrimage which has been no more than the blind leading the blind; both his own projects and those inspired in others have ended in failure. As Reinaldo's eyes search the canvas, what he sees is a montage of the recurrent symbolic elements of the novel. The painting depicts the tragic figures of ragged beggars, trying to seed the stony ground, their project as hopeless as Reinaldo's had been. His utopic ideals had been plucked away by selfish interests just as the seeds of the beggars would be by the vultures perched on nearby trees. The scene is depicted at sunset: "el rayo sesgado de un sol de oros muertos tumbaba la sombra de los surcos." In the crepuscular light a single, leafless tree dominates the foreground. The canvas is a mass of inconsistencies (as is Reinaldo's character):

> trozos donde vibraba el color felizmente hallado; grandes porciones incomprensibles en las cuales el

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[1] Ibid., p. 177.

> desdibujo y la falsedad del colorido revelaban incapacidad y cansancio; espacios de tela, ni manchados siquiera, denunciando el súbito abandono.[1]

In the final evaluation, the painting, as well as the sum total of Reinaldo's futile projects, was "un asunto extravagante, que sólo el genio hubiera podido salvar del ridículo; una tentativa que se quedó en boceto... ¡Todo un símbolo que paró en caricatura!"[2]

It is at this point that Reinaldo comes to the final realization of himself, of his wasted years and energies, of his ultimate defeat:

> Reinaldo corrió piadosamente el lienzo que cubría aquel cuadro ... allí había muerto algo suyo, un entusiasmo de juventud, uno de aquellos entusiasmos que no sacudían su espíritu con la vehemencia de antes, que ya lo abandonaban para siempre, dejándole en el corazón el temprano estrago de las fuerzas despilfarradas.[3]

Reinaldo's faith in himself is broken, nor can it be reinforced by the love of Rosaura. Their parting, the failure of this woman's love to hold his interest, is the "final vanishing dream." Now Reinaldo's life and the atmosphere of the novel are dominated by twilight scenes. As the two stroll at La Guaira the evening before Rosaura will leave for Europe, once again Reinaldo is struck with a mystic sense of the scene before him:

> Tras del cabo, el resplandor de la puesta de sol... El agua infinita y resonante se movía bajo el ala del viento, y todo el mar parecía correr hacia el poniente... Reinaldo tendió las miradas sobre la ancha faz del mar. ¡Ni una vela en el horizonte!

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., p. 178.

> ¡Ni un rumbo marcado en aquella desolación de infinitos! ¡Ni una actividad que no fuese el atormentado vaivén de las fuerzas que se han quedado encadenadas dentro del colmo de las medidas! ¡Tan sólo aquellas dos barcas cuyos mástiles trazaban sobre el crepúsculo los signos vacilantes de los destinos detenidos!
>
> Interpretando el místico sentido de las cosas, vió en ello un símbolo de su vida.[1]

How different his mystic interpretation now from the day he began his journey with the happy omen of the first ray of the rising sun on his brow. Later, as Rosaura's boat pulls into the distance, Reinaldo stands at the end of the dock, for the first time "al término de un camino." The scene is dominated by the horizon of the sea, shapeless, pathless: "... rojo y enorme, el sol bajaba a hundirse tras el horizonte... Reinaldo Solar recogía aquellas impresiones y pensaba que también en él todo declinaba o ya estaba sepultado."[2] His supreme reign over all those who loved and trusted him is at an end:

> Almas donde él había reinado y obra suya que se le apartaban y se le enajenaban para siempre, porque no supo hacer el gesto necesario, la afirmación imperiosa que impidiese que ésta le fuera arrebatada y prostituída por los prevaricadores, ni quiso pronunciar la palabra mágica que aquéllos esperaban de sus labios...[3]

As Reinaldo leaves the dock and passes in front of a barracks, the flag is being lowered and he stops to contemplate the spectacle. There, as in his own life, "también declinana algo hermoso, color y orgullo que debía ser recogido antes de que extinguiera el día, pues se aproximaba la

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[1] Ibid., p. 199. [2] Ibid., p. 201. [3] Ibid., p. 200.

noche y era cosa sagrada que no podía ser envuelta en sombras..."[1] He is determined not to outlive his ideals, for, "la vida es también una bandera, que no puede ondear sino en la luz gloriosa del ideal..."[2] At this point he commits the final treason against the principles of the Association; he will join the revolution and by doing so will commit suicide: "muerte de bala o de barbarie, de la guerra no regresaría el Reinaldo Solar que iba a lanzarse a ella."[3] The mixed imagery of the setting sun and the lowering of the flag parallels Reinaldo's decline in strength of will and spirit. Like the flag which waved so brightly, Reinaldo has been brought down, extinguished:

> La bandera acabó de descender, cayó, se apagó como una llama del cielo al tocar la tierra, y dejando de ser el símbolo de la Patria, se convirtió en un trapo entre las manos de un soldado. Enmudecieron los clarines y a la diana marcial sucedió una charanga burlesca de pitos y tambores...
>
> Y el símbolo se cumplió.[4]

Months later, this final symbol is fulfilled. The revolutionary movement has broken up because of the anarchy of its leaders. Reinaldo, now Captain Solar, is in charge of a group of twenty ragged men making their way to the sea and escape in fishing boats. Reinaldo is broken in body and spirit, "vuelta un guiñapo el alma que había sido una bandera de orgullo suelta a los vientos de los grandes ideales como aquella otra tarde la de la Patria en manos del soldado."[5]

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[1] Ibid., p. 203. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid. Italics mine. [5] Ibid., p. 204.

The final chapter complements the first and completes the symbolic pattern. It is almost as if Reinaldo's fleeting life had covered the course of one day. How different now the description of the setting as Menéndez and Alcor stroll in the outskirts of the capital, "donde mueren las estribaciones del Ávila." The rebirth of day is distant; the scene is at dusk. In contrast to the luxuriant, bucolic landscape of the opening chapter filled with smiling peasants, this scene is dry, dead, flowerless, and unpeopled except by the two friends. Their communion with nature is very distinct from Reinaldo's mystic jubilance as the novel opened:

> --Otra vez estamos como entonces: el paisaje vuelve a ser nuestro refugio. Pero ya el paisaje no es para nosotros lo que era antes: sueño y entusiasmo; ahora es reposo, abandono.[1]

Reinaldo is now only a sad memory; all those who gravitated around him have suffered their own defeats, although not so spectacularly: "Sobre todos ellos había caído 'la losa de los sueños...'"[2] And the novel, which opened with a life that promised such stellar brilliance, now closes its dramatic cycle in absolute darkness:

> La noche invadió la barranca solitaria.[3]

La trepadora, 1925

Among the multitude of social, political and artistic preoccupations that were developed through the dialogues of the restless, youthful group in Reinaldo Solar, one of

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[1]Ibid., p. 206. [2]Ibid., p. 207. [3]Ibid.

the most consistent questions was that of the need to develop a truly national art and literature. Two years after the publication of this first novel, Gallegos was still urging his compatriots to join together in this common cause. From the pages of the weekly La Novela Semanal, of which he was the literary editor, he opened the doors to aspiring young Venezuelan writers: "A todos los invitamos a colaborar en esta tarea que emprendemos con el ánimo de contribuir a la divulgación de una literatura verdaderamente nuestra."[1] But Gallegos was not content merely to animate others to forge a national literature:

> Para el año 1925 estaba Gallegos ya entregado al segundo aspecto de su rol como forjador de una literatura venezolana no como animador de otros escritores sino como creador de una novela genuinamente venezolana. La trepadora está tan metido en su esfuerzo que propone cambiar la misma trayectoria de la novela venezolana con la publicación de su obra nueva...
>
> La trepadora resultó la primera novela, la verdadera novela, ciento por ciento venezolana.[2]

The lapse of five years between Reinaldo Solar and La trepadora is indicative of a "gran distancia espiritual"[3] in the evolution of Gallegos' thought. Where the first novel had formed part of the series of bitterly pessimistic works that had characterized Venezuelan letters up to its time, a sharp change of attitude, a bright optimism, is

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[1]La Novela Semanal, Vol. I, No. 1 (septiembre 9, 1922), 1.

[2]Lowell Dunham, "Rómulo Gallegos: creador de la literatura nacional venezolana" (unpublished article written in January, 1964).

[3]Pardo Tovar, op. cit., p. 174.

evident in the second novel. Gallegos calls attention to this change in trajectory in the prologue to the first edition:

> Este asunto ha sido para mí, objeto de un cariño especial: es mi primer libro optimista y estoy satisfecho de haberle dado este carácter: La trepadora es ansia de mejoramiento y, por lo tanto, implica confianza en el porvenir.
>
> Hasta ahora nuestra literatura ha sido amarga y desesperanzada, pero creo que ya es tiempo de amar y confiar un poco.[1]

With La trepadora, Gallegos the novelist comes into his own; the transition from the short story and essay to the novel is completed. The preoccupations of Gallegos the essayist are subordinated to the artistic technique of the novel, resolving many of the defects of Reinaldo Solar, a novel of abstract setting and unstable characterizations. In La trepadora Gallegos finds the pulse beat of his nation; his protagonists are authentic products of the Venezuelan soil, their conflicts real and the spirit of the land warmly felt. Above all he displays his able narrative technique, his mastery as a great story teller in La trepadora, "novela en la cual siempre está pasando algo a punto de convertirse en tragedia."[2] The form of the Gallegan novel is fixed:

> La fórmula de novela que Gallegos realiza en La trepadora va casi a constituir un modelo invariable para toda su obra posterior. Esa forma podríamos reducirla en lo esencial a esto: el escenario natural venezolano presentado al través de un conflicto

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[1]La trepadora (1ª ed.; Caracas: Tip. Mercantil, 1925), quoted in Dunham, op. cit., p. 61.

[2]Julio Planchart, op. cit., p. 22.

> ético y sentimental, que se combina con la pugna reformista entre civilización y barbarie. Este tipo de conflicto se desarrolla en un relato siempre lento, equilibrado y de una mesura formal que rara vez se rompe.[1]

La trepadora is further significant in that the cycle of constants, "de temas que conservan un valor, fijo en el desarrollo de la creación literaria," is stabilized. These constants, treated in varying degree in the first novel, will become the great thematic substance of Gallegos' symbols:

> la fuerza desorientada con sus implicaciones del fracaso y del pecado contra el ideal; la idea del alma dormida con su corolario de la función redentora de despertarla; la lucha entre la civilización y la barbarie que abarca campos colectivos o individuales; los conflictos provocados por los mestizajes y los casamientos entre personas pertenecientes a grupos sociales diferentes y hasta contrapuestos.[2]

The central conflict of La trepadora revolves around Venezuela's principal social problem, the diverse racial character of the nation. In other countries this problem was not critical or not even present,

> pero Venezuela no era un viejo país, con estratos sociales perfectamente definidos y asentados donde a cada cual le correspondiese, conforme a lo preestablecido y prejuzgado, sino una hechura reciente de convulsiones de guerra--la Independencia, la de la Federación, sobre todo--y un empuje violento de pueblo venía de abajo abriéndose paso.[3]

The only fruitful solution which Gallegos sees for the racial upheaval is the mixture of the races, el mestizaje. In

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[1]Uslar-Pietri, op. cit., p. 145.

[2]Liscano, op. cit., p. 208.

[3]Gallegos, "La pura mujer sobre la tierra," Una posición en la vida, p. 407. Italics mine.

Reinaldo Solar he had presented the picture of a decadent and moribund aristocracy without hope of prolongation, as symbolized in the fracaso and death of Reinaldo. In La trepadora he offers a new vision of hope, "una pintura de formación de pueblos, que puede realizarse con alegría si se procura con bondad."[1] This "formation" of the race, the inevitable process of mestizaje, is the central symbol of the novel. Gallegos translates "el empuje violento de pueblo que venía de abajo abriéndose paso" into la trepadora, the climbing vine. This symbol is projected through the three key figures: Hilario, "el hombre de presa," Adelaida, "la de la voluntad abolida," and their daughter, Victoria.[2] The composite image of these three protagonists forms the parallel of the symbolic growth of the trepadora.

Hilario Guanipa and the trepadora begin life simultaneously. The first two parts of the novel take place in the vast, open coffee country of the Tuy valley. Hilario is the illegitimate son of an aristocratic landowner, don Jaime del Casal and a humble worker on the plantation, Modesta Guanipa. In reparation for his "veleidad," don Jaime gives Modesta a "montañuela de café" where she can raise the boy. Thus Hilario, in whose veins the blood of the aristocracy intermingles with that of his humble mother, begins life

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[1]Ibid., p. 410.

[2]The novel is divided into three approximately equal parts, each bearing a subtitle which characterizes the three main protagonists.

simultaneously with the symbolic vine, "... la Trepadora que brotó de la gleba[1] y creció para ahogar cuanto se dejara aprisionar entre sus bejucos..."[2]

The trepadora begins to grow, but not just to grow at random; there is always the image of the strong young shoots and tendrils grasping, clinging, choking, seizing everything along the path of growth to pull itself upward. This upward rhythm of growth is paralleled in the increasing momentum of the three ascending parts of the novel, almost as if the trepadora were desperately pulling itself upward through the darkness toward a point of full exposure to sunlight. Hilario, too, finds many obstacles in his path. As the illegitimate son, he watches helplessly through the years as his step-brother, Jaimito, lets the family plantation, Cantarrana, go to ruin. As Hilario contemplates the abandoned lands, he forms a plan: "--¡Todo esto será mío dentro de poco!"[3] But despite that part of him which hates and envies, a nobility and pride inherited from his father dictate that he must win on his own merit. He rejects his father's offer to recognize him as his son: "... le agradezco

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[1]The symbol of the vine, in perfect harmony with the natural setting, is enriched by the double significance of gleba as referring both to the actual sod and an indentured servant sold with the land; although Modesta was merely a worker at Cantarrana, the desires of the patrón were not to be ignored.

[2]Prologue to first edition of La trepadora, loc. cit.

[3]La trepadora, p. 27.

su buena voluntad, pero no quiero que nadie diga mañana que tengo porque me dieron."[1] As his father laments the ruin of the land, Hilario replies with the intención, a phrase charged with future significance which establishes the circular pattern of the novel: "--Y no tenga cuidado: Cantarrana no pasará a manos extrañas."[2]

Hilario will be spurred on throughout the course of the novel to attain what he considers rightfully his except for chance: Cantarrana, dominated by Casa Grande, the manor house, which symbolizes the aristocratic caste that Hilario sees as his implacable enemy. Throughout the novel, the symbolism is drawn around this house and the trepadora which begins to grow over it after the death of don Jaime, when the family moves to the capital. The growth of the vine over the house represents Hilario's growing strength over the hated family and, by extension, the power of the mestizo's brute strength over the gradually weakening aristocracy. This growth is noticed too late by the del Casal family. When Jaimito, desperately in need of money to salvage a banking venture, first mortgages Cantarrana and then seeks a buyer, he finds that Hilario is the mortgage holder. With the land finally his, the first part of his project of vengeance against the del Casal family is complete. But the trepadora instinct in Hilario does not stop at this. He will make a spiritual conquest within the family; he is determined

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[1] Ibid., p. 31. [2] Ibid., p. 32.

to take the finest flower of that aristocratic family in marriage.

As a child Hilario was fascinated with the young cousin of his step-father, Adelaida Salcedo, a fragile girl of romantic temperament. Sheltered by a possessive and overly strict father, she soon learned that it was impossible to protest against anything in life and retreated into an ivory tower existence, taking enjoyment in romantic music and her daydreams. Already "de la voluntad abolida," she was unable to cope with the violent emotions that Hilario's attentions aroused in her. Here again is the attraction of opposites that Gallegos uses so forcefully to delineate character: Adelaida, who represents the best of her caste culturally and spiritually, will be irrestibly drawn to the brute strength and vitality of Hilario: "Su alma tímida, su delicado ser entero, su vida toda, corría hacia Hilario, fuerte, brutal y valiente, como corre el río manso y débil hacia el mar inmenso y temible."[1]

Adelaida will enter into the union with Hilario with a high spiritual motive, having promised don Jaime before his death that she would be the woman who could redeem Hilario and calm his bitterness. She realized the source of that bitterness, his dual nature as "el hombre de bien" as opposed to "el hombre de presa." Adelaida's refining influence on Hilario is foreshadowed by the scene where he goes to

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[1]Ibid., p. 60.

Casa Grande, planning to carry her away from the family, by force if necessary. But he stops, watching her through the window as she plays the piano:

> Pero... ¡aquella música..! ¿Que virtud tenía, desconocida para él, que no le dejaba hacer la señal necesaria para que Adelaida fuera a arrojarse a sus brazos? ¿Por qué lo subyugaba hasta el extremo de no poder moverse, de querer retener el aliento para escucharla mejor..? ¿De qué mundo misterioso, jamás vislumbrado venían aquellos sonidos que le suspendían el alma en arrobamientos desconocidos, aquel soplo invisible de belleza que le iba apagando dentro del corazón las brasas impuras del deseo? ... todo le produjo un sentimiento singular, el primer sentimiento delicado que experimentaba el alma ruda de un Guanipa... Dio un paso atrás. Luego otro y otro...[1]

The significance of this scene will grow through the course of the relationship between Adelaida and Hilario. True to her promise to don Jaime, she will finally effect a change in Hilario toward the "hombre de bien": civilización will overcome barbarie.[2]

Part II begins with the rustic wedding reception which Hilario has arranged for his new bride. Now the prey has fallen into his grasp, and although he loves her in his manner, he is determined to impose his environment on her: they will live in the house of the mayordomo, for he steadfastly refuses until many years later to inhabit Casa Grande.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 66-67.

[2] "Adelaida es Efigenia. Será también Luisana. Gallegos gusta conceder a las mujeres de origen mantuano un papel redentor. Su misión parece asignada de antemano: propiciar con su amor y su refinamiento espiritual, el nacimiento de una conciencia superior en los rencorosos mestizos que vienen de la plebe y anhelan igualarse con sus antiguos amos." Liscano, op. cit., p. 71.

The wedding reception is Adelaida's forceful introduction to her new way of life. Finally, tired and embarrassed by the blunt comments of the workers and neighbors who have come to meet her, she retreats alone down the path toward Casa Grande:

> La blancura de sus muros y columnas al crudo sol del mediodía daba una impresión desoladora. Por sus techumbres comenzaba a extender sus ásperos gajos una trepadora silvestre que subía desde su matorral cercano, revestida de flores de un color violento.[1]

At this point Hilario has reached the summit of his goals just as the vine has reached the rooftop of Casa Grande; and this growth on the part of both has been accomplished by obstinate, brute force, an upward surge from the lowest level, the humblest beginnings. The whiteness, purity, of Casa Grande is stained by the trepadora's flowers, "de un color violento," as Adelaida's sensitivity will be shocked and strained by her husband's nature. Her world is no longer the aristocratic confines of the "noble casa abandonada," but rather the raw, stifling natural setting around her to which Hilario is inextricably bound:

> En torno reinaba la siesta ardorosa. Un pesado sopor gravitaba sobre todas las cosas. Cerca de ella, entre el ramaje inmóvil de un árbol, temblaba una hoja, con inexplicable vibración. De los cafetales subía el penetrante aroma de las flores recién abiertas. Bajo la hojarasca, entre el alto follaje de los guamos y dentro de los matorrales rastreros, murmullos, gritos silenciosos, pausas de una sinfonía enervante que recorría la brutal naturaleza como una onda turbia y cálida.[2]

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[1] La trepadora, pp. 95-96.

[2] Ibid., p. 96.

Her revery is broken by the imposition of Hilario's brutal nature, as his arms grasp her with the same vigor with which the vine clings to Casa Grande:

> De pronto sintió que un brazo duro y fuerte se enroscaba[1] en su talle oprimiéndola contra un cuerpo musculoso y ardiente... Fue un instante de zozobra. ¡Ya iba a conocer cómo era el amor de un Guanipa.[2]

With the birth of their daughter, Victoria, Adelaida's strength is tested to the fullest. The dual nature of the father is repeated in the daughter. Hilario is furious when the infant resembles the mother so much that he even doubts the child to be his own, but

> ... iban desapareciendo de su rostro aquellos leves rasgos delicados y finos del parecido materno que tanto había contrariado a Hilario, para ser sustituídos, aunque ganando en hermosura, por las toscas facciones Guanipas, y Adelaida, atenta, día por día, a la transformación de la hija, que era su propia desaparición progresiva, se abandonaba con resignada tristeza a pensamientos fatalistas.[3]

Hilario is jealous of his child's dual nature because he feels in himself "la lucha entre lo plebeyo y lo noble ... en dramático mestizaje espiritual."[4]

But despite the mother's disappointment and the father's fervent desire that his caste triumph in the child,

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[1]Compare with later treatment (footnote 1, p. 67): "Los brazos de Modesta estrechando a Jaime fueron los primeros brotes de aquella trepadora silvestre que venía enroscándose en torno al viejo árbol de la familia ilustre, brotes que ya eran gajos vigorosos cuando sus brazos se apoderaron de Adelaida..." Ibid., p. 257. Italics mine.

[2]Ibid., p. 96.

[3]Ibid., p. 115.

[4]Ibid., p. 116.

the fruit of their union is not a victory for either caste at the expense of the other. Victoria's dual nature is undeniable, as the nurse points out: "Esa criatura tiene dos caras: una cuando está despierta, que es la cara de su pae; otra cuando está dormida, que es mismamente la de usté."[1] If Victoria had been the triumph of one parent over the other, as one recent critic would have us believe,[2] Gallegos' optimism in the racial outcome of his country would have been defeated. As Professor Dunham states: "En La trepadora el físicamente fuerte se casa con la que lo es espiritualmente; el resultado es un producto mejor que ambos..."[3] The author himself explains:

> Y resultó lo que tenía que resultar: Victoria Guanipa.
>
> Y digo así porque soy optimista, porque creo en la eficacia de las hechuras de la vida, que todas pueden ser buenas si bien se las dirige. Victoria, producto de fuerza y de ternura, con voluntad de pelea para cuando fuere necesario darla, pero con disposición a sacrificio en las oportunidades de alma serena y confiada, no era un triunfo de los Guanipas trepadores y violentos, ni tampoco de los Salcedos de casa vieja y leyenda nobiliaria, más o menos auténtica, sino de imperecedera bondad acompañada de alegría.[4]

Victoria, "otro gajo más de la trepadora," is the

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[1] Ibid., p. 117.

[2] "... Hilario Guanipa queda al fin derrotado. Por eso 'La trepadora' es novela optimista; porque no triunfa la sangre Guanipa, que hubiera representado el triunfo de la Barbarie, sino la sangre y los ideales del Casal que vuelve a dominar allí donde en un paréntesis había triunfado la Barbarie." Damboriena, op. cit., p. 260.

[3] Dunham, op. cit., p. 214.

[4] Gallegos, "La pura mujer sobre la tierra," loc. cit., p. 409.

final component of the symbolic network. An only child, she grows up in the rugged, isolated atmosphere of Cantarrana, an authentic product of her environment. But as she develops into a young woman, her attentions turn away from the mannish pursuits she has enjoyed with her father. Where Hilario's vision of conquest had been limited to the confines of one hated family, Victoria directs her trepadora instincts toward a larger horizon. Fascinated by accounts of her fashionable cousins, she formulates a plan of conquest toward that aristocratic society of the capital, "el dorado mundo," where they reign:

> Y una nueva zozobra se aposentó en el corazón de Adelaida. El ambicioso sueño de Victoria de brillar en la alta sociedad de Caracas, apenas nacido y ya afán impetuoso, la temeraria ingenuidad de adoptar el apellido del Casal, vislumbrando a través de las palabras que acababa de oírle, y, por otra parte, los graves recelos que siempre le habían inspirado los ímpetus de aquella sangre que la hija llevaba en sus venas, sangre de una raza trepadora que ante nada se detenía, todo esto era más que suficiente para que el medroso corazón de Adelaida se colmase de sombríos temores.[1]

The incident which allows Victoria her trip to Caracas also serves to bring out a decisive change in Adelaida's character. Hilario, in the attempt to seduce the daughter of his old friend and mayordomo, has brought on the wrath of the girl's father and now fears reprisal on Victoria. When Adelaida becomes aware of the situation, she sends Victoria on to the capital and stays to take a firm stand with her husband:

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[1]La trepadora, p. 143. Italics mine.

> Ya no era la Adelaida lánguida que a toda injusticia se había resignado, la esposa ofendida y traicionada que había renunciado a sus derechos, sino otra mujer nueva, animosa y resuelta: La madre que había sido amenazada en la hija propia...[1]

At the end of Part II Adelaida has new hope for the future, for "una vida nueva, todavía de luchas pero ya de triunfo seguro."[2] With the impulse of Adelaida's new found determination, Hilario is on the road to the final adjustment of his dual nature, the stabilization of his mestizo character, and thus nearer to being a true victor over those obstacles that he first set out to vanquish.

Hilario has conquered one family (and will eventually come to his own self-mastery), but the more transcendental triumph must be Victoria's. The choice of Caracas for the setting of Part III, although variously criticized, is absolutely necessary for the fulfillment of the central symbolism of the novel. The mestizo can never triumph nor be sure of his position if he remains in the isolation of a rural environment. Only by a conquest of the city, stronghold of the aristocracy, can Victoria's position be assured, and only in the city will she be truly forced to face and examine her dual nature.

Victoria is at first dazzled by the ways of the capital. She parallels her father's youthful envy of the Del Casal family in her desire to enter the aristocratically fashionable world of her cousins, once again symbolized by

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[1] Ibid., p. 170. [2] Ibid., p. 172.

their house, the Villa Alcoy. The house, of course, represents an insurmountable obstacle, its doors sealed to her "por la muralla de la soberbia y de los prejuicios de casta."[1] Victoria's reaction is a desire to try to model herself after her cousins. She even goes so far as to renounce her name, having cards made up substituting for Guanipa the Del Casal name. Admiration gradually turns to a bitterness and envy for the seemingly unattainable that might have led Victoria to a complete denial of her mestizo heritage had it not been for the timely return of her cousin, Nicolás del Casal, Jaimito's son. Nicolás, trained abroad, intelligent, progressive, infuriates his cousins by his defense of Victoria: "Puede que el apellido Guanipa no sea bonito como dices; pero suena a cosa nuestra, es muy criollo, muy indígena, y esto me lo hace agradable."[2] He defends her father, even though his father, Jaimito, was the victim of Hilario's schemes. Once again the comparison is evoked of Hilario as a natural force surging upward from below:

> Hilario Guanipa se apoderó de Cantarrana, mediante una serie de estratagemas de pícaro, porque no hubo nadie en la familia que supiera o pudiera oponérsele... En aquel momento Guanipa representaba la fuerza efectiva, el empuje que venía de abajo, abriéndose paso, formidable, brutal, pero al mismo tiempo, hermosamente, como es hermoso el espectáculo de la fuerza dondequiera que se manifieste.[3]

Nicolás, reinvigorated by living and studying abroad has not fallen into decadence as has the rest of his family,

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[1]Ibid., p. 195. [2]Ibid., p. 201.

[3]Ibid., pp. 210-211. Italics mine.

and he recognizes the inherent weaknesses of his father's caste and the inevitable rise of those who possess a superior strength and manifest it at the propitious moment:

> Guanipa lo venció y lo arrolló, porque en aquel momento Guanipa era el hombre dueño de las circunstancias y papá, la víctima que una ley natural, irresponsable, pero sabia, había escogido para sacrificársela a la Fuerza.[1]

And it is Nicolás who, when he wins Victoria's love, instills in her an appreciation for her heritage. She will have the coveted Del Casal name, but first she must understand the significance of her own name:

> --¡Guanipa! Sabe a tierra nuestra, con ese sabor áspero de fruta silvestre, llena, sin embargo, de dulzura. ¡Guanipa! Oye cómo es sonoro y grato, con la melancólica sonoridad del caramillo del indio triste. Evoca también, la melancolía del salvaje desierto, el lamento de la tierra deshabitada que gime en la voz del viento, sobre el arenal ardiente por donde corren, silenciosos, anchos ríos del transparentes aguas inútiles...
>
> Andando el tiempo, olvidado el origen, el nombre, que había sido conservado en la tierra como una semilla de la cual brotaría, a su hora, una planta robusta que daría una sola flor de belleza extraordinaria, pasó de la tierra a una familia, recobrando su primitivo empleo, y así llegó hasta ti, que <u>eres la flor de singular hermosura con que se adornó la planta robusta de tu raza, hija genuina de nuestra tierra</u>.[2]

Now all that is lacking for the ultimate triumph is Hilario's conquest of the <u>barbarie</u> within him. The new influence of Adelaida which promised the regeneration of Hilario at the end of Part II is again apparent as she

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 211.

[2] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 249. Italics mine.

confronts him on behalf of the novios:

> ... lo que pretendo es ayudarte a que encuentres al verdadero Hilario Guanipa que se te ha perdido, al Hilario Guanipa de quien yo me enamoré... Vuelve a ser aquel Hilario Guanipa de entonces, por quien una mujer podía sacrificarlo todo, como lo sacrifiqué yo.
>
> ... De una manotada Hilario se enjugó los ojos que se le habían llenado de lágrimas...
> --Tiene razón, mi Blanca.[1]

When Hilario comes face to face with Nicolás and is unable to kill him as he had sworn he would, the "hombre de presa" is finally defeated. Hilario cannot kill this young man who is the image of his father, don Jaime: "¡Era don Jaime del Casal! La misma gallardía, la misma expresión, el mismo rostro de aquel retrato que estaba en la sala de su casa. Era su padre quien había pasado!"[2]

Gallegos, in the prologue to the first edition, states that "el hábito pesimista" first led him to conceive a tragic solution which he later changed to the optimistic outcome. By having Hilario back away, by dispersing his hatred in the nobility of the love he felt for his father, the author removes the final obstacle from the path of his symbolic trepadora. Victoria will wed Nicolás, and the circular pattern will be completed: Victoria reconquers the name and Nicolás reconquers the land. The symbol is complete:

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[1]Ibid., pp. 252-253. Prof. Ratcliff offers the following comment on Hilario's habitual addressing to his wife of "mi Blanca": "When he first realized her superiority, it infuriated him. Later he accepted the situation and jokingly called her mi Blanca, a term once used by slaves when addressing young ladies of quality." Op. cit., p. 247.

[2]La trepadora, p. 256.

> Los brazos de Modesta estrechando a Jaime fueron los primeros brotes de aquella trepadora silvestre que venía enroscándose en torno al viejo árbol de la familia ilustre, brotes que ya eran gajos vigorosos cuando sus brazos se apoderaron de Adelaida, gajos que ya florecían en el amor de Victoria triunfante. Lo mejor de la sangre que corría por sus venas lo tomó por asalto Modesta de Jaime del Casal; con el resto de aquélla, con la porción impetuosa, savia de la trepadora, se alimentaron su ambición y su amor: el zarpazo sobre Cantarrana y la presa hecha en la mujer más noble de aquella familia; pero aún faltaba el nombre y éste había sido la conquista de Victoria.[1]

In covering Casa Grande, the trepadora has not obscured but rather embellished it. The optimism of the novel lies in the happy union of these two symbols, each complementing and strengthening the other:

> Así, llena de alegría en Victoria y de sereno gozo interior en Adelaida, la Trepadora que brotó de la gleba y creció para ahogar cuanto se dejara aprisionar entre sus bejucos, termina adornando con un florido festón la aristocracia de la Casa Grande.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 257.

[2] Prologue to the first edition of La trepadora, loc. cit.

PART II. THE MASTER WORKS

CHAPTER III

DOÑA BÁRBARA, 1929

After the treatment of the fracasado in Reinaldo Solar, Gallegos advanced a more positive analysis of mestizaje, another vital national problem, in La trepadora. But the symbols of these novels are limited. The key to their interpretation lies within the individual novels, and greatly within the individual character studies. In the first, Gallegos is uneasy in the urban setting, and except for brief passages the description of nature no more rings true than it inspires Reinaldo to sustained effort in any area. Among other novelistic improvements, the structure of La trepadora is more compact; the natural setting is more in harmony with the theme, although "resulta más bien un decorado para determinadas escenas culminantes."[1] But once again the symbolism is based on the protagonists and does not transcend the range of the particular social problem expressed in the novel.

Gallegos' third novel, Doña Bárbara, published in 1929, opens the mature period of his literary work. This novel, immediately acclaimed by critics and reading public

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[1]Liscano, op. cit., p. 94.

alike, fixed the great thematic constants which Gallegos would pursue throughout his literary career. Doña Bárbara is, in fact, both a synthesis and a culmination of the two previous novels. The same basic conflicts are treated to a greater or lesser degree, and the protagonists share many common qualities: there is much of Victoria Guanipa in Doña Bárbara; los Barbudos might well be the ancestors of los Mondragones; Mr. Danger is an older and greedier Mr. Builder; the work begun by Nicolás del Casal is continued by Santos Luzardo; and the similarities between Felipe Ortigales and Mujiquita and between Adelaida and Marisela are evident.

The factor that truly marks Doña Bárbara as a new period in Gallegos' novelistic trajectory is a change in style, and, most important for this study, a renovation of the author's symbolic process. The event which brought about this change was a trip to the llano in 1927. At this time the author was at work on a novel whose protagonist was to spend some time in this region, so Gallegos, the man of the city, traveled to the heart of the llano to document his novel. In his essay "Cómo conocí a doña Bárbara," the author vividly recounts the emotional and literary impact of that brief trip. The novel which brought him there was soon abandoned, and before the spectacle of the immensity of the llano--"Tierra ancha y tendida, toda horizontes como la esperanza, toda caminos como la voluntad"--Gallegos discovered the personaje principal of a new novel which was beginning to take shape in his mind: "Y en efecto, ya lo tenía: el

paisaje llanero, la naturaleza bravía, forjadora de hombres recios."[1]

In the presence of this newly discovered "escenario dramático," the author begins to establish in his mind the relationship between the land and "las criaturas suyas," that is, those human protagonists who personify their "medio vital." As natives of the region recount figures of local interest,[2] the author's natural sense of dramatic potential draws him to the immediate vitality of a person or situation. In a local lawyer given over to alcoholism, Gallegos formulates his Lorenzo Barquero: "¿Un caso frecuente en todas partes? Sí. Pero un caso dramático que allí tenía un sentido especial."[3] In the legendary hombruna of the region, doña Pancha Vazquéz, he discovers his female protagonist "con la emoción de un hallazgo, pues habiendo mujer simbolizadora de aquella naturaleza bravía ya había novela."[4]

At this point the author's symbolic process enters a third stage, taking it beyond a mere description of nature and the formulation of human counterparts to personify the geographic setting. For as an author of self-confessed didactic intent, Gallegos' object is not merely to paint scenes

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[1]Gallegos, "Cómo conocí a doña Bárbara," loc. cit., p. 528.

[2]See footnote 3, p. 10, Chapter I.

[3]Gallegos, "La pura mujer sobre la tierra," loc. cit., p. 412. This essay also deals extensively with a self-analysis of the author's symbolic method.

[4]Gallegos, "Cómo conocí a doña Bárbara," loc. cit., p. 530.

of local color and customs, nor is it merely to describe the limited actions and characters of the realistic and naturalistic novelists:

> Por exigencias de mi temperamento yo no podía limitarme a una pintura de singularidades individuales que compusieran caracteres puros, sino que necesitaba elegir mis personajes entre las criaturas reales que fuesen causas o hechuras del infortunio de mi país...[1]

Firmly rooted in reality, Gallegos carries character, setting and situation to a further level of significance in his constant analysis of the problemática venezolana. In the final stage of his symbolic process, those human protagonists who have come to symbolize the natural forces which surround them ultimately symbolize a more universal aspect of the national circumstance. Thus the "mujer simbolizadora de aquella naturaleza" becomes symbolic of the "predominio de barbarie y de violencia" not only of a particular region but of the country as a whole:

> Pero hay que advertir, para que mejor se entienda lo que luego viene, que eso de barbarie imperante no era sólo cosa de los Llanos, sino tragedia de Venezuela entera bajo una dictadura oprobiosa, dimanante de las guerras fratricidas que durante largos años habían ensangrentado el país.[2]

At this level of meaning, Gallegos' symbols become syntheses of the human and natural reality which is the basis of his inspiration, and, carried a step further when symbol and reality interfuse, symbol becomes theme:

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[1] Ibid., p. 532.

[2] Gallegos, "La pura mujer sobre la tierra," loc. cit., pp. 413-414.

> Unos libros con diversa fortuna, bonísima la de Doña Bárbara, sin duda por lo que contiene de síntesis de un drama fundamental de mi tierra, de nuestras tierras indoamericanas, donde barbarie y civilización todavía se disputan el alma de su gente, y por el hallazgo fortuito en la realidad de personajes en cuyas condiciones individuales e históricas pudiera apoyarse ese conflicto que de otro modo habría quedado flotando en el aire de las invenciones puras o de los símbolos abstractos...[1]

Gallegos' dominant symbol in Doña Bárbara has emerged from his primary preoccupation of the early essays. Like Sarmiento, whose terms he paraphrased,[2] Gallegos sees the basic political, economic, social and moral problems of his country in the conflict of two antithetical poles. As early as 1912, in his essay "Necesidad de valores culturales," the author diagnosed one of the most fundamental Venezuelan problems--"y el más importante de todos quizás"--in these "términos antitéticos":

> ... la ciudad y el monte, con lo que determinaríamos, no sólo los lugares en que suelen suceder, sino también su naturaleza propia, las circunstancias que los producen, el espíritu y las tendencias que los animan, que es como decir: civilización y barbarie.[3]

From this early point in his career his fight against barbarie constitutes Gallegos' literary endeavor and his life. All of his great thematic constants stem from and revolve around his implacable fight against this destructive force.

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[1]Gallegos, "Lo justiciero se ha dejado dominar por lo generoso," Novedades (México), No. 292 (24 de octubre de 1954), p. 1.

[2]Dunham, Vida y obra, p. 233.

[3]Gallegos, Una posición en la vida, p. 84.

In this essay he underlined the need for cultural values and moral principles in the face of "la ciega voluntad popular"; civilization must halt "los impulsos del instinto popular y aun a los móviles del interés material económico."[1] For Gallegos civilization implies progress, education and a growing sense of public morals. Civilization is the channeling of individual and national efforts toward the breaking down of machismo and the fatalistic habit of accepting one caudillo after another. Reinaldo Solar, the author's first novelistic protagonist, was the epitome of the bala perdida who echoed a plea for a tomorrow, "cuando les hayamos construido canales regulares,"[2] in which wasted efforts might flow in unison toward a strong nation. Hilario Guanipa, as a mestizo both in blood and spirit, dominated the forces of barbarie within him to emerge as another plea for a racially united nation in the march toward civilization.

These first two protagonists were analyses of constants of national character which contribute to the presence of barbarie and hold back civilización. In Doña Bárbara the author abandons such ramifications of the problem to settle on the basic conflict, and in so doing attains a new unity of form and meaning. Gallegos continues to force the reader to concentrate on the meaning of his work, but not didactically in the ordinary sense, because his theme is his symbol, the total simultaneous shape of his novel.

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[1]Ibid., p. 94. [2]Ibid., p. 97.

The world which Gallegos depicts in Doña Bárbara is a mestizo world torn by two great bloodlines and two conflicting moral currents. Human beings and nature reflect this conflict, this duality, and the author's manner of presentation is accordingly based on contrasts. Contrasts are so profuse, from those of the largest and most general kind, down to contrasts between individual motifs, that one is led to fix on this principle as the governing structural principle of Gallegos' novelistic technique. And from this it follows, given the basically symbolic bent of the author's novels, that a system of contrasts forms the basis for his symbol-making. In his earlier novels Gallegos had already found that "the most productive kind of comparison is one in which similarity is balanced by dissimilarity,"[1] and had consistently shown preference for the "double image" or "double character," i.e., the strong versus weak character combinations mentioned in preceding chapters. In Doña Bárbara this system of contrasts takes the form of antithetical or quarrelling elements in one type of juxtaposition or another, and serves not only to delineate character, but also to set the tone, establish narrative impetus and to form the total structure of the novel. Again there appear the crucial ideas of reality and relationship in the symbol, which "takes on

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[1]Tindall, op. cit., p. 212. This critic also states that in the comparative process, the symbol is unitive: "By uniting the separate it can organize experience into a kind of order and, revealing the complex relationships among seemingly divided things, confer peace." (p. 16)

more than literal significance by being what it literally is and by being related to other things," as "an object which embodies special significance as the result of the way it acts upon or is acted upon by other objects. . . ."[1] The interactions of symbolic characters and elements in Doña Bárbara result in the ultimate defeat of barbarie. This defeat is the optimistic message of Gallegos, the ultimate symbol of "el novelista y el soñador, si no el procurador de tiempos mejores para mi país."[2]

How then does duality in the form of a system of contrasts function in this novel?: 1) in the two anthetical factions of his major symbol, 2) in the choice of natural setting, 3) in the duality of his protagonists as they incarnate both individually and in reaction to each other the great overall conflict. The characters are symbolic individually, but in their relationship they become part of the greater composite symbol which they unify. And this penetrating study of inner human conflict is their greatest defense as masterful creations. The very duality of their nature, both within the individual characters and in their respective conflicts, makes them real and palpable, gives them depth. Gallegos' protagonists are psychologically complex and believable human beings who are not weakened by their symbolic roles. As Prof. Ratcliff states: "The

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[1]Danziger and Johnson, op. cit., p. 30.

[2]Gallegos, "Lo justiciero se ha dejado dominar por lo generoso," loc. cit.

symbolic nature of the work might easily have been allowed to sap the vitality of the two principal characters. The very name Bárbara carries with it the threat of making the novel a mere allegory."[1] But Gallegos' protagonists are not the flat, cardboard characters of an allegory; there is no simple one-to-one relationship in their interpretation. Gallegos sets his characters up with a dual nature springing from their inner conflicts (and their conflicts with others), and then moves back to a "post of observation" to allow them to act so as to imply their own significance, to allow them freedom to work their problems out, and to arrive, as it were, at the final solution without his interference. Doña Bárbara is an especially subtle, complex and varied creation. She is a symbol of barbarism and yet at the same time a product and victim of it against her will.[2] In her superstitious, passionate nature, Doña Bárbara is the incarnation of many aspects of Venezuelan character. The author himself says that she is not all of a piece anymore than "el alma tenebrosa" of her real life counterpart: "¿Que de dónde

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[1]Ratcliff, op. cit., p. 289.

[2]Gallegos is insistent upon this point. Doña Bárbara's life might have been different, but she is living proof that violence is the only product of violence: "Eso y aquel comienzo de vida bárbaramente maltratada. Aquel amor de Asdrúbal frustrado por el crimen y aquel festín de doncellez, a orillas del Orinoco, lejos el bronco mugido de los raudales de Atures, cuando cantó el yacabó. Porque violencia sólo de violencia puede naturalmente provenir y odio implacable debe tener origen en daño monstruoso sufrido." "La pura mujer sobre la tierra," loc. cit., p. 414.

saqué esta monstruosa criatura, que no es hombre, que no parece mujer, que debería ser abominable, y sin embargo interesa y seduce?"[1] Despite her evil nature, Doña Bárbara is a sympathetic character whose appeal, even for her creator, stems from a certain fascination for the forces of evil which she incarnates, a fascination to which Gallegos attributes a great portion of his novel's success:

> No resisto la tentación de preguntarme si tan extraordinaria fortuna en un libro venezolana ... no se deberá tanto al casual acierto con que describí mi paisaje llanero y tracé los rasgos característicos de la psicología de mi gente, como a la recóndita fascinación que aun estén ejerciendo en el ánimo humano las ejecutorias de la barbarie.[2]

The structure and choice of setting for the novel are in perfect harmony with the characterization of the human protagonists. Symbolic *per se*, they fuse to reinforce their individual symbolism. The structure of the novel is built around the war between the forces of civilization, captained by Santos Luzardo, and the forces of barbarism, led by Doña Bárbara. The battle lines are clearly drawn. The ranches of "El Miedo" and "Altamira," whose names signify their *partido*, are battle headquarters with a type of no-man's land in between, "La Chusmita," significantly inhabited by Marisela. She is torn between both factions, and her eventual alliance with Santos will symbolize, as much as the retreat of Doña Bárbara, the ultimate triumph of the forces

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[1]*Ibid.*, p. 410.

[2]Gallegos, "Lo justiciero se ha dejado dominar por lo generoso," *loc. cit.*

of civilization.

The setting of the novel in the Venezuelan llano is dictated by the ruling system of contrasts: the llano is the geographic region of greatest physical extremes in Venezuela,[1] subject to long periods of drought followed by total innundation. The llano, also because of distance and its immense extension is isolated in the extreme; a desierto, it is the perfect stronghold of barbarism and its human exponents. Virtually untouched by civilization and the law, it is la ley del llano which rules there, and the spirit of personalism and caciquismo make a Doña Bárbara possible. Geographically, then, the llano is the perfect choice of setting for this struggle of antithetical principles.

While the narrative action moves ahead as a series of battles between these principles, the duality of the natural setting is developed, with its backdrop of lyric beauty opposed to its sinister, brooding force. For the

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[1]Gallegos' innate sense of the dramatic leads him to choose extremes in ambiente, and these extremes, in turn, give rise to the exceptional person: "¿Quién ha de llamarse escritor pleno, sino aquel que muestra lo auténtico de su lar, de sus gentes, de su tiempo? Sólo que, para el cumplimiento del arte, hay que deformar esas realidades, haciéndolas purificarse en el sentido de acentuar unos rasgos... Tal la razón para que Gallegos haya creado sus figuras y haya construido sus escenarios, llevando situaciones y personajes a un prodigio de esfuerzo, y casi diríase a bien calculado efectismo. No altera, sino que hace crecer: las pasiones, o las virtudes, el crimen o el soñar poético, la barbarie o la cultura. Se agiganta todo eso a manera de árboles sin desprenderse de la entraña terrestre y sin preocuparse por las ramas chicas de los árboles inmensos, ni por las minucias de los temperamentos vigorosos." Alfonso Rumazo González, "El Ser de Gallegos," El Universal (Caracas), (2 de agosto de 1959), p. 4.

llano is no more all of a piece than the human protagonists which personify it: it can be a "llanura bárbara" as well as "toda horizontes como la esperanza, toda caminos como la voluntad": "El llano es todo eso: inmensidad, bravura y melancolía."[1] Above all the llano is deceptive; man must beware the espejismos in its "remoto confín circular."[2] But there is also a kind of magnetic attraction in this duality:

> El Llano asusta; pero el miedo del Llano no enfría el corazón; es caliente como el gran viento de su soleada inmensidad, como la fiebre de sus esteros.
>
> El Llano enloquece y la locura del hombre de la tierra ancha y libre es ser llanero siempre.[3]

The greater structure of the llano is circular--an effect which can bring about the impression of vast limitlessness (freedom) or confinement, confusion and loss of equilibrium:

> El anillo de espejismos que circunda la sabana se ha puesto a girar sobre el eje del vértigo. El viento silba en los oídos, el pajonal se abre y se cierra en seguida, el juncal chaparrea y corta las carnes; pero el cuerpo no siente golpes ni herida. A veces no hay tierra bajo las patas del caballo; pero bombas y saltanejas son peligros de muerte sobre los cuales se pasa volando. El galope es un redoblante que llena el ámbito de la llanura. ¡Ancha tierra para correr días enteros! ¡Siempre habrá más llano por delante![4]

Within the circular aspect of the setting (and the novel as well), there is a "bárbaro ritmo" which is constantly felt;

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[1]Gallegos, "Cómo conocí a doña Bárbara," loc. cit., p. 527.

[2]Doña Bárbara, p. 37.

[3]Ibid., pp. 63-64.

[4]Ibid., p. 70.

the pendulous movement of life on the llano is a precarious balance between "vida hermosa" and "muerte atroz." It is as methodically measured out as the extreme change of seasons: "¡La muerte es como un péndulo que se mueve sobre la llanura, de la inundación a la sequía y de la sequía a la inundación."[1] This pendulum is ever-present: life-death, rains-drought, crimes-vengeance.[2] The emphasis on this pendulous rhythm is paralleled psychologically throughout the course of the novel in the reciprocal gravitational pull of the protagonists toward one another and in their inner conflicts as they sway toward one extreme of action or another. Geographically, the pendulum breaks the expanse of the "llano sin fin" and fixes attention on a specific area of physical action as it swings between the warring camps of "Altamira" and "El Miedo." The rhythm of the pendulum constantly swaying to and for measures out the gravitating conflicts of the novel. It has a certain lulling effect, which, coupled with light imagery, functions to soften the novel's moral lesson. This is characteristic of the author's new style in Doña Bárbara, the harmony and subordination of message to artistry. The novel is not entirely lit by the harsh noonday light of the llano, but often is softened by a cloudy, nebulous lighting

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[1]Ibid., p. 270.

[2]This pendulum is employed significantly in a simile describing the dead body of El Brujeador slung over his horse: "... la bestia decidió encaminarse al caney sillero, paso a paso como para no sentir el trágico péndulo que llevaba encima." The horse, like the llanero, must bear this ever-present burden.

which on many occasions fades to moonlight or the flickering, eerie light of a candle or an oil lamp. The lighting effects contribute greatly to soften the focus of the novel, to remove harsh reality a greater distance from the world of fiction, to lend abstract value to the symbolism and to reduce its direct moral nature. The pendulous movement works at the same time to relieve a traditional formalism in recounting the story; it breaks the straight line of narrative and disturbs a certain rational balance of things at propititious moments--for there is much of the irrational in this novel whose final message is a plea for the rational, for cool reasoning in the face of unbridled passions. By this disturbing of the senses (or the reader's equilibrium), the pendulous movement carries us with its impetus into an area of mystery and superstition which forms such an important element of the novel, and it is a major device for establishing tone and for focusing attention.

Each chapter is a unit within itself in the greater structural framework of the novel. Already in La trepadora Gallegos had given symbolic subtitles to each of the three parts. In Doña Bárbara (also in three parts) each chapter bears a title which, when repeated in the closing lines of the chapter, synthesizes its meaning. The titular words, thus repeated, "se asoman cargadas de un sentido simbólico, conseguido en el trascurso del capítulo mismo."[1] This device

[1]Ulrich Leo, Rómulo Gallegos: estudio sobre el arte de novelar, p. 25.

is one which Gallegos will continue throughout the rest of his novels.

The very first chapter of the novel serves as an example of the multiple meanings which the title may take on through its development until the end of the chapter. In it Gallegos utilizes the folklore of the region in the pregunta ritual of the boatmen, who, as they abandon shore with--"¿Con quién vamos?"--, await an answer of --"¡Con Dios y con la Virgen!"--which wards off the evil spirit, El Viejito. But this literal level of meaning is superseded by a further meaning, for both main protagonists are introduced in this first chapter: Santos, who is traveling down the Apure into the heart of the llano, and Doña Bárbara, who is introduced indirectly (both through the tales of the bongueros and the presence of Melquíades). From the opening lines of the novel there is a growing crescendo of tension, even a spirit of espionage, for Doña Bárbara has sent out a spy. As Santos progresses deeper and deeper into the llano, the physical surroundings are gradually introduced in parallel fashion. While the city grows distant and the ambiente becomes more striking, even oppressive, "la abrumadora impresión del desierto" arouses contrary sentiments in Santos' mind. From the moment of his internment in the llano certain factors will engender a conflict within him. His mind is flooded with memories of his youth in "la llanura semibárbara, 'tierra de los hombres machos.'"[1] Santos Luzardo, despite his

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[1]Doña Bárbara, p. 47.

doctoral diploma and long contact with the city, will struggle throughout the novel to overcome his dormant tendencies toward machismo:

> La vida del Llano, esa fuerza irresistible con que atrae su imponente rudeza, ese exagerado sentimiento de la hombría producido por el simple hecho de ir a caballo a través de la sabana inmensa, pondría en peligro la obra de sus mejores años, consagrados al empeño de sofocar las bárbaras tendencias del hombre de armas tomar, latente en él.[1]

Santos had begun the journey with the idea of restoring his inheritance to its former value and then selling it to travel to Europe. But even by the end of this first chapter he is caught by the "fuerza irresistible" of the land. He decides to change course, to fight the mysterious adversary he has yet to meet, because, "luchar con doña Bárbara, criatura y personificación de los tiempos que corrían, no sería solamente salvar Altamira, sino contribuir a la destrucción de las fuerzas retardatorias de la prosperidad del Llano."[2] Thus, on a second level of meaning, the author has utilized the question of the title to introduce the emotional changes and conflicts in his protagonist. The reader, who might have asked himself as he began the novel, "¿Con quién vamos?", has now been introduced to the natural setting, to the woman who personifies it, and to the character of Santos and the nature of the battle he is about to begin. The chapter ends with this insight:

> Ya Santos Luzardo conocía la pregunta sacramental de los bongueros del Apure; pero ahora

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid., p. 23.

> también podía aplicársela a sí mismo, pues había emprendido aquel viaje con un propósito y ya estaba abrazándose a otro, completamente opuesto.[1]

By the chapter's close, the symbolism of the title has not only taken on a new meaning for the reader, but a similar process has occurred in the mind of the protagonist himself.[2]

The symbolic chapter title is an important device for strengthening structural unity. In Doña Bárbara, the author has abandoned the confusion of incidents and digressive conversations which weakened the first two novels. With a new harmony of thematic substance, narrative action and mode of presentation, even the interlude takes on symbolic weight and serves to reinforce structure. Gallegos fills these interludes with tales of the superstitious llanero, with his coplas and pasajes; but the folklore of the region is not employed at random as a manner of giving a note of authenticity to the novel. Every interlude is skillfully integrated into the framework of the novel and has an active function. As an example, the chapter entitled "El familiar,"

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[1]Ibid., p. 16.

[2]The most common use of the symbolic chapter title is that in which the double level of meaning of the title refers first to a physical phenomenon and is later transferred to a second level referring to a human counterpart. In "Los Amansadores," Carmelito tames a wild mare, "la Catira," destined for Marisela. Carmelito himself notes the parallel in Santos' continued attempts to educate the sometimes impatient and spirited Marisela. The chapter ends with both men making progress in their respective tasks: "--¡Ah doctor! Como que no somos tan malos amansadores, usted y yo. Véale el paso a la Catira, por lo que a mí me corresponde. Que tocante a la obra de usted...". (Ibid., p. 126.)

recounts the practice of burying an animal alive at the entrance of a ranch to give it a protecting spirit; at the same time it functions to advance plot, to develop character, and to foreshadow future events. In this incident, Pajarote tells the men of Altamira that he has seen the familiar of Altamira, "el Cotizudo." In doing so he reveals (as do the men in their acceptance of the story) his faith in Santos, his loyalty to him, and the belief that "la aparición anunciaba la vuelta de los buenos tiempos con la llegada de Santos."[1] This is another manner of saying that the arrival of Santos and the simultaneous appearance of the familiar foreshadow the end of Doña Bárbara's reign of power: "Y eso de que esté apareciendo otra vuelta el 'familiar' significa que ya se le van a acabar los poderes a la bruja y que ahora nos toca a nosotros los altamireños echar suertes."[2] The author gives no indication as to whether or not Pajarote really saw, or even thinks he saw, the familiar. One rather thinks that his telling the story is a means of showing his loyalty to Santos and a way of encouraging the men to give theirs to their new boss. There is also a certain residual build-up of meaning in this interlude, for the reader has already learned that Doña Bárbara, in burying her familiar, included the body of a murdered foreman for whom she no longer had any use. Thus this interlude functions, though it deals at a conscious level with the familiar of Altamira,

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[1] Ibid., p. 56. [2] Ibid., p. 60.

to evoke at a subconscious level the connotation of crime associated with Doña Bárbara and the familiar of "El Miedo."[1]

The direct narrative action is initiated with Santos' final decision to stay and confront the forces of barbarie. His entry into the struggle is symbolized by the withdrawal of the sword which his father had plunged into the wall after killing Santos' older brother in a violent outburst. He removes the symbol of bloodshed and hatred as a gesture of having dedicated himself to bringing progress and civilization to the llano.

Santos' civilizing plans are developed in the chapter "Algún día será verdad." As a lawyer, he is first drawn to the legal aspect of combating Doña Bárbara, to the reform of the so-called Ley del Llano, which he soon discovers is nothing more than the Ley de doña Bárbara: "Porque dicen que ella pagó para que se la hicieran a la medida."[2] Throughout the novel Santos seeks to reform this unjust law through orderly

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[1]In other symbolic interludes Gallegos continues to interweave elements of folklore and superstition around a secondary level of meaning. Thus "La Doma" shows Santos assuming authority over his men through their respect as he tames a wild horse. The killing of an alligator supposedly protected by Bárbara's charms parallels the decline of her powers ("El Espanto del 'Bramador'"). The cruel Mr. Danger's frolics with his cunaguaro are later paralleled in his deadly toying with Balbino Paiba ("Los retozos de Míster Danger"). A story told by Ño Pernalete summarizes not only the corrupt local government but that of the country as a whole ("Los puntos sobre las haches"). The description of "Los Rebullones," more than a method of probing Juan Primito's madness is a metaphorical way of referring to the "malos instintos de doña Bárbara."

[2]Doña Bárbara, p. 92.

legal process. The greatest factor on Doña Bárbara's side, besides the corrupt officials, is the lack of definite boundary lines which resulted from the ambiguous terminology in the agreement which originally divided the land between the Luzardos and the Barqueros. In the owner's absence, Doña Bárbara had used various ruses to encroach on Luzardo land and freely encouraged the practices of cachilapiar (the claiming of unbranded cattle which wandered onto her property) and trasnochear (rustling). In the face of this, Santos sees the necessity of fencing off the llano as the primary step toward bringing law, order and progress:

> ... Luzardo se quedó pensando en la necesidad de implantar la costumbre de la cerca. Por ella empezaría la civilización de la llanura: la cerca sería el derecho contra la acción todopoderosa de la fuerza, la necesaria limitación del hombre ante los principios.
>
> Ya tenía, pues, una verdadera obra, propia de un civilizador...[1]

Santos' decision to construct the fence functions as a focal point for his conflict with Doña Bárbara, the point over which he will bring her law to account. Around this fence is built the imagery of Santos el civilizador, who by act and principle will combat the vast, open domain of the llano, will break up its horizon with the orderly rows of fence; this fence, in its stationary aspect, counters the "casa en piernas" which Doña Bárbara has employed to advance her boundaries "Altamira adentro":

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[1] Ibid., p. 95.

> El hilo de los alambrados, la línea recta del hombre dentro de la línea curva de la Naturaleza, demarcaría en la tierra de los innumerables caminos, por donde hace tiempo se pierden, rumbeando, las esperanzas errantes, uno solo y derecho hacia el porvenir.[1]

This idea parallels the chapter "Uno solo y mil caminos distintos," and gives further significance to the title. The "solo" refers to unified action, orderly progress toward the betterment of the llano; the "mil caminos" refer to individual action, caciquismo, and the countless ways in which Doña Bárbara has broken as well as interpreted the law to her own advantage.

Throughout Part I the figures of both "armies" are introduced: the altamireños (Antonio Sandoval, María Nieves, Pajarito) and the miedosos (Juan Primito, El Brujeador, Balbino Paiba, los Mondragones). All are vividly drawn and are remarkable syntheses of national and regional types, without losing their individual value as characterizations. Among the secondary figures of greatest impact are Ño Pernalete, the jefe civil whose idea of the law is as primitive as the sword of authority he keeps hanging on his office wall (the ever-present symbol of the machete type of law enforcement); his sniveling secretary, Mujiquita, who lacks the courage to speak up for what he believes in; and Mister Danger, the yankee adventurer, "conquistador de tierras mal defendidas."[2]

The presentation of Doña Bárbara herself is masterful.

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid., p. 106.

Although it is Santos Luzardo on whom attention is focused in the opening pages of the novel, Doña Bárbara is vividly present, surrounded by an aura of mystery and fear in even the mention of her name. In the protagonist's mind the image of Doña Bárbara and the tierra bárbara fuse as he contemplates the threatening, turbulent waters. The author gives an almost mythical quality to his direct presentation of "la devoradora de hombres." With ominous and measured rhythm, he assigns her origin to no specific place, but merely to

> ¡De más allá del Cunaviche, de más alla del Cinaruco, de más allá del Meta! De más lejos que más nunca...
>
> De allá vino la trágica guaricha. Fruto engendrado por la violencia del blanco aventurero en la sombría sensualidad de la india, su origen se perdía en el dramático misterio de las tierras vírgenes.[1]

Our first vision of the young Barbarita is among a brutal band of river pirates. A young passenger is taken aboard the piragua in which they travel the rivers, Asdrúbal, who teaches Barbarita to read and write. His kindness and attentions spark the first pure love of the young girl, but this love is cut short when Asdrúbal is killed by the band after having discovered that they plan to sell the girl to a sadistic, leprous Syrian trader. The boy's death and the chant of the yacabó bird are significantly confused in the girl's mind:

> De pronto cantó el "yacabó". Campanadas funerales en el silencio desolador del crepúsculo de

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[1]Ibid., pp. 23-24. Italics mine.

> la selva, que hielan el corazón del viajero.
> --Ya-cabó. Ya-cabó...
> ¿Fue el canto agorero del ave o el propio gemido mortal de Asdrúbal?[1]

Asdrúbal's horrible death and "el festín de su doncellez" by the rebellious crew are the formative incidents of Bárbara's life. Even later, when she is taken by the old pilot of the boat to live with her mother's tribe, Bárbara cannot tear this memory nor her growing hatred for men from her mind.

> Reflejos de hogueras empurpuraban la oscuridad de la noche... Es la caza del gaván. Los indios encienden fogatas de paja en torno a los pantanos inaccesibles, el ave levanta el vuelo, asustada por la algarabía ... pero, de pronto, los cazadores enmudecen y apagan rápidamente las hogueras, y el ave, encandilada, cae indefensa al alcance de las manos.
>
> Algo semejante ha acontecido en la vida de Barbarita. El amor de Asdrúbal fue un vuelo breve, un aletazo apenas a los destellos del primer sentimiento puro que se albergó en su corazón, brutalmente apagado para siempre por la violencia de los hombres, cazadores de placer.[2]

As hatred grows in the young girl's heart, she is initiated into the "tenebrosa sabiduría" of the Indians. Her sensual beauty becomes a perturbing factor once again, and she is forced out of the tribe--but she takes with her a knowledge of <u>brujerías</u> when she leaves the jungle to enter the <u>llano</u>.

There is an ever-present comparison of the young girl with the natural elements that have spawned and formed her:

> El Orinoco es un río de ondas leonadas; el Guanía las arrastra negras. En el corazón de la

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[1]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 27. [2]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 28.

> selva, aguas de aquél se reúnen con las de éste; mas por largo trecho corren sin mezclarse, conservando cada cual su peculiar coloración. Así, en el alma de la mestiza tardaron varios años en confundirse la hirviente sensualidad y el tenebroso aborrecimiento al varón.[1]

In this simile the author has synthesized the dominant natural image of the first chapters of the novel, the river (on which both Santos and Doña Bárbara enter the novel). Like the two turbulent rivers that lace the jungle, the dual conflicts within Doña Bárbara finally merge into one black river of hatred which will be the motivating force of her life until she meets Santos Luzardo.

The most vivid product of Doña Bárbara's hatred is in the person of Lorenzo Barquero, whom she at first loved because he reminded her of Asdrúbal. But this love quickly turned to disgust and Lorenzo found himself exiled to a small plot of land, "La Chusmita,"[2] with the daughter that Doña Bárbara refused to recognize. His brilliant career destroyed, his lands lost to his former lover, Lorenzo sinks

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[1]Ibid., p. 29.

[2]"La Chusmita" is characterized significantly as "una vasta depresión de la sabana... Era un lugar maldito: un silencio impresionante, numerosas palmeras carbonizadas por el rayo y en el centro un tremedal donde perecía, sorbido por el lodo, cuanto ser viviente se aventurara a atravesarlo. (p. 75) Italics mine. This tremedal is an excellent example of the recurring image which takes on symbolic force. At first it would seem to point only to Lorenzo's emotional, spiritual and physical state. But repeated references to the tremedal throughout the course of the novel charge it with further significance until it reaches the stature of a symbol of the sinister forces of the llano in the culminating scene of the steer and the serpent. As Doña Bárbara witnesses the scene, its significance is all too clear with regard to her own life.

into a quagmire of hallucination and alcoholism from which the "animal" that he has become pours out, in moments of feverish outbursts, the remnants of a brilliant and rational mind. Lorenzo, Santos' cousin, is the only remaining descendant of his family, one with a long history of feuding antagonism with the Luzardos. Santos, as a gesture of ending this hatred, seeks Lorenzo out. The encounter of the two is further significant in that it takes place before Santos has met Doña Bárbara, and thus forces upon him more vividly the nature of his adversary.

As Santos tries to communicate with the drunken Lorenzo, he is reminded of his first meeting with his cousin. Santos' father was praising the boy as being "bueno de a caballo," and Lorenzo had angrily declared: "Es necesario matar al centauro que todos los llaneros llevamos por dentro."[1] Unable to understand the significance of this outburst, Santos had later read a brilliant discourse by Lorenzo in which he proclaimed: "El centauro es la barbarie y, por consiguiente, hay que acabar con él."[2] Here the vehicle of the metaphor is brilliantly in accord with not only the natural scene, but with the novel as a whole: the double meaning of the word centauro as 1) a horseman of note (the most highly regarded ability of the llanero), and 2) the mythical significance of half man, half horse. The second meaning reinforces the dual nature of the novel's protagonists,

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[1]Ibid., p. 80. [2]Ibid., p. 81.

particularly the llanero (and by extension the Venezuelan), torn by his duality; the half man, half animal signifying in one creature human and animal tendencies (once again civilized and barbarous tendencies). In Lorenzo's confused state of mind, the centaur is a living, palpable reality, a factor present not only in the llano, but throughout the country:

> --¡Matar al centauro! ¡Je! ¡Je! ¡No seas idiota, Santos Luzardo! ¿Crees que eso del centauro es pura retórica? Yo te aseguro que existe. Lo he oído relinchar. Todas las nochas pasa por aquí. Y no solamente aquí: allá, en Caracas, también. Y más lejos todavía. Dondequiera que esté uno de nosotros, los que llevamos en las venas sangre de Luzardos, oye relinchar el centauro. Ya tú también lo has oído y por eso estás aquí. ¿Quién ha dicho que es posible matar al centauro? ¿Yo? Escúpeme la cara, Santos Luzardo. El centauro es una entelequia. Cien años lleva galopando por esta tierra y pasarán otros cien.[1]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 83-84. Italics mine.

This second definition of the centaur (the first simply as barbarie) again reinforces the duality involved, both on the personal level of Lorenzo and on the national level. The completed realization of Lorenzo, now a total loss of a man, is diametrically opposed to "su juventud brillante, el porvenir, todo promesas, las esperanzas puestas en él..." (p. 81) Lorenzo presents, in more vivid extremes this same entelechy of character which Gallegos first probed in the person of Reinaldo Solar, the same pitiful actuality of the completed realization of a human (or national) life as opposed to original potentiality. Through Lorenzo the author again voices a plea for the channeling of "energías y aptitudes intelectuales que poseemos," ("Necesidad de valores culturales," loc. cit., p. 91), the need to search for the one right road among "los mil y unos distintos," so that "mañana, cuando les hayamos construido canales regulares se deslizarán por ellos aguas claras y sosegadas, a cuyas orillas se pueden plantar sin peligro villas y plantíos." (Ibid., p. 97)

Once again we see the main preoccupation of Gallegos leading back to the ultimate problem: the defeat of the entelechy within his people, the defeat of their duality of character, which when unified into one stream of civilized progress will result in the defeat of the fuerzas bárbaras, and in the ultimate triumph of civilization.

Lorenzo is a vivid example of the man who did not follow his own advice, of the man who has regressed to the animal state.[1] It is Lorenzo, "el ex hombre," who warns Santos against falling into barbarie's clutches; and in his feverish outburst which wavers between rationality and hallucination, he begins with a warning of the power of the land: "Esta tierra no perdona. Tú también has oído ya la llamada de la devoradora de hombres. Ya te veré caer entre sus brazos."[2] But his tortured mind confuses the land, "llena de espejismos," with its human counterpart who caused his destruction. In his confusion, in his personification of the destructive forces of the land, he describes it as a woman loved, as a deceptive illusion of warmth and tenderness whose arms eventually close around its victim to destroy it with fatal caresses:

> Ya te veré caer entre sus brazos y enloquecer por una caricia suya. Y te dará con el pie, y cuando tú le digas: "Estoy dispuesto a casarme contigo", se reirá de tu miseria y...
> --¡La devoradora de hombres! ...
> --¡La llanura! ¡La maldita llanura, devoradora de hombres!
> --¡Santos Luzardo! ¡Mírate en mí! ¡Esta tierra no perdona![3]

With this warning, ominous both through word and example, Santos encounters a further product of his yet unseen opponent, as the tension mounts toward the actual meeting of

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[1]There is emphasis throughout the novel on the dehumanizing of Lorenzo in the repeated references to him as the "ex hombre," "el espectro de un hombre"; he himself refers to his miserable hut at "La Chusmita" as "el cubil de una bestia." (p. 78)

[2]Ibid., p. 82. [3]Ibid., pp. 84-85.

the two. Marisela, Doña Bárbara's daughter, is "La Bella Durmiente" of the novel; she is the "alma dormida" par excellence of the Gallegan novel. Deserted by her mother and left in the care of her sick, drunk father, she grows up in the wilderness of the isolated "La Chusmita." Her one contact with the outside world and her only means of sustenance are the visits of Bárbara's servant-messenger, Juan Primito. Juan, though pitifully dedicated to the girl, is a bobo, if not over the brink of insanity.

Marisela is a virgin spirit on which Santos can initiate, as he has begun to do with the land, his civilizing enterprise. When he meets her she is pitiful in appearance, "greñuda, mugrienta, descalza y mal cubierta por un traje vuelto jirones,"[1] although the rigors of her existence have not dulled "un rostro de facciones perfectas."[2] Her speech, untempered by contact with others, is barely more than embarrassed phrases punctuated with a frequent "Guá." But when Santos reproaches her manner of talking, she does, significantly, display interest in the words he uses and shows spirit. He is encouraged to probe beneath the outer layer of grime to find out whether she has possibilities. He coaxes the naive girl into looking at him (under the pretext that she is bizca), and she reveals "los hermosos ojos que eran lo más bello de su rostro."[3] Struck by the innate beauty of the girl, Santos undertakes the first lesson of

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[1]Ibid., p. 85. [2]Ibid., p. 87. [3]Ibid., p. 88.

civilization as he washes her face. This is the first of a series of acts which will signify the salvation of Marisela; it begins the relationship of the two characters of the novel who are not drawn from real life but were invented by the author to function in unison as a counterbalance to the forces of barbarie:[1]

> ... e inventé a Santos Luzardo y a Marisela, las únicas figuras totalmente mías: la idea-voluntad civilizadora de la barbarie y el fruto inocente de los contubernios culpables, que no debía perderse también en el tremedal de las depravaciones. La posibilidad de acción y la indestructible esperanza.[2]

Santos' effect on the girl is remarkable. She is "la Bella Durmiente" whose Prince Charming has left, instead of a kiss, the freshness of the water on her cheeks and the first bit of tenderness in her life in "unas palabras nunca oídas hasta entonces."[3] As new emotions take hold of her, the author translates the awakening of her "alma dormida"

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[1]Various critics have lamented the too elemental symbolism in the name of the protagonist. Ricardo Montilla reports in a recent article that there was no such conscious intent on the part of the author: "El apellido Luzardo se ha prestado para que algunos exégetas de la novela crean encontrar una intención simbolista en su composición: luz ardo, luz ardiente, lo que en realidad aspiraba a ser Santos en las conciencias. Pero Gallegos me ha confesado que lo extrajo de un plano topográfico que le mostraron, donde aparecía una 'mata' con el nombre de 'Luzardera', sin poner en la escogencia propósitos simbolistas. Misterios del subconsciente... El nombre de Marisela era hasta entonces el de un 'pasaje' llanero." "Algunas noticias sobre Doña Bárbara," El Farol (Caracas), Año XX, No. 179 (noviembre-diciembre de 1958), 48.

[2]Gallegos, an interview quoted in Montilla, "Algunas noticias sobre Doña Bárbara," loc. cit.

[3]Doña Bárbara, p. 87.

into beautifully appropriate similes which parallel the reawakening or rebirth of natural phenomena:

> ¡Sí, se siente la belleza! ...
>
> Así debe de sentir el árbol, en la corteza endurecida y rugosa, la ternura de los retoños que de pronto le reventaron. Así debe de estremecerse la sabana, cuando, un día, después de las quemas de marzo, siente que ha amanecido toda verde.[1]

These poetic comparisons in parallel constructions are structurally similar to the description of Doña Bárbara's emotional reactions after the death of Asdrúbal: "En el corazón de la selva, aguas de aquél se reúnen con las de éste... Así en el alma de la mestiza tardaron en confundirse la hirviente sensualidad y el tenebroso aborrecimiento."[2] Ulrich Leo has pointed out that in this type of construction,

> ... tal yuxtaposición de dos frases gramaticalmente independientes da más lugar a la descripción detenida, facilita con eso la evocación del objeto encargado de pintar poéticamente el otro objeto... Así tal forma de comparación, renunciando a la exactitud lógica del "como ... así", trueca por ella un avance en la cualidad y expresividad poéticas. Los modelos de esa forma, menos racional y más vital que la ordinaria no se hallan en la prosa lógica sino en los poetas. Tenemos en ella indudablemente uno de los numerosos elementos líricos del estilo prosaico de Gallegos.[3]

These comparisons, apart from the stylistic quality, reveal a careful selection of imagery which harmonizes perfectly with the immediate situation, the natural setting and

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[1]Ibid., p. 89. Italics mine.

[2]Ibid., p. 29. Italics mine.

[3]Leo, op. cit., p. 20.

the particular emotion the author wishes to convey. This is especially significant in the last example, where the comparison between Bárbara's dual emotional currents and the rivers carries symbolic weight: first, because of its sense of immediacy and proximity to both the dominant natural image of the early pages of the novel, and second, because of the recurrent symbolism of the river itself in Doña Bárbara's mind as the scene of her early life and of Asdrúbal's death. Throughout the novel, such comparisons and water images recur as a device for establishing and justifying Doña Bárbara's character. In her mind, water imagery and the call of the yacabó are the constant reminders of the horrifying incident which channeled her life into a new course. An interesting example of the fusion of these two images occurs as El Brujeador brings Bárbara a report on the arrival of Santos. She is sitting at the dinner table with her foreman:

> Acababa de servirse un vaso de agua y se lo llevaba a los labios, cuando, haciendo un gesto de sorpresa, echó atrás la cara y se quedó luego mirando fijamente el contenido del envase suspendido a la altura de sus ojos. En seguida la expresión de extrañeza fue reemplazada por otra, de asombro.[1]

Her surprise is caused by the appearance of the image of Santos in the water--"que ha querido dejarse ver." As El Brujeador and Balbino Paiba mentally recognize this as an attempt to have them believe in her supernatural powers, Doña Bárbara's "trácala" backfires on her:

> Entretanto, doña Bárbara había depositado el vaso sobre la mesa, sin llevárselo a los labios, asaltada

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[1]Doña Bárbara, p. 53.

> por un recuerdo repentino que le ensombreció la faz: "Era a bordo de una piragua... Lejos, en el profundo silencio, se oía el bronco mugido de los raudales de Atures... De pronto cantó el yacabó...[1]

As the others leave and the lamp dims, Doña Bárbara remains at the table, "su pensamiento inmóvil, torvo, sombrío, en aquel momento atroz de su pasado."[2]

It is also interesting to note here that in her first "vision" of Santos, even before she comes face to face with him, that she has already begun to associate him with Asdrúbal. This association will form the basis of her inner drama as Asdrúbal and Santos fuse into one person in her mind. She is irrestibly drawn to Santos, who is both hated enemy and desired lover. The resulting conflict will account for the remarkable "mudanzas" of Doña Bárbara.

This significance of water in the mind of Doña Bárbara builds throughout the novel until it becomes charged with symbolic connotations when it is further developed in one of the final chapters of the novel, "La Hija de los ríos." Bárbara, having vowed to "entregar las obras," has traveled to San Fernando to personally insure that Santos will receive full payment for the stolen plumes. She is filled with the illusion that a new life can be hers, that she can win Santos' love. These dreams are interrupted by a sudden realization that her illusions are hopeless--like birds captured in blind flight, "así su corazón, deslumbrado ya por las luminosas ilusiones, se le ha quedado repentinamente ciego para el vuelo del sueño."[3] As she walks at nightfall, she

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[1]*Ibid.* [2]*Ibid.*, p. 54. [3]*Ibid.*, p. 268.

is drawn to the riverbank: "Una necesidad invencible y obscura la llevaba hacia el paisaje fluvial; la hija de los ríos empezaba a sentir la misteriosa atracción."[1] Doña Bárbara has never been more alone; her "historia" has cut her off from Santos' love in the same way that the inhabitants of the riverbank shut their doors against the night, "apagando así los reflejos de las lámparas sobre el río."[2] The darkness of the night is as abysmal as that of her soul; no voice is directed to her. There is only the sound of the boatmen: "y su charla es algo tan lento como la corriente del río por la horizontalidad de la tierra, como la marcha de la noche soñolienta de brumas, como los pasos de doña Bárbara, sombra errante y silenciosa a lo largo del ribazo."[3]

All the recurrent thematic images connected with the figure of Doña Bárbara are united in this sequence: the river, "el río que viene de arriba," a bird, "el graznido de un chicuaco," and the sinister voices of men whispering in the darkness, "la conversación de los bogas con los palanqueros: cosas terribles que han sucedido en los ríos que atraviesan los llanos." The description is elliptical, as though reflecting the wandering and turbulent thoughts of the silent protagonist. But from this collocation of elements, sensations and memories, there arises a kind of nameless horror and fatality which fixes our understanding of the formative phase of Bárbara's life.

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., pp. 268-269.

She walks further into the shadows of the night, and, as she retraces her steps, the same elements are presented with a slight change of detail. This "variación de lo idéntico"[1] suggests both a lapse of time and the non-variable aspect of nature (and of Bárbara's life):

> Esto, cuando doña Bárbara viene, lenta, bajo la tenue sombra azul que proyectan los árboles. Y esto mismo cuando se revuelve: ... la noche callada, el río que se desliza sin ruido hacia otro río lejano, el graznido del pájaro insomne ... y la charla soñolienta de los palanqueros con los bogas: cosas graves que han acontecido en las tierras bárbaras de anchos y misteriosos ríos...[2]

The montage of significant imagery and the lapse of time, coupled with subtle change of detail, summarize magnificently the course of Doña Bárbara's existence: her link with the river, the fateful bird, the formative incident of Asdrúbal's death ("cosas terribles que han sucedido en los ríos") and the course of her later life ("cosas graves que han acontecido en las tierras bárbaras"). Now all human sounds cease as Doña Bárbara contemplates the river:

> ... sólo atiende a lo que, de pronto, se le ha adueñado del alma: la fascinación del paisaje fluvial, la intempestiva atracción de los misteriosos ríos donde comenzó su historia... ¡El amarillo Orinoco, el rojo Atabapo, el negro Guainía![3]

Only the sounds of nature are heard: "Cantan los gallos; ladran los perros de la población. Luego se restablece el

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[1]Leo, op. cit., p. 36.

[2]Doña Bárbara, p. 269.

[3]Ibid.

silencio y se oye volar las lechuzas."[1] But of all of these non-human elements, it is, significantly, the water which replaces the "speech" of the boatmen: "Pero el río se ha puesto a cuchichear con las negras piraguas."[2] And as she stops and listens, it is the water which whispers her epitaph: "Las cosas vuelven al lugar de donde salieron."[3]

The sequence closes with this leitmotiv of the novel, prophetically heard in the night, at the shore of the river on which Bárbara entered and will exit the novel. The subtleties of this passage have been justly praised by Leo as "la expresión insuperable del más profundo sentimiento simbólico."[4] It might be added that nowhere in the novels of Gallegos is montage as symbol more effectively employed.

Throughout Part I of the novel the stage for the major conflict has been carefully prepared. Part II begins with the inevitable confrontation of Santos and Doña Bárbara. Although warned by Mujiquita that the theory and practice of the law are two different things, and knowing that Ño Pernalete is in league with Bárbara, Santos insists on pressing the letter of the law. Finally Bárbara has met a man who stands up to her, a man of inner strength and principle, and in her unexpected admiration of him, she senses "la intuición fulminante del drama final de su vida."[5] From their first meeting, Doña Bárbara is another woman, and her

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid. [3]Ibid.

[4]Leo, op. cit., p. 35. [5]Doña Bárbara, p. 115.

every encounter with Santos increases her remarkable admiration for him and her opposite effect on him. Their first meeting also sets in motion an inverse pendulous movement whose momentum will carry Doña Bárbara toward Santos in a desire to renounce her past and gain his love, and which will carry a frustrated Santos toward the solutions of barbarie. Doña Bárbara's inner struggle is a mixture of passion, superstition, and a growing sense of nobility unknown to her before. Famous for her miserliness, she even gives a bonus to her workers--an act so unusual, despite her noticeable changes, that they bite the gold coins to see if they are real. The immense pride of this hombruna of the plains vanishes before her desire to belong to Santos, "aunque tuviera que ser como le pertenecían a él las reses que llevaban grabado a fuego en los costillares el hierro altamireño."[1] Her increasing nobility is witnessed as she toys with the idea of recurring to her "supernatural" powers, of asking her familiar, "el Socio," to aid her in capturing Santos' heart--"pero inmediatamente rechazó la idea con una repugnancia inexplicable."[2] And as she is experiencing these inner conflicts, her tortured mind transposes the image of her first love to Santos. When she looks wistfully toward "Altamira," she sees Asdrúbal and remembers his words, "que la hicieron sentir el primer estremecimiento de esta ansia de bien, que ahora quería adueñársele del corazón hastiado de violencias."[3]

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[1]Ibid., p. 145. [2]Ibid., p. 146. [3]Ibid.

From her first meeting with Santos, Doña Bárbara follows a path of no return. Her association with him is, however, tragically a series of genuine attempts to redeem herself in his eyes; but Santos is uncompromising, and even her genuine, and at times naive, efforts are thwarted. When she offers to return the lands that she has swindled from him, she makes the ultimate gesture. Nowhere is Doña Bárbara more human nor more sympathetically portrayed than when she tells Santos: "si yo me hubiera encontrado en mi camino con hombres como usted, otra sería mi historia."[1] This confession is the summary of her life, "un alma en una frase."[2] It is, at the same time, an indictment of civilization, a plea for understanding the protagonist as a human being; for Doña Bárbara is a product of the very barbarie that she has come to personify. She is a soul which, having come into contact with a representative of civilization, is trying desperately to redeem herself. She is as dual in nature as is "la llanura donde se agitaba," and Santos can only wonder if perhaps the abyss of her soul might also contain, like the llano, "sus frescos refugios de sombra y sus plácidos remansos, alguna escondida región incontaminada, de donde salieran, de improviso aquellas palabras que eran, a la vez, una confesión y una protesta."[3] But even this fleeting rapprochement of the two is interrupted when Santos rejects her offer and asks instead the return of Marisela's lands. Doña

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[1]Ibid., p. 149. [2]Ibid. [3]Ibid.

Bárbara, furious and increasingly jealous, grabs a revolver, but she cannot fire it. A change has come about in her life that cannot be undone, and yet the very cause of that change is inaccessible to her: "--No matarás. Ya tú no eres la misma."[1] From this point the decline of Doña Bárbara is inevitable.

Doña Bárbara's emotional crisis is treated in a chapter, "La dañera y su sombra," which reveals Gallegos as a master of psychological symbolism. Bárbara, having completely reverted to her primitive, superstitious beliefs, has managed to obtain a cord measurement which is the exact length of Santos' height. With this object in her possession, she believes that she can work a spell which will finally bring Santos within her power. Marisela, horrified at this possibility, confronts her mother (for the first and only time in the novel), and struggles to get the cord. Santos suddenly appears in the doorway, and while Bárbara stands by paralyzed with emotion, he removes Marisela, who has managed to retrieve the cord. What follows this dramatic confrontation of the three principal protagonists is one of the most masterful scenes in the novel. Doña Bárbara is left alone amid scattered objects of her "brujerías." In a state of emotional shock and autosuggestion, her inner crisis is exteriorized in material form before our eyes. The author illuminates the scene with the single, flickering light of a

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[1]*Ibid.*, p. 150.

votive candle which Marisela had knocked over in the struggle. The flickering light is the materialization of Bárbara's soul as she attempts to conjure up "el Socio": "... éste no acudía a presentársele porque, como en la mecha de la lamparilla, también había inconciliables cosas mezcladas en el pensamiento que lo invocaba."[1] But suddenly the familiar seems to be present, though not yet visible: "Y en seguida la impresión de haber oído una frase que ella no había llegado a pronunciar:--Las cosas vuelven al lugar de donde salieron."[2] The voice of "El Socio" speaking these words "con esa entonación familiar y extraña, a la vez, que tiene la propia voz devuelta por el eco,"[3] is nothing more than the materialization of Bárbara's own voice, her own inner thoughts. And then, suddenly, the familiar "appears":

> Doña Bárbara levantó la mirada y advirtió que en el sitio que hasta allí ocupara su sombra, proyectada en la pared por la luz temblorosa de la lamparilla, estaba ahora la negra silueta de "el Socio". Como de costumbre, no pudo distinguirle el rostro, pero se lo sintió contraído por aquella mueca fea y triste de sonrisa frustrada.[4]

Is the shadow which Bárbara sees merely her own shadow as the title implies? Bárbara herself is convinced of the reality of her vision. Here the author brings about a dialogue between this primitive woman and her familiar, which is perhaps nothing more than the materialization of the other portion of her "alma desdoblada":

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[1]*Ibid.*, p. 196. [2]*Ibid.*, pp. 196-197.

[3]*Ibid.*, p. 197. [4]*Ibid.*

> Convencida de haberlas percibido como emanadas de aquel fantasma volvió a formular, ahora interrogativamente, las mismas palabras que, de tranquilizadoras cuando ellas las pensó, se habían trocado en cabalísticas al ser pronunciadas por aquél.
> --¿Las cosas vuelven al lugar de donde salieron?[1]

At this point the author seems to step back from his protagonist, placing himself beyond a rational explanation of what is taking place. He allows the conversation to continue, but he gives no help to his confused protagonist, who searches for a solution, for the imaginary point where she went astray: "Y no se podía decir cuándo interrogaba ella y replicaba 'el Socio', porque ella misma no sabía dónde había perdido el camino."[2] The solution comes from the familiar, or perhaps from some inner recess so deep within her own soul that Bárbara cannot recognize the thought as her own and must attribute it to "el Socio": "--Si quieres que él venga a ti, entrega tus obras."[3] And with these words, which will be the motivating impetus of Doña Bárbara's actions throughout the rest of the novel, the flickering lamp extinguishes the scene:

> Alzó de nuevo la mirada hacia la sombra que por fin le decía algo que ella no hubiera pensado; pero la lamparilla se había extinguido y todo era sombra en torno suyo.[4]

As Doña Bárbara attempts to "entregar las obras," and consequently moves toward <u>civilización</u>, Santos' power of self control diminishes, leading him toward the ways of <u>barbarie</u>. He is thwarted at every turn (as is doña Bárbara): he

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[1]<u>Ibid</u>. [2]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 198.

[3]<u>Ibid</u>. [4]<u>Ibid</u>.

quarrels with Marisela, and when she returns to "La Chusmita" with her father, it seems that all attempts to educate her are in vain. In fact, all his attempts at progress seem lost: the fence posts are destroyed and the heron plumes which will bring enough money to replace them are stolen. The implacable ley del llano seems indestructible. Gradually Santos succumbs to the psychology of barbarie and the call of his past:

> ¿No eres un Luzardo? Haz lo que siempre hicieron todos los Luzardos... Los Luzardos no fueron sino caciques y tú no puedes ser otra cosa, por más que quieras. En esta tierra no se respeta sino a quien ha matado. No le tengas grima a la gloria roja del homicida.[1]

The event that sends Santos off along this road is the burning of the pastures in which the fence posts are destroyed. Although Doña Bárbara had nothing to do with it, Santos interprets it "como signo de una guerra definitivamente declarada," and she fatalistically interprets it "como obra de los 'poderes' que la asistían."[2] With Marisela no longer at his side,[3] Santos succumbs to barbarie: "--Después de todo--se decía--la barbarie tiene sus encantos, es algo hermoso que vale la pena vivirlo, es la plenitud del hombre rebelde a toda limitación."[4]

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[1]Ibid., pp. 160-161. [2]Ibid., p. 161.

[3]Gallegos emphasizes that Santos and Marisela have a mutually good effect on each other: "... mientras él la iba debastando de su condición silvestre, Marisela le servía de defensa contra la adaptación a la rustiquez del medio." (p. 123.)

[4]Ibid., p. 187.

All might have been lost had Marisela reacted differently. For while Santos momentarily retrogresses, his "product" holds firm in the new ways of civilization: Marisela finds that she cannot go backward, that she cannot return to the old life at "La Chusmita." As she turns her horse out to pasture, she knows that for her to return to her "monte" is not so simple: "Mas si la Catira podía volver a la libre vida del hatajo, no así Marisela a la simplicidad de su antigua condición montaraz."[1] During this period Marisela develops a tenderness formerly lacking in her--"Marisela parecía tener selladas en el corazón las fuentes de la ternura"[2]--, a deficiency which had always been a disturbing factor in her relationship with Santos.

The withdrawal of Marisela, her rival, is hopefully interpreted by Doña Bárbara as the fulfillment of "el Socio's" warning: "Marisela, la rival que le quitaba el amor de Santos Luzardo, regresando al rancho del palmar, eran las cosas que debían volver al lugar de donde salieron."[3] The same fatalism that allows Doña Bárbara continued hope, angers and defeats Santos in his ceaseless struggle with the law authorities. He finally declares that when he again encounters the law, it will be "con un machete en la mano... Que el atropello me lanza a la violencia y que acepto el camino."[4] Once Santos decides on this path, "la gloria roja" is not far

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[1] Ibid., p. 210. [2] Ibid., p. 183.

[3] Ibid., p. 220. [4] Ibid.

away. He succeeds in driving out certain of Bárbara's henchmen, the Mondragones, and a break-up of her power soon follows: "El Brujeador" is shot, not by Santos as he first thinks, and Bárbara herself betrays Balbino Paiba. Thinking her accomplices in crime are now taken care of, she again finds that all roads of redemption are closed to her, that inevitably her plans go awry: "Hasta allí siempre había sido para los demás la esfinge de la sabana; ahora lo es también para sí misma: sus propios designios se la han vuelto impenetrables."[1]

In his moment of emotional crisis, Santos turns to Marisela. At "La Chusmita" he finds her weeping over the body of her father, who died tortured by morbid hallucinations of being pulled down into the tremedal. Santos, convinced that Lorenzo's obsessive warning has been fulfilled, feels that his criminal act brands him also as a victim of "la devoradora de hombres." But Marisela, with her redeeming faith in Santos, explains that he could not have been "El Brujeador's" assassin, that because of the trajectory of the bullet, Pajarote must have committed the act. Marisela's faith and her revelation not only relieve Santos' mind of the burden of crime, but they bring to light the error of the path of violence he had momentarily followed. He finally realizes that all has not been in vain, that he has created a lasting monument to civilization in the person of Marisela.

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[1] Ibid., p. 240.

Most important, he discovers

> las fuentes ocultas de la bondad de su tierra y de su gente--su obra, inconclusa y abandonada en un momento de despecho, que le devolvía el bien recibido, restituyéndolo a la estimación de sí mismo... porque, viniendo de Marisela, la tranquilizadora persuación de aquellas palabras había brotado de la confianza que ella tenía en él y esta confianza era algo suyo, lo mejor de sí mismo, puesto en otro corazón.[1]

Doña Bárbara reaches her maximum emotional crisis when she returns from San Fernando to find that her men have deserted her and that Santos will soon marry Marisela. She has returned the stolen plumes, disengaged herself from her henchmen (which to her way of thinking was a purifying act), and protected Santos by insinuating to the law that Balbino Paiba was "El Brujeador's" assassin. But all her "marchas forzadas hacia el espejismo del amor imposible" have been in vain. Her first reaction to the forthcoming marriage is total reversion to her former character. She repents of ever having tried to "entregar las obras": "Pues las recojo, otra vez, y con ellas, ¡hasta la tumba!"[2] With this sinister thought, she approaches "Altamira" in the darkness, and, seeing Santos and Marisela through the window, "despacio y con fruición asesina, sacó el arma de la cañonera de la montura y apuntó al pecho de la hija, que hacía blanco a la luz de la lámpara."[3] The moment which follows is one of crucial tension in which the protagonist makes a climactic decision:

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 259-260. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 271.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 272.

> De pura luz de estrellas era la chispa que brillaba en la mira, entre la tiniebla alevosa, ayudando al ojo torvo a buscar el corazón de Marisela; mas, como si en aquel diminuto destello gravitara todo el peso del astro de donde irradiaba, el arma bajó sin haber disparado y, lentamente, volvió a la cañonera de la montura. Puesto el ojo en la mira que apuntaba al corazón de la muchacha embelesada, doña Bárbara se había visto, de pronto, a sí misma, bañada en el resplandor de una hoguera que ardía en una playa desierta y salvaje, pendiente de las palabras de Asdrúbal, y el doloroso recuerdo le amansó la fiereza.
>
> Se quedó contemplando, largo rato, a la hija feliz, y aquella ansia de formas nuevas que tanto la había atormentado tomó cuerpo en una emoción maternal, desconocida para su corazón.
>
> --Es tuyo. Que te haga feliz.[1]

Critics generally have dealt harshly with Doña Bárbara's sudden decision not to kill Marisela and to withdraw in defeat. However, in interpreting Doña Bárbara's act, one must keep in mind the violently changeable nature of the Gallegan protagonist.[2] Furthermore, the author has clearly established the tortured conflicts of Doña Bárbara's irrational mind. Once before she had tried to kill when she thought she had lost Santos, and she had also been unable to fire the gun. Perhaps the best defense of this climactic scene, if one is needed, is in the constantly emphasized fusion of the Asdrúbal-Santos image in Bárbara's mind. Giver her emotional state, it does not seem incredible that she makes a further (and logical) transference of herself to Marisela, as the text clearly states: "... de pronto, se había visto a sí

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[1]Ibid. Italics mine.

[2]See Dunham, op. cit., p. 232, for a discussion of this point.

misma." To have pulled the trigger would have been, in a manner, the self-infliction of the same horrible separation from Asdrúbal, only this time as the result of her own death. Given the thematic substance of the novel, any other decision on Doña Bárbara's part would have invalidated not only the author's ultimate message but the innate optimism which characterizes all of his work. This is the justification of Gallegos himself:

> ... y en vez de complacerme en el irremediable mal que aquella vez le hicieron a la enamorada de Asdrúbal, en vez de admitir como una fatalidad la aridez definitiva de su corazón, ya sólo capaz de odios implacables, le tomo a una estrella lejana, temblorosa sobre la negrura de la noche llanera--como los románticos, sí, con todo lo que ahora mueva a sonrisa despectiva--una pequeña chispa de su luz y la deposito sobre la mira del arma dispuesta al más espantoso de los crímenes, a ver qué pasa... Yo dejo ese pequeño destello de celestial fulgor en las miras de todas las armas que en mi tierra estén alzadas contra el derecho a la felicidad de mi gente.[1]

The circle of narrative action closes with a magnificent synthesis of Doña Bárbara's defeat. As she rides away from the scene of her former power, the natural spectacle around her takes on a direct symbolic parallel with her own existence. It is the dry season, and as the cattle lick the parched earth with swollen tongues, "así ella en su empeñoso afán de saborearle dulzuras a aquel amor que la consumía."[2] Further on she pauses to witness a violent drama of nature

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[1]Gallegos, "La pura mujer sobre la tierra," loc. cit., pp. 419-420.

[2]Doña Bárbara, p. 273.

at the tremedal. A young steer is struggling with a water snake and is finally pulled under. Very quickly the surface returns to its "habitual calma trágica," broken only by "pequeñas burbujas de gases":

> Una más grande, se quedó a flor de agua dentro de una ampolla amarillenta, como un ojo teñido por la ictericia de la cólera.
>
> Y aquel ojo iracundo parecía mirar a la mujer cavilosa...[1]

And while all sorts of aquatic birds fly overhead, "describiendo círculos atormentados en torno a la charca," the tormented circle of Doña Bárbara's life as cacica of the Arauca is permanently closed. There is speculation that she committed suicide by throwing herself into the tremedal; some say that more probably she was a passenger in "aquel bongo que, navegando de noche, ya eran varias las personas que lo habían sentido pasar, Arauca abajo..."[2]

Some critics, especially in early reviews of the novel, interpreted Doña Bárbara's outcome as an act of suicide. The author allows a reader a degree of choice as to the fate of his protagonist. In a way that parallels the mysterious indefiniteness of her origin ("de más allá ... de más lejos que más nunca"), Gallegos states that he himself is not sure of her fate: "Doña Bárbara desapareció de la noche llanera, después de aquella repentina iluminación de la madre frustrada y reprimida que llevaba en los abismos de

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[1]Ibid., p. 274.

[2]Ibid., p. 275.

su corazón. Yo mismo no sé hacia dónde cogió camino entre los innumerables de la sabana..."[1]

The leitmotiv ("las cosas vuelven al lugar de donde salieron") is fulfilled, and the novel closes as it opened--on the river, the entranceway to the novel's setting: "un bongo remonta el Arauca" is paralleled by "un bongo que bajaba por el Arauca y en el cual alguien creyó ver una mujer."[2]

Now nothing stands in the way of progress. Doña Bárbara's henchmen desert the region, as does Mr. Danger. Even the name of "El Miedo" disappears, and with the union of Marisela and Santos, "todo vuelve a ser Altamira."

The novel ends on a note of hope as limitless as the vast horizons of the

> ¡Llanura venezolana! ¡Propicia para el esfuerzo, como lo fue para la hazaña, tierra de horizontes abiertos donde una raza buena ama, sufre y espera!...[3]

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[1]Gallegos, "La pura mujer sobre la tierra," loc. cit., p. 420.

[2]Doña Bárbara, p. 1, p. 274. Italics mine.

[3]Ibid., p. 275.

CHAPTER IV

CANTACLARO, 1934

The situation in Venezuela was precarious for Gallegos following the publication of Doña Bárbara. Rumors of the novel's symbolism reached Gómez, who decided to ascertain whether or not the novel might contain thinly veiled attacks on his regime. Professor Dunham relates the colorful episode in which the dictator had the novel read to him at one sitting and then exclaimed: "Eso no es contra mí porque eso es muy bueno."[1] Wishing to reward the author, Gómez promptly named him Senator for the State of Apure, an act which eventually necessitated Gallegos' voluntary exile rather than associating himself with the tyrant's regime. Thus, a scant two years after the publication of the masterpiece which had brought him international acclaim, Gallegos found himself forced into an exile which would last until Gómez death in 1935.

Despite the financial and spiritual hardships of the following years, exile did not dim the fascination for the llano which had taken hold of the author. The same trip that

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[1]Dunham, op. cit., p. 65.

furnished him with the material for Doña Bárbara provided more than adequate data for another treatment of the llano: the ambiente, the legendary figures, a voluminous collection of coplas, and a deep psychological insight into the character of the inhabitants of the llano. Thus, even as Gallegos presents the great conflict between civilization and barbarism, he reveals (through Santos Luzardo) a deep and lasting admiration for the llanero, who in his duality of nature is representative of the virtues and defects of his race as a whole:

> Y vio que el hombre de la llanura era, ante la vida, indómito y sufridor, indolente e infatigable; en la lucha, impulsivo y astuto; ante el superior, indisciplinado y leal; con el amigo, receloso y abnegado; con la mujer, voluptuoso y áspero; consigo mismo, sensual y sobrio. En sus conversaciones, malicioso e ingenuo, incrédulo y supersticioso; en todo caso, alegre y melancólico, positivista y fantaseador. Humilde a pie y soberbio a caballo. Todo a la vez y sin estorbarse, como están los defectos y las virtudes en las almas nuevas.[1]

In Doña Bárbara, Gallegos begins to develop the figure of the llanero as a synthesis of national character; at the same time he fixes his attention on the essentially dramatic quality of the llano, scene of a deadly struggle between the forces of good and evil taking place in "las almas nuevas" of his young nation. The llanura venezolana--"propicia para el esfuerzo como lo fue para la hazana"[2]--is a

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[1]Doña Bárbara, p. 191. Italics mine. The author incarnates these two qualities in the brothers of Cantaclaro: Florentino, el fantaseador, and José Luis, el positivista.

[2]Ibid., p. 275.

land of heroic proportions and heroic acts: "Es la vida hermosa y fuerte de los grandes ríos y las sabanas immensas, por donde el hombre va siempre cantando entre el peligro. Es la epopeya misma."[1]

The perspective of Gallegos' epic vision, limited in Doña Bárbara to two opposing antithetical forces, broadens in scope in his second novel of the llano, Cantaclaro. During his first year in exile, Gallegos delivered, in New York, a lecture entitled "Las Tierras de Dios."[2] This work is vital to the interpretation of Cantaclaro, for in it the author expresses a new concept of the llano, which he calls "las tierras de Dios," not because of divine predilection but because these regions have been formed last in the creative process:

> Porque hay tierras donde todavía trabaja Dios y otras donde ya trabajan los hombres; tierras donde aún relampaguea la tormenta creadora y tierras donde ya serenó. Y es que los días de la creación fueron largos y el trabajo comenzaba con el alba y duraba hasta la noche, y las tierras que aparecieron en la mañana ya han tenido tiempo de madurar, mientras que las que fueron creadas en la tarde están verdes todavía. Por lo cual hay tierras viejas y tierras jóvenes, unas donde el hombre ya ha tenido tiempo de hacer su obra, otras que están saliendo apenas de las manos de Dios. Éstas, calientes todavía del calor de las manos creadoras...
>
> Y es porque en esas tierras nuestras, de impresionante silencio y trágica soledad, se siente que todavía no ha terminado el día sexto del Génesis, que aún circula por ellas el soplo creador. Y por eso las llamo las tierras de Dios.[3]

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[1]Ibid., p. 188. Italics mine.

[2]Gallegos, Una posición en la vida, pp. 112-144.

[3]Ibid., pp. 116-117. Italics mine.

In this lecture, delivered a scant three years before the publication of Cantaclaro, the author presents the central theme and imagery of the novel: the spiritual, political and racial genesis of Venezuela. In the novel this idea is voiced by Juan Parao: "Varias veces le he escuchado decir al doctor Payara que Venezuela está todavía en la madrugada del primer día de la Creación, cuando las cosas empezaron a salí de la nada."[1] The land is in a continual metamorphosis agitated by a "torbellino creador"; it is a virgin land whose "influjo satánico" is the drive toward barbarism. But as the land is recently created, so is the man who inhabits it: "Porque así como hay una tierra cálida, del ardor de las manos creadoras que aún trabajan sobre ella, hay un alma recién salida de la fragua, puro fuego alardoso todavía."[2] This newly formed man is characterized by two outstanding traits: "una imaginación inflamable y una fiera propensión al individualismo."[3] As always, Gallegos denounces "la acción individual sin control alguno" as the greatest threat of his nation's formative process:

> ¿Que nuestro individualismo ha sido nuestro mal? Es cierto; mas por desorientados, como son peligros todas las fuerzas de la naturaleza mientras no se encauzan y se subordinan a una finalidad útil.[4]

It is this fierce individualism which is the basis of disorientation and fracaso.

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[1]Cantaclaro, p. 136.

[2]"Las Tierras de Dios," loc. cit., p. 123.

[3]Ibid. [4]Ibid., p. 142.

The author's purpose in Cantaclaro is to create the genesis epic of his country, to probe the national psychology in the turmoil of its formative process. In doing so, Gallegos re-examines the dominant constants which form the thematic substance of his novels: the necessity of awakening the alma dormida and of forming a unified social conscience; the futility of armed revolution; the need for economic, political and social reforms; the betrayal of the people by a composite of environmental factors, especially their government and those public officials who abuse their position of trust.

Cantaclaro is, then, a creation myth translated into the idiom of the llano. If the author's technique is to complement his theme, his method must be distinct, and Cantaclaro does mark an abrupt departure from the overall style of Doña Bárbara. This is the key to the brilliance of the novel—its subtle subordination of theme to artistry. The novel's structure, tone, and imagery and characterizations are in perfect harmony with the author's message. Cantaclaro is not technically inferior to Doña Bárbara; it is technically distinct from that novel. The upheavals of a creative process cannot be as methodically expounded as the definitive battle between two opposing enemies. Gallegos' very purpose in Cantaclaro is to capture the atmosphere of cosmic chaos, frustration, isolation and death which are the theme, tone and structure of his novel. Interpreted in this manner, criticisms of lack of "artística cohesiva" and "la seguridad

técnica de Doña Bárbara"[1] reveal a misunderstanding of the author's technique in Cantaclaro and of the novel's artistic and symbolic unity.

The llano of Santos Luzardo's dream, neatly ordered with rows of fence, has not yet come to pass in Cantaclaro. Here the atmosphere is that of myth; one is never sure of what is happening, of whether or not the apparitions which dimly move about are real. Where in Doña Bárbara all was traced with firm detail,

> en Cantaclaro todo se esfuma, se vuelve borroso, impreciso, difuso, todo parece inventado, imaginario, irreal, fantasmagórico, remoto ... todo cobra una personificación singular, única. Obra tierna, lírica y mesiánica que se contrapone a Doña Bárbara como el estar despierto al estar soñando.[2]

The llano of Cantaclaro is one of metamorphosis and movement, of shadowed imagery still awaiting the illuminating morning light: "Venezuela está todavía en la madrugada del primer día de la Creación, cuando las cosas empezaron a salí de la nada."[3]

The author employs a wealth of folkloric details to establish tone. The llano into which Cantaclaro rides is populated with duendes, familiares, fantasmas, and mysterious voices. Throughout the novel there is a palpitation of the

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[1]Arturo Torres-Rioseco, "Rómulo Gallegos," in Grandes novelistas de la América hispana (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949), p. 66.

[2]Liscano, op. cit., p. 113.

[3]Cantaclaro, p. 136.

unknown which stems from a residual sinister force in the land itself propitious for the superstitious beliefs which give substance to the many corridos and pasajes. The "llano bello y terrible" of Doña Bárbara has become "una inmensidad misteriosa y obsesionante" in Cantaclaro. The llano has become an eerie domain in which even words take on a mysterious significance and power:

> En estos sitios callados y desiertos están suspendidas en el aire, o mejor dicho en el silencio, a orillas del camino, todas las palabras frustradas, por no haber sido recogidas por el interlocutor necesario en toda conversación, que se pronunciaron al altravesarlos pensando en alta voz. Están mudas, pero sentimos que nos hablan, porque son palabras y necesitan ser recogidas por oídos inteligentes. Esas son las almas en pena ... que se aparecen por estos lugares pidiendo oraciones que las saquen del purgatorio. Por estas tierras vagan en el limbo del silencio todas las palabras que van dejando por el camino los que viajan hablando a solas.[1]

The copla, as well as the self-dialogue, breaks the monotonous silence of the llanero's lonely wanderings. Of all the folkloric devices employed in Cantaclaro, the most outstanding is the copla, a four line verse closely akin to the traditional Spanish ballad. It is the llanero's poetic means of expressing himself and all he finds around him: "... pues para cada cosa que se necesite decir hay en el Llano una copla que ya lo tiene dicho y lo expresa mejor, porque la vida es simple y desprovista de novedades, y porque los espíritus son propensos a las formas pintorescas de la imaginación."[2] The llanero, "cantando en coplas sus amores,

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[1]Ibid., pp. 22-23. [2]Doña Bárbara, p. 167.

sus trabajos y sus bellaquerías," is both the author and the audience of "la poesía naciendo."[1]

For Gallegos, the copla is the most authentic expression of the psychological and racial components of his people:

> Algo de esto lo dejaban traslucir las coplas donde el cantador llanero vierte la alegría jactanciosa del andaluz, el fatalismo sonriente del negro sumiso y la rebeldía melancólica del indio, todos los rasgos peculiares de las almas que han contribuído a formar la suya...[2]

In Cantaclaro, the author personifies the poetic spirit of his race in the figure of Florentino Coronado, Cantaclaro, the coplero or wandering minstrel whose songs are the product of "la musa ingenua y chispeante del hombre en contacto con la naturaleza"[3]: "Los versos están en las cosas de la sabana; tú te la quedas mirando y ella te los va diciendo."[4]

The copla is a synthesizing element which is symbolic in itself, for it is a distillation or condensation of meaning within its four lines which leaves much to be filled in by the hearer's imagination. The same definition applied by Pedro Salinas to the ballad may also be applied to the copla: "It is a poem condensed into a small space and which expands as it enters our soul."[5] In its potential of expansion into multiple meanings, the copla is a symbolic device par excellence.

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid., p. 191.

[3]Ibid. [4]Cantaclaro, p. 8.

[5]Pedro Salinas (introductions) and Eleanor L. Turnbull (ed.), Ten Centuries of Spanish Poetry (New York: Grove Press, 1959), p. 79.

One of the most interesting characteristics of Cantaclaro is the diverse manners in which the author integrates the copla into the artistic framework of the novel. Its primary function is as the "tema conductor de las diversas situaciones y conflictos."[1] The copla, as a synthesis, constantly serves to summarize and reinforce. The major functions of the copla may be categorized as the following:

1) To define character and accent individual and collective psychological traits. In this function the copla serves to summarize the basic characteristics of the protagonists: the competitive and carefree spirit of the king of the minstrels,

> Desde el llano adentro vengo
> tramoliando este cantar.
> Cantaclaro me han llamado.
> ¿Quién se atreve a replicar?[2]

the isolation and self-sufficiency of Juan Crisóstomo Payara,

> Sobre la tierra la palma,
> sobre la palma los cielos;
> sobre mi caballo yo
> y sobre yo mi sombrero.[3]

the hopeless social and economic situation of Juan, el veguero,

> Hasta los palos del monte
> tienen su separación:
> unos sirven para leña
> y otros para hacer carbón.[4]

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[1]Pardo Tovar, op. cit., p. 180.

[2]Cantaclaro, p. 1.

[3]Ibid., p. 65.

[4]Ibid., p. 31.

and the humor, irony and tragedy in the trajectory of the life of Juan Parao:

> El del caballo jerrao
> con el casquillo al revés,
> pa que lo busquen po un lao
> cuando po el otro se fue.[1]

2) To present the state of mind of a protagonist in his reaction to events and to others; in the following copla, José Luis reveals not only his acceptance of Rosángela, but his growing love for her:

> Aquella tormenta fiera
> que anoche se desató,
> una preciosa Centella
> en la casa nos dejó.[2]

3) To reinforce plot by summarizing past action or foreshadowing future events.[3]

4) To function as a repetitive symbolic element. Many coplas, in whole or in part, take on new meanings through repetition and gradually become charged with symbolic weight. Thus only a line will conjure up a character in the reader's mind, or a characteristic attitude or event.

The extensive use of folkloric material, especially the copla, then, rather than an interrupting or digressive element, "pertenece al desarrollo mismo de la novela, y aparece como fundido en su acontecer. Brotado de la tierra y del hombre, surgido allí como lazo espiritual entre aquélla

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[1]Ibid., p. 59. [2]Ibid., p. 187.

[3]Cf. notes 2 and 3, p. 130, for examples of this point.

y éste, lo folklórico expresa la tierra y ayuda a conocer al hombre que sobre ella canta, habla, cuenta, teme y espera."[1]

The structure of Cantaclaro marks an abrupt departure from the tightly organized narrative of Doña Bárbara. In the latter, the author moves surely and steadily through a carefully prepared chain of events toward a logical climax, the defeat of barbarism. The nature of the figure whom Gallegos selects as his central protagonist determines to a great extent the episodic structure of Cantaclaro. The legendary figure known in Venezuela as Florentino, or Cantaclaro (whom the Devil had nicknamed Catire Quitapesares), is closely akin to Santos Vega, the payador who also faced the Devil in a famous contrapunteo:

> Florentino el araucano, el gran cantador llanero que de todo lo dijo en coplas y a quien ni el mismo diablo pudo ganarle la apuesta de a cuál improvisara más, que una noche vino a hacerle disfrazado de cristiano, porque aquél, cuando ya no le alcanzaba la voz, sobrándole todavía el ingenio, y faltando poco para que los gallos comenzasen a menudear, le nombró en una copla las Tres Divinas Personas y lo hizo volverse a sus infiernos, de cabeza con maracas y todo.[2]

Both the structure and the central protagonist of Cantaclaro are defined in the title of the first chapter, "La copla errante." Cantaclaro is, first, the copla: the personification of the poetic, fanciful spirit of his people. Second, he is errante: the personification of the "espíritu vagabundo" of his people. He opens the novel as a solitary,

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[1]Araujo, op. cit., p. 34.

[2]Doña Bárbara, p. 168.

wandering figure appearing suddenly on the llano and will exit the novel, alone, losing himself in the limitless expanse of the land and the legend. But in his passing and in his encounters along the way, he is a device for presenting and analyzing different segments of Venezuelan society facing the problems at hand. Each of these social segments is personified in an individual. The episodic structure of the novel reinforces the isolation and frustration of these individuals who are searching for their spiritual definition, for a means of channeling themselves into a proper place in their society. These individual figures are gradually united through their relationship to Cantaclaro, who, as the unifying force of the novel, draws seemingly unrelated characters and episodes into a total perspective from which there emerges a composite symbol.

Cantaclaro is the personification of the copla, and as such, he is a synthesis of the interior drama of all those around him, a reflection of the various facets of the soul of his people. In the first chapter, he draws a vivid portrait of his psychological make-up through a series of the coplas for which he is renowned.

His attitude toward danger and toward women is frivolous, and he intends to stay free of encumbering responsibilities:

> Hoy te quiero y hoy te olvido
> pa recordarte mañana.
> Que si me quedo contigo
> yo pierdo y tú nada ganas.[1]

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[1]Cantaclaro, p. 8.

His poetic spirit finds expression in and inspiration from all those things around him; as he explains, the source of his verse is in the very nature of the land: "Los versos están en las cosas de la sabana; tú te la quedas mirando y ella te los va diciendo":[1]

> La mañana está saliendo,
> los caminos van andando
> y Florentino está oyendo
> sin que le estén conversando.[2]

Material possessions rob Cantaclaro of his freedom as much as does a woman's love; both are to be enjoyed and disposed of in good time. He may work months to earn money only to gamble it away or lavish it quite generously on parrandas for all to enjoy:

> Dos cosas hay en el mundo
> que no sirven pa viajar:
> la plata, por lo que pesa,
> y el no quererla gastar.[3]

The wanderlust is supreme in his life. Despite the rational pleas of his brother, José Luis, el positivista, Florentino is irresistibly drawn to the open llano: "Porque de mí te aseguro que no hay cosa más sabrosa que un camino largo por delante..."[4]

Thus, at the end of the first chapter, Florentino has defined his own character, and, leaving his brother to tend the land and care for their widowed mother, he sets the narrative action in motion by undertaking a journey--"Porque

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid., p. 9...

[3]Ibid., p. 13. [4]Ibid., p. 9.

le oyó cantar a un vaquero una copla de otros lados, obra de un cantador que se reputaba invencible..."[1] The novel opens with this search, apparently to encounter the legendary rival, but this quest takes on greater symbolic meaning as Florentino comes to forget the rival. In his interminable wandering he will find precisely what he was not looking for:

> ¡Ah, malhaya un trotecito
> que no terminara nunca!
> ¡Ah, malhaya quién hallara
> aquello que nadie busca![2]

This copla synthesizes Florentino's fate. He is actually, though unknown to himself, departing on a journey which will terminate in his spiritual awakening. For Florentino, the collective spirit of his race, "aquello que nadie busca" is the "curse" of a responsible outlook on life, of a social and patriotic conscience before unknown to him. The change that gradually takes place in the protagonist is symbolized by the loss of his gift of verse. Thus, the final copla of the first chapter will be answered later in the course of the novel by:

> ¡Ah, malhaya quién pudiera
> con esta soga enlazar
> al viento, que se ha llevado
> lo mejor de mi cantar![3]

Florentino's first encounter on his journey is surrounded by an aura of mystery. He spends the night camped with a guide and his client, a young man ill with malaria

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[1]Ibid., p. 14. [2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., p. 190, 238.

who refuses to give his name and is known only as "El Caraqueño."[1]

Through this first encounter, Florentino is faced with a choice. The old guide, who knows the young minstrel through his reputation, senses that the object of his journey is to face the "cantador nuevo ... que, según cuentan, no es propiamente un hombre, sino el mismo Diablo en figura humana, pues y que las maracas con que se acompaña se quedan impregnadas de olor de azufre."[2] But Florentino's adventurous spirit is captured by another "Devil." Already his course is changing as he listens to "El Caraqueño," in a feverish delirium, describe Juan Crisóstomo Payara, known to Florentino through the many pasajes based on his exploits as "El Diablo del Cunaviche." He momentarily forgets the purpose of his journey: "Más que el deseo de medir sus facultades con el ya legendario cantador a quien iba a desafiar así fuese el mismo Diablo, como decían, pudo la curiosidad del enigma de Hato Viejo Payareño y hacia allá cabalga escotero..."[3]

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[1]Later we learn that "El Caraqueño" is Martín Salcedo, a young student from Caracas on his way to meet with Dr. Payara. Inadvertently Florentino's wanderings will also bring him into contact with Payara, where he will again meet Salcedo. The final meeting of the two will take place over the dead body of Juan Parao as both simultaneously give up the idea of joining the revolution and go their separate ways. Already the narrative line of the novel is set in motion by what at first seem chance meetings, which later considered in the total scheme of the novel are skillfully interwoven human relationships. When brought together again at the propitious moment, they create a total symbolic and artistic unity.

[2]Cantaclaro, p. 18. [3]Ibid., p. 28.

When Florentino leaves the others behind, he advances into a nebulous and melancholy landscape:

> Humaredas de incendios lejanos que hace días enturbia la atmósfera de la sabana, más densas a medida que se interna hacia el sur, hacen el aire sofocante y penosa la marcha bajo el sol sin brisa que lo mitigue...
>
> Y la sabana por todas partes desierta, inmensa y melancólica bajo la luz espesa con que se desangraba el sol, degollado por el horizonte, entre la bruma de la humareda.[1]

What Florentino encounters is a human vignette as brutally devastating as the landscape. Only the barking of a mangey dog and the slow movements of a man and his wife tilling the barren soil animate the scene of complete misery. The man, Juan, el veguero, is a typical case of the small farmer or homesteader in whom the author synthesizes the slow ruin and destruction of a certain element of Venezuelan society:

> La acción embrutecedora del desierto, la vida confinada al palmo de tierra de la vega perdida en la inmensidad de la sabana, siervos solitarios de la gleba que sobre aquel mal terrón de ella nacieron y en ella enterrarían sus huesos, el funesto chinchorro siempre colgado, encurvando y reblandeciendo las energías, el rudimentario alimento del topocho y de la yuca que degeneraban en la tierra sin cultivo del rastrojo y el agua pútrida de la charca o del jagüey, carato de aquellas larvas que les hinchaban los vientres y les chupaban las fuentes vitales, la miseria sin límites pero sin horizontes, como la llanura en aquella tarde brumosa y la ignorancia absoluta, habían hecho de aquel hombre y su mujer duendes de sí mismos, con cenizas de alma en la mirada.[2]

Nowhere in the novels of Gallegos is there a more desolate picture of the tragedy of "la vida campesina," of the total

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., pp. 29-30. Italics mine.

waste of the isolation and ignorance, of the need for social, scientific and economic progress. These people, "duendes de sí mismos," must be roused from their spiritual lethargy. But it would seem that nothing could rouse Juan--"Ni una chispa de inteligencia brillaba en aquella mirada..."[1] The story which he tells Florentino is the tragedy of a lifetime of hopelessness. His children dead of hunger, fever and snakebite, he had fallen in debt to the "pulpería del hato" and thence into the clutches of the local Jefe Civil, Coronel Buitrago:

> Se enamoró de lo mío--a ellos siempre les sucede eso con lo ajeno--, y hoy con una multa, porque las vacas y que andaban sueltas por la población, y mañana con un arresto por unos palos de más que me pegué, como yo nunca tenía plata pa pagá las multas, me jue montando una cuenta y un día jue y vino a embargarme dos vacas pa pagársela él mismo... Y vendí lo que me quedaba de lo mío y me vine a trabajá en lo ajeno... Y aquí me tiene, resignao a mi suerte...[2]

The encounter with Juan, el veguero, is the first preoccupation for the heretofore carefree spirit of Florentino. From this moment, he begins to undergo a gradual spiritual evolution. His jubilant nature is dimmed, and he begins to analyze both human and natural phenomena with a new vision. The llano, mysterious but beautiful, heretofore the scene of adventure and romantic conquest, is now also a place of destruction. One must choose his way more carefully than merely allowing his horse to select a path, for not all the "caminos del llano" are the same:

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[1] Ibid., p. 29. [2] Ibid., p. 32.

> Todos están listos para ponerlo en marcha y todos son iguales: los que conducen y los que extravían. La sabana los ofrece, como una mano sus rayas al abrirse, pero no indica cuál es el mejor. Aunque es ancha y llana la tierra que cruzan, casi todos son senderos angostos para un solo viajero... ¡Y son muchos estos caminos muertos por donde va muriéndose el Llano!...[1]

As Florentino rides away from Juan's hut, he carries on a self-dialogue, typical of the llanero who spends so much time alone, "desdoblándose en el habitual interlocutor de sus monólogos dialogados."[2] As he rides hour after hour across the deserted landscape, this self-dialogue reveals the growing separation of the dualities of Florentino's character. This device allows the author a new technique of exploration of character, a new manner of making concrete inner conflict. Heretofore the author had set at odds antagonistic personalities; now he develops the "double-self," and as the self-dialogue progresses from the rational to the non-rational (for Florentino is falling ill with sunstroke and fever), the intensity of his separation of character becomes acute. Once again the solitude and nebulous landscape are underscored: "La atmósfera, saturada del humo de las quemas sofoca y abrasa los pulmones... Por momento se va haciendo más densa la niebla de humaredas que invade la llanura."[3] Florentino is becoming lost and he cries out to the land to show him the way:

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[1] Ibid., pp. 33-34.

[2] Ibid., p. 33. [3] Ibid., p. 34.

--¡Llano, llano, llano, llano! ...

Cuatro veces te he mentado
y a ninguna has respondido.[1]

Superficially, we are led to believe that Florentino is losing his way because of the smoke and dust. Half singing and half talking, he shows a growing concern as opposed to his habitual carefree, fearless spirit:

> --Aguárdate ahí, Florentino, que el caso no es de cantar. ¿Que se hizo la queserita? ¿Cómo que se la tragó la tierra? ... Completica vi la casa en piernas y hasta distinguí al quesero y ahora resulta que no hay sino banco de sabana pelada. Y no fue hilacha de sombrero, porque ya se la había arrancado... Espejismos los llaman, Florentino...[2]

His "happy self" tries to bolster his spirits as he urges his horse on:

> Bueno, tripas, ¿están oyendo? Por el momento no hay nada de lo dicho. Y apura el paso, retinto... ¡Llano! ¡Llano! ¿Por qué lo hiciste tan grande y tan seco, Dios mío? ...¿Verdad, retinto, que no nos vendrá mal? Seis horas llevamos atravesando este reventadero de sol sin una jacíita de sombra. ¡Llano! ¡Llano!...
>
> Cuatro veces te he mentado
> y a ninguna has respondido.
> ¿Quién me manda a estar buscando
> lo que no se me ha perdido?[3]

Now definitely lost, Florentino is becoming delirious; he thinks he sees a figure but then is sure he is alone: "El sol que me lleva ciego. --¿Ciego y viendo visiones?--porfió el interlocutor ilusorio..."[4]

--¿Què te pasa, Florentino?

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., pp. 34-35. [4] Ibid., p. 35.

> Y la pregunta, materializando de nuevo al duende, provoca otra vez la áspera respuesta, con lo primero que a mano le viene:
>
> --Esta barba que me trae fastidiado. Me parece que no soy yo cuando me siento tan peludo...[1]

Laughter interrupts the self-dialogue, almost as if coming from another--this is the same technique employed in the "La dañera y su sombra" of Doña Bárbara, where Bárbara carries on a self-dialogue with her "Socio." By making both Bárbara and Florentino unsure as to whether or not they are talking (or laughing), the reader is kept off balance to stimulate the mystery and fantasy of what is taking place.

> Oye una risa socarrona y luego, dando rienda suelta al diálogo, deliberadamente:
> --No se aflija, compañero ... ya debemos de estar cerca... A menos que vayamos perdidos, porque con esta humasera... ¡Qué perdidos vamos a ir! Será la primera vez que yo no llegue a donde me haya propuesto. Este es el camino. ¡Arree y no se aflija!
> --¿Afligirme yo? ¡Ah caramba, compañero! Usted como que no me conoce.[2]

Finally the separation of character is so complete that it becomes difficult for Florentino to identify with one or the other:

> Una brusca interrupción pone fin al diálogo y restablece la completa lucidez de su pensamiento:
> --Ahora sí que estoy de cuidado. Se me han revuelto los nombres y no sé cuando habla Florentino y cuándo Cantaclaro...[3]

The confusion here--delirium brought on by sunstroke and fever--is greater than at a literal level of meaning.

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[1] Ibid. Italics mine. [2] Ibid. Italics mine.

[3] Ibid. Italics mine.

Cantaclaro and Florentino are becoming two separate entities, the first standing for carefree lack of social responsibility, and the latter gradually becoming a socially conscious man who feels the necessity of orienting himself, weighing his decisions. In Florentino's own mind, the two, synonymous as the novel opened, have begun to separate and to signify two distinct ways of life.[1]

Now, in the culmination of this delirium, Florentino comes to a fence, but as he prepares to dismount to open the gate a voice answers: "--No se moleste, que ya lo hice."

> Era un hombre de aspecto distinguido y acomodado. Vestía de blanco, calzaba polainas de charol y espuelas de plata y usaba un sombrero aludo bajo el cual lo único que se le apreciaba del rostro era la barba negra y tupida...[2]

Florentino cannot see the man's face, but "la voz no le era desconocida y las palabras ya le parecía haberlas oído antes..."[3] As he passes through the gate and turns to thank the stranger, he finds that he is alone: "La sabana estaba sola. Un remolino de polvo al ras del suelo se alejaba por el camino..."[4] Florentino is perplexed (as is the reader). Did he meet a stranger or was it an apparition? Why was the man's voice familiar? Was he the stranger Florentino greeted earlier on the road? The usually intrepid Florentino believes

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[1]The separation of these dual aspects of his nature are later recognized by the protagonist and are further emphasized: "¡Se acabó Cantaclaro! ... Hay que hacer algo más serio, Florentino... Hay que hacer algo, Florentino." Cf. note 3, p. 150.

[2]Cantaclaro, p. 36. [3]Ibid. [4]Ibid., p. 37.

he has met an apparition:

> Por ser la primera vez
> que yo en estas tierras canto,
> me hago la cruz en la frente
> por librarme del espanto.[1]

The mystery grows, and only later do we associate the "apparition" dressed in white with the legendary "espanto" of Dr. Payara's ranch, "El Blanco de Hato Viejo"--Payara himself. Throughout the novel the figures of Payara and "El Blanco" are interfused in a method parallel to that of the duality of Cantaclaro and Florentino.

Significantly, Florentino's next encounter with Payara is also in a confused mental state, when, after finding his way to Hato Viejo, he is taken in by Payara's foreman, Juan Parao. His horse dead of fever, Florentino himself collapses in a state of delirium. As he comes to, he remembers being tended (bled), and he makes a significant association between 1) the Devil who has defied him and the Diablo del Cunaviche, and 2) between Payara and the Blanco de Hato Viejo:

> Era el Diablo del Cunaviche ganándole la porfía, acosándolo con sus coplas recién sacadas del infierno, rojas y quemantes, como la sangre del retinto, como los medanales de la sabana, inmensa lengua seca de tanto cantar ... como la sangre que le estaba chupando de las venas abiertas el Blanco de Hato Viejo, que se iba volviendo negro a medida que chupaba, que se iba poniendo rojo a medida que oscurecía...[2]

Now, even through this delirious vision, the author is clarifying Florentino's encounter at the gate. The description

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid., p. 44.

of Payara is the same: "--¡Ese es el hombre que me abrió la puerta del medanal!"[1] And when he is told that he is invited to convalesce at Hato Viejo, Florentino's answer has the double meaning of this new understanding: "--Así me ha dicho el blanco... Ya van dos veces con ésta que me abre camino expedito."[2]

Juan Crisóstomo Payara is a unique character in the Gallegan novel. He represents an unbending moral code in a society bound by compromise. His iron will and fanatical concept of justice have earned him the nickname of El Diablo del Cunaviche. The entire course of his life is marked by a gradual withdrawal from the society around him into an abstract and hermetically sealed world. The son of a wealthy and landed family, he studied medicine only to renounce his career when local officials tried to force him to sign fraudulent death notices for yellow fever victims by changing them to a disease "de que podían morirse públicamente los venezolanos."[3]

From the practice of medicine, Payara retreated into the pharmacy inherited from his father, "refugiado en un margen penumbroso de su ciencia..."[4] But if he had physically retired from the struggle, intellectually he continued to voice his rigid diagnosis of his country's ills: "La enfermedad de Venezuela no es para paños calientes y bálsamos

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[1]*Ibid.*, p. 46. [2]*Ibid.*

[3]*Ibid.*, p. 66. [4]*Ibid.*, p. 67.

anodinos, sino para hierro de cirujano. El que quiera redimir a este país de sus males tiene que inmunizarse, primero contra la compasión."[1] But Payara, like Unamuno's hero in Nada menos que todo un hombre, is not immune to sentimentality. Even with "aquel trágico concepto de la vida," Payara "se asustó de la aridez sin brote de ternura, se vió al borde de la crueldad, ya empedernido, tuvo miedo de sí mismo y pensó que le era necesaria la compañía dulcificante de una mujer."[2]

When Payara falls in love with Ángela Rosa, the daughter of his former teacher, his happiness is short lived. He discovers her on the eve of their wedding about to drink poison and forces the girl's pitiful confession of violated honor and her subsequent mistreatment by the despicable Carlos Jaramillo, son of a family with a long tradition of antagonism with the Payara family. The impact of this confession pushes Payara even further back into the recesses of a fanatical concept of morals and justice. He agrees to go through with the marriage, but only to save the honor of the girl's father.

Payara takes Ángela Rosa to Hato Viejo, the country home of his family around which is woven the legend of the spirit of its builder, who declared in his will that no woman should ever live there. According to the legend, his spirit,

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[1] Ibid., p. 68. [2] Ibid.

> ... aún después de muerto vigilaba sobre la finca para que en ella no se estableciesen ni se detuviesen mujeres, pues cuando, sin embargo, esto sucedía, no tardaba en aparecerse su fantasma a no permitirles reposo.[1]

In this tortured atmosphere, Ángela Rosa lives only long enough to give birth to a baby daughter. She commits suicide by drinking a bottle of poison which, according to popular belief, was left within her reach by "El Blanco." Payara, although remorseful that he left the poison there, is not able to decide whether or not he did it on purpose. This thought does not long disturb him, for the same rigid concept of justice which led him to personally "execute" Carlos Jaramillo, precludes his imagining any other fate for Ángela Rosa: "... pues contra este Payara tremendo no había reacción espiritual que pudiese atormentarlo, tan lleno como estaba de sí mismo que no admitía ni la imaginación de otro modo de ser y de entender la vida que fuese más justo que el suyo."[2]

Following these tragic events, Payara left the child, Rosángela, with his sisters in the capital and disappeared for more than three years. When he returned from this voluntary exile, supposedly spent with an Indian tribe, he was determined to enter the national cause: "No basta hacerse la propia justicia; es necesario tratar de ejecutarla en todo el país. Vengo decidido a dedicarme a la guerra contra los bandidos que se han adueñado de Venezuela."[3] But his faith

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[1]*Ibid.*, p. 77. [2]*Ibid.*, p. 78. [3]*Ibid.*, p. 79.

in the revolution is soon shattered as he finds himself alone in his ideals, while those about him are fighting for personal gain:

> "Voltear la tortilla", derrocar y sustituir a los hombres de presa que se habían apoderado del gobierno, por otros iguales que luego harían lo mismo que aquéllos, era toda la ideología de los revolucionarios venezolanos.[1]

Payara abandons the revolutionary cause and returns to Hato Viejo, accompanied by all his frustrated hopes and ideals. He hopes to find the peace of total isolation, but when his sisters die, Rosángela is left alone, and against his better judgement he allows the girl to come to live with him at Hato Viejo. The relationship between the young girl and the man she believes to be her father forms the most intense human conflict of the novel. Both are tortured by the relationship. Rosángela realizes subsconciously that Payara is not her father, but at the same time she consciously feels guilty for loving him. Her constant declarations of--"si no fueras mi padre, me enamoraría de ti"--agitate Payara's inner turmoil. He is torn by the lie that he has created and his growing love for the girl. True to character, he attemps to tell her the truth, but she stops him, afraid of this truth and afraid of losing him. Their situation is hopeless, for without the truth, their love is incestuous.

It is at the height of this conflict that Florentino comes to convalesce at Hato Viejo. It is obvious from the

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[1]Ibid., p. 80.

first meeting of the two that Payara and Florentino are opposite poles. Payara's entire life has been devoted to his rigorous ideals of justice and to rational purposes, to order and exactitude. Florentino, on the other hand, is the epitome of the vagabond, inoffensive and likeable; but his existence is a type of barbarie simply through the wasting of his talents and his lack of orientation. As such, he can only be attacked by Payara: "Desde pequeñito ha sido usted fanteaseador y por lo que lleva andado por tal camino me parece que ya no tendrá remedio."[1]

Payara is an existentialist whose motto is: "... cada cual es dueño de hacer de su capa un sayo."[2] He cannot understand the waste of energy that Florentino represents, and his acid comments agitate Florentino's spiritual evolution, begun with the encounter with Juan, el veguero.

> Pero ¿no siente usted, alguna vez, necesidad de contraer deberes y obligaciones que le impriman a su vida el sentido y la razón de ser de que carece? Y no hablemos de las grandes obligaciones del hombre ante la humanidad y de ciudadano ante su país, ya que no lo creo a usted capaz de tamañas preocupaciones, sino de los deberes más inmediatos y sencillos: casarse, tener hijos, labrarles una fortuna. ¿Cree usted que a sus hijos, si es que los tiene o cuando los tenga, van a serles útiles sus coplas, única herencia que usted les dejará?[3]

Part II of the novel deals with Florentino's continued spiritual awakening spurred on by Payara and others he comes in contact with at Hato Viejo. Principal among

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[1]Ibid., p. 49. [2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., pp. 49-50.

these figures is Juan Parao, who complements Juan, el veguero, in that both are the personification of large masses of the people who are waiting and vainly searching for a leader, for orientation. Where Juan, el veguero, represents the white and indigenous masses, Juan Parao represents the Negro. Alone and without family, Juan Parao soon learned that his lot was to serve one master after another. He was taken in by the Jaramillos, and later faithfully served Carlos Jaramillo. Carlos rewarded Juan by failing to help him defend himself against a murder charge, and Juan fled to the llano. There he lived as a cattle rustler until he became associated with Payara, then General Payara, during the revolution.

When Florentino meets Juan Parao, he is the aging bárbaro, "degenerado en caporal de sabana" within the confines of Payara's ranch. In his youth, Juan's dream, his "gran idea" was to be the great Negro liberator of his people. Renowned for his feats during the revolution, he had followed his general home to Hato Viejo. His dreams are all but forgotten until Florentino's arrival with his inevitable coplas and corridos, and soon Juan's loyalty to Payara begins to weaken:

> Era imposible que Juan Parao acertase a descubrir que este comienzo de desligamiento ... había comenzado antes cuando, a la llegada de Florentino, cantador de sus antiguas hazañas, experimentó las primeras nostalgias de sus tiempos de cuatrero indómito...[1]

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[1]Ibid., p. 120.

Florentino seems to act as a catalytic agent on the emotional state of all those around him. He has established in his mind the relationship between Payara and the mysterious "El Blanco," whose frequent appearances accompanied by the sound of hoofbeats in the night now dominate the environs of the ranch. Juan Parao and the servants have also become aware of "esa manera de mirá el doctor a la señorita..."[1] Now Rosángela overhears the servants repeating Florentino's story of "El Blanco" who opened the gate of the ranch; they interpret Florentino's arrival as a fortunate event, hoping that the girl will fall in love with him: "... por eso fue que el blanco corrió el tranquero; pa que viniera a evitá lo que no debe de sucedé."[2] Rosángela hears Payara coming and going in the night, and she begins to understand the relationship between him and "El Blanco":

> ¿Qué relación existiría entre aquellas furtivas salidas nocturnas y las apariciones del duende de Hato Viejo? ¿Por qué los peones de éste designaban con el mismo nombre de "el blanco" a su padre y al aparecido? ... la respuesta correspondía a una interrogación formulada en lo insondable del alma... Y ya esto era como ante el paisaje, inmensidad misteriosa.[3]

It is Florentino who, in an indirect way, communicates his suspicions, as well as those of the others, to Payara. The two are inspecting the herd which Florentino is to purchase, when they witness a phenomenon of the animal world which has a direct parallel in the life of Payara:

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[1] Ibid., p. 108. [2] Ibid., p. 111.

[3] Ibid., pp. 112-113.

> El repudio de las potrancas ya aptas para el amor. A coces y dentelladas las despedía el padrote de aquella yeguada, porque eran sus hijas y el instinto, vedándoselas, se las hacía aborrecibles.
>
> Y esto bastó para que, de pronto tomase cuerpo y contornos precisos un pensamiento, o sombra de pensamiento, difuso a través de todas las reflexiones de Florentino desde que se interesase en el misterio de Hato Viejo y especialmente de las encontradas inclinaciones que experimentaba respecto a Payara.[1]

Whén Florentino expresses his comment at the sight, Payara is quick to understand the full implications of its double significance: "El padrote echando a las hijas con las cuales no se debe ayuntar. Hasta los animales respetan esa ley."[2] With this comment, Florentino has forced Payara to face the situation realistically: "... lejos de ofenderlo con calumnia alevosa, Florentino lo había despertado de aquel sueño de sí mismo, dándole ocasión para que se reintegrase."[3]

What the author is exploring in the second part of the novel is the awakening of the alma dormida of his central protagonists. Parallel to their search for orientation, Gallegos introduces a study of the Messiah complex, skillfully integrated into the total architecture of the novel. The llano is the setting par excellence of the Messianic appeal. There the open spaces traditionally have given rise to a nomadic existence. The symbolism is easily carried further to the level of the national character of a psychologically nomadic people who traditionally have searched for a leader or

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[1]Ibid., p. 145. [2]Ibid. [3]Ibid., p. 148.

a channel for energies.

Florentino's arrival at Hato Viejo had coincided with the dry season, when, according to custom, the dry lands are burned just before the rainy season to clear them for new growth. As the thick clouds of smoke obscure the landscape, it reflects the atmosphere of blind searching of the human protagonists:

> Una onda de inquietud se iba extendiendo por el llano y en todas partes miradas recelosas exploraban el horizonte. Aquellas humaredas que hacía días se deslizaban sobre la llanura, ya se volvían tan densas que era casi imposible orientarse por entre ellas, y como no podían ser explicadas por incendios de la sabana, no mayores aquel año que los acostumbrados por tal época, el ánimo supersticioso del llanero tendía a atribuírselas a causas sobrenaturales.[1]

The atmosphere of superstition which prevails throughout the novel is propitious for the appearance of one who can explain the causes of the humaredas, for the appearance of a "prophet": "Era un hombre vulgar, ya viejo, sin fulgor visionario en la mirada ni acento mesiánico en la voz. Quienes lo conocieron no se explican cómo pudo fanatizar a tanta muchedumbre."[2]

The prophet's appeal is that of a Christ translated into the idiom of the llano: "--Llanero, abandona el trabajo que te esclaviza al hombre, ensilla tu caballo y sígueme."[3]

> Era una voz antigua, pero siempre oportuna, a cuyo encuentro salía el alma del llanero: la voz

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[1]Ibid., p. 114. [2]Ibid., p. 123. [3]Ibid., p. 127.

> de la sabana, del vasto horizonte abierto al nomadismo... Pero quizá también la gran voz mesiánico, cuando alguien se le aparece y le dice, como decía aquel visionario:
>
> --Sólo yo conozco el camino y el que me siga será salvo...[1]

The appearance of the prophet, besides being a device for exploring a constant of national character, advances the emotional conflicts of all concerned and causes them to analyze themselves. Payara is forced to wonder whether he should again approach "la realidad venezolana"; but Juan Parao's appeal that Payara lead the forces grouped around the prophet falls on deaf ears. Payara has turned his back on his own society, convinced that the same vicious circle to which he fell victim once before will be carried out again:

> ... cuando renuncié a la guerra ... no lo hice por despecho, como algunos se habrán imaginado, sino por convicción absoluta de que con este pueblo, con ese rebaño que va detrás de ese ... hombre con esa manada de bárbaros no se puede ir sino a la barbarie, que la llaman democracia.[2]

Juan Parao turns to Florentino and tries to convince him to become the military leader of the prophet's band. Once again Florentino is questioned as to whether he intends to do something concrete with his life, as Parao's words echo Payara's: "¿No le provoca a usté hacé una cosa grande, de aquí p'alante en su vida?"[3] Juan Parao knows that he cannot be that leader--"Negro no llega a los postres, catire"--, but where Payara had looked cynically on the prophet's band, Juan, with the traditional hope he represents, interprets

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[1]*Ibid.* [2]*Ibid.*, p. 126. [3]*Ibid.*, p. 134.

the prophet's appearance as opportune:

> ... porque sentíamos que algo dormía en nuestro corazón y teníamos menester de que alguno, más aprendío, nos lo dispertara... Esa gente lo que necesita y lo que en el fondo va buscando, es jefe.[1]

The appearance of the prophet coincides with a turning point in the protagonists' lives. Juan Parao joins the prophet's band. Payara withdraws from the world and renounces all causes. Rosángela, guilt stricken at loving the man who spiritually and before the world is her father, begs Florentino to take her away with him. As the two leave Hato Viejo, Florentino sees a shadowy figure near the gate and understands that Payara's presence is a mute consentment to his taking the girl away by "... abriendo con sus propias manos la puerta del medanal, que bien podían ser las mismas que a él se la abrieron ocho días antes..."[2] Thus the Payara cycle closes as it began, with a fusion of Payara the man and the legendary "El Blanco," the materialization of his inner turmoil as opposed to the cold rationality of the former.

The final chapter of Part II, "Recogiendo los pasos," might well serve as the theme of the third part of the novel. Florentino's wanderings have introduced him to the major protagonists of the novel. Now he begins an inverse journey which will carry him over the same path and back to his home. As he passes back by the home of Juan, el veguero, Florentino notices that another cross has been added to the small graveyard which marks the scene of Juan's sad existence.

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[1]Ibid., p. 135. [2]Ibid., p. 157.

It is the grave of his wife, Eufemia, "pobre mujer del campo venezolano siempre preñada de muerte."[1] Juan, finally roused from his spiritual lethargy, has burned his fields, hacked his dog to death in a fit of rage and abandoned the place forever.

The impact of all he has seen and experienced opens a new vista for Florentino, no longer the "tenorio errante" capable of taking advantage of the young girl in his care:

> Era como si la aventura del rapto de Rosángela, primera con la cual no perseguía un propósito torpe o mezquino o simplemente frívolo, le hubiese comunicado a su existencia--hasta allí sin rumbo ni finalidad útil, fuerza perdida como la del viento en la sabana--una mejor razón de ser, abriéndole ya el alma a otra mejor comprensión de la vida y en particular de su tierra llanera y de la gente que sobre ella amaba, sufría y esperaba.[2]

Florentino now decides that he, like the others, must find some direction, must take some action:

> ¿Cómo es posible que yo ande cantando por la tierra donde suceden estas cosas? ... ¡Se acabó Cantaclaro! Y se acabaron los amorcitos y los viajes sin rumbo... Hay que hacer algo más serio, Florentino... Hay que hacer algo para que en esta tierra un Juan el veguero no tenga tres hijos y una mujer y se le mueran todos, de hambre y de fiebres y de brujos... Y de jefes civiles, como el que arruinó a Juan el veguero...
>
> Hay que hacer algo, Florentino.[3]

From now on his life will have a new direction, a new road: "No el camino de afuera, que ya lo conocía, sino el de adentro, por donde un hombre va recogiendo sus pasos perdidos."[4]

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[1]Ibid., p. 160. [2]Ibid., pp. 161-162.

[3]Ibid., p. 162. Italics mine.

[4]Ibid., p. 163.

It is Florentino who must undertake the new road; Cantaclaro is finished:

> Ese cielo tan rosado
> es que el día está rompiendo.
> Esta fiesta se ha acabado;
> Cantaclaro se está yendo.[1]

The third and final part of the novel concerns the outcome of the protagonists who have resolved to take some action to change the course of their lives. Florentino, true to his change of heart, takes Rosángela to the protection of his mother's home. For the first time in his life he intends to settle down, to help his brother retain their land, now threatened by Buitrago, the same Jefe Civil who ruined Juan, el veguero. Florentino is honest in his attempt for a new life, for he has genuinely fallen in love with Rosángela. But he is not so reformed that he has lost all desire for the vagabond freedom that means so much to him. Just as he is about to utter "la palabra definitivamente comprometedora," he is stopped by the sound of a distant cowboy's voice singing one of his own coplas.

> Hoy te quiero y hoy te olvido
> pa recordarte mañana,
> Que si me quedo contigo
> yo pierdo y tú nada ganas.[2]

The fatalism of his nature has not changed. He accepts this as a sign and remains silent, thinking to himself: "--Lo mejor es lo que sucede. ¡Y después dicen que las coplas no sirven para nada!"[3]

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[1]Ibid., p. 164. [2]Ibid., p. 199. [3]Ibid.

José Luis, too, has been undergoing a spiritual crisis which reaches a climax as the two brothers are indulging in their favorite sport, hunting tigers with lassos. José Luis falters almost too long before lassoing a tiger about to kill his brother. As the two return home, José Luis tells Florentino the story of twin brothers whose love of the same girl caused one of the brothers to murder the other during a tiger hunt. This story, one of the best examples of the use of an entire tale as symbolic explanation of an event in the novels of Gallegos, is only too well understood by Florentino. But more than the attempt on his life, it reveals José Luis's love for Rosángela and opens a way of repaying his brother for the many years he has cared for him.

Leaving Rosángela in the care of his brother, Florentino undertakes his last journey, the one which he interrupted to reach Hato Viejo. Now the human character of Florentino seems to dissolve. The legendary character has been set in motion: "... y ahora las voces de los caminos parecíanle que le contaran, no su historia vivida, sino su leyenda soñada."[1] Now he is the figure who opened the novel wandering across the llano: "Pero ya Florentino cabalgaba otra vez al azar de los caminos, por donde su historia se perdería en la leyenda."[2]

Florentino's first stop is at a neighbor's house where friends are awaiting him at a fiesta. When he arrives

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[1] Ibid., p. 222. [2] Ibid., p. 223.

he is told that a stranger is asking for him, but the stranger has disappeared without being seen. Florentino understands the significance: "Ya sé quién era ese forastero misterioso. Ese es el Diablo, el cantador que y que se estaba apareciendo por los llanos de Barinas, que como yo no fuí a buscarlo ha venido por mí."[1] Florentino has once again become Cantaclaro, yet he is somehow not the same self-confident mistrel sure of defeating any rival; now he has the presentiment that he may be defeated: "Pero ya volverá, después de las seis de la tarde, cuando haya pasado el tiempo que el Señor estuvo en la cruz, y cargará conmigo..."[2]

When the news arrives of an armed uprising against the government and of its Negro leader, Florentino leaves in search of his friend, Juan Parao. The final chapter of the novel is the author's strongest appeal against the horrors and futility of the armed uprising as the solution to his nation's evils. Florentino, drunk and excited, arrives at the scene of the battle and is confronted by one living being in the scene of destruction--a woman, who, having witnessed another such holocaust years before, had gone mad. In her delirious speech, she recreates the death of Buitrago, a machetazos, at the hands of Juan, el veguero, who after the death of his wife had joined first the prophet and later Juan Parao. Juan, el veguero, "aquel hombre paciente y pacífico,

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[1]Ibid., p. 225.

[2]Ibid. Italics mine. Cf. note 2, p. 156.

de hablar calmoso y mansa mirada bestial," had taken the only path of action open to him by joining the revolution. Buitrago's death at his hands is an act of revenge for a whole lifetime of injustice from which he finally rebelled. But his rebellion is without transcendence:

> --Y cuando ya del Coronel no quedaba sino el olor de carne chamuscá, soltó el hombre fiero su machete rabón, dió unos pasos, calambriao por la furia, se echó en el suelo contra la paré de un rancho y se quedó muerto como si tal cosa. Muerto del todo y sin decí ni ñe, como un pajarito.[1]

Thus died Juan, el veguero, betrayed by his nation, by those entrusted to protect his rights. He had awakened too late from his spiritual lethargy and in the wrong cause. He symbolizes a tragic waste of human potential:

> Aquella ruina humana a quien primero sostuvo una inmensa resignación y luego una cólera inmensa...
>
> Porque en habiendo saciado su venganza ya aquella ruina humana carecía de aliento que la sostuviese. ¡Juan, el veguero, que habría sido un hombre bueno y paciente hasta el fin, si el destino y los hombres lo hubiesen dejado vivir tranquilo, con su mujer y sus hijos y sus cuatro vacas y sus dos potrancas![2]

The way of revolution has been no kinder to Juan Parao, mortally wounded when Florentino reaches his camp. Like so many, he discovered too late that the prophet's cause was no real attempt to better the country: "--Lo del profeta y la muchedumbre que lo seguía, realmente no era sino pura superstición, si no simple deseo de vagar un poco a la aventura."[3] Juan Parao's death, like that of Juan, el veguero,

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[1] Ibid., p. 231. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., p. 235.

is a betrayal, a betrayal of Parao's "gran ideal" and his continual hope and search for a leader:

> ¡Negro bueno, pobre negro de mi pueblo venezolano, que supiste ser sufrido y rebelde al mismo tiempo! ... Una voz de tu sangre, religión de tu raza mesiánica, te hizo luego seguir a un hombre en quien viste un jefe. ¡Pobre pueblo mío que siempre andas buscándolo! ...¡Negro bueno, sufrido y rebelde! ¡Pueblo mío que lo llevas en tu sangre como una vergüenza y en tu pecho como una tormenta! ¿Hasta cuándo estarás muriendo a los pies de tu jefe?[1]

Cantaclaro is, in the final analysis, a sharply pessimistic novel populated with fracasados. The failures of the protagonists represent two extremes in the collective masses which they personify. One extreme is the road to revolution which the two Juans have adopted as their solution to the nation's ills. But this is not the answer: "--Éste no es el camino; por aquí no saldremos nunca de la barbarie."[2] The useless sacrifice of "la rabia heroica y tremenda de Juan, el veguero," and "el candoroso idealismo de Juan Parao" is a plea for the orientation of the tragic waste of human potential which they represent: "Son dos fuerzas muy nuestras que es necesario desviar de este camino para siempre."[3]

Juan Crisóstomo Payara embodies the other extreme: total withdrawal. His failure is the most tragic, for his preparation and opportunity to do something constructive were greater than that of the others. Payara, who could have been a Santos Luzardo, withdrew into a total and wasteful isolation.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 237-238.

[2] Ibid., p. 238. [3] Ibid.

The figure of Florentino is a synthesis of the great individual and national fracaso. As the unifying force of the novel and the "lazo espiritual" which relates the total experience, Florentino is the one protagonist who could have profited from all he had witnessed. But his spiritual evolution, which seemed so promising, is abortive. Florentino is reabsorbed by Cantaclaro:

> Florentino, que no llevaba ninguno [camino] determinado, siguió solo y se perdió en las desiertas lejanías de la sabana.
>
> Y penetró en la leyenda.[1]

But Gallegos' protagonist is not allowed the legendary defeat of the Devil. The triumph of Doña Bárbara is reversed as the author warns that the satanic forces of barbarie can defeat a people who cannot or will not conquer their spiritual disorientation and undertake a constructive and unified path toward progress:

> Tiempo después llegó a El Aposento la noticia.
>
> --A Florentino se lo llevó el Diablo...[2]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

CHAPTER V

CANAIMA, 1935

Of Gallegos' three master works, the two which have most consistently been compared as "obras gemelas" are Doña Bárbara and Cantaclaro. Such a comparison is valid with regard to the study of the llano region and its inhabitants; but technically and thematically, Cantaclaro is much more closely linked to Canaima. These two novels, written within a year of each other, share the dominant thematic constant of the struggle between civilization and barbarism--but the struggle is not that of Doña Bárbara, where these two antithetical principles, incarnated in Santos and Bárbara, met in the definitive battle. In Cantaclaro and Canaima, the author's vision of the epic struggle is keyed to civilization as the orientation needed to channel the potential of his racial and national circumstance toward the progress he wants for his country. Inversely, barbarism is seen as all those factors which thwart such a productive concentration of potential.

Gallegos' vision in both Cantaclaro and Canaima is that previously cited in his essay, "Las tierras de Dios": the creative process of his young nation is still in the throes

of a time of genesis, where the forces of good and evil (civilization and barbarism) are struggling in a primitive scene, in

> una tierra sobre la cual todavía se agitaba el torbellino de donde surgieron el agua, el viento y el rayo ... de un mundo sacudido por las convulsiones del parto de los abismos creadores.[1]

To complement the genesis epic of the llano setting of Cantaclaro, Gallegos moves to the most virgin of his country's regions, the Guayana jungle of Western Venezuela. Here he finds the most intense of the inherent geographical dramas of Venezuela, abundant with material for another great epic:

> El drama de la selva virgen ... grandioso panorama de epopeya ... las calamidades de aquella región sustraída al progreso y abandonada al satánico imperio de la violencia, eran de la naturaleza de las maldiciones bíblicas.[2]

Cantaclaro had as its theme the waste of human potential (national human resources), lost or sacrificed uselessly through lack of orientation or adequate leadership. In Canaima Gallegos incorporates, in symbolic parallel, the waste of natural resources in the fabulously wealthy Guayana region. Nowhere in the novels of Gallegos is the author's symbolic setting more intrinsically coordinated with his central theme than in Canaima. The Guayana region, in its untapped potential and inherent dangers, intensifies the search for orientation; it is the region of man's greatest struggle

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[1] Canaima, pp. 209-210. Cf. Chapter IV, notes 2 & 3, p. 119.

[2] Ibid., pp. 64-65.

precisely because Nature is at its strongest here.

Thus the theme of the bala perdida, the man seeking orientation in life, becomes more intensely dramatic as the struggle between man and nature intensifies. If man felt himself "empequeñecido" by the vast expanse of the llano, the jungle threatens to swallow him. The "uno solo y mil caminos distintos" of the llano become a deadly maze of tributaries and caños that thread the jungle: "... laberintos de corrientes y contracorrientes estrepitosas por entre gargantas de granito sembradas de escollos."[1] Above this bewildering labyrinth rises the jungle, a pagan and primeval temple, dark and foreboding, where no orienting light may penetrate:

> ... la selva virgen, que es como un templo de millones de columnas, limpio de matojos el suelo hasta donde la fronda apretada no deja llegar los rayos solares, solemne y sumida en penumbra misteriosa, con profundas perspectivas alucinantes.[2]

In this pagan temple, the pendulum swings between the forces of good and evil, incarnated in the primitive Indian gods: Canaima, the evil deity who looses the arms of nature against man and invades his spirit as "el mal de la selva," and Cajuña, god of good, who is consistently defeated in the titanic struggle of the two:

> --¡Canaima!
> El maligno, la sombría divinidad de los guaicas y mariquitares, el dios frenético, principio del mal y causa de todos los males, que le disputa el mundo a Cajuña el bueno. Lo demoníaco sin forma determinada y capaz de adoptar cualquier apariencia, viejo Ahrimán redivivo en América.

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[1] Ibid., p. 168. [2] Ibid.

> Es él quien ahuyenta las manadas de dantas, que corren arrollándolo y destrozándolo todo a su paso; quien enciende de cólera los ojos como ascuas de la arañamona, excita la furia ponzoñosa del cangasapo, del veinticuatro y de la cuaina del veneno veloz, azuza el celo agresivo y el hambre sanguinaria de las fieras, derriba de un soplo los árboles inmensos, el más alevoso de todos los peligros de la selva, y descencadena en el corazón del hombre la tempestad de los elementos infrahumanos.[1]

The myth of Canaima is the primary nucleus of the novel. It is the basis for a great metaphor or vast analogy in which the conflict between the forces of good and evil in the human protagonists is a continuation of the struggle between the "divinidades selváticas." The mysterious influence of Canaima is the incarnation of the primitive and barbaric region he dominates. His power struggle with Cajuña is unleashed in the human spirits which penetrate his domain in two manners: 1) in the inner turmoil arising from the conflict of good and evil impulses, and 2) in the conflict between the individual and the forces of nature (Canaima), between lo humano and lo salvaje.

A complex of subsidiary metaphors and similes is built on the concept of the multiple forms of nature which Canaima is capable of adopting. Principal among these is the metaphorical analogy of the course of the rivers which dominate the novel and the course of human life. As the rivers merge to form the great Orinoco, so Marcos Vargas becomes a human synthesis of his racial disorientation: both are "aguas perdidas" representative of an enormous flux of

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[1] Ibid., p. 170. Italics mine.

energies which are lost to the nation.

As the author fuses man and river in symbolic parallel throughout the course of the novel, the balance of power swings toward nature, as the latter is humanized or personified and man is inversely dehumanized until by the novel's end Nature has become the most powerful protagonist. This process of personification of nature is initiated with the first passage of the novel, as the reader penetrates the world of Canaima crossing the threshold or "Pórtico"[1] of the Orinoco, entranceway to the jungle region. The passage is a litany to the Orinoco in which each paragraph (or stanza) ends with the refrain of the boatmen calling out the depth of the water:

> Barra del Orinoco. El serviola de estribor lanza el escandallo y comienza a vocear el sondaje:
> --¡Nueve pies! ¡Fondo duro!
> Bocas del Orinoco. Puertas, apenas entornadas todavía, de una región donde imperan tiempos de violencia y de aventura...
> --¡Ocho pies! ¡Fondo blando![2]

The course of the boat marks the passage of one day on the Orinoco, a day depicted in the nature imagery characteristic of the novel. The sunrise is painted first through a vegetal metaphor,

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[1]The title of the first segment of Chapter 1. In Canaima Gallegos divides each chapter into three or four segments giving each an individual title; these are employed in much the same manner as the individual chapter titles of Doña Bárbara and Cantaclaro. Although some go beyond a literal meaning, the majority are not employed with symbolic intent.

[2]Canaima, p. 9.

> Una ceja de manglares flotantes, negros, es el turbio amanecer,[1]

and then through an animal metaphor which relates both elements, ave-amanecer:

> Bandadas de aves marinas que vienen del Sur, rosarios del alba en el silencio lejano.[2]

The jungle dawn is suggested, rather than described, through the colors of bird plummage:

> De la tierra, todavía soñolienta, hacia el mar despierto con el ojo fúlgido al ras del horizonte, continúan saliendo las bandadas de pájaros. Los que madrugaron ya revolotean sobre aguas centelleantes: los alcagrises, que nunca se sacian; las pardas cotúas, que siempre se atragantan; las blancas gaviotas voraces del áspero grito; las negras tijeretas de ojo certero en la flecha del pico.[3]

Not only does the author employ the colors of the birds to paint the dawn, but he characterizes each of the birds with a peculiar instinct, thus adding to his jungle setting a sense of the voraciousness of hungry birds of prey.

As the sun rises the river comes into full view. Now begins an extensive metaphor in which the Orinoco, from its birth until its emptying into the ocean, is personified as the father-river whose waters separate at the delta and flow into the ocean like many sons sent out into the great sea of life:

> Término fecundo de una larga jornada que aún no se sabe precisamente dónde empezó, el río niño de los alegres regatos al pie de la Parima, el río

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid. Italics mine.

> joven de los alardosos escarceos de los pequeños raudales, el río macho de los iracundos bramidos de Maipures y Atures, ya viejo y majestuoso sobre el vértice del Delta, reparte sus caudales y despide sus hijos hacia la gran aventura del mar.[1]

The passage ends with the river, now personified, as a synthesis of Gallegos' symbolic theme: the Orinoco is immense and powerful; its potential is unlimited:

> ¡Agua de monte a monte! ¡Agua para la sed insaciable de las bocas ardidas por el yodo y la sal! ¡Agua de mil y tantos ríos y caños por donde una inmensa tierra se exprime para que sea grande el Orinoco![2]

But the theme of improperly channeled human and natural resources transcends this particular river and region. As always, Gallegos' purpose is to analyze his theme not on an isolated regional scale but rather related to the national circumstance as a whole. Thus the river becomes an amalgamation of all the waters of Venezuela:

> Las que manaron al pie de los páramos andinos y perdieron la cuenta de las jornadas atravesando el llano; las que vinieron desde la remota Parima, de raudales en chorreras, de cataratas en remansos, a través de la selva misteriosa, y las que acababan de brotar por allí mismo, tiernas todavía, olorosas a manantial. Todas estaban allí extendidas, reposadas, hondas, y eran todo el paisaje venezolano bajo un trozo de su cielo.[3]

From this point, the dominant analogy throughout the novel is that of the multiple rivers which, twisting and turning tortuously, finally reach the Orinoco and pour fruitlessly into it. The multiple river imagery parallels the

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10. Italics mine.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 12. [3] *Ibid.* Italics mine.

multiple Canaima concept: the many rivers, like the multiple human types of the novel (who are expressions of Canaima's evil in man), wander across the Venezuelan scene in a frustrating search for the proper outlet for their energies.

In the last stage of the river's personification, it finally synthesizes the social criticism inherent in the region in which it culminates. As the father-river prepares to empty into the sea--"ya próximo al mar inevitable"--the multiple rivers have become "cuentas confusas" which the Orinoco must put in order before dividing the inheritance (sus caudales) among his sons:

> Término sereno, como el acabar de toda grandeza, ya próximo al mar inevitable, el Orinoco se ensimisma en los anchos remansos de las bolinas del Delta para arreglar sus cuentas confusas, pues junto con las propias, que ya no eran muy limpias, trae revueltas las que le rindieron los ríos que fue encontrando a su paso. Rojas cuentas del Atabapo, como la sangre de los caucheros asesinados en sus riberas; turbias aguas del Caura, como las cuentas de los sarrapieros, a fin de que fuese riqueza de los fuertes el trabajo de los débiles por pobres y desamparados; negras y feas del Cunucunuma, que no es el único que así las entrega; verdes del Ventuari y del Inirida, que se las rindió el Guaviare; revueltas del Meta y del Apure, color de la piel del león; azules del Caroní, que ya había expiado sus culpas en los tumbos de los saltos y con las desgarraduras de los rápidos... Todas estaban allí cavilosas.[1]

As the waters mingle like the turbulent currents of greed, corruption and violence of the region, the day declines as the Orinoco empties into the sea. Night falls on the desolate scene of wasted potential, of "vastos silencios para

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[1]Ibid., Italics mine.

inmensos rumores de pueblos futuros..."[1]

The second segment of Chapter I introduces "Guayana de los aventureros": "La de los innumerables ríos de ignotas fuentes que la atraviesan sin regarla--aguas perdidas sobre la vasta tierra inculta..."[2] Here men and nature are fused into one force with "rumbo incierto por donde debieran ser ya los caminos bien trazados..."[3] The entire region is a theater of contrasts, of contradictions as diametrically opposed as the two primitive deities who dispute its control. The very wealth of natural resources forms the greatest paradox. The lands are drought ridden in the midst of abundant water. Even the gold, diamond and rubber enterprises are more a curse than a benefit to the nation:

> Al purguo y al oro lo llaman la bendición de esta tierra, pero yo creo que son la maldición. Despueblan los campos y no civilizan la selva, dejan las tierras sin brazos y las familias sin apoyo y corrompen al hombre, desacostumbrándolo del trabajo metódico, pues todos nuestros campesinos ambicionan hacerse ricos en tres meses de montana purgüera y ya no quieren ocuparse en la agricultura. Lo desmoralizan profundamente, pues la tragedia del purguo--aquí, como el caucho en Rionegro y la sarrapia en el Caura no consiste sólo en que empresarios sin conciencia exploten al peon por medio del sistema del avance--dinero y bastimentos a cuenta de la goma que saquen--que casi equivale a comprar un hombre por cuatro reales y para toda la vida, sino también en que el peón le toma el gusto al venderse de ese modo y cuando coge el dinero del avance no le importa malgastarlo, pues ya está pensando en el fraude de la piedra dentro de la plancha de goma y en fugarse de la montaña debiendo lo que se ha comido... Eso de la riqueza que producen el oro y el caucho sólo es verdad para los privilegiados.[4]

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[1] Ibid., p. 13. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., pp. 27-28.

The study of the Messiah complex is given an interesting variation here. This racial trait is personified not in a human figure, such as the "profeta" of Cantaclaro, but in the region itself, "una tierra de promisión," land of the fabulous El Dorado. The magnetic desire for quick fortune parallels the hypnotic power which Canaima exercises in his jungle domain--both have a devastating influence on man caught in the dual spell of "el espectáculo mismo de la selva antihumana, satánica, de cuyo fascinante influjo ya más no se libra quien la ha contemplado..."[1]

The very name of the region is imbued with Messianic connotations--"Guayana era una palabra mágica"[2]--which arouse "emoción religiosa" in the hearts of those who hand themselves over to its power: "Guayana era un tapete milagroso donde un azar magnífico echaba los dados y todos los hombres audaces querían ser de la partida."[3] The odds are against man in this game of fate. He suffers the same tragic human waste of the "manada de ovejas" who followed the prophet's fanatical call and sacrificed themselves uselessly in Cantaclaro. There, the road to revolution channeled the band of men, who, having lost all direction, found momentary legitimacy of being in the hopeless cause. The Guayana region also seemingly offers a physical haven for those pieces of human debris who are swept into it, many of them escaping the law. But Canaima attacks them furiously with the myriad of

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[1]Ibid., p. 14. [2]Ibid. [3]Ibid., p. 13.

weapons he incarnates:

> Porque junto al tesoro vigilaba el dragón. El mortífero beriberi de los bajunbales caucheros, las fiebres fulminantes que carbonizan la sangre, las fieras, la arañamona y el veinticuatro de las mordeduras tremendas, la culebra cuaima del veneno feroz, el raudal que trabuca y vuelve astillas la frágil curiara que se arriesga a correrlo...[1]

In the end, the Messianic promise is once again the road to destruction. Those few who return from the jungle are only the apparent victors of the great adventure. Their tragic waste is that of the river which carries them back to the city; ill and strangely changed, they bear the signs of Canaima's influence: "... los hombres mismos, que ya eran otros, con una extraña manera de mirar, acostumbrados los ojos a la actitud recelosa ante los verdes abismos callados..."[2] Like the Orinoco, "ya arreglando sus cuentas," they squander their earnings before the dazzled eyes of those who have not undertaken the adventure. The Orinoco is the same kind of apparent victor; it shares the terrible secret (and trajectory) of its human counterparts and continues to flow enigmatically toward seeming promise. But it is a disappointment to those who look to it expectantly as a guiding force; its potential wasted, it cannot divulge the "magic answer" expected of it, "y retardando el secreto que querían arrebatarle las miradas ansiosas, el gran río avanzaba solo, callado y solemne ante la expectación de la ciudad."[3]

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid., p. 15.

[3] Ibid., p. 14.

The final part of Chapter I introduces the third of the novel's major protagonists, Marcos Vargas. As the river personifies the symbolic theme of the novel and the Guayana region the violent natural theater where it is to be enacted, so Marcos is the human synthesis of both these natural protagonists. He is the living incarnation of the turbulent currents which agitate the Guayana, where as a young boy the power of the jungle had begun to put him under its captivating spell--"La geografía de la vasta región que luego sería el escenario fugitivo de su vida de aventurero de todas las aventuras."[1]

Marcos' trajectory is implicit from his first introduction. Like the sunrise which opened the novel, Marcos' promise is deceptively bright. He is intelligent, imaginative, a youthful leader of "su pandilla de chicos del pueblo, cacique querido por su carácter expansivo y franco, al par que respetado por la fuerza de sus puños."[2] Marcos, even as a young boy, is the prototype of the Guayana: adventuresome in spirit (corresponding to the promise and possibilities of the region) and macho (resulting from the violence of the region). These two facets, adventure and the exalted sense of masculinity, are the culminating characteristics of his personality--both involving the risk on which he thrives. These factors instill a spirit of unrest in Marcos, an insatiable thirst for greater adventures, more daring exploits in

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[1]Ibid., p. 16. [2]Ibid., p. 18.

which to prove his machismo. Finally he becomes a man driven in anguished search for the maximum fulfillment of himself, for the definitive spiritual essence of his being.

Marcos' symbolic journey provides the theme, structure and ultimate symbol of the novel. The course of his trajectory parallels that of the rivers which dominate the imagery of the novel. Like the rivers, which run a certain course before twisting and flowing into the jungle depths, Marcos' adventures do not carry him immediately into the jungle. Thus it is only when there is nothing left to conquer outside the jungle that Marcos finally succumbs to its irresistible attraction.

The episodic nature of the novel is dictated by Marcos' continual movement, by the analogy of his course with that of the rivers which form a frustrating labyrinth of circular movement. There is constant emphasis on this circular movement in the novel--in the circling rivers, the circles traced by the desperation of those lost in the jungle, the coming and going of the ships which bring supplies and slaves. The tangled multitude of repeated circles and the confusion of intersecting lines suggests a rendering of cosmic chaos, of the elements concerting against man.

The more flexible episodic structure of both Cantaclaro and Canaima allows the principle protagonist a series of symbolic encounters in his search for orientation; it reinforces the isolation of the wandering protagonist, and finally, it allows the author a means of introducing the

collective character types which incarnate the thematic substance of his novels.

Marcos Vargas is launched on his tragic path by the death of his father. The boy and his mother are left penniless, but Marcos strikes out without fear to make his fortune. The circumstances of Marcos' first encounter offer a vivid example of the maximum effectiveness of symbolic analogy through juxtaposition and syntactic parallelism: Marcos, having arranged a meeting with Manuel Ladera to purchase a fleet of freight wagons, is traveling toward the designated appointment. Suddenly he stops, fascinated by "la brusca aparición de uno de los espectáculos predilectos de su espíritu."[1] It is the Caroní, a river which he is seeing for the first time, one of the many rivers of the Guayana which had fascinated him from boyhood--

> ... no como simples cursos de agua, sino cual seres dotados de una vida misteriosa...
>
> --¡Caroní! ¡Caroní! ¡<u>Así tenía que ser</u> el río de los diamantes.[2]

At the same moment, Ladera observes Marcos from a distance, and exclaims on seeing him for the first time: "'<u>Ese debe de ser</u>. Buen plantaje de hombre tiene el mozo!'"[3]

Manuel Ladera is Marcos' first friend along the way. Impressed by the young man's intrepid spirit and frankness, Ladera agrees to sell him, on terms of credit, the wagons--

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[1]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 23. [2]<u>Ibid</u>. Italics mine.

[3]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 24. Italics mine.

the basis of a lucrative enterprise since all merchandise must be painfully transported into the interior. As the two travel toward Upata, where the transaction is to take place, Ladera points out Marcos' first vivid lesson in "la geografía viva" of the region:

> Lo que venía ... era una res destinada al consumo de algún caserío vecino, atada a la cola de un burrito por un cabo de soga que le traspasaba la nariz perforada y sangrante y con la cabeza enfundada... La conducía un hombre a pie, aunque en realidad el conductor era el burrito que, adiestrado para este oficio, trotaba por delante de ella zigzagueando, para quitarle con el aturdimiento del rumbo incierto toda gana de cornearlo que pudiese traer.[1]

The author makes his symbol all too clear (through Ladera): "--Ahí tiene la historia de Venezuela: un toro bravo, tapaojeado y nariceado, conducido al matadero por un burrito bellaco."[2]

Manuel Ladera is the voice of reason which mourns the tragic waste of the spectacle about him: "--Imagínense lo que significaría para Guayana y quizá para todo el país el aprovechamiento de estas caídas de agua."[3] But his commentary falls on deaf ears, as Marcos significantly juxtaposes his own course and that of the river: "Si los saltos del Caroní eran enormes fuerzas perdidas, también lo eran

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[1] Ibid., p. 30.

[2] Ibid. Juan Liscano, op. cit., cites this passage as the one which "hirió la susceptibilidad de los censores de la dictadura," and which prohibited the novel's circulation in Venezuela. (p. 126.)

[3] Ibid., p. 64.

todavía sus vehementes inclinaciones hacia la aventura del gran escenario: la selva sin fin, el vasto mundo del itinerario gigantesco vislumbrado a través de los cuentos de los caucheros, sembrado de hermosos peligros."[1] The thought which is beginning to dominate Marcos' trajectory is not that of personal gain (although he is his mother's only means of support), but of adventure for adventure's sake:

> ... la aventura del caucho y del oro tenía otro aspecto, el de la aventura misma, que era algo apasionante: el riesgo corrido, el temor superado y aquello mismo de ir y volver a tirar el dinero, con que el hombre desafiaba al Destino. Una fiera medida de hombría...[2]

Marcos experiences the first of a series of such "fieras medidas" when he arrives at Upata and comes face to face with the power of the local caciques, the Ardavines. Despite the warning of Ladera, Marcos insists on challenging José Francisco Ardavín, the most pathological member of the powerful family. Marcos confronts him in a memorable scene where the two toss dice for the monopoly of trade with certain merchants whom Ardavín controls and without whose business Marcos' enterprise will be destroyed. But it is not the business which motivates Marcos as he faces the local tyrant, who is in a drunken rage--it is the voluptuous pleasure of the danger involved in such a confrontation:

> ... para conocer a su peligroso competidor y para someterse de una vez y cuanto antes a una experiencia inevitable: comprobar si en realidad sería capaz,

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[1] Ibid., p. 65. [2] Ibid., p. 28.

llegado el caso, de enfrentarse con un hombre de las condiciones de Ardavín.[1]

Among those figures who vainly attempt to temper Marcos' suicidal drive toward danger, the most outstanding is Gabriel Ureña. Like Marcos Vargas, Ureña had been fascinated as a boy by "las palabras mágicas" of the legends and lore of the jungle region. But later, in contact with the region, his sense of justice and decency was shocked by all he saw around, by the barbaric waste, by the machismo "que detestaba de ella de una manifestación de barbarie..."[2]

Ureña, when Marcos meets him, is a marginal character in many aspects. He, too, is a bala perdida. The relationship of the two men is paradoxical: when they meet, Marcos seems full of promise in his search for orientation while Ureña has apparently given up the struggle. Even Ureña's work is of a marginal nature--"... allí estaba, telegrafista por apatía, por aceptación de un modus vivendi en un sentido de menor resistencia..."[3] Both men are inwardly tormented by the nostalgia "de haber perdido el rumbo": Marcos despises the monotonous "vida de negocios," while Ureña observes life from a distance, listening to the messages which pass through his office en route to their destination like "las misteriosas señales del Destino."[4]

Ureña ultimately represents the opposite possibility of Marcos' eventual waste. Ureña makes the decision to stay

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[1]Ibid., p. 52. [2]Ibid., p. 67.
[3]Ibid., p. 94. [4]Ibid., p. 93.

in Upata, to shut his ears to the Messianic promise of quick fortune. His course is less flamboyant than that of Marcos, but he eventually finds happiness in his marriage and family and in his work. Ureña embodies the author's message that no potential is wasted when applied to steadfast purpose and honest work.

Marcos Vargas' own wavering on the edge of adventure comes to a sudden end as he discovers the consequences of opposing the powers that be. Miguel Ladera is murdered by the paid assassin of José Francisco Ardavín, Cholo Parima. Marcos is doubly incensed by the act, for Parima had murdered his brother years earlier. Like Santos Luzardo, Marcos seeks recourse in the law, but when he denounces Ardavín as the instigator of the murder, he finds that the local Jefe Civil is only another employee of Ardavín.

Marcos' path, from the moment of this first bitter deception, is toward isolation. Ladera's death and the burning of the wagons cut his link with the world outside the jungle. The path to adventure is opened when he is offered the job of overseer in a rubber enterprise operated by the father of his sweetheart, Aracelis Vellorini. Once again, it is not the money but the adventure that attracts Marcos: "... por aquí metí la cabeza y por aquí tengo que salir adelante. En último caso, y si quedo endeudado, mientras haya un río por donde boguear..."[1]

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[1]Ibid., p. 116.

In his comings and goings to and from the headquarters of the enterprise, Marcos experiences a series of encounters with protagonists that incarnate the vices of the area. They are syntheses of the human types that, once drawn into the vassalage of the region, are living examples of the destructive powers inherent in it. These characters are a device for indirectly personifying nature, for they are the living incarnations of its various aspects in the human being. Marcos moves among them in the same capacity that Florentino did, as a catalyst, the "lazo espiritual" who ultimately forms a synthesis within himself of all about him through his own search for spiritual definition.

The gallery of characters who populate the region forms an amalgamation of its complete subjugation of man. The effects of the multiple aspects of Canaima, of his invasion of man's soul and the subsequent unleashing of barbaric instincts, is analyzed in multiple character studies of not only the Venezuelan but the foreigner as well. Among the latter group there are representatives of foreign commercial interests, such as the Vellorini brothers for whom Marcos works. Theirs is an open exploitation of the country's wealth.

An equally insidious drain on the nation's energy is represented by the North American, Mr. Davenport. He is the foreigner who does not come to exploit, but neither does he offer anything to the country. His home, "El Varadero" (shipyard) is his retreat from his own world to a marginal existence:

> "El Varadero" denominábase aquella casa y huerta, nombre que le puso su deuño porque, según la usual frase criolla, él era uno de esos extranjeros que, yendo a aquella tierra en plan temporal de negocio o de aventura, luego se "quedan varados" en ella, sin forzoso motivo que lo justifique, renunciando a la propia, que por más civilizada debiera serles más atractiva.[1]

A less fortunate case is that of the young English engineer Reed, who had come to the region with a mining company. When his job was finished, so was he: consumed by tuberculosis and alcoholism, he refuses all offers of help and retires to a semi-isolation from which he emerges only for more alcohol. Davenport diagnoses Reed's case, and that of all foreigners who fall under the region's spell, as a disease more incurable than tuberculosis or alcoholism. Davenport's analysis is a variation of the <u>alma dormida</u> theme transposed to the tropics, which reduces men to a mental and physical stupor:

> Se llama chinchorro, que es la enfermedad más traidora de esta tierra... ¡el chinchorrito, el chinchorrito! Cuando yo digo esta cosa, quiero decir todo lo que significa el trópico para los hombres que no hemos nacido en él. Tú decides marcharte, porque ves que por adentro de ti ya no anda bien la cosa, y el trópico te dice suavecito en la oreja: "Deja eso para después, <u>musiú</u>. Hay tiempo para todo. Además, ¡si esto es muy sabrosito!" Tú te metes adentro de tu chinchorro y vienen los mosquitos con su musiquita y <u>tú te vas quedando dormido sabrosito</u>.[2]

Conde Giaffaro is the most dramatic case among the foreign protagonists, since he has given himself up completely to the jungle. Cultured, a world traveler, he followed the

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 134.

[2] <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 139-140. Italics mine.

familiar pattern of returning to Europe several times only to return after a shorter interval each time. Finally he disappeared one day into the realm of the jungle. When Marcos meets him after fifteen years of relative isolation, in Giaffaro's character "... le presentaba la selva uno de sus aspectos más dramáticos."[1]

Giaffaro has become a mysterious enigma of the jungle. He is seen only rarely, and then it is always "tumbado en la curiara, moviendo continuamente la cabeza, silencioso y con la mirada inmóvil bajo la influencia embrutecedora de la lenta, penosa y monótona navegación del río interminable a través del bosque sin fin."[2] The symbolism here is only too clear. Giaffaro is a bala perdida who has been irresistibly absorbed by Canaima's magnetic power. He is a maniac whose tortured digressions reveal the origin of the strange shouting which the Indians of the region attribute to Canaima:

> --Trate usted su alma--prosiguió el extranjero--como una caldera de vapor, vigile los aparatos registradores de la presión, y cuando advierta que ésta pone en peligro la integridad de aquélla, tire del obturador sin falsos escrúpulos y ábrale la válvula de escape al grito de Canaima.[3]

Giaffaro's maniacal shouting as he wanders through the jungle is a concrete manifestation of Canaima's presence in him. Giaffaro's whole being is, by extension, "el grito de Canaima." As Marcos, fascinated by this strange figure, ponders Giaffaro's advice, he is unaware that he has actually experienced a

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[1]Ibid., p. 173. [2]Ibid., p. 175.

[3]Ibid., p. 176. Italics mine.

direct encounter with the force that will eventually subjugate him. Canaima, through Giaffaro, has planted an insidious and obsessive philosophy in Marcos' mind:

> Y cuando volvió a atravesar el Guarampín para regresar al campamento purgüero, de todo cuanto dijo el conde en una sola cosa iba pensando: que la selva era para que en ella se le abriese la válvula de escape al grito de Canaima.[1]

The above characters reflect the hypnotic and morally disintegrating influence of the natural setting. Another aspect of the reaction to the milieu is incarnated in figures who are representatives of machismo: the concept of individual valor which is one of the Venezuelan social phenomena most frequently analyzed in the novels of Gallegos:

> Bordea lo patológico y parece ser el resultado del abrumador sentido del yo español, junto con el sentimiento de inferioridad profundamente arraigado en el criollo. Para afirmar ese eco, para negar ese complejo de inferioridad requiere de sí mismo la demostración de que es un hombre macho, preferiblemente mediante un acto de violencia que por lo general culmina en la muerte de un adversario.[2]

The concept of machismo is but another aspect of Canaima--"lo demoníaco sin forma determinada"--in the soul of man. The hombre macho is a variation of the multiple living counterparts (or personifications) of the mythical god: "el Hombre Macho, semidiós de las bárbaras tierras, sin ley ni freno en el feudo de la violencia...."[3] He is a demi-god, a tyrannical deity whom all worship:

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[1]Ibid., p. 178. Italics mine.

[2]Dunham, op. cit., p. 245.

[3]Canaima, pp. 13-14.

> ... aquella especie de divinidad sombría que reinaba en todos los espíritus sobre aquella tierra: el Hombre Macho que sabe jugarse la vida en un momento dado.[1]

In Guayana this deity is incarnated principally in the Ardavín family, caudillos of the region, and those grouped around them: Cholo Parima and the Jefe Civil Alcaraván. In this region, on the margin of the law, these men are all-powerful and are responsible only to their own desires; their authority is based on the revolver.

The figure of José Francisco is Gallegos' most penetrating analysis of the pathological nature of the caudillo. José Francisco's torment is that he, a coward, must drive himself to the extremes of drink, vice, and crime to prove to others that he has the courage "sin lo cual nadie podía vivir en la tierra de los Hombres Machos y menos un Ardavín..."[2] In his maniacal drive to create hombría in himself, José Francisco's cruelty and violence reach the extremes of pointless excess. He terrorizes the local merchants, tyrannizes the woman whose love he might have conquered honestly and forces her into a kind of "widdowhood" by killing any prospective suitor who fails to heed his threats.

After ordering Miguel Ladera's death, José Francisco's pathological mind turns his activities toward those of his own family. In his desire for total power, he treacherously betrays his cousin, General Miguel Ardavín, for plotting a revolution. Miguel's imprisonment ends in the break-up of

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[1] Ibid., p. 106. [2] Ibid., p. 50.

the family's power. José Francisco, tormented by the illusion that he shot and killed Miguel, sinks into alcoholism. Destroyed financially and deserted by the Jefe Civil, who all too quickly realigns his allegiance, José Francisco wanders pathetically through the region, a constant reminder that the man who shows weakness can expect no allies here.

Marcos had first tasted the voluptuous pleasure of machismo by facing José Francisco in the dice game. But Marcos' crucial test of hombría comes with the confrontation of Cholo Parima. By killing the dreaded assassin, Marcos attains the rank of hombre macho, but Parima's death is the turning point in Marcos' trajectory: he has taken the law into his own hands, and the act of violence has permanently isolated him from the common social stream:

> ... la tremenda experiencia de sí mismo recién adquirida, parecía haberlo desplazado fuera de todo contacto con las cosas que hasta allí lo hubiesen interesado, tanto las materiales como las del orden afectivo o moral...[1]

The defeat of Cholo Parima leaves Marcos no other antagonist worthy of measuring himself against--other than the jungle itself, the maximum risk. Marcos' "call to the jungle" parallels Florentino's "call to the open road" of the llano. In both men the waste of great potential is a useless wandering through a series of adventures which become a meaningless, barbaric way of life. Florentino's measure of hombría was the facing of the Devil himself. Marcos, having

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[1]Ibid., p. 163.

faced multiple obstacles, leaves the world of men where he had conquered all, and begins the march toward his final measure of machismo: the encounter with Nature itself--with the jungle deity (Devil), Canaima.

From the moment of Marcos' internment in the jungle, his fate is predestined, for Canaima "se asomó aquella noche a la linde del bosque para conocer a Marcos Vargas, cuyo destino ya estaba en sus manos..."[1] The course of the novel now begins an inverse pendulous movement. On the edge of the jungle, Nature (Canaima) exercised his powers through the men who were the incarnation of his violence; he exercised these powers from a certain distance. Now Nature becomes increasingly felt as a living presence of tremendous magnetism, while man (Marcos) is inversely dehumanized, his vital energies sapped in contact with

> la selva fascinante de cuyo influjo ya más no se libraría Marcos... La selva antihumana. Quienes trasponen sus lindes ya empiezan a ser algo más o algo menos que hombres.[2]

The jungle is significantly antihumana, not inhuman. Within its "verdes abismos callados," the powers of man are insignificant, useless. Here only "las fuerzas vegetales" reign supreme, above all the trees which line the banks of the countless caños which thread the jungle like a labyrinth:

> Negros árboles hostiles que por momentos parecen ponerse en marcha sigilosa para cerrar aquel hueco

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[1] Ibid., p. 170.

[2] Ibid., p. 167. Italics mine.

que abrieron los hombres intrusos, a fin de que todo amanezca selva tupida otra vez.[1]

In these environs, the theme of disorientation takes on more deadly, more dramatic connotations than when, for example, Florentino symbolically lost his bearings on the llano. There man felt himself empequeñecido, but here the jungle threatens to absorb him. Here the forces of Canaima concert against man, isolate him from his fellow man, bestialize him through fear. The desperation of the poor wretches who find themselves lost in the jungle, tracing "círculos de la desesperación," is Gallegos' most vivid depiction of the tragic plight of his people:

> El infierno verde, por donde los extraviados describen los círculos de la desesperación, siguiendo sus propias huellas una y otra y otra vez, escoltados por las larvas del terror ancestral, sin atreverse a mirarse unos a otros, hasta que de pronto resuena en el espantoso silencio sin que ninguno la haya pronunciado, la palabra tremenda que desencadena la locura:
>
> --¡Perdidos!
>
> Y se rompe el círculo, cada cual buscando su rumbo, ya totalmente desligado del otro, bestia señera y delirante, hasta que vuelven a encontrarse en el mismo sitio donde se dispersaron; pero ya no se reconocen, porque unos momentos han bastado para que el instinto desande camino de siglos.[2]

Marcos, too, traces circles of desperation and frustration in the jungle. As an overseer, he shares his men's work, but his benevolence is defeated by another figuration of Canaima's loosing of evil in the hearts of men: the avance system--"Deuda que ya nunca se pagaría, hipoteca del hombre

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[1] Ibid., p. 169. [2] Ibid. Italics mine.

sin rescate que a veces pasaba de padres a hijos"[1]--, another of the dehumanizing processes of the jungle. Encarnación Damesano, a Juan, el veguero, of the jungle, is the incarnation of this system and of its effect on all the men working for the Vellinoris under Marcos' supervision. Encarnación is a pathetic figure of the man whose wife and children are at home starving while he is slowly dying in the jungle without hope of ever seeing them again. He is the "peón fatalista e irónico" whose rebellious attitude against the injustices of his enslavers is a lesson to Marcos: "... a él estaba enseñándole ahora muchas cosas acerca del alma de su pueblo, con su gran sentido de la realidad y su íntima rebeldía bajo la total sumisión aparente..."[2]

Encarnación's agonizing death as a result of snakebite is another stimulus to Marcos' gradual movement toward isolation and abandonment of his "sentimientos humanitarios." Now he is more separated than ever from the world of man by "la tremenda injusticia que dividía a los hombres en Vellorinis y Damesanos,"[3] and by his disgust at his own role in the vicious system: "Desde el Guarampín hasta Rionegro todos estaban haciendo lo mismo, él entre los opresores contra los oprimidos, y ésta era la vida de la selva fascinante, tan hermosamente soñada."[4]

Up to this point, Marcos' life has been characterized

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[1]Ibid., p. 147. [2]Ibid., p. 179.

[3]Ibid., p. 187. [4]Ibid., p. 188.

by a series of deceptions: the murder of his brother and Miguel Ladera, the corruption of the law, the crimes of Ardavín and Cholo Parima, the social injustices embodied in the figure of Damesano. Marcos must now search for his spiritual definition and orientation outside anything he has previously known. The jungle is spread before him as a kind of primeval spiritual frontier in which to cleanse his soul of inner turmoil. Finally he yields to the obsession to give himself up to the jungle--

> La obsesión de contemplarla a toda hora, de no poder apartar la mirada del monótono espectáculo de un árbol y otro y otro, ¡todos iguales, todos erguidos, todos inmóviles, todos callados! ... La obsesión de internarse por ellos, errante como un duende, despacio, en silencio, como quien crece... De marcharse totalmente de entre los hombres y fuera de sí mismo, hasta perder la memoria de que alguna vez fue hombre y quedarse parado bajo el chorro de sol del calvero donde hierve la vida que ha de reemplazar al gigante derribado, todo insensible y mudo por dentro, la mitad hacia abajo, oscuro, creciendo en raíces, la mitad hacia arriba, despacio, porque habría cien años para asomarse por encima de las copas más altas y otros ciento para estarse allí, quieto, oyendo el rumor del viento que nunca termina de pasar.[1]

Marcos' subsequent internment in the most dense selvatic region marks the final stage of his total waste as a human being. Giving himself up to the jungle is the final renunciation of his previous self. His spirit is being overpowered by Canaima, by the mal de la selva: the mystic desire to lose human identification and to be reincarnated as another element of Nature, a tree.

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[1] Ibid., p. 189. Italics mine.

Marcos' final encounter with a human counterpart worthy of challenging his hombría is with Sute Cúpira, the jungle cacique of deceiving outward appearance--"pequeño, flaco, enteco." Marcos ends Cúpira's reign as undisputed overlord of the jungle without even recurring to the violence he had been forced to employ with Cholo Parima. But the moral defeat of "aquel hombrecito, personificación de la selva monstruosa,"[1] leaves Marcos unsatisfied. He has successfully overcome all human obstacles. Now he is compelled to face the greatest measure of himself by defying the very forces of Nature.

The climactic chapter entitled "Tormenta" is the culmination of Marcos' obsessive drive toward the maximum adventure. Here, finally, he faces the inevitable desafío of Canaima's superhuman powers. As Marcos advances into the jungle, the storm gathering around him parallels the climax of his own inner "tormenta." The scene further fuses the symbolic parallel between man and nature, for here they come together--Marcos dehumanized and Nature at a height of personification--until they meet on equal ground to battle the storm.

The scene begins as Marcos, in a state of hallucination, advances into the jungle. He is completely along, overcome by the obsession

> que ya se había apoderado de su espíritu: la impresión de que por momentos iba a aparecerse ante su vista, brotado de la soledad misma, en la

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[1] Ibid., p. 193.

> sugestiva lejanía, algún ser inédito, algo menos o algo más que hombre, espíritu de la selva encarnado en forma inimaginable, obra de las formidables potencias que aún no habían agotado la serie de las criaturas posibles.[1]

The "espíritu de la selva" is Canaima, "llamándolo, desde allá adentro."[2]

As Marcos stops and looks around him, we see him once again as the prototype of the bala perdida:

> Estaba en la encrucijada de dos caminos igualmente anchos y rectos y ya no supo por cuál de los cuatro debía seguir, cuál era el que llevaba. Una repentina ausencia de sí misma lo había dejado ya a la merced de la selva fascinante.[3]

He characteristically makes no attempt to choose his way carefully, but rather enjoys the voluptuous pleasure of the fear of becoming lost:

> Eligió al azar, abandonándose a la tremenda delicia con que acababa de rozarlo el temor de extraviarse. La primera emoción de miedo que llegaba a experimentar. Los abismos del pánico que ya lo atraían.[4]

As the storm continues to approach, all the forms of nature seem to come alive, "las mil pupilas asombradas de la extraña claridad fosforescente lo contemplaban desde cada una de las hojas de todas las ramas del bosque..."[5] while Marcos inversely is paralyzed by the fear that if he stops walking, he will be completely dehumanized:

> Lo sobrecogió de pronto el miedo de detenerse involuntariamente y para siempre y reanudó la marcha normal, diciéndose en voz alta:
> --Todavía no.

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[1] Ibid., p. 205. [2] Ibid., p. 206.

[3] Ibid. [4] Ibid. [5] Ibid.

> Luego rió a carcajadas y volvió a decirse:
> --¡Pues no he tomado yo en serio lo de convertirme en árbol![1]

Marcos' own fear is interrupted by a monstruous scene which parallels the dehumanizing process he is struggling to overcome. He comes upon a hut inhabited by two rubber workers; one is about to amputate his own infected finger, while the other looks on impassively as his companion masochistically brandishes his machete, raising and lowering it, each time coming closer to his finger:

> Teníalo apoyado sobre un leño mientras con la derecha blandía el arma afilada, alzándola y bajándola repetidas veces, a cada una más cerca del miembro ya sobre el ara del dios frenético que perturbaba todos los espíritus.[2]

Such an action is but another manifestation of the grito de Canaima as is also the rapidly approaching storm: "En torno a ellos la selva antihumana ensanchaba sus ámbitos para el grito del bárbara holocausto."[3] Marcos disarms the man, beats him mercilessly with the broadside of the machete,"... totalmente fuera de sí, negras como carbones las pupilas que de ordinario las tenía claras y así se las transformaba la cólera."[4] Transformed by rage, Marcos is momentarily freed of the "influencia maléfica" of Canaima. Once again he is full of self confidence, even superiority, as he sees the jungle transformed in fear of the approaching storm:

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid., p. 207.

[3] Ibid. Italics mine.

[4] Ibid.

> Y advirtió que la selva tenía miedo. Los troncos de los árboles se habían cubierto de palidez espectral ante la tiniebla diurna que avanzaba por entre ellos y las hojas temblaban en las ramas sin que el aire se moviese...
> --Es la tormenta. Viene contra nosotros dos, pero sólo tú la temes.[1]

Finally, in the culminating moment of Marcos' drive to measure himself against Nature, he removes his clothing and advances, alone and entirely nude, into the center of the storm:

> Quería encontrar la medida de sí mismo ante la Naturaleza plena, y de cuanto fue cosa aprendida entre los hombres sólo una llevaba consigo: las palabras del conde Giaffaro aconsejándole intimidad hermética y válvula de escape al grito de Canaima.[2]

Amid the thunder and lightening of the storm, Marcos screams the terrifying question which has motivated his inner torment--"¿Se es o no se es?"--and finally comes to experience the dramatic impact of his defiance of nature:

> Las raíces más profundas de su ser se hundían en suelo tempestuoso, era todavía una tormenta el choque de sus sangres en sus venas, la más íntima esencia de su espíritu participaba de la naturaleza de los elementos irascibles y en el espectáculo imponente que ahora le ofrecía la tierra satánica se hallaba a sí mismo, hombre cósmico, desnudo de historia, reintegrado al paso inicial al borde del abismo creador.[3]

As Marcos faces the full onslaught of the storm, he seems to find a new inner strength, a new direction: "Y ya había aparecido, en efecto, en la tormenta de la ira que acababa de ennegrecerle las pupilas. ¡Ira, cólera! ...¡Eso tenía que

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[1] Ibid., pp. 207-208.

[2] Ibid., p. 208. [3] Ibid., p. 209.

ser él contra la iniquidad que no permitía el optimismo en el corazón generoso!"[1] The storm symbolically arouses his anger at the injustices that have populated his life. The rain which beats at his nude body quickens his senses, clears his muddled mind and shows the true nature of the jungle which had so fascinated him:

> La selva alevosa que mató a Encarnación Demesano en la hora mejor de su alma, la selva embrujadora que había puesto el arma filuda en la diestra del hombre acosado para que se mutilara. ¡Cómo resplandecía ahora el arma blandida por el brazo vengador de la tormenta![2]

Once again Marcos' spirit is invaded by the kind of mystic socialism which had always formed the opposite pole of his life of adventure; this feeling, as well as his sense of superiority over the forces of nature, is symbolized by the terrified monkey he protects from the storm:

> El animalito temblaba y se acurrucaba más, buscando el calor del pecho amigo, y Marcos Vargas experimentó que era bueno, después de haberse hallado a sí mismo fuerte en la tempestad de las iras satánicas, encontrarse también protector en la bondad sencilla, en la ternura generosa.[3]

Seemingly the Marcos Vargas who emerges from the storm "ya no era el de antes": "... él mismo no estaba muy seguro de cuanto allí sucedió. Sabía, solamente, que allí había recibido su vida un impulso que lo desplazaba de su trayectoria."[4] But once again the victory is only apparent. When his mother dies, Marcos' last link with civilization has

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[1] Ibid., p. 210. [2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 212. [4] Ibid., p. 222.

been permanently severed. Even his friend Ureña, who has found a productive orientation in life, cannot convince Marcos that there is still time to remake his life. Ureña voices the author's eternal plea for the channelization of Marcos' potential:

> --No despilfarres tu fortuna... La vida te ha dotado de condiciones quizá extraordinarias y es menester que las emplees bien... Presenciaste la iniquidad y hasta la has sufrido en ti mismo, tienes el impulso generoso que se necesita para consagrarse a combatirla, puedes (déjame decirlo así) recoger el mensaje de la voz que clama en el desierto y sólo te falta prepararte intelectualmente. Lee un poco, cultívate, civiliza esa fuerza bárbara que hay en ti, estudia los problemas de esta tierra y asume la actitud a que estás obligado. Cuando la vida da facultades, y tú las posees, repito, da junto con ellas responsabilidades. Este pueblo todo lo espera de un hombre, del Hombre Macho se dice ahora, y tú, ¿por que no?, puedes ser ese mesías.[1]

Marcos' refusal to channel his life is symbolized by Canaima's invasion of his spirit, for Marcos is not ultimately defeated by any external force. He has proved himself superior to man and nature and has defeated all the obstacles in his path. Marcos' greatest enemy is his own <u>fuerza bárbara</u>, which, stimulated by Canaima, takes control of his actions. When he turns his back on civilization and enters the jungle never to emerge again, he, too, becomes another incarnation of Canaima. He passes into the realm of legend, where, totally dehumanized, his existence parallels that of Giaffaro. Marcos' existence is the summary of the wasteful barbarity that characterizes the <u>bala perdida</u>: his unearthly cries

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 237.

(gritos de Canaima) symbolize the wasteful outlet of his energies as the boat traces his pointless trajectory:

> Un grito sobre el bronco mugido del rápido, alarido impresionante entre humano y bestial. Una curiara que pasa silbando raudal abajo y se pierde en la noche hacia donde corren las aguas torrentosas bajo el resplandor lunar... Ese es Marcos Vargas, que corre los raudales las noches de luna como alma que lleva el diablo.[1]

Marcos, like Florentino, has been ultimately defeated by the Devil, or the demonic drives unleashed in him by Canaima.

Marcos is allowed one last chance to free his soul of Canaima's influence when, after years of "la fiebre delirante y el errar continuo," he is taken in by the Indian tribe of Ponchopire.[2] His communion with the Indians reveals to Marcos "los negros abismos de la infinita tristeza del indio ... el fondo atormentado del alma de la raza vencida, despojada y humillada..."[3] Again Marcos feels that he can begin a new life, and in his humanistic dream to help the

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[1] Ibid., p. 239. Italics mine.

[2] The circular structure of the novel begins to reach its completion here. It was significantly the same Ponchopire who met Marcos as a young boy and recognized the fascination for the jungle which would determine his inevitable trajectory:

> "Cuando tú yendo allá, Ponchopire enseñándote las cosas...
> --¿Cómo sabiendo tú que yo yendo allá? inquirió Marcos con emoción de alma en el umbral del misterio.
> --Tú yendo, tú yendo. Yo mirándotelo en los ojos." (p. 18.)

Ponchopire's prognostication has been fulfilled as Marcos, having renounced the outside world, settles permanently with the tribe.

[3] Ibid., p. 201.

Indians, he feels that he has finally encountered the positive direction in life of which Ureña has spoken:

> ¿Sería posible--se preguntaba--sacar algo fuerte de aquellos indios melancólicos? ¿Quedarían rescoldos avivables de la antigua rebeldía rabiosa bajo aquellas cenizas de sumisión fatalista? ...¿no sería él capaz de reunir bajo su mando todas aquellas comunidades dispersas en un vasto territorio y a la cabeza de ellas emprender aquella obra grande que una vez le aconsejara Gabriel Ureña? Decirle al blanco explotador: "¡Fuera de aquí!..." Y crear un gran pueblo indio.[1]

The forces of good seem to be winning out at last--"parecían soplar por fin aires de Cajuña el bueno"--but once again Canaima is the victor, as Marcos soon realizes that his plan is impossible. The Indians' human potential, like his own, cannot be salvaged: "... la raza indígena, degenerada por enfermedades, sin cuidado ni precaución y por falta de cruzamientos y por alimentación insuficiente [era] algo total y definitivamente perdido para la vida del país."[2] The Indians are cut off from all hope of help by the same spiritual barrier which separates Marcos from the Indian wife whose love he cannot accept--once again the waste of physical and spiritual potential is synthesized in water imagery: "frente a ellos, bajo la noche fosca, el Ventuari arrastraba su inútil caudal. Aguas perdidas sobre la vasta tierra inculta."[3]

The final chapter, "¡Esto fue!", completes the circular structure and complements the river metaphor which

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[1] Ibid., p. 267. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., p. 268.

opened the novel. The adventure is done, all is past, and still the river rolls monotonously and wastefully on:

> --¡Nueve pies! ¡Fondo duro!
> Bocas del Orinoco. Puertas, no bien despejadas todavía, de una región por donde pasó la aventura que aridece el esfuerzo y donde clavó la violencia sus hitos funestos. Aguas de tantos y tantos ríos por donde una inmensa tierra inútilmente se ha exprimido para que sea grande el Orinoco.
> Guayana frustrada. La que todavía no ha sido y la que ya no es. La de los caudalosos ríos desiertos por cuyas aguas sólo navegan las sombras de las nubes, de las inmensas energías baldías de los fragorosos saltos desaprovechados, y la de los pueblos tristes, ruinosos, sin tránsito por el día ni luz por la noche, donde el guayanés suspira y dice al forastero:
> --¡Esto fue![1]

Like the rivers, like the whole Guayana region, Marcos Vargas--"¡Aquella esperanza fallida!"--is a part of the past. But from his union with Aymara (Marcos' Indian wife), a new Marcos Vargas is born. A generation of hope has been devoured by the jungle, but from it another, stronger, *mestizo* generation springs forth. The symbolic parallel between man and the father-river Orinoco is completed as Marcos sends his son to be educated with those of Gabriel Ureña. Vargas, the *hombre macho*, has become permanently fused with *río macho*: the Orinoco, who continues to send his own sons to the sea and now transports another son of the future:

> Apoyado sobre la barandilla del puente de proa va otra vez Marcos Vargas ... Ureña lo lleva a dejarlo en un colegio de la capital donde ya están dos de sus hijos, *y es el Orinoco quien lo va sacando hacia de porvenir... El río macho de los iracundos bramidos de Maipures y Atures... Ya le rinde sus cuentas al mar...*[2]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 269. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 271. Italics mine.

PART III. VARIATIONS ON THEMES

CHAPTER VI

THE LAST NOVELS

Pobre negro, 1937

The trajectory of the Gallegan novel may be compared to the dominant circular structure within the individual novels themselves. With the publication of Canaima, generally considered the last of the master works, the cycle of thematic constants is completed. The novels of the last period introduce no new constants but are rather comprised of a series of variaciones de temática characterized by a spiral method which takes the reader over the established temática from a different altitude (or level of intensity), a different angle or perspective. In this way, the final novels complement the main outline of Gallegan fiction by re-analyzing the dominant thematic motifs of the earlier novels. Taken in this perspective, each previous novel may be considered a kind of reference work for those of the last period, beginning with Pobre negro, which "abre un nuevo rumbo a su temática: el de unos episodios nacionales venezolanos de los cuales la obra de referencia sería el primero."[1]

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[1]Mauricio Magdaleno, "Imágenes políticas de Rómulo Gallegos," Cuadernos Americanos, LX, No. 6 (Noviembre-Diciembre, 1951), 254.

Stylistically the last novels close the author's literary cycle by approaching the novel-essay technique of the first period. Unfortunately, many of the defects apparent in the digressions in Reinaldo Solar, as well as the direct use of a protagonist to voice the author's message, are responsible for the adverse criticism of these final novels:

> Pero en Pobre negro y aun más en El forastero me parece ver sacudido tal equilibrio estético ... en aquellos dos últimos volúmenes el autor ha traspasado la frontera que separa la novela como género literario, de otros géneros. Nos encontramos con una preponderancia tal del elemento psicológico, de realidad anímica, política e histórica; y con un descuido tal del elemento de invención como acción material y como composición artística: que dichas dos obras parecen haber conservado solamente exterior y casi ficticiamente el aspecto de novelas, mientras en el fondo de su substancia son ensayos de realidad psicológica: histórica en Pobre negro, política en El forastero.[1]

The "equilibrio estético" of the final novels is further weakened by a withdrawal of the paisaje from a dominant symbolic role. The natural setting continues to supply ambiente, but little more than that. Nature no longer motivates the springs of human action, which now stem from man and his social circumstance. Gallegos' "new concept" was explained by the author himself in an interview in 1936, precisely at the moment that he was at work on Pobre negro:

> --Ahora trabajo en la próxima novela... Pensaba llamarla "Pobre negro". Luego escogí el nombre de "Maesanta". ... Aún es posible que sea otro el título definitivo. ... Se trata de una evocación de los problemas raciales del mulato en los tiempos más pintorescos que ese tema ofrece: desde los últimos años de la esclavitud hasta la Guerra

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[1]Leo, Estudio sobre el arte de novelar, p. 69.

> Federal, en el ambiente de cacaotales de Barlovento. ... Aquí se modifica mi manera de entender la novela. Me aparto del paisaje para penetrar en el hombre, que es síntesis de nuestra misma naturaleza.[1]

Pobre negro, although set in the period immediately preceding the abolition of slavery in Venezuela (1854) and the subsequent years leading to the outbreak of the Guerra Federal (1859-1863), is not a historical novel in the strictest sense. The fixing of a definite historic moment, unlike other Gallegan novels, is a device which increases the dramatic tension in Pobre negro and allows a vivid variation of the social and psychological conflict already presented in La trepadora: both novels treat the problem of mestizaje, the amalgamation of the diverse races that compose Venezuela's principal social problem. The central symbol of both novels lies chiefly in a mestizo protagonist whose actions signify the triumph of the fruitful mixture of races; but where Victoria Guanipa's triumph in the capital over her racial duality signified the mestizo's ultimate social conquest, the study of the young mulatto Pedro Miguel is that of a much less advanced racial type. In Pobre negro, Gallegos withdraws to the historical moment which fixes the initiation of the mestizaje process in order to examine it from its basic foundation: in the character of the Negro before and after abolition, and in the psychology of the mulatto, resentful, insecure, torn between the still strictly divided worlds of

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[1]Luis Enrique Osorio, "Rómulo Gallegos," Democracia en Venezuela (Bogotá, 1943), pp. 47-52, quoted in Araujo, op. cit., p. 137.

White and Black. The end product of the conflict of these two groups is the war, which results from the breakdown of conservative White supremacy and the social and economic chaos brought on by the freedom of the slaves, whose entrance into the main stream of Venezuelan society did not go unopposed.

Structurally Pobre negro is divided into four Jornadas,[1] or major sections. Each Jornada functions in a similar manner to the three main divisions of La Trepadora: such divisions break the time-flow more than mere chapters would and contribute to the temporal verisimilitude; each introduces and develops, respectively, the major protagonists of the struggle. An outline of the novel, then, shows the following scheme: I, the Negro masses (birth of Pedro Miguel) in the pre-abolition period; II, the white mantuanos (Alcorta and Céspedes families) in the same period; III, the interrelation of these two social groups and the abolition declaration; and IV, the culmination of the social conflicts in the war and its outcome.

The novel opens with a brief segment, "Tambor," which like the "Pórtico" of Canaima introduces the reader to the ambiente of the novel. The scene is the Barlovento valley on the eve of the festival of San Juan. This and subsequent religious festivals during the month of June are celebrated by

[1]Each Jornada is subsequently divided into three or four individually titled segments.

the Negro in traditional drum dances (bailes de tambor), half pagan, half Christian. The night is punctuated with the sensual beat of the African drum and the shouts of "¡Airó!" which begin the dance:

> Tam, tam, tam...
> Tambor de San Juan, tambor de San Pedro, tambor de la Virgen de la Coromoto... Allá en África se quedaron las divinidades bárbaras, pero el alma pagana aquí también celebra con danzas sensuales las vísperas santificadas. Y es un grito del África enigmática el que estremece las noches de América:
> --¡Airó! ¡Airó![1]

The sensuality of the rhythm is extended to the dance, which represents "la pareja eterna, que se busca y se esquiva, la danza vital que lanza a la hembra contra el macho."[2]

Throughout the passage (and the novel), there is a constant play on the contrast of black and white, the colors which not only symbolize the two racial components of the novel, but the psychological duality of the mulatto protagonist whose dilemma is that he is torn between two diametrically opposed worlds. The Negro bodies blend into the darkness of the night, while the only visible color is the white of starched petticoats, the white of "los ojos en éxtasis," the "reflejos de candiles en los rostros negros, vueltos hacia las blancas estrellas ... entreabierta la boca toda dientes blanquísimos."[3]

As the "tambores frenéticos" continue, the Negro

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[1]Pobre negro, p. 7.

[2]Ibid., p. 9. [3]Ibid., p. 8.

soul is synthesized in the dance, while nature reflects the scene it witnesses:

> Hierven arriba las estrellas de la noche del trópico. La luz de los candiles pone reflejos alucinantes en los rostros enardecidos. Sube hacia los silencios supremos de la noche ardorosa el griterío de la sensualidad jadeante. Sudan los cuerpos y huele a negro todo el aire.[1]

The element of sensuality in the drum dances is the basis of the "extraño mal" which the second chapter introduces: "He aquí el abismo donde había de sucumbir, presa del vértigo, el alma atormentada de Ana Julia Alcorta."[2] Here the author carefully develops the neurotic nature of Ana Julia, the only daughter of the wealthy, slave owning Alcorta family. The most Freudian of all Gallegan characters,[3] Ana Julia is tormented by the guilt of her own sensual

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[1]Ibid., p. 9. [2]Ibid., p. 10.

[3]The author has stated, regarding the character of Ana Julia: "Aquí sí nadie puede librarme de las especulaciones freudianas, porque con el auxilio de ellas le construí complejo y le atormenté la vida." "La pura mujer sobre la tierra," loc. cit., p. 420.

It is interesting to note that Gallegos, usually adverse to psycho-analytical interpretations of his character creations (see below), has emphasized the Freudian implications in the tormented figure of Ana Julia. Such an interpretation is especially relevant in Pobre negro, since the author's ultimate message is that Ana Julia's "absurdo abandono" can never initiate a true mestizaje process; this is accomplished only through Luisana's conscious knowledge of the transcendence of her union with Pedro Miguel.

For a detailed study of Ana Julia, see Raúl Ramos Calles, Los personajes de Rómulo Gallegos a través del psicoanálisis (Caracas: Editorial Grafolit, 1947), pp. 154-157. (Gallegos is undoubtedly referring to this work in the following statement: "Yo acabo de leer las interpretaciones freudianas, un poco malabaristas como las más de ellas, que un compatriota mío, de indiscutible ciencia en esos dominios de perturbaciones espirituales, ha hecho a propósito de mis

nature which brings on attacks of

> una misteriosa fiebre errante que por momentos le recorría todo el cuerpo, arrebolándole las mejillas, aterciopelándose los ojos. Un gran dolor dulcísimo de punzantes lanzadas que le traspasaban el pecho, de clavos ardientes que le taladraban las manos. Congojas, ahogos y de pronto desmayos.[1]

Her concerned parents attribute the young girl's nervous state to the traumatic experiences of her tender years: the War of Independence which broke out the year she was born and the terror of the great earthquake of 1812. In reality, Ana Julia's torment stems from an incident, which, buried in her unconscious memory, initiated her sexual obsession. As a young child she saw "un negro de estatura descomunal" dragged through the streets, stoned and beaten by a crowd. As her father whispered to the mother the terrible reason for the Negro's punishment--he had sexually abused a white girl--,

> Ana Julia, que por ahí andaba, oyó sin entender y en seguida olvidó; pero si alguien le hubiese sondeado los abismos del alma, habría descubierto que allí estaba escondida la instantánea intuición atroz, que nunca debía ser recordada, de donde provenía todo aquel extraño embrujamiento.

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personajes novelescos, y me han llenado de asombro, de estupor o incluso de miedo ... me aventuro a preguntarle desde aquí, con todos mis respetos, si no se explicarían también algunos de los abismos psíquicos de mis antedichos personajes, enfocándolos desde el punto de vista de las deformaciones que el imperio de la violencia y de la iniquidad en la historia de nuestro país, ha tenido que causar en algunos espíritus y especialmente en aquéllos que mejor me han servido para las materializaciones de mis inquietudes político-sociales. Que es como decir: los pies sobre la realidad. Por ahí nos dolía, doctor. Y no tome, usted a mal, que no en la atormentada cabeza de Edipo." "La pura mujer sobre la tierra," loc. cit. pp. 417-418.

[1]Pobre negro, p. 10.

> Comenzó, desde aquel mismo día, por una aversión a la comida que hubiesen guisado las esclavas del servicio doméstico, convirtiéndose pronto en un asco invencible por todo lo que hubiesen tocado manos negras.[1]

The girl's fear is complemented by a sense of guilt instilled by her mother, who tells her to beg forgiveness for her hatred of Negroes. But the obsession grows, until one day in school she spills ink, and the sight of the black spots staining her hands causes her to fall ill with fever. During her illness she is tormented by a nightmare "en la que se veía ennegrecer por instantes, extravasada bajo su piel blanca y fina una sangre inmunda, negra como la tinta."[2] It is as if Ana Julia is tormented by the premonition of her destiny, of the mixture of bloods which will occur within her, and the subsequent "stain" on the family honor.

Her physical obsessions, intensified by puberty, are accompanied by "una reacción mística," which heightens her guilt feelings:

> Recordó las palabras de la madre que le anunciaban castigo de Dios por aquellas grimas, vio pecado de soberbia en el amor de su blancura y su limpieza y le pidió a Dios, ardientemente, que le inspirase amor a los negros, que la volviese negra a ella misma, como a Santa Efigenia. Y fue así cómo una noche, durante sus oraciones frenéticas, tuvo la primera visita de aquella cosa negra que iba a echársele encima.[3]

The girl's parents take her, now a young woman, to

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[1] Ibid., p. 12

[2] Ibid., p. 13. Italics mine.

[3] Ibid. Italics mine.

"La Fundación,"[1] hoping to revive her health in the countryside and to dissuade her from entering a convent. The direct narrative of the novel begins at "La Fundación" on an eve of San Juan. The slave Negro Malo has been forbidden, along with the other slaves, to attend the festivities, but he slips out into the night, drawn by the beat of the drums.

Negro Malo is the opposite of what his name implies:

> Mozo fornido, recio para el trabajo y siempre en humor de bromas y jugarretas--por lo cual y no por mala índole dábanle sus compañeros el apodo--, bien proporcionado, escultural la musculatura que lo embellecía y de facciones extraordinariamente finas para su tipo racial, este negro gozaba de unánimes simpatías entre los esclavos de La Fundación y el amo lo estimaba mucho.[2]

Negro Malo is the embodiment of the superstitious and good natured slave who unknowingly plays into the "great plan" of mestizaje as he wanders through the plantation following the sound of the drums. It is truly a "noche de embrujamientos," in which sounds and moonlight create halucinatory effects:

> Abriéronse totalmente en el alma del negro los abismos de la superstición milenaria. Eran espantos que se movían por entre los árboles, acaso almas en pena de los antiguos esclavos de la finca, trabajando todavía en ella...[3]

Without knowing it, Negro Malo has lost his way and suddenly finds himself near the main house: "--Pero ¿qué

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[1]The Alcorta estate symbolizes the base or foundation for a new racial beginning--the mestizaje process. Throughout the novel, it is the center of the action and exercises a tremendous attraction over Pedro Miguel. It is, significantly, the only land spared from his torch when he enters the war.

[2]Pobre negro, p. 15. [3]Ibid., p. 21.

vengo buscando yo por aquí? Este es el camino de la Casa Grande y ahora es que vengo a darme cuenta."[1] Here the author underlines his message of the inevitability of the encounter, of the "encantamiento" of this particular moment, when both Negro Malo and Ana Julia have been drawn out into the night by the sensuous beat of the drums. The poor fellow is paralyzed with fear when he sees "una sombra blanca" appear before him in the darkness:

> Lanzó un gemido la sombra y cayó por tierra. Negro Malo permaneció inmóvil, conteniendo el aliento. Luego murmuró sordamente:
> --¡Escúchala cómo se queja! Como una persona rial. Avanzó contra su voluntad, ya bajo el influjo del encantamiento. Sonaba el tambor misterioso en el latir de sus sienes.[2]

Then he discovers that the figure is "la Blanca," Ana Julia, who, having suffered another attack, has also been irresistibly drawn into the "embrujamiento" of the night:

> Se había paseado largo rato por los corredores, como un duende en el silencio de la alta noche, hasta de pronto se apoderó de su alma la atracción fascinante del bosque negro y mudo que se extendía en torno de la casa... Luego, ya insensata, descendió, atravesó el jardin y se encaminó al callejón de los caobos gigantes. Allí vaciló un momento ... pero en seguida le acometió el vértigo de los abismos de su mal, y allí estaba ahora, ausente del alma, tendida en medio del camino del esclavo temerario. Su semblante, fino y pálido al fulgor de la noche embrujadora, todavía expresaba una pena acerba, una tormenta honda y recia...[3]

The author is careful to emphasize the blamelessness

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[1] Ibid., p. 23. [2] Ibid. Italics mine.

[3] Ibid., p. 24. Italics mine.

of both parties, each advancing "contra su voluntad," each powerless in the grasp of the embrujamiento of the night accompanied by the drum beats that echo and re-echo throughout the novel--the pulsating heartbeat of the negro masses that cannot go unheard. Ana Julia, "la Blanca," is the figure of the mother-White race in whom, for Gallegos, the seed of the new mestizo race must inevitably be sown:

> Confieso que me conduje como divinidad inexorable que pidiera inmolación de doncella blanca a la exigente voluntad del mestizaje venezolano; mas lo hice como para aplacar las cóleras de la tremenda guerra niveladora que ya estaba en las puertas de la historia de Venezuela.[1]

Negro Malo manages to escape, never to be heard from again, and Ana Julia dies days after the birth of a son, Pedro Miguel, her wavering emotional stability permanently destroyed. True to the premonitions of her childhood nightmare, the Alcorta family considers itself deeply dishonored. Ana Julia's brother, Fermín, entrusts the child to a farm couple giving them to believe that the boy is his own illegitimate son.

As the years pass, Pedro Miguel--el cachorro, Don Nadie--grows up in the proximity of the family which has cast him out. He early begins to suffer the inner torments of his dual nature, though his origin is unknown to him, and he distrusts the affection offered him by Fermín's children, Luisana and Cecilio el joven, as he distrusts all mantuanos.

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[1]Gallegos, "La pura mujer sobre la tierra," loc. cit., p. 421.

His hatred for the class they represent is intensified by the brutal lashing he receives from Antonio Céspedes, Luisana's fiancé. Throughout the course of the novel, Pedro Miguel carries the scar in his heart long after it has disappeared from his face.

The boy might have been abandoned to a life of resentment and hopeless confusion if not for the return of the Alcortas' uncle, Cecilio el viejo (to distinguish him from his nephew, el joven). An eccentric figure,[1] don Cecilio belongs to the mantuanaje through blood, education and refinement, but he is a liberal in spirit. He is the "lazo espiritual" of the novel, both structurally and thematically. As the orienting force of the novel's message, don Cecilio voices the author's philosophy by analyzing and defending the equalizing processes which are taking hold of the nation. His return after years of wandering initiates a period in which he guides the family thought, educates the children, and gradually creates a bond between Pedro Miguel and the Alcortas.

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[1]The figure of Cecilio el viejo is based on the extraordinary Venezuelan humanist and man of letters, Lisandro Alvarado (1858-1929): "It is not surprising that the fantastic, even extravagant, personality of Lisandro Alvarado should catch the fancy of a great novelist like Don Rómulo and as one reads the novel Pobre Negro certain very distinct similarities between the life of the old humanist Cecilio el Viejo and Don Lisandro appear. It was during my research on Gallegos that I noted this similarity and, in answer to a question submitted to Gallegos in April 1952, he replied: "Efectivamente yo pensé en Lisandro al 'construir' mi Cecilio el Viejo." Lowell Dunham, "The Strange Case of Lisandro Alvarado," Hispania, Vol. XL, No. 4 (December, 1957), 429.

It is Cecilio el viejo who, having revealed Pedro Miguel's origin to his cousins, rebukes the Alcortas for having cast him out, and who voices a transcendent definition of the young mulatto's significance as a human being:

> ... un encuentro regido por la fatalidad le dio origen en circunstancias verdaderamente repugnantes, pero donde los demás sólo ven la mancha que por primera vez cayó sobre nuestro nombre, yo creo descubrir la manifestación de una voluntad trascendente. Pedro Miguel no es el fruto vulgar de unos apetitos ciegos en ocasión propicia, ni sólo del trastorno de un alma pura, sino la criatura dramática de un plan que tenía que cumplirse, de una Idea que buscaba su Forma.[1]

Pedro Miguel is a true symbol of the times, of the changing face of Venezuela (which is incomplete because mestizaje is incomplete) to which the final features, "estos toques finales," would inevitably be added--through violence and bloodshed:

> Los tiempos eran realmente dramáticos pero de tempestades creadoras... La Patria acababa de salir de las fraguas de la guerra y todavía no estaba completamente moldeada. Vuelta hacia el pasado tenía la faz tremenda que contempló la sangre y el fuego, pero mostraba inconcluso el rostro noble y sereno que debía mirar hacia el futuro y era necesario darle cuanto antes y de manera eficaz estos toques finales.[2]

The key words here are manera eficaz of applying the final touches to the changing face of Venezuela. Gallegos' message in Pobre negro is not so much the inevitability of the mestizaje process as the direction it must take, and most important, that the conscious effort on the part of both Negro and

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[1] Pobre negro, p. 54. Italics mine.

[2] Ibid., p. 69. Italics mine.

White is necessary to fruitfully channel the process.

Thus the novel's momentum builds toward another "ocasión propicia" in the "great drama of mestizaje." The years following Ana Julia's fateful encounter see the Alcorta family scatter: Cecilio el viejo disappears into a nomadic existence, Luisana's sisters marry and move to the capital, Cecilio el joven's studies carry him to Caracas and then to Europe to initiate his displomatic career; the family with whom Pedro Miguel lives (his origin is still unknown to him) moves away for a time. The major protagonists are in a constant state of flux which parallels the social and political changes taking place in Venezuela. Gradually, though, the scene is set again. "La Fundación" has been virtually uninhabited for years. But it is significantly here--the site of the encounter which opened the novel (and initiated the novelistic mestizaje)--that the principals must return to continue the process.

Of the Alcorta family, it is Cecilio el joven who shows greatest promise. But like the social class he represents, Cecilio is a punta de raza who is condemned "de pertenecer en vida al mundo de los muertos."[1] With his health and brilliant career destroyed by leprosy, he retires to "LA Fundación" to be cared for by Luisana, who will share her brother's isolation from the world: "... pues su mundo, de allí en adelante, sería el inmenso y hermoso sacrificio."[2]

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[1]Ibid., p. 91. [2]Ibid., p. 90.

Cecilio el joven represents the physical decline of his class, but also its nobleness and refinement of spirit. He complements Cecilio el viejo in his vision of the transcendence of Pedro Miguel's racial significance and in his paternal, generous attitude toward the proper national duty in the mestizaje process:

> ... consideraba la existencia de Pedro Miguel como algo más significativo que la suya propia, a la que no habían contribuído sino voluntades individuales y por menos corrientes ... y en quien veía no ya un campo de lucha entre dos razas irreconciliables, como antes llegó a temerlo, sino, por el contrario, de armonía constructiva de una nación que se enfrentara decidida y valiente con su porvenir, aceptando a plena conciencia el hecho consumado de su mestizaje.[1]

But a racial harmony, a conscious acceptance of its racial destiny by the nation as a whole, must begin with the individual. Cecilio el joven realizes that Pedro Miguel, "plantado en la vida entre dos campos hostiles," cannot find his direction nor release his pent-up hostilities until he faces his position in life. In reality, Pedro Miguel has long suspected the secret of his origin:

> --¿Lo sospechabas?... Ya me lo esperaba yo.
> --Lo sentía... Yo... ¡Qué sé yo lo que me pasaba con eso! Ni tampoco lo que ahora me sucede.
> --Comprendo. Sentías la mentira que te rodeaba y eso te envenenaba la vida. Oye ahora, con calma, la historia real y completa.[2]

Instead of clarifying Pedro Miguel's position in life, the revelation only intensifies his sense of duality. Before, he had been able to identify completely with the

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[1]Ibid., pp. 97-98. Italics mine. [2]Ibid., p. 115.

Negro race, and his subsequent hatred for the mantuano had been a way of life, an emotional directive. His immediate reaction is the confusion and anguish of belonging to neither race, the sense of total isolation that can be conquered only by emotional (and racial) maturity:

> --¿Y ahora, Pedro Miguel?
> --Ahora déjeme que me vaya solo. Usted habrá querido hacerme un bien, porque, la verdad sea dicha, hasta ahora sus intenciones siempre han sido buenas para conmigo, mas por el momento no me parece sino que me ha causado el mayor mal que estaba a su alcance. Yo tenía un odio de toda mi vida, infundado según me decían los viejos Gómarez, aparte lo de una marca que mucho tiempo llevé en la cara, pero estaba a gusto con él. Ahora podría decir que era un rencor contra el mantuano que arrenegó de mí; pero eso no sería nada nuevo, si a ver vamos. Lo grave, dicho sea con palabras suyas de hace poco, es que ahora no sé si serán dos rencores, por mengua de uno, los que tendré que alimentar.[1]

The revelation which Pedro Miguel must face parallels that of the slaves when abolition is declared. They joyfully disperse to shouts of "ahora tos semos iguales," only to find that freedom brings a social and economic responsibility for which they are unprepared. Again the drums beat throughout the Barlovento valley, but this time they announce a deceptive message for the Negro:

> Pronto, sin embargo, enmudecieron los tambores. Al volver de su aturdimiento a la dura realidad, los negros se habían encontrado con el hambre y la desnudez y la noche sin techo y el desamparo absoluto, porque el decreto famoso sólo había dicho:
> --¡Eres libre![2]

Now the slaves return to their former masters, hat in hand,

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[1]Ibid., pp. 115-116. [2]Ibid., p. 120.

desperately begging work only to be turned away by a class which will not yet accept the responsibility of orienting the free Negro:

> Pero el propietario intransigente les respondió que prefería que continuaran perdiéndose los frutos de su tierra antes que recibir en ella como jornalero libre al que había sido su esclavo.
>
> Y comenzó la romería de la mendicidad y hubo cunetas de caminos donde aparecieron negros muertos de hambre, mientras los más animosos andaban alzados por los montes, viviendo del merodeo y de la rapiña.[1]

The Negro, unprepared for freedom, has been betrayed by the nation--"--Nos invitaron a una fiesta; pero no nos reservaron puesto."[2] But the nation will pay for its social crime, for the Negro has begun to react violently, and roving bands of hostile ex-slaves represent a force whose impetus toward revolution cannot be stopped.

Just as the freed slaves realized their need of their former masters, Pedro Miguel is drawn back to "La Fundación" after months of lonely wandering. He is made mayordomo of the plantation, and under his just command, the former slaves return to work. Outwardly Pedro Miguel has brought the hatred that was his "única razón de ser" under control: "Yo, por lo menos, creía que nunca podría vivir sin odiar; pero de golpe he descubierto que también es bueno querer."[3] But the emotional habits of a lifetime cannot be overcome so easily. As he warns Cecilio el joven, his inner torments are not stilled and his outward calm is deceptive: "Porque yo

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid. [3]Ibid., p. 127.

soy como las culebras, que después de haber mudado la piel todavía se quedan adormecidas bajo el carapacho de la antigua."[1]

Pedro Miguel's position as mayordomo brings him into close contact with Luisana, who is also experiencing emotional upheavals. Her dying caste is symbolized in her brother, whose health is rapidly failing. She is forced to analyze her purpose in life; her brother will soon die, and she faces the possibility of retiring to a sterile existence with her married sisters or finding a spiritual and physical emancipation from the role of family enfermera and sacrificial lamb. The chapter entitled "Las aleluyas de la enfermera" describes Luisana's rebellion, her vision of the symbolic mission she must undertake. As she walks in the countryside near Casa Grande with Cecilio el viejo, she suddenly feels freed from the atmosphere of death which has been surrounding her at her brother's bedside: "... ahora se la sentía invadida por una ternura tumultuosa ... que empezaba ya por rejuvenecerla y transformarla, impulsándola a ocurrencias inusitadas..."[2] Luisana has been gradually falling in love with Pedro Miguel, although she has tried to stifle her emotions realizing the problems involved in such a match. But now, in a moment of abandon, she sheds her inhibitions:

> Había por allí una gran piedra revestida de musgos y líquenes, sobre la cual fue a treparse Luisana, y soltándose del todo los cabellos despeinados por

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[1]Ibid., p. 126. [2]Ibid., p. 140.

> los saltos y las carreras, los sacudió con movimientos de cabeza, acompañados de los brazos al cielo agitando las manos, a tiempo que en un grito salvaje descargaba el resto de su tumultuosa alegría. Era hermosa la cabellera suelta que la adornaba de feminidad, los brazos alzados quedaron al desnudo, carne emancipada de espíritu de sacrificio, y en el aire coloreado las manos blancas hicieron aleluyas de resurrección.[1]

Here we see Luisana in a spiritual and sensual awakening. Her movements and her "grito salvaje" signify a freedom of expression, a "tumultuosa alegría" which she has never known. Cecilio sketches her lying on the rock, "la virgen tendida en el ara" awaiting the sacrificial ritual. Luisana will be sacrificed--as her caste must sacrifice its pure identity in the amalgamation of the races--but it will be a sacrifice of love. This is the author's message, voiced by Cecilio <u>el viejo</u>: love is the only force capable of fusing the diverse racial currents which form "the great river of life":

> ¿No es hoy día de aleluyas? Pues tal día sacó el Cristo del seno de Abraham, a los justos que allí padecían. ¡Hermoso símbolo, muchacha!... ¡No te muevas! Cristo muerto regresa al seno de Abraham, porque Abraham es la vida, el gran río que corre avanzando y retrocediendo, pero siempre hacia la inmensidad del futuro perenne. Oye bien esas tres aes que se van ensanchando: ¡A-bra-ham! Es una misma letra, la primera del abecedario, una vocal abierta desde el principio... La primera aparece sola en la sílaba, como una aspiración! ¡Es la vida que ya quiere ponerse en marcha! En la segunda sílaba ya la acompañan dos letras que dan la idea de que algo se ha desgarrado. ¡Brrr! ¡Son los abismos del Caos que ya se abren! Y en la tercera, entre esa hache y esa eme, la vocal de la vida se prolonga hasta el infinito. ¡Oye! ¡Hammm! ...¡El gran río del amor esparciendo sobre la tierra el linaje humano!...[2]

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 141. [2] <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 142-143.

Cecilio's ecstatic flow of ideas awakens in Luisana "una ansia que no tenía forma determinada." She comes to the full realization of her role in life: the symbolic mission of completing the obra initiated by Ana Julia, of "redeeming" her ancestor:

> ... complacíase en pensar que era la Blanca reaparecida. Para la memoria de Ana Julia Alcorta siempre hubo en su alma compresión y piedad, pero ahora algo más que acudía a tomar forma en la voluntaria ilusión de reproducirla. Ana Julia había sido quizá la mujer más femenina de su familia, al par que la más infortunada, y de ella quería tomar aquel espíritu prestándole su carne, a fin de que en ésta se extinguiesen los últimos rugidos de aquella tempestad.[1]

Luisana is the figuration of the sense of conscious destiny and purpose necessary for the success of the mestizaje process. Hers is not the role of "la hembra expuesta al azar de los apetitos," to which Ana Julia had fallen victim. The key word in Luisana's life is obra, and it is in Pedro Miguel, product of Ana Julia's abandon, that she must undertake a redemption of love, an orientation through intelligence and understanding:

> ... en Pedro Miguel había todo un mundo por crear. La materia prima era de calidad excelente... Obra de entrañas maternales, que dan un fruto propio sin reproducción exacta. Y la madre postergada en la enfermera, postergando a su vez a la novia que no era del caso, decidió tomar el amor que ya era suyo sin esperar a que se le declarase.[2]

Luisana intuitively knows that Pedro Miguel loves her, but it is Cecilio el viejo who forces him to a self-realization of his love. Pedro Miguel's reaction is similar

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[1]Ibid., pp. 146-147. [2]Ibid., p. 184.

to the imagery with which Cecilio had sketched Luisana as a virgin to be sacrificed. He feels himself a victim not only of his emotion but of the role that destiny has planned for him:

> Sintió que el destino insistía en escoger otra víctima para llevar adelante una obra ya iniciada, que su vida dejaba de pertenecerle desde aquel momento para formar parte de un plan ineludible, y se asustó de que esto ocurriese junto con un desbordamiento de dulzuras interiores nunca imaginadas. Y esto lo hizo emprender aquella fuga, tan inútil como la de quien huye del rayo cuando ya ha estallado.[1]

The author's message is clear; individual will cannot defeat the "plan ineludible" no matter how desperate the attempt. The class conflict which has been building throughout the novel explodes in the Guerra Federal. Now the drums beat again, this time the message of war: "fiesta de tambor, como lo es la guerra..."[2] The war allows Pedro Miguel a means of momentary escape, and like so many Gallegan protagonists, he takes the road to revolution in a desperate attempt at orientation: "... que en esta guerra los hombres se encontrarían a sí mismos."[3] And together with the faithful Juan Coromoto, Pedro Miguel attempts "aquella fuga inútil" by joining the revolutionary forces.

The fourth and final Jornada opens with five segments whose titles indicate their symbolic content. Each one is a vivid "cuadro de guerra" depicting various facets of the

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[1] Ibid., p. 189. Italics mine.

[2] Ibid., p. 169. [3] Ibid., p. 188.

tragic conflict:

"La furia," which is the reign of terror hovering over the nation: "Ya estaba en pie de guerra la Venezuela cuartel."[1]

" Aquel silencio!", which falls after each bloody battle and accents the useless massacre.

"Aquella visión atroz," of a small boy who watches his mother brutally raped by a band of soldiers and later hangs himself.

The "Fascinación" of another youth, "una fascinación ejercida sobre su alma por el acero desnudo que simboliza la guerra,"[2] whose mother fatalistically watches him leave for the war that has sacrificed her husband and other sons.

The fifth segment symbolizes not a single horror of the conflict, but "Venezuela," the plight of the nation as a whole. It is a brief allegory in which a mother, whose husband has been killed in the war, vainly tries to protect her sons from a band of soldiers. When they approach her home at the edge of a river asking for the ferryman to row them across, the mother lies, saying that she is alone with the two small daughters who are clinging to her skirts. But the soldiers discover the two sons and force the entire family to row the ferry across the river. There, the soldiers force the mother to watch--"Y a bayonetazos vió que le

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[1] Ibid., p. 197.

[2] Ibid., p. 207.

mataban los hijos."[1] The mother is left alone as the soldiers' laughter dies in the night:

> Se incorporó la madre, que se había inclinado sobre los cuerpos yacentes, con la sangre de todos sus hijos, fría, en las manos sarmentosas... Pero ya había perdido la razón y el uso de la palabra, que para nada la serviría en la soledad en que la había dejado la guerra, y empuñando una de las palancas, retiró de la orilla la balsa trágica donde chapoteaba el negro río, con un rumor de lengua que estuviese lamiendo algo.[2]

The symbol is that of the mother-nation searching for a way out of destruction like the mother adrift on the river, with clouds of war covering the sky and the "relámpagos" of distant guns breaking the stillness of her despair:

> La corriente se la fue llevando, poco a poco. Grandes nubarrones cubrían todo el cielo, y relámpagos inmensos aleteaban sobre el agua tenebrosa...
> De pie en la balsa, entre sus hijos muertos, la madre, muda y trágica, hundía de cuando en cuando la palanca, cual si buscase un rumbo.[3]

The despair of this mother-Venezuela is echoed in the heart of Pedro Miguel, who finds that the war is betraying its very goal: "Dábase cuenta de que los del exterminio no podían ser los caminos por donde se lograsen las reivindicaciones sociales, nebuloso objetivo de aquella guerra."[4] He earns the title of General Candelas through the methodic burning of lands belonging to the mantuanos. Only too late does he come to realize that he has sunk to the kind of banditry that destroys the very sustenance of the race he is

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[1] Ibid., p. 210. [2] Ibid., p. 211.

[3] Ibid. Italics mine. [4] Ibid., p. 215.

fighting for; his destruction of the land can only mean that his soldiers will go hungry after the war.

Finally, disillusioned with the revolutionary cause but intent on facing his old enemy, Comandante Céspedes, Pedro Miguel joins forces with other leaders. The brutality and outright bandolerismo of these leaders is exemplified in the figure of El Mapanare, whose cruelty reveals to Pedro Miguel new abysses of barbarity in the Negro soul. When he discovers that El Mapanare is his half brother--son of Negro Malo--his confusion of feelings adds to the "interminable sucesión de tormentas espirituales" which has characterized his life.

When the inevitable battle with Céspedes comes, Pedro Miguel's forces are decimated even though he could have won the battle. Pedro Miguel betrayed his men by thinking only of himself, "con el objeto de medirse, cuerpo a cuerpo, ya no con el jefe enemigo, sino con el hombre mismo que un día le infirió agravio injusto."[1]

The reproaches of Juan Coromoto and the realization that he has failed as a leader fill Pedro Miguel with hatred for the Alcorta family, especially Luisana; for in his twisted reasoning she is responsible for his having entered the war where he became "un bandolero más." With hatred in his heart, he and his men enter the confines of "La Fundación." As Pedro Miguel starts toward the door of Casa Grande, sword

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[1]Ibid., p. 238.

drawn, Don Cecilio meets him with the news that Cecilio el joven has just died. As the men watch the effect on Pedro Miguel, the sinister El Mapanare realizes that his general will never be able to carry out his hateful vengeance, that the band has lost its leader:

> --¡Jm! Si será caso de que nos jáigamos quedao sin jefe los pobres negros. Porque si mi vista no me ha engañao el hermano como que nos ha vuelto la espalda al dentrá por esa puerta con to y su sombrero en la mano.[1]

Furious with this "treason," El Mapanare treacherously attacks Pedro Miguel, wounding him and killing Juan Coromoto. The death of his friend is the final blow to Pedro Miguel's wavering search for orientation; now he feels only guilt and responsibility for the betrayal of this man, who, like Juan Parao,[2]

> no era un hombre, sino el pobre negro, que en todo un pueblo, abandonado por él de espaldas al golpe artero, pues si él no entra en la Casa Grande tal vez no sucede aquello.[3]

Pedro Miguel would have been destroyed both physically and spiritually except for Luisana. She tends his wounds and manages, with Cecilio el viejo's help, to take him to the relative safety of a coastal fishing village. The revolutionary forces have triumphed, but there is immediate danger from the roving bands of ex-revolutionaries who terrorize the countryside. Cecilio arranges for Luisana and

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[1]Ibid., p. 246.

[2]Cf. note 1, p. 155.

[3]Ibid., p. 250.

Pedro Miguel to be taken to the safety of the Island of Margarita.

As their boat draws away, Cecilio remains behind, a symbol of the end of a way of life, the decline of a social class. The future belongs to Luisana and Pedro Miguel, who turn their backs on the violence and prejudice of the past: "Atrás se quedaban por fin la hechura de aquel mundo de ideas y sentimientos de otros."[1] Theirs is a new beginning, a symbolic culmination of the conscious process of mestizaje. Pedro Miguel, oriented at last through Luisana's generous love, unites his destiny with hers, "la Capitana, pero de su amor, por fin, sin mezcla de sacrificio":

> Ya el destino de aquella mujer estaba unido al suyo y ella misma desafiaba las posibles borrascas exclamando:
> --¡Venga viento!
> El falucho abandonó la ensenada triste y traspuso la línea de los escollos desprendidos de la montaña inmensa. Ahora eran viento enfilado, más abierto y un ser nuevo mirando hacia adelante, hacia el horizonte inalcanzable, en plena aventura.
> --Ya están cumplidas sus órdenes, capitana...[2]

El forastero, 1942

El forastero has been aptly termed a "novela de excepción."[3] Begun in 1921 and finished the following year, the political situation was such that it was not published until 1942, "rehecho en esa oportunidad pero perteneciente en

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[1]Ibid., p. 225.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Araujo, op. cit., p. 141.

su inspiración básica, al ciclo de El último Solar."[1] Insofar as El forastero recreates and analyzes the asphyxiating atmosphere of the Gómez regime, the novel does belong in its "basic inspiration" to the cycle of the early novels. However, the novel marks an abrupt change in style and technique which prohibits its being placed exclusively, as Liscano has--"El forastero ... pertenece por entero a la época de Reinaldo Solar"[2]--in the author's first period.

As the second of what may be considered the novels of the last period, El forastero continues, to an even greater degree than Pobre negro, the return to the novel-essay technique which characterized Gallegos' early works. But here the similarity ends. Pobre negro, with its strongly felt Negro masses, had signaled the author's transition from the individualistic to the collective concept of character study: "Del protagonista aislado, que desde Reinaldo Solar hasta Canaima señorea el desarrollo de los argumentos y somete cuanto le rodea a su propia estatura moral derivamos hacia el protagonista colectivo..."[3] This evolution is made patent in El forastero, where the main protagonist is the town itself. The theme of the novel is the political-social analysis of a dictator's reign over a small, unnamed town (and, by extension, the entire nation). Since no one person is

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[1]Liscano, op. cit., p. 161.

[2]Liscano, "Encuentro con Rómulo Gallegos," Cuadernos, No. 6 (Mayo-Junio, 1954), p. 22.

[3]Pardo Tovar, op. cit., p. 185.

individually the victim of the dictatorship, the author's technique is that of singling out a character, analyzing through him a particular effect of his political-social environment, and then disposing of him to continue the process:

> ... porque en realidad no existen personajes centrales, en cuanto el ilustre escritor tiene buen cuidado de esfumar aquellas de sus criaturas que mejor se perfilan en los primeros capítulos de la obra, para reemplazarlas por otros que, a su turno, corren la misma suerte. Lógrase así un sabio equilibrio de las fuerzas dramáticas y psíquicas que juegan en el relato y, por consiguiente, un predominio total del elemento colectivo, que interviene no a la manera del coro en la tragedia griega sino a virtud de la eliminación paulatina--como tales--de los posibles protagonistas de la acción.[1]

Apart from the collective protagonist, the second facet of Gallegos' abrupt change in style is characterized by a strict condensation or economy of description and a subsequent development of narrative action through dialogue more than event. Ulrich Leo has designated El forastero's rapidly moving scenes and abrupt changes of focus as an "estilo de película":

> Los capítulos resultan más breves cada vez; las introducciones descriptivas van aboliéndose; las frases se cortan; se eliminan verbos, epítetos, conjunciones. Al introducirse una nueva persona, muchas veces no se dice el nombre sino que nos encontramos con un "él", "ella", como si el texto no hiciera sino acompañar el cuadro en la pantalla, en donde se ve quien es "él", o "ella". La evocación, de tal modo, se hace cada vez más ligera, esbozada, saltante. Cada vez más parecen interesarle al autor los elementos colectivos y fugitivos, cada vez menos la individualización de aspectos, caracteres, situaciones anímicas. Ya no quiere mostrar la substancia sino la actitud--como lo hace

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[1]Ibid., pp. 185-186.

la película--.[1]

As a third manifestation of the change in style, we see that Nature, which had disappeared as a major protagonist in Pobre negro,[2] although it continued to supply ambiente, has totally vanished in El forastero.

El forastero is a variation on the treatment of the personal drama of the youthful intellectuals of Reinaldo Solar during the early days of the Gómez regime. The theme of El forastero is the analysis of the collective drama of an entire town under that same dictatorship. But where Reinaldo Solar treated the effect of this period on one class and only during the initiation of the dictatorship, the latter novel is a study both in the psychology of the despotic mentality as well as its effect on the downtrodden masses. The time lapse is greater, embracing the period from the dictator's rise to power until his eventual fall.

Gallegos utilizes three major symbols which recur throughout the novel as a leitmotif of the political-social analysis. The first of these is introduced as the novel opens with the return of Mariano Urquiza to the small, ruined town of his childhood. His return emphasizes the change that has come about in the once prosperous town, a change which reflects the "angustias de Venezuela. Vuelve el alma contemplativa al espectáculo de su dolor y su mal: vastas regiones

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[1]Ulrich Leo, "Rómulo Gallegos," Repertorio Americano, XLVIII, No. 18 (Dic. 15, 1954), 283.

[2]Cf. note 1, p. 197.

desiertas, viejos pueblos tristes..."[1] The anguish of this particular town is symbolized by the motionless clock which dominates the town square--for here time stands still; progress and prosperity are forgotten in an atmosphere as stifling as the tropical heat. The entire town is one vast alma dormida to which Mariano, a self-confessed fracasado, has returned in a hopeless gesture, "una forma de suicidio."

The symbol of the clock and its significance both within the novel and the thought of the author have been clarified by Gallegos himself. In 1921, the year that he began El forastero, Gallegos was living in Los Teques, just outside Caracas, and traveled daily to the capital, where he taught at the Colegio Andrés Bello. One day, having missed the last morning train, he went to the Plaza Bolívar, and there, contemplating the clock above the square, he visualized it as a symbol of the times:

> Eran tiempos de opresión; Juan Vicente Gómez había consolidado su poder, que pesaba como losa sobre todo el país. El tiempo en Venezuela parecía verdaderamente haberse detenido; no había progreso; había solamente un orden determinado. Juan Vicente regía el país como un barón medieval, comprando cuanto podía o si no apropiándose de cualquier manera las mejores haciendas y bienes del país. Tales eran los pensamientos que mortificaban a Gallegos cuando se sentó en la Plaza Bolívar aquel día de 1921, mientras esperaba el tren que lo regresaría a su casa. Fue entonces cuando se le ocurrió la idea de emplear el reloj de la torre, con sus manecillas detenidas a la una en punto--detenidas por un tiro de revólver de un general--como un símbolo de la Venezuela de Gómez.[2]

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[1] El forastero, p. 7.

[2] Dunham, Rómulo Gallegos, vida y obra, pp. 264-265.

The general of the novel is Hermenegildo Guaviare, whose origin is legend in the small town where he was born. His mother disgraced her prominent family by marrying the ne'er-do-well Guaviare, who later fled the country (after having gotten control of his wife's fortune) to escape bigamy charges. As a boy, Hermenegildo early showed signs of a "temperamento avasallador, puro instinto de presa, todo envuelto en una desaforada alegría de causar daño, de apurarse la impetuosa intimidad en la posesión de un gozo o un bien que fuesen ajenos."[1] The youth grew up, untamed, his adventurous spirit satisfied by long absences, from one of which he returned to

> lanzarse a otra aventura, de más funestas consecuencias: alzarse a la cabeza de las peonadas del hato y de una hacienda de café que había heredado de la madre, dando vivas a una revolución armada que venía bajando de la cordillera a paso triunfal y así cayó sobre el pueblo, tomándolo de sorpresa, a tiros entre carcajadas como de costumbre:
>
> --¡Viva el General Hermenegildo Guaviare! ¡Cuaj, cuaj, cuaj! ¡Viva la revolución!
>
> Luego descargó su revólver contra la muestra del reloj de la torre, a punto de dar la una y cuando observó que el minutero ya no se movía:
>
> --¡Así! --exclamó--. Parado en la hora de mi triunfo, para que todo el pueblo la tenga siempre ante los ojos y no la eche en olvido.[2]

In the years which follow--"sin que en el reloj de la torre las agujas se moviesen de la hora de Hermenegildo Guaviare"[3]--the general's barbaric influence overpowers the entire town. Even his own family is not spared his bestial

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[1] El forastero, p. 11.

[2] Ibid., p. 14. [3] Ibid., p. 17.

cruelty: Guaviare has long been attracted to his cousin Efigenia; he has her husband murdered by his henchman, Comemuertos, on their wedding night and then brutally takes advantage of the girl. That same night Guaviare murders the lone witness who saw him enter Efigenia's house, Heliodoro Urquiza, director of the only school in the town. Thus the tyrant's passionate appetite has led to two murders, one of which signals the abolishment of education and the closing of the school.

Ten years have passed since these events when Urquiza's grandson, Mariano, returns. His reacquaintance with the townspeople initiates the presentation of character creations who reflect the result of the years of Guaviare's control, as well as those who form part of his despotic regime.

Principal among the latter group is the Jefe Civil, Parmenión Manuel, whose trajectory is one of growing control over the powers he supposedly administers loyally for the aging and semi-retired Guaviare. Parmenión's figure complements that of Guaviare in the total psychological analysis of the political caudillo.[1] Guaviare represents the shameless brutality and violence of dictatorship, while Parmenión synthesizes the astuteness and cunning of the semi-benign tyrant who realizes that by loosening the iron grip he will

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[1]"Los caracteres de Hermenegildo Guaviare y Parmenión Manuel se inspiran en el mismo Gómez." Dunham, Rómulo Gallegos, vida y obra, p. 269.

be accepted by the people as the lesser of two evils.

Dr. Basilio Daza, perhaps the most diabolical figure of the novel, moves constantly between the figures of Guaviare and Parmenión, manipulating them like pawns in a game of chess. The town judge, he represents not only the corruption of the law in the service of the tyrant--"en este país el destino de los doctores es servirles de instrumento a los generales"[1]--but intelligence at the service of despotism for self gain.

Opposed to these figures, who represent the varied aspects of tyranny, are all the other inhabitants of the town. Their psychological composite is a living analysis of the people's reaction to dictatorship. All agree that something should be done, but here their agreement ends. Their relationships constitute interminable arguments as to their proper course of action: "Y eran así, destemplados, irrascibles, porque así los había puesto la vida del pueblo."[2]

The town is not entirely deadened by the oppression: "La plaza era el corazón del pueblo y todavía palpitaba un poco."[3] The spirit of rebellion is kept alive by the pathetic figure of Anterito Valdez: "Pero todo no había muerto en aquel pueblo y en Anterito Valdez alentaba el espíritu de la conspiración. Era la conspiración misma."[4] As a last report, for no one will join him in his schemes, he attempts to at

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[1]El forastero, p. 27.

[2]Ibid., p. 24. [3]Ibid., p. 7. [4]Ibid., p. 20.

least create the illusion of rebellion by entering the deserted houses that line the town square and making vain noises in the night to convince the people that conspirators are holding meetings.

Anterito's pathetic attempts to keep a spirit of rebellion alive are as futile as Arístides Velarde's

> fe mesiánica: esperando al hombre todo rectitud, que de un momento a otro debía de aparecer en Venezuela, para librarla de los bribones que se habían apoderado de ella, y:
> --Para encaminarla al solio de las naciones civilizadas.[1]

The group is completed by the figures of Padre Romero and Marcos Roger--"el místico y el positivista"--whose incessant ideological duels represent two diametrically opposed solutions to the problems at hand:

> El uno [Romero], penetrado de su convicción cristiana de que sólo el espíritu de la verdad y de la justicia debe reinar sobre la tierra para que ésta sea espiritualmente habitable; el otro [Roger], empeñado en que además--y de una manera especial sobre la porción de la tierra que eran su país y su pueblo--se llevasen al cabo realizaciones positivas de bienestar, comodidad y aun buena apariencia.[2]

Of all the figures of the novel--characterized by their static quality--Marcos Roger is the only one who undergoes a psychological and ideological evolution. As the novel opens, he is a figure closely akin to Reinaldo Solar, an uncompromising idealist whose attempts to better the town have ended in <u>fracaso</u>. Having been unable to conquer the <u>medio</u>

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[1]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 21. [2]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 24.

ambiente or the alma dormida of the people, he has retired to a marginal existence, the frustrated

> hombre de acción que por temperamento era y muchas las obras que para bien del pueblo se había propuesto, como ninguna pudo realizar--aquí por incomprensión o indolencia de sus paisanos, allí porque atentaba contra intereses creados, allá porque a la autoridad omnipotente no le daban ganas de permitir obras que de algún modo se opusieran a su derecho de gobernar atropellando con todo--se quitó de procurarlas más y se metió a soñador, en sus tierras de Camposolo, donde criaba chivos, cultivaba sanseviera, fabricaba ladrillos y cacharros y leía los clásicos de varias lenguas.[1]

Such is the human panorama which Mariano Urquiza finds upon his return. But he also discovers that the spiritual disorientation is not the only effect of the dictatorship. There is a concrete physical parallel in the river, the most perfectly achieved symbol of the novel in its multiplicity of functions. It is the embodiment of the "pueblo muerto," the town dead both spiritually and financially. The useless theft of the river by diverting its course to his own land (where he already had ample water supply) reinforces Guaviare's exploitation of the town not only for personal ends but through sheer malice and delight in his power. The partially dry river bed, "que antes fue cauce de un río caudaloso, navegable por pequeñas y hasta por medianas embarcaciones que hasta allí llegaban,"[2] is a constant reminder of the physical and spiritual murder of the town: "Que, por cierto, a él de nada le sirve, habiendo sido la

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[1]Ibid., p. 25. [2]Ibid., p. 26.

vida misma del pueblo."[1]

The river is intrinsically bound to the clock symbol: as the motionless clock symbolizes the "hora del bárbaro," so the river which has ceased to flow symbolizes the power of one man to divert the course of history, to change the very destiny of an entire town (and nation). These symbols are often juxtaposed in the total picture of desolation, the odiferous river encarnating the stagnate moral atmosphere, the clock dominating the town with a shadow as dark and dictatorial as that cast by the tyrant himself:

> La luna menguante daba iluminación espectral al lamentable paisaje: charcas de mal olor, borales que flotaban sobre ellas, intrincado matorral silvestre más allá, los tejados del pueblo recortados en oscuro silencio contra el cielo medianamente luminoso y al fondo, negra sombra erguida, la torre del reloj donde se había detenido el tiempo.[2]

Suddenly, unexpectedly, an event occurs which changes the course of the town. The ever-hopeful Anterito discovers "que al pueblo ha llegado un forastero":

> No un hijo del pueblo que a éste regresara al cabo de tantos a cuantos años de ausencia, como Mariano Urquiza, ni un venezolano de otra parte que por allí pasara de tránsito o allí viniera a establecerse, sino un forastero auténtico, rubio, de ojos azules. Un extranjero. Misterioso, por añadidura...[3]

The figure of the unnamed stranger is suggested rather than described directly, for more than a physical visitor to the town, he symbolizes the arrival of ideas from the

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[1] Ibid. Italics mine.

[2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., p. 31.

outside world, a breath of fresh air in the stifled community. He passes through the novel like a shadow--appearing and disappearing suddenly--, more significant through his influence on others than by his own actions, which are minimal. He talks of the recent Russian revolution, loans books which open the world of Russian revolutionary literature to the youth of the town, adorns his house with photographs of the Kremlin, little more.

The forastero[1] represents an influx of ideas which motivate various reactions in the town. Parmenión, for example, instinctively knows that the forastero "ya de algún modo figuraba en su propia historia."[2] His premonition is "una de tantas de la misma naturaleza que comenzaban a producirse en el pueblo a causa de la llegada del forastero."[3]

It is Anterito who sees the greatest significance in the stranger's arrival and who is first moved to action. He

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[1]The forastero is one of the few major characters in the novels of Gallegos which has not been concretely identified. Juan Liscano states that his figure may represent the Russian painter Ferdinandov, "que, en aquel entonces, pasó por Venezuela y sacudió con sus excentricidades, el ambiente aletargado de las artes, influyendo particularmente en Armando Reverón..." Rómulo Gallegos y su tiempo, p. 59.

Professor Dunham relates that on questioning the author as to his inspiration for this figure, Gallegos replied that his forastero was based on a historical personnage, the first man to bring Marxism into Venezuela, but he refused to concretely identify him by name. Interview with Lowell Dunham, May 3, 1964.

[2]El forastero, p. 38.

[3]Ibid., p. 47.

and the forastero visit the clock tower, where the latter discovers the bullet lodged there for so many years:

> Estaba allí y a ninguna de nosotros se nos había ocurrido nunca que allí pudiera estar todavía--. "Una pequeña cosita -- me dijo-- para producir un efecto grande quitándola de ahí".[1]

Anterito returns later in the night, understanding the stranger's intención. He removes the bullet and sets the clock's mechanism in motion, significantly at the very hour that it was stopped:

> Y fue a la primera hora justa de un día que acababa de desprenderse del filo de medianoche. Un zumbido inusitado en el profundo silencio y de pronto, cadenciosamente:
> --Tam, tam, tam, tam...
> ¡El reloj de la torre!...
> ¡La una del día que acababa de comenzar![2]

The deathly stillness of the town is broken by the peals which signify a new day, indeed a new era. The incredulous town awakens like a vast alma dormida aroused to consciousness at last. The long night of the dictatorship is suddenly a "día ya de un tiempo en marcha":

> Ya era numeroso el grupo en el altozano mirando hacia el reloj. ¡Sí! No cabía duda. No había sido un sueño de los que dormían, ni alucinación de los que consumían alcohol. El minutero, viejo tullido que de pronto sanó, volvió a los pinicos dando saltitos de minuto en minuto.
> Y aquella noche, día ya de un tiempo en marcha, casi nadie durmió más en el pueblo: unos en el altozano, otros en el bar haciendo descorchar champaña, otros en sus camas, pero todos oyendo los cuartos y nombrando las horas que otra vez sonaban.[3]

The motion of the clock triggers the people to action,

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[1]Ibid., p. 42. Italics mine.

[2]Ibid. Italics mine. [3]Ibid. Italics mine.

especially the younger generation headed by Martín Campos and Elio Monegas, Mariano's nephew. They persuade Mariano to re-open his grandfather's school,[1] which he agrees to do, inspired by their confidence in him and their desire to learn. Thus, by the end of Part I of the novel, Guaviare's power is beginning to diminish, and the motion of the clock parallels a "mechanism" of inquietude in the people: "Quedó en movimiento la maquinaria detenida, en la torre del reloj y en los corazones inquietos."[2] The town begins to talk openly of the changes which are coming about:

> --¿Y qué le parecen los giros que va tomando la política? ¿Se fijó en lo del reloj? Eso es la caída del General Guaviare. ¿No le parece?...
> --Se siente en el aire el olorcito a tortilla volteada.[3]

Part II deals with these political "giros" which the clock has symbolically set in motion. Parmenión, like the people, has sensed the waning power of Guaviare, who is growing old in the semi-retirement of his country estate:

> Sabana del Muerto no era por completo un refugio de mandarín holgazán, amigo de baile y mujer fácil, lance de cacería y comilona de terneras, sino la residencia natural de quien ya había alcanzado segunda etapa de los apetitos de mando. Un hombre que mandaba por sí, pura y simplemente. Un hombre a quien se le temía.[4]

Guaviare, secure in his power, entrusts more and more

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[1]The re-opening of the school, which had been closed as a result of another of Guaviare's bullets, complements the clock as a concrete manifestation of the march of progress which has been set in motion once again.

[2]El forastero, p. 63.

[3]Ibid., p. 56. [4]Ibid., p. 66.

authority to Parmenión, who takes advantage of the tyrant's abuse of his segundones. Parmenión, too, has sensed the odor of "tortilla volteada," and the Jefe Civil has patiently awaited his opportunity: "Que Parmenión se le voltease enemigo cuando la oportunidad le fuese propicia, ya lo tenía previsto y cómo prodecería."[1]

Parmenión's gradual rise to power is embodied in the third major symbol of the novel, the growth of the trinitaria. The origin of this symbol, inspired in the very words of the dictator himself, has been clarified by Gallegos. The author had gone to Las Delicias, Gómez's country estate, to ask permission to re-open publication of the suspended Actualidades (which had suffered the same fate as Gallegos' first literary enterprise, La Alborada):

> Para ilustrar determinado punto, Gómez señaló una planta de bugambilia que, al crecer, había cubierto casi totalmente un mango y dijo: "Ya la trinitaria se le montó encima al mango, y ya no se le apea más. Así soy yo".[2]

In the novel, the mango has become a laurel-matapalo which adorns the courtyard of the Casa de Gobierno, dominating the view from Parmenión's office window as Guaviare has so long dominated the town's political panorama from a distance. The combination of the two plants which Gallegos has fused to symbolize Guaviare offers a vivid evocation of the tyrant: the laurel, associated with triumph, incarnates his

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Dunham, Rómulo Gallegos, vida y obra, pp. 55-56. Italics mine.

power, while the matapalo,[1] a parasitic vine which wraps itself around a plant much like a boa constrictor, incarnates the method by which Guaviare came to power. He is the dictator triumphant, but his victory has been at the expense of the town, crushed in his iron grasp. A true parasite, he has devoured the town's wealth, its best lands; he has absorbed the very life blood of the town by diverting its river, thus draining the vitality of the people and the land like a true matapalo, which absorbs the vital sap of the plant it drains and crushes.

Parmenión's ambition is symbolized by a new growth, for despite the imposing size of the gigantic laurel-matapalo, "había logrado crecer una trinitaria que por la verde y espesa copa ya le extendía sus gajos floridos..."[2] Parmenión's words as he notes the growth of the trinitaria are almost literally those of Gómez:

> --Mire --díjole una vez Parmenión a su secretario--. Ya la trinitaria se le está encaramando encima al matapalo. Para no apiársele más.
> Y al cabo de una pausa:
> --Así soy yo.[3]

Parmenión sees in the trinitaria not only a parallel of his own ambitions, but a manner of making them known to his subordinates. The secretary, quick to understand his

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[1]"Nombre vulgar de plantas parásitas, principalmente del género Ficus que, viviendo a expensas de otra, terminan por matar a ésta." Francisco J. Santamaría, Diccionario general de americanismos (Méjico: Editorial Pedro Robredo, 1942), II, 255.

[2]El forastero, p. 72. [3]Ibid.

jefe's intentions,

> llamaba la atención de todos los subalternos de Parmenión su complacida insistencia en contemplar y compulsar los progresos del encaramamiento del arbusto florido sobre el árbol frondoso y hubo escribiente que comenzó a ganar mejor sueldo, por el cuidado de hacerle observar entre días:
> --Fíjese, Jefe. Otro gajo.
> A lo que Parmenión correspondía:
> --¡Y para arriba es que va! Esa trinitaria es un acontecimiento.[1]

At the same time, Parmenión, angered by Guaviare's high handed treatment, employs the trinitaria to test the loyalty of those under his command. One day, as the ingratiating secretary points out another gajo, Parmenión bursts out with:

> --No estamos ahora para tonterías de florecitas. Que le peguen el machete ahora mismo a la trinitaria, para que no jorobe más.
> Y en esto sonó el reloj.[2]

Once again we see the juxtaposition of two major symbols, especially effective here. Previously the clock and river symbols were frequently fused to reinforce the picture of Guaviare's power. Now the striking clock signifies the tyrant's failing power and forms an effective contrast with the growing trinitaria. The clock reminds Parmenión of his investigation of the suspected Anterito and his threat to jail him if it can be proved that he did start the clock, because "el reloj estaba parado en la hora del compadre, como él decía siempre, y esa hora no puede mancar en este pueblo."[3] Now the poor secretary--"ya sudando frío"--cannot

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid., p. 73. [3]Ibid.

comprehend the sudden change in Parmenión, who continues: "--Sí. Hay que cortarla. Muy bonita es, pero en una Casa de Gobierno no tiene por qué haber flores. ¿No le parece, compañero"?[1] With this simple interrogative, Parmenión makes it clear that a choice must be made between his authority and that of Guaviare. The response of loyalty to Parmenión is, of course, a refusal to cut down the trinitaria:

> --Sí, General; ni yo ni los que aquí estamos, sus amigos además de subalternos disciplinados, compartimos la idea de que no se compadecen flores y casa de gobierno. Y venimos a pedirle que levante la orden dada a fin de que la trinitaria... o mejor dicho, General --porque entre amigos estamos-- lo que la trinitaria significa, continúe prosperando y dando sus flores delicadas por encima de lo que significa el matapalo, que ya aquí nadie quiere llamarlo laurel, porque...
>
> --¡Aguarde, aguarde! --atajó Parmenión--. Si se trata de matas con significados, mejor será cortarlas las dos. Pero vuélvanse a sus puestos tranquilos, que ya aquí hemos comprendido y apreciado.[2]

Parmenión's words contain the key to the total symbol, for not only the growth of the trinitaria, but the quality of this other "mata con significado" is vital to the author's political analysis. The delicate flowers and beautiful color of the trinitaria form a deceptive contrast with the obviously parasitic matapalo, which is gradually obscured as the people come to look toward Parmenión, "puestos en él los ojos esperanzados." Only later will they find that merely the outward appearance of their situation has changed--as the trinitaria flowers upon the matapalo, Parmenión's dictatorship is based on that of his predecessor and its effect

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[1]Ibid., p. 74. [2]Ibid., p. 90. Italics mine.

is equally as asphyxiating.

Another concrete signal of Parmenión's rising power is the changed attitude of Marcos Roger. Roger, like Reinaldo Solar, commits treason against his ideals in an attempt to take some positive action--"de hacer; de ejecutar, a cualquier precio." He decides to make a pact with Parmenión to sell the jefe civil his land holdings at a fraction of their cost in return for diverting the river back to its natural course. Roger's reasoning is that of the frustrado, who, having failed to realize any actions because of his unbending moral code, commits el pecado contra el ideal:

> Pero si nunca logró el bien de su pueblo por empeñarse en buscarlo por los caminos rectos, ahora iba dispuesto a meterse por los tortuosos, aunque entre sus marañas se le quedase en jirones la dignidad. Si adulaciones y apañamientos eran los instrumentos del tiempo en que le había tocado vivir, por él no se diría que a personales escrúpulos les fueron sacrificadas las obras que de todos reclamaba la suprema necesidad del bien público.[1]

With these thoughts in mind, Marcos Roger enters Parmenión's office, sacrifices his dignity, and offers the jefe civil his collaboration "para bien del pueblo." As the two shake hands on the "pacto cerrado," Parmenión realizes that the public collaboration of "el hombre puro y recto que no quiso entenderse nunca con el General Guaviare"[2] signals his triumph over the leader of the strongest opposition element: "Era imposible que a Parmenión no se le fuesen maquinalmente los ojos hacia la trinitaria del patio y así sucedió."[3]

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[1]Ibid., p. 99. [2]Ibid., p. 107. [3]Ibid., p. 102.

Marcos Roger has been deceived by appearances and will find too late that only outwardly has the moral and political situation changed: "Volvió a sentarse Parmenión, con su sonrisa desplegada y una vez más cumplió la trinitaria del patio su misión simbólica."[1]

Roger's idea allows Parmenión the opportunity to openly defy Guaviare "for the good of the town." He has a decree drawn up stating that the river will be returned to its natural course. When Parmenión is subsequently declared Hijo Predilecto de la ciudad, a new era of corruption begins: "Terminó Guaviare, pero empieza Parmenión, el mismo mal con distinto nombre."[2]

The only hope for a genuine change in government lies in the youth of the town, whose spiritual and political awakening was inspired by the forastero and whose movement for justice had begun when they demanded the reopening of their school. During the ceremonies honoring Parmenión, they take the valiant step--they protest:

> Era la voz reprimida hacía años, que por fin se echaba a la calle. Era la juventud en marcha, los indiferentes y los remisos arrastrados por los decididos.[3]

The students, though they are easily dispersed by Parmenión's forces, offer "la mejor lección de aquel día":

> Cárceles y torturas bajo el Guaviare implacable habían producido la sumisión de todo un pueblo y cuando

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[1] Ibid. Italics mine. [2] Ibid., p. 122.

[3] El forastero, p. 122.

por evitarlas todo se soportaba y se admitía, un puñado de muchachos, yendo a ellas voluntariamente, desvanecen de golpe el espantajo del miedo.[1]

Parmenión jails Anterito and places the students in forced labor groups to clean out the river bed: "Era modo de ahorro que él hacía, para su bolsillo, del dinero público erogado con cargo a las obras del río."[2]

Part II of the novel completes the symbolic growth of the trinitaria. Parmenión, "complacido en el arropamiento total del laurel-matapalo por la trinitaria escarlata,"[3] now rules the town. Through the exploitation of the students, he finally has the river diverted back to its former course. The river, a complex symbol, synthesizes two types of dictatorships: (1) Guaviare's open and criminal theft of the river--the arbitrary diverting of the historic

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[1]Ibid., p. 124. The historical basis for this incident was the student revolt against the Gómez regime which took place in Caracas, 1928. Among the leaders of this revolt were many of Gallegos' former students, among them Rómulo Betancourt:

"Ellos habían aprendido bien las lecciones del Maestro, a quien conocían. El les había imbuído una nueva noción de decencia, no sólo en la vida pública y sus deberes, sino también en cuanto a la responsabilidad social que cada ciudadano debía asumir para hacer posible una Venezuela mejor. Ellos pagaban voluntariamente el precio de sus ideales." Dunham, Rómulo Gallegos, vida y obra, pp. 84-85.

[2]El forastero, p. 124. Parmenión's punishment of the student conspirators parallels that of Gómez, who placed the arrested students in several concentration camps:

"Bolas y cadenas fueron atadas a las piernas de los jóvenes que cada día, bajo guardia, eran llevados a trabajar en la construcción de una carretera. Dunham, ibid., p. 84.

[3]El forastero, p. 148.

stream of a town (and nation), and (2) the seemingly benevolent, but in reality more cunning exploitation of the Parmenión regime. As the river begins to flow again, history repeats itself. Parmenión has managed to buy most of the property that the river will run through, so that in a more cunning manner he will continue to drain the wealth which Guaviare openly exploited:

> Ya no eran los tiempos de la baladronada guapetona ni del arresto temerario para sojuzgar a los hombres. Arrebatarle el río a la ciudad fue el procedimiento de la época de Guaviare, el alarde del hombrón que ella pedía para sus complacencias, al tono heroico del guerrear continuo; devolvérselo era lo que aconsejaba la suya: la maña paciente que diera dominio irresistible.[1]

The river comes flowing back through the thirsty river bed, which is "como una boca de sediento pidiendo de por Dios una ñinguita de agua."[2] The people, thirsty for justice, greet the river with wild enthusiasm:

> --¡El río! ¡El río!
> Ya venían las aguas hinchadas, turbias, revueltas con remolinos de espumas, toda la masa del caudal llenando el cauce sediento. Se alzaban a una y otra orilla los brazos, echando a lo alto la alegría y acompañaba el fragor de la corriente la exclamación multitudinaria:
> --¡El río! ¡El río!
> Lo seguían las miradas atentas a la recuperación del cauce palmo a palmo, se tendían por la anchura que ya ocupaban las turbias aguas revueltas y eran bosques de brazos alzados en las yermas riberas el saludo de un pueblo.[3]

But the naive enthusiasm of the town is merely another manifestation that the deceptive <u>trinitaria</u> has blinded the

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 164-165. [2] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 166.

[3] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 167.

people. Parmenión imposes high water taxes and monopolizes the shipping trade. Thus the hope of the people and Marcos Roger's betrayal of ideal have been in vain: "El pecado contra el ideal es estéril, como las tierras malditas, donde se siembra pero no se cosecha."[1] When Anterito, the scapegoat, is given an unjust prison term, the gran protesta he had hoped for is merely the silence of a whole town which has fallen back into the same pattern under another dictator. In the ultimate analysis, it is the people's lethargy which has allowed the growth of the trinitaria:

> Lo que, por afecto de perspicacia, le permitió al secretario de Parmenión corroborar que, como la trinitaria del patio, cuando su jefe se montaba encima no se apeaba fácilmente. Y esto era de todo punto necesario que alguien lo comprobase y lo atestiguase, sin lo cual no prevalecería Parmenión, por aquello que todos traían en la sangre, de dolencia antigua y se expresaba diciendo:
>
> --Jefe es jefe.
>
> Y los amigos del orden inalterable, de Anterito también casi todos, poco tiempo atrás, durmieron aquella noche tranquilos y confiados.
>
> ¿Podría decirse, acaso, que fuese de Parmenión toda la culpa?[2]

The growth of the trinitaria has gone unchallenged by all except the students, but finally Guaviare, having failed to enlist the help of former comrades, decides to face the usurper of his power. The two meet in Parmenión's office as the people gather in front of the Casa de Gobierno like an army awaiting the decision of single combat between feudal war lords: "Afuera--la multitud en la plaza, pendiente la suerte de un pueblo de la rifa del aliento--era un

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[1] Ibid., p. 172. [2] Ibid., p. 174. Italics mine.

silencio imponente, contenidas las iras, frenado el entusiasmo..."[1] Simultaneous gunshots mark the death of Guaviare and the serious wounding of Parmenión.

The outcome of this meeting is synthesized in the title of the last chapter, "Sin embargo, angustia...":

> De la grave herida quedó postrado Parmenión con insegura suerte. Un día, que no daba esperanzas; otro día que:
>
> --¡Caramba! Como que va a levantarse el hombre.
>
> Esperanzas de unos; pero temor de otros, que eran los más.[2]

The novel closes leaving only a question mark as to the future of the town. The dictatorships have taken their toll: Marcos Roger has withdrawn into total isolation, "otra vez soñador"; Father Romero, too, is totally disillusioned; Arístides Velarde still awaits the "advenimiento del Hombre"; Anterito Valdez is serving his prison term, his heroic efforts on behalf of the town forgotten--all are victims of their times to one degree or another.

Only the students, who have also been victimized, are not broken in spirit. Elio and Martín, the two student leaders, have lost their <u>lepras</u>, the terrible insect bite infections contracted in their forced labor on the river bed. But though the scars have disappeared, the experience has served its purpose: "Tal vez alguna grave infección de nuestro país se descargó por ellas, como sucede con los abscesos de fijación."[3] The youth, the only ones who have not betrayed their ideals, have been purged of the national disease through

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[1]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 179. [2]<u>Ibid</u>. [3]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 180.

their "ensayo de hombre" to ready them for a tomorrow "cuando nos toque de veras y a fondo, se podrá comprobar."[1] It is in such youth that Gallegos sees the hope of the nation--the youth, "antena de la inquietud de un pueblo ... el rostro transido de angustia."[2]

Sobre la misma tierra, 1943

Sobre la misma tierra is another of Gallegos' studies in the striking contrasts which characterize the social, geographic, political and economic complexion of Venezuela. The novel presents "el violento contraste" inherent in the geographic framework of the Guajira Peninsula and the adjoining state of Zulia, where the misery and abandonment of the Guajiro Indians are dramatically juxtaposed to the immense wealth of the oil deposits around Lake Maracaibo. Nowhere else "en un mismo punto del horizonte venezolano" are the contrasts between wealth and poverty, primitivism and progress so great:

> No existen ... en el marco de la República, estos dos tipos, el civilizado y el primitivo, en formas tan opuestas una a la otra, como acontece en el Zulia y la Guajira. No hay en Venezuela, primitivismo más antiguo, costumbres y tradiciones más concretamente conservados que los de los indios guajiros, pintados por Gallegos, de manera que, a veces, nos parece encontrarnos en plena vida precolombiana resucitada... Ni hay, por otra parte, civilización más "moderna" que la importada por los empresarios norteamericanos a la región petrolera del Zulia.[3]

Above this paradox there arises a great tragic parallel: like the human resources which the Indians represent, the

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid.

[3]Leo, Estudio sobre el arte de novelar, p. 115.

oil income, too, is being lost to the nation. The money passes to a few Venezuelan "privilegiados," but mainly to foreign enterprises whose ultra-modern facilities stand virtually side by side with the miserable huts of the Indians--inhabitants of the "same earth" beneath whose surface the immense fortune is being drained away: "--La estupenda suerte ajena junto al descuidado infortunio propio, sobre la misma tierra."[1] This titular phrase echoes throughout the novel like a sad lament, the same one that the author expressed in Canaima: the riches of La Guayana have become the oil of Zulia, but the barbaric trajectory of the protagonist, the foreign exploitation, the treatment of the Indians are the same. Given Gallegos' tendency toward variación de temática in his last period, Sobre la misma tierra may be considered a thematic elaboration of Canaima.

Sobre la misma tierra, like all the novels of the last period with the exception of Pobre Negro, is divided into three approximately equal parts whose scheme is the presentation of antithetical or contrasting poles in Parts I and II, and the synthesis or solution in Part III.

The novel opens with an analysis of the cultural, psychological and racial position of the Guajiro Indians within the sociological framework of the nation as a whole. The picture is of a once proud race, dwindling through its own caste wars, droughts and sickness; a marginal people

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[1]Sobre la misma tierra, p. 133. Italics mine.

whose racial regeneration must come from outside themselves, whose desolation is synthesized in a recurrent image of the Peninsula's characteristic vegetation: "El cardón, que niega la sombra y prodiga la espina."[1]

The central figure of the diverse episodes of Part I is Demetrio Montiel, another of the protagonists so characteristic of the Gallegan novel. Through him the author continues the analysis begun with Reinaldo Solar and developed in Florentino Coronado and Marcos Vargas: that of the *bala perdida* whose barbaric waste of talents and energy in a useless trajectory is treason against self and nation.

Demetrio is more closely akin to Florentino than Marcos. Where the latter was searching for a meaning and direction of his life, Demetrio parallels Florentino in his total lack of goal, and like him, he is described as a *tarambana*, who from an early age

> venía dispuesto a dar al traste con la circunspección y la honorabilidad de los Montieles de la Calle Derecha, en el corazón de Maracaibo, pues con pasos quitados del camino de la escuela, tirando por su calle hacia afuera, fue a caer en El Saladillo plebeyo y pendenciero.
>
> Periquito a Pie, La Mala Ley, Los Biombos, El Manadador, sitios borrascosos donde los corrillos de muchachos en torno a las tertulias de los hombres recogían la tradición del bravo arrabal maracaibero, lo oyeron presentarse fanfarronamente, arrastrando ya por los suelos de plebe y hampa a todos sus mayores:
>
> --Demetrio Montiel Montiel de los Montieles.[2]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 164.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

Demetrio's boastful affirmation of self and even his nickname--Diablo Contento--are reminiscent of Florentino Quitapesares. But more vividly than the troubadour of the llano, Demetrio represents that peculiar variety of barbarity which is destructive not through premeditated cruelty so much as an absolute lack of responsibility--"el ímpetu a derrocharlo todo de una sola vez."[1]

The path of Demetrio's useless adventures is strewn with violence, seductions and illegitimate children. Before he runs away from home to definitively take "el rumbo de los contrabandistas," he sires a son by his brother's fiancée. The child, Marco Aurelio Peripatético, is later abandoned to a childhood in the streets and an adulthood consumed in an alcoholic attempt to escape the shame of his origin.

Demetrio's daughter, Remota, is the fruit of his encounter with the Guajira cacica, "Cantaralia la generosa, de cuya honestidad nadie pudo dudar nunca..."[2] When Cantaralia dies, Remota (her existence unknown to Demetrio) is left to the care of her aunts, while Demetrio continues his pursuit of adventure. The earnings of his contraband activities between Colombia and Venezuela permit him to open a store in Maraicabo, where he delights in his apparent respectability:

> ... le pareció divertido reforzar la fama que sus azarosas andanzas de contrabandista, más a menos vulgar, le habían dado o su apodo de Diablo Contento, con el sarcasmo de una aparente ocupación honesta que comprobara una vez más la verdad del proverbio

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid., p. 23.

> de que tras de la cruz está el diablo, y puso en el centro de Maracaibo, cerca del mercado, una tienda de artículos de uso piadoso ... pero en cuya trastienda se encontrase a la venta cuanto su Diablo Contento metía de contrabando por aquellos vericuetos.[1]

But to Demetrio, like Marcos Vargas, the world of an office and the restraints of a stable business are unbearable. He gives the store to an employee, and, "libre de preocupaciones burguesas," buys a boat which he names La Arrepentida "para patentar sarcasmos una vez más, puesto que se proponía destinarla al contrabando en gran escala desde las Antillas vecinas."[2]

Contraband activities soon give way to the slave trade--buying and selling Guajiro Indians--, for Demetrio's adventurous drive is not satisfied by profit so much as flaunting the law in the most dangerous manner possible: "Mas no ejercía aquel tráfico inhumano tanto por el beneficio material, como cuanto por satisfacer la gana de aventura en cosa hacedera contra las leyes..."[3]

Demetrio's slaving trips carry him back and forth along the Catatumbo River, which empties into Lake Maracaibo, to the plantation of Adrián Gadea, whose cruel practices result in a constant demand for slaves. The use of a river in symbolic parallel to human course, a device particularly effective in the Gallegan novel, is manifested here. In Canaima, the tortuous course of the Orinoco symbolized the un-

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[1]Ibid., p. 45. [2]Ibid., p. 49. [3]Ibid., p. 51.

channeled flow of Marcos Vargas' potential; in Sobre la misma tierra, the Catatumbo is literally the path of Demetrio's barbaric trajectory: his suicidal flirtation with the law and his exploitation of the Guajiro Indians.

In conjunction with the river, the author utilizes a natural phenomenon of the region which recurs throughout every major episode until by the novel's end it has become charged with symbolic weight. Known as the Faro del Catatumbo, it is

> un curioso fenómeno que consiste en un relámpago que constantemente se produce, con brevísimas intermitencias, sobre la región de selvas vírgenes por donde corre el río Catatumbo.[1]

This lightning, visible along the shores of Lake Maracaibo and far down river, exercised an almost mystic influence on Demetrio as a youth. In a significant scene, early in the novel, he appealed to the Faro to "light his way," to show him which path to take in life:

> ... a orillas del lago sin brisa, en cuyas aguas se reflejaban en dorados cabrilleos las luces nocturnas de Maracaibo en la ribera opuesta, quitado de la acostumbrada tertulia con los pescadores y contemplando el relámpago del Catatumbo hacia el sur distante y oscuro, ya no le estaba agradando aquello.
>
> --¿Pescador para toda la vida? -- se preguntaba--. Yo como que no nací en ese mes... ¡Faro del Catatumbo, alúmbrame este mal paso!...
>
> Y en esto oyó que uno decía en la tertulia:
>
> --Ese es el rumbo de los contrabandistas...[2]

Demetrio accepts this as a mystic sign and thus is launched

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[1]Gallegos, "La pura mujer sobre la tierra," loc. cit., p. 423.

[2]Sobre la misma tierra, p. 14. Italics mine.

on his career as contrabandista and slave trader along the river above which the Faro hovers in the atmosphere, illuminating the two worlds contrasted in the novel and reflecting their chaos.

The Faro del Catatumbo also reflects Demetrio's inner torment and emphasizes the tíralo todo aspect of his character. The chapter "Tirando Faros" ranks among the finest examples in the Gallegan novel of the use of symbolic parallel between natural phenomenon and human counterpart: as the Faro del Catatumbo sheds its intermittent flashes of light (or energy), so Demetrio continues to flaunt his abuse of the law, to take greater risks, to commit more violent acts which reflect his outbursts of temper; like the lightning, his trips now become more frequent, the intervals between them dangerously shorter:

> Porque además, ya estaba "tirando faros" por las vueltas de aquellos ríos, como nadie podía hacerlo, a marchas temerarias. Acababa de sustituir en La Arrepentida por el de la hélice a motor el impulso moroso del viento incierto sobre el lago y de la palanca desesperante por los ríos y ya había experimentado el recio placer de la remontada nocturna por el Escalante, gobernando el timón, a todo motor por entre las vueltas azarosas y oscuras.[1]

The symbol is clearly that of a tíralo todo, who will not heed any warnings--"Don Demetrio, no se juegue así con el río"--in the hazardous course both of the river and of his own life:

> Y pronto no hubo capitán de embarcación que al

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[1]Ibid., p. 51. Italics mine.

> acercarse a la desembocadura del Catatumbo o del Escalante, con la mano en el timón, él mismo, por muy expertos que fueran sus timoneles, al divisar en la oscuridad de la noche destellos violentos a diestra y siniestra, según las vueltas del río, no se dijese:
>
> --Allá viene Demetrio Montiel jugándose la piragua y la vida.[1]

Demetrio's imagination is captured by the possibilities of another adventure, offered by the revelation of his daughter's existence: "Era una vuelta azarosa por donde nunca habría pensado tirar sus faros..."[2] Airapúa, Cantaralia's faithful slave, remembers Demetrio and seeks him out when Remota's aunts promise her in marriage to a cruel Guajiro cacique. Intrigued by Airapúa's description of the girl--"la majayura [virgin] más bonita que ha formado en Guajira"--, he agrees to help her escape. With Airapúa's aid, Remota reaches La Arrepentida; when she comes aboard, the night is still, and symbolically, the Faro del Catatumbo is not to be seen: "--¡Bonita noche!... ¿Por qué no serán así todas las de navegar?... Ni siquiera se distingue el Faro del Catatumbo en la claridad de la luna..."[3] But as the ship's captain, Venancio Navas, comments on the night, Remota appears on the moonlit deck. Demetrio, who has agreed to help her escape "por hacer una travesura más," is overcome by the girl's beauty, and his incestuous desire for her is paralleled by the change in the night:

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[1] Ibid. Italics mine.

[2] Ibid., p. 53. [3] Ibid., p. 64.

> En efecto, densos nubarrones empujados por un viento veloz, que aún no soplaba sobre el lago, comenzaban a ocultar la luna ya cercana al horizonte, y al ras de éste una mancha plomiza, nudo de los temporales reinantes en aquella región, venía extendiéndose y ennegreciéndose, a tiempo que el relámpago del Catatumbo, fulgor de muda tormenta perenne, se hacía más intenso y más frecuente.[1]

The scene is a montage of recurrent thematic images which convey the violence of Demetrio's growing passion and Remota's approaching danger:

> Ya comenzaban a encresparse, en realidad, los marullos del lago y al resplandor intermitente del relámpago se divisaban, más y más cercanos, los peligrosos varaderos de los palos del río. Pero Demetrio Montiel sonreía contemplándolos, sin dar la orden de recortar la marcha...[2]

Venancio Navas realizes the danger, brings Demetrio to his senses, and takes control of the ship, which he heads toward Maracaibo and the home of Demetrio's sister. Significantly, the lightning fades in the distance; the lake is calm: "Y [Demetrio] salió a la cubierta de la embarcación, que ya dejaba atrás el dramático espectáculo de la tempestad perenne y silenciosa."[3]

Remota finds "un mundo nuevo y raro" with Demetrio's sister, Selmira, and her German husband, Alejandro Weimar. The girl is accepted with love by the childless couple and is re-christened Ludmila by Alejandro, who romantically envisions her a Valkyrie (since they are born fully formed):

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[1]Ibid., p. 65. Italics mine.

[2]Ibid. Italics mine.

[3]Ibid., p. 66. Italics mine.

"--¡Ludmila Weimar! ¡Por fin va a nacer una walkiria en Maracaibo!"[1] Thus, with a new name and identity, Remota leaves the harsh world of the Guajira Peninsula and eventually emigrates to New York with her adopted parents.

Part II opens with "El Estupendo Hallazgo,"[2] the discovery of the rich oil deposits around Lake Maracaibo, and with it the treason of "la Nación que ya se está entendiendo con los musiúes."[3] The author's criticism is just, for he emphasizes that foreign exploitation could not take place without the help of the "dictador omnipotente" and the attitude of Venezuelans like Demetrio, who joins "la danza de los millones" with thoughts only of personal gain. Overnight the barren Zulia landscape reflects the mad influx of Venezuelans and foreigners, the immense changes which the repercussion of the find brings about:

> Locomotoras, camiones, tractores, grúas... Toneladas de hierro y acero ajenos que hacen retemblar la tierra venezolana y músculo venezolano contraído en recia actividad dirigida por palabras inglesas, entre bocanadas de humo de tabaco de Virginia, cachimba en la boca.[4]

The "dance of millions" has begun, but not for the nation nor the people as a whole: "Sobre el Zulia corrían los ríos de la abundancia, mas como sobre terreno impermeable, todo deslizándose hacia afuera."[5]

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[1] Ibid., p. 72.

[2] Title of Chapter 1, Part II.

[3] Ibid., p. 82.

[4] Ibid., p. 85. [5] Ibid., p. 88.

The brief chapter, "¡Misericordia, Petróleo!," dramatizes this tragic paradox: the raging lust of a "Venezuela en marcha," the mad rush to share in the wealth, which is an ephemeral promise for those who "pusieron el rumbo y el paso hacia la [tierra] de promisión."[1] It is an excellent example of the use of an entire chapter as symbol (and is strikingly similar to the chapter entitled "Venezuela" in Pobre Negro):

The scene is a boomtown area filled with miserable shacks where a multitude of people await work:

> Lagunillas de Agua se había quedado rezagada en el camino de la Venezuela en marcha y estaba aquella noche empeñada en hacer pintoresco un rincón del lago, espejo de su miseria, y aunque éste se hallaba empañado por la ruptura de un caño de petróleo que se derramó sobre el agua, se complacía en mirarse en él, entre el cabrilleo de sus luces mustias, junto al emporio de las torres ajenas.[2]

The town is symbolically located on a small island--"Hacinamiento de barracas de madera y angostas pasarelas para el tránsito sobre pilotes dentro del agua, con una sola comunicación con Lagunillas de Tierra"[3]--where the people, like the nation, are surrounded by a sea of oil, the wealth so visible, yet belonging to "las torres ajenas." This wealth is capable of destroying the country unless it is controlled, as is symbolized by the terrifying tragedy of the little town, which is suddenly shaken by the alarm:

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[1] Ibid., p. 83.

[2] Ibid., p. 88.

[3] Ibid., pp. 88-89.

--¡Fuego!

> Se estremeció toda la población, se echó fuera de las viviendas de tablas y trapos y las planchadas retemblaron bajo el pánico en carrera. Pero aquello estaba hecho para las llamas, y esa noche, además, se alzaba sobre combustible flotante sobre el agua y el incendió se lo apoderó de prisa. Se hundió la planchada que comunicaba con tierra y la población lacustre quedó a la merced del fuego en la isla de tablas.[1]

As the town and the water flame, with the passage ways to land inaccessible, one cry rises above all the others, "--¡Misericordia, petróleo!--", that of the mother-nation:

> Es una mujer que corre de aquí para allá con su pequeño hijo en los brazos, oprimiéndolo contra su pecho a fin de que no se lo alcance el incendio.
>
> Huye perseguida por una llamarada, otras le salen al paso obligándola a detenerse y otras suben del lado del petróleo inflamado, a ambos lados de la pasarela, advirtiéndole que por allí tampoco hay salvación posible.
>
> Se revuelve, se encoge sobre su amor en los brazos, se empina hacia el aire negado a su respiro por los torbellinos del enrarecimiento, y cuando ya la tienen asfixiándose a su alcance, las llamas se precipitan sobre ella, la apresan por las faldas, la ciñen, la desnudan para el sacrificio ante la negra divinidad del petróleo, le achicharran en los brazos el tierno llanto del hijo, le apagan el alarido de todos sus dolores entre un zumbido infernal, la derriban, se encarnizan y se sacian en ellos. ¡Tizones ella y el niño![2]

The mother-nation falls victim to "la negra divinidad del petróleo," stripped of her wealth: her human potential, her sons, drained from the farmlands and drawn to the oil fields, to the industry which cannot sustain an entire

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[1] Ibid., p. 89. Italics mine.

[2] Ibid. Italics mine.

nation; her natural potential, the oil, more destructive than good, creating slums at the edge of the foreign enterprise. In the end, only the people have suffered, have been consumed, for when the smoke clears, the oil derricks dominate the landscape like monuments to the nation's plight:

> De Lagunillas de Agua ya sólo quedaban tizones humeando sobre el lago en la noche espantosa, brasas que luego se extinguirían...
> Pero allí estaban en pie las torres intactas, para que continuasen jaloneando el camino de la Venezuela en marcha.[1]

The symbolism of this chapter is reinforced by the one which immediately follows, "¡Si Tú Hubieras Querido!" The shameful waste which the fire represents is paralleled by the individual example of lost potential inherent in the figure of Demetrio Montiel, for whom the fire is another adventure:

> Aquella noche estuvo fondeada La Arrepentida frente a Lagunillas y a Demetrio Montiel se le vió desafiar, temerariamente, riesgos mortales, en el salvamento de las víctimas del incendio.
> Fue el resplandor postrero y centelleante de su vida famosa.[2]

The tragic symbol of both chapters is based on the tremendous potential involved. Demetrio is not an ordinary man; he is a figure who has become a legend in his own time, a man capable of rising to heroic feats, of commanding the respect and admiration of all:

> ... pero en el ánimo impresionable de la gente

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[1] Ibid., pp. 89-90.

[2] Ibid., p. 90. Italics mine.

> exitada por el espectáculo hermoso y tremendo, la figura simpática y gallarda todavía del contrabandista ingenioso y audaz, del jugador impávido ante quien habían temblado los montes de dado y de ruleta, adquirió aquella noche contornos heróicos.
>
> Y fueron muchos los que le dijeron emocionadamente:
>
> --¡Demetrio Montiel, si tú hubieras querido!...[1]

This is the summary of his life. Incapable of a sustained effort, his energies are dispersed like the Faro's brief flashes of lightning which alternately illuminate the horizon and then leave it in total darkness. Demetrio's promise, like that of the oil, has been deceptive--both are burned out all too quickly:

> Cincuenta años ya. Nada que valiera la pena al cabo de ellos. Lo acompañó la fortuna, pero no recorrió sino el camino de la desdicha. Ganó, perdió, lo tiró y lo despilfarró todo. La generosa juventud, la provechosa madurez... Sólo le quedaba el triste descenso de allí adelante.
> Se quemó, él también, en pocas horas.[2]

Despite the reproaches of his friends, despite the realization that his life has been a total waste, Demetrio cannot change his course:

> ¿Ya, para qué? Por delante no le quedaban sino los años yermos del envejecimiento... Resolvió tirarlos de un todo.
> Y desde aquella misma noche fueron ya completamente insensatos los interminables viajes sin objeto, Catatumbo arriba, Escalante abajo, tirando faros por las vueltas azarosas y oscuras.
> Pero ahora se decía:
> --Allá viene Demetrio Montiel, Diablo Sombrío.[3]

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid. Italics mine.

[3] Ibid., p. 91. Italics mine.

The Diablo Sombrío ends his futile existence in the ultimate act of self negation. His suicide precipitates Remota's return to Maracaibo after an absence of some eighteen years spent in the United States. Her adopted parents, the Weimars, had only recently died when she received the news that Demetrio had named her sole heir to his sizeable estate.

Remota's return initiates a spiritual evolution in which the division between her two identities is increasingly evident. Remota incarnates the duality of the mestizo more clearly than any other Gallegan protagonist. As Ludmila Weimar, she has created a comfortable world for herself, but the foundations of that existence are shaken by renewed contact with the world of her youth. As a child she had been impressed by the melancholy aspect of her dwindling race, but now, in the Guajiro beggars who fill Maracaibo, she sees the "escombros de una raza":

> Allí languidecía, desmoralizada, una brava gente. Allí estaba extinguiéndose una fuerza original, genuina de la tierra, pero no incorporada todavía a la vida del país, ni en el espíritu ni para ningún esfuerzo constructivo.[1]

The tragedy of her people, of her own long forgotten relatives, increases her growing sense of the falseness, "lo postizo," of her Weimar identity: "Ludmila Weimar no era sino un personaje de ficción, obra de un cariñoso disparate. Remota Montiel, hechura de apetitos sensuales irresponsables,

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[1] Ibid., p. 104.

es, en cambio, una realidad."[1]

It is significantly Hardman, the yankee oil driller, who orients Remota in the search for her reality. The figure of Hardman, a representative of the oil industry, offers an interesting study in the use of symbolic name. Outwardly, "aquel hombre de apariencia férrea" is not so much a human being as "un superproducto de la industria de acero":

> Un sujeto de formación no antigua todavía -- quizá unos cuarenta años-- de rostro aristado, sobre cuyas facciones no habría querido el artífice perder tiempo precioso en ternuras de suavizamientos, sino que lo echaría afuera apenas fraguada y soldada la armadura interior. Y para más completa y mejor apariencia de elaboración de altos hornos, tenía pupilas de acero taladrante.[2]

Hardman in an example in inverse symbolism, for his physical appearance is misleading; he is not so much "el hombre duro" as "el hombre fuerte y sereno." The author explores through his figure the duality of the oil indsutry, whose steel derricks dominate the Venezuelan skyline. Hardman's presence, like the "torres ajenas," has been made possible through the nation's treason against itself: "La venta de los hombres venales al mejor postor, que ha venido siendo la compañía petrolera."[3]

Hardman's brusque exterior synthesizes the mechanical, physical control of foreign exploitation; but in his respect for the Venezuelan people and in his optimistic

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[1] Ibid., p. 110.

[2] Ibid., p. 93. Italics mine.

[3] Ibid., p. 140.

vision of the changes that the oil industry is bringing about, he presents the author's balanced social and economic view. For if the oil industry has effected "males incalculables;"

> en cambio de ese daño el obrero venezolano está adquiriendo un sentido de responsabilidad personal de eficacia y una conciencia de clase, que es también sentido de responsabilidad social, que realmente no tenía.[1]

Hardman's vision convinces Remota that she, like all Venezuelans, must assume her responsibilities toward the nation. The world of the Weimars had been an escape from the cruel reality of her origin. When, as Remota Montiel, she accepts Demetrio's inheritance, it is symbolically an acceptance not only of her mestizo identity but of the responsibility which she feels, as such, for her people:

> Pero Ludmila Weimar, criatura de ficción, ya estaba dispuesta a cederle el sitio a Remota Montiel, la verdadera y dramática hechura de unas circunstancias deplorables y no era cosa de cambiarse solamente el nombre, sino de encararse totalmente con su realidad. Aún no sabía hasta qué extremos pudieran llevarla sus nuevas responsabilidades, pero se le alcanzaba que había más de un destino -- el suyo propio-- pendiente de sus determinaciones.[2]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 140-141.

[2] Ibid., p. 144. Italics mine. The symbolism of the Ludmila Weimar-Remota Montiel duality is clearly established here. Weimar, the town, was the home of Goethe, Schiller, et al., center of German Romanticism in the 19th century. Ulrich Leo comments that as an "apellido personal, que, sea dicho de paso, el que estas líneas escribe, no ha oído ni una sola vez durante sus más de 40 años de permanencia en Alemania." (Sobre el arte de novelar, p. 118.) The name Weimar would seem to symbolize the heroine's flight from reality as much as the name "'Ludmila' para 'simbolizar' su

Remota's dedication to her new sense of mission is shown as she rejects Hardman's offer of marriage, which would take her back to the United States and definitively sever her ties with Venezuela:

> Allá iría Hardman ... mas por su camino, a disfrutar del ascenso bien merecido, dentro del poderoso esfuerzo industrial a que pertenecía.
> Ludmila Weimar, en cambio, de cara al relámpago del Catatumbo, muda tormenta perenne, iba hacia Remota Montiel, misterio también, inquietante.[1]

The resurgence of the Faro del Catatumbo now reflects the multiple aspects of Remota's mission as she assumes with her "inheritance" the task of rectifying her father's crimes: "... ya era, ante la ley, Remota Montiel. Ahora se disponía a comenzar a serlo ante la vida, tal como se la entregaban, disparatada, absurda, las culpas de su padre."[2]

Part III concerns Remota's return to the Guajira Peninsula, where a legend has evolved around her figure since the time of her disappearance. Thus, she returns to her people, "al mismo tiempo, una persona real y un personaje de leyenda de encantamiento."[3] For the Guajiros she is a living symbol, "La Gran Madre," whose arrival is accepted as a sign of new hope--"la noticia estupenda de la vuelta del tiempo bueno con el regreso de la majayura encantada."[4]

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aspecto como miembro de la civilización urbana, y 'Remota' para presentarla en su estado natural, como hija de la Guajira." (Ibid., p. 136.)

[1]Sobre la misma tierra, p. 144. Italics mine.

[2]Ibid., p. 145. [3]Ibid., p. 174. [4]Ibid., p. 175.

Remota, as the embodiment of the social mission which she has accepted, sets about tenaciously to overcome all obstacles, to erase the "negra herencia" which her father has left. On an individual basis this task concerns the rehabilitation of her brother, Marco Aurelio, and the young Guajira prostitute, Marita, whom Demetrio had seduced and initiated to a life of vice. Through Remota, Venancio Navas is given a chance to right the wrongs of his service to Demetrio.

Remota's plan to meet the needs of the people as a whole centers around the drainage of the Gran Eneal, the swamp lands which her father had bought with the hope of selling the oil royalties, and its conversion into pasture lands for the Guajiros. To do this she must collect the debts owed her father by many of the plantation owners, principally Adrián Gadea.

The circular structure of the novel is completed as Remota employs her father's boat, with Venancio again at the helm, to mount the Catatumbo River toward Gadea's plantation. The symbolic function of the river parallels that of the Orinoco in Canaima, where it transported the new Marcos Vargas toward a constructive future in vindication of his father's wasted potential. The promise of Canaima is fulfilled in Remota, who also retraces her father's course, in the same boat-- "¡La Arrepentida! Que realmente lo es ahora"--, with the same "resplandor frecuente del relámpago del Catatumbo" which lit the way for Demetrio's illicit trips now paralleling Remota's inspiration:

> El aleteo angustioso del resplandor del Faro del Catatumbo, que se producía alternativamente en dos puntos del cielo, cercanos al horizonte y entre negros nubarrones, no le daba descanso a la noche sobre el lago, y era un espectáculo imponente el de aquella inagotable ira silenciosa, resto acaso de las tremendas cóleras cósmicas que produjeron la formación de la Tierra.
>
> Remota se abandonó a la contemplación del misterioso fenómeno, ante el cual ya una vez se había decidido venturosamente su suerte, al borde de un destino dramático.[1]

When Remota reaches Gadea's plantation, she finds many of the Indians which Demetrio had sold him are still enslaved there, including Airapúa. She pretends to make an agreement with Gadea (allowing him to believe that she will submit to his physical desires), but sends Venancio for the authorities, who arrest Gadea and set the slaves free. Thus the chapter "El Rescate," more than the rescue of a few Guajiros, is symbolic of the "rescue of the race" which Remota has undertaken.

The final chapter, "Destellos de Faro," complements the earlier chapter "Tirando Faros," which synthesized Demetrio's mad course along the river (and his attitude toward life). Now the "destellos de Faro" light a different course, one of renewed hope:

> Ya iba el rescate en La Arrepentida, río abajo, alejándose de Santa Bárbara. Más bocas para el hambre que reinaba en la Guajira, en vez de algún dinero para aplacarla; pero ya estaba reparada, en lo posible, la iniquidad de Demetrio Montiel...
>
> Y ya la piragua estaba desembocando en el lago bajo la noche estrellada.

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[1]Ibid., p. 214. Italics mine. Cf. note 1, p. 261.

> Remota Montiel salió a la proa. La saludó batiendo sus resplandores el Faro del Catatumbo.[1]

The symbolism of Remota at the prow of the ship which takes the slaves to freedom is clear. They have been rescued from a seemingly hopeless existence by the vision and efforts of "La Gran Madre," the figuration of a Venezuela overcoming the violence of its origin and the pecado contra el ideal of the past generation. Remota symbolizes the new mestizo generation whose "obra de revindicación" transcends the geographic restrictions of the Guajira Peninsula: "La intención del novelista se extiende a toda la patria, ya que presenta una solución local a la problemática nacional."[2]

As a once enslaved people--"en sus rostros un despertar de humanidad recuperada"--travel toward a new future, Remota stands at the prow of the boat as one of the most firmly optimistic symbols of the Gallegan novel, the culmination of Gallegos' tesis civilizadora: "Todos los caminos de la obra galleguiana conducen a esta figuración."[3] She symbolizes the completion of Doña Bárbara's frustrated desire to "entregar las obras," the defeat of all the balas perdidas who have contributed to the tragic waste of human and natural resources, the Venezuela which seeks and finds its orientation in the responsible acceptance of its social and moral destiny.

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[1]Ibid., pp. 239-240.

[2]Damboriena, op. cit., p. 308.

[3]Liscano, Rómulo Gallegos y su tiempo, p. 168.

La brizna de paja en el viento, 1952

The dramatic conclusion of Sobre la misma tierra closes the author's cycle of Venezuelan novels on a note of optimism, an optimism which was betrayed by the overthrow of his government in 1948. Thus, after less than a year in the Presidency, Gallegos found himself again in exile, this time in Cuba. There his literary silence of almost ten years was broken with the appearance of his last published work to date,[1] La brizna de paja en el viento, 1952. The dedication to the first edition is significant in fixing this last novel within the total scheme of Gallegos' literary endeavor:

> Le entrego a Cuba este libro en las manos amigas de Raúl Roa, gallarda figura de su intelectualidad, a través de cuya alma ardiente y generosa me he asomado a la angustia contemplada en sus páginas; de Sara Hernández Catá, amiga cordial, quien junto a su fervorosa cubanidad, le ha brindado tierna acogida a mi mortificación venezolana, y, de manera especial, en las de los estudiantes universatarios, que padecieron y superaron la tragedia de la cultura que aquí comparto con ellos, en mi modo natural de expresión y en ejercicio de la fe que tengo puesta en la juventud intelectual de los pueblos de nuestro espíritu y nuestra lengua.[2]

From this dedication we see that La brizna de paja en el viento, although a Cuban novel in ambiente, is still within the main stream of Hispanic culture--"la tragedia de

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[1]Gallegos' last novel, unpublished as yet, is entitled La brasa en el pico del cuervo. Written during that portion of his exile which he spent in Mexico, the novel deals with certain aspects of that country's agrarian reform.

[2]La brizna de paja en el viento (1st ed.; La Habana: Editorial Selecta, 1952), quoted in Dunham, Rómulo Gallegos, vida y obra, p. 278.

In a Seminar on Rómulo Gallegos offered at the University of Oklahoma, 1962, Prof. Dunham stated that the figure of Professor Lucientes was based to a great extent on Raúl Roa.

la cultura que aquí comparto con ellos." What is the tragedy of this culture? Gallegos synthesizes it in one brief paragraph:

> De la siembra de violencias hecha por la aventura conquistadora en el suelo indoamericano, de la complementaria sumisión a que acostumbró el fraile adoctrinador, del apoderamiento de la riqueza por unas cuantas manos aprovechadoras de trabajo esclavo en la vasta tierra que debía producirla, de lo geográfico e incluso lo telúrico que tendían a construir sobre ella un tipo de hombre de presa que en ancho espacio pudiese campar por sus afueros: de todo eso, dentro de las modalidades propias y de la interesada complacencia imperialista del vecino poderoso para quien atrasados y oprimidos pueblos eran deseables mercados de sus industrias, provino el dictador hispanoamericano, y Cuba lo padeció.[1]

The author had found in Cuba a situation which captured his novelistic imagination, a social problem in common with his own Venezuelan ambiente. We have already noted Gallegos' characteristic tendency toward variación de temática in his last period, and La brizna de paja en el viento is no exception. As Liscano has stated of this novel, and the same might be said of all those since the master works, "Gallegos ya no busca, repite."[2] The theme of La brizna de paja en el viento is the same analyzed in El forastero: dictatorship and the tragedy of the revolutionaries who degenerate into worse tyrants than those they defeat.

The historical nucleus of the novel is the student movement organized in the Havana University to combat the dictatorship of Gerardo Machado:

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[1]La brizna de paja en el viento, p. 79. Italics mine.

[2]Liscano, Rómulo Gallegos y su tiempo, p. 203.

> Un día de septiembre de 1930. Patio de los Laureles. Animosa y numerosa reunión. "Somos una fuerza pura, conviene aclarlo desde ahora y para siempre", diría el manifiesto que allí se convino en lanzar, como si se presintiera que en posibles encrucijadas, camino adelante, se producirían desviaciones. Concluía el manifiesto pidiendo la renuncia del dictador, y en la reunión se acordó entregárselo al pueblo de Cuba en las manos de un maestro de pensamiento y de conducta que por libertad y dignidad cubanas tenía alzada la voz acusadora, y que a ello fuese el estudiantado en masa absolutamente desarmado.[1]

The student revolt fails (as it did in El forastero). But the cause finds its first martyr in Rafael Trejo, the student of "el corazón ardiente," whose name becomes a battlecry: "... su sacrificio galvaniza la conciencia popular y de punta a punta todo Cuba se inflama en rebelión contra la dictadura, que ya no perdurará."[2] The failing dictatorship must be replaced, but with what? This was the question posed at the conclusion of El forastero, where a town and its heroic student leaders awaited their unknown fate. La brizna de paja en el viento offers a solution to this question in the analysis of the Cuban youth in a similar moment of national crisis.

The university atmosphere is well suited to the analysis at hand, for Latin American students traditionally have been involved in politics and are a force to be reckoned with. The tragedy of the novel lies in the "desviación" of ideals which has generally resulted from the Latin American students' frustration:

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[1] La brizna de paja en el viento, p. 80.

[2] Ibid., p. 81.

> Pero no hubo entonces una organización política, con ideología bien ventilada, que canalizara aquella ideología generosa lanzada al campo del sacrificio, y a falta de ella surgieron, en las prisas de la angustia ante la frustración inminente del movimiento revolucionario, los Grupos de Acción, y con ellos, pistola en mano, quitada de libro, tomándole afición a las eficacias del gatillo, no sólo se menoscabó el ideal revolucionario, sino que también el espíritu universitario se desvió de sus fines propios.[1]

The youthful intellectuals, the hope of the nation, are faced with the negation of their ideals. Betrayed by lack of orientation adequate to channel their "fuerza pura," their movement degenerates into a kind of gangsterism from which there emerge new leaders eager for personal power:

> Reinaba la confusión dentro y fuera de la Universidad, y así como las autoridades de ésta se sentían cohibidas ante las arrogancias estudiantiles --sin que en realidad fuesen estudiantes todos los que las exhibían--, así también el acontecimiento desbordado perturbaba y anulaba totalmente a veces el funcionamiento de los mecanismos de gobierno administrativos y judiciales. En parte, por el temor que habían llegado a inspirar los Grupos de Acción, al amparo del pretexto de lucha política, y en parte, por el uso que de ellos hacían o tuvieren que hacer, desde los tiempos del régimen cuartelario, los funcionarios públicos necesitados de respaldo armado y con dineros del tesoro público, bajo la apariencia de empleos remunerados, pero inexistentes --las famosas "botellas"--, el gatillo alegre hacia sus agostos.[2]

Thus, the university campus becomes another battlefield for the eternal struggle between <u>civilización</u> and <u>barbarie</u>. The student, caught in an ideological crossfire, drifts in an environmental vacuum, a "brizna de paja en el viento." The ultimate solution lies in an enlightened university

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>. [2] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 83.

leadership, which must be a directing force for the nation's youth.

The social framework of the novel is explored in Part I, which revolves around the family of Pablo Azcárate. Don Pablo is dying as the novel opens, and, surrounded by "el alfabeto Azcárate"--Alfonso, Bernardo, Clemente, Dionisio, Eugenio and Florencia (La Muñeca)--, he charges his offspring with his final wish:

> Se acaba la vida en mí, pero en vosotros dejo la mano Azcárate asentada sobre Cuba, no para oprimirla, sino para exprimirle, cariñosamente, la riqueza que ella puede y debe dar. Cinco dedos los hombres hechos y derechos, y la Muñeca, tierna y pequeña todavía mi linda muñequita, pero en la cual debe latir siempre el pulso de la familia. Os casaréis, os multiplicaréis, pero unidos siempre, hijos míos. Indivisos los bienes, mientras la Muñeca sea menor de edad, y suya exclusivamente esta casa, adonde en los momentos difíciles se acuda a sentir las palpitaciones del pulso. Un puño de Mano Azcárate.[1]

This metaphor of the "Mano Azcárate" dominates Part I in a dual function: (1) structurally, it is a cohesive force, a manner of uniting the multiple protagonists in a nucleus (either of family members or those protagonists in contact with them), and (2) thematically, it is a means of dramatizing the social chaos prevalent in the country. With the death of Don Pablo, "El Fundador," a way of life has passed on. A laborious and honest man, he had immigrated to Cuba from Spain and had amassed a huge fortune. After his death the union of his empire (and of the family) begins to break

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[1]Ibid., p. 14. Italics mine.

up almost immediately. Florencia is sent away to school in the United States; the brothers assume the responsibilities of their inheritance (each receives a piece of property corresponding to the various Cuban tobacco, sugar, dairy and ranching industries).

As the brothers marry and become increasingly involved in their individual business interests, they grow apart: the "mano" begins to open, reflecting the destructive social forces at work in the environment. When Florencia returns, now a young woman, the family is reunited to welcome her back, but she quickly senses the discord: "Pero ya se había dicho lo suficiente para que Florencia se diera cuenta de que entre los dedos de la Mano Azcárate ya no reinaba la armonía de antes."[1] Florencia herself, a strong willed and independent young woman, will contribute to the family's internal dissension.

The very night of Florencia's return, she openly opposes her brother, Dionisio, whose personality is well suited to his name. His destructive irresponsibility is diametrically opposed to his father's creative energies and represents a social and moral regression. He runs his sugar cane plantation like a feudal overlord, underpaying his workers (who stay on only through loyalty to the memory of "El Viejo") and violating their daughters' honor. Dionisio has arranged for a traveling circus to fête the family and

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[1] Ibid., p. 30.

the workers. He has also arranged to play the part of the lion tamer, knowing that the animals are old and harmless. Florencia, infuriated at the spectacle of her brother's attempt to capitalize on this occasion to further impress his future victims (the simple girls who watch stupified at his "courage"), throws the doors of the cage open and enters. There, before the aghast audience and her horrified family, she denounces Dionisio:

> --¡Farsante! ...¡Especulador de la ingenuidad de la gente sencilla que te siembra la tierra y te ordeña la vaca! ¡Atropellador de la ilusionada candidez de la guajira que está enamorada de ti, sin darse cuenta de que no podrás hacerla sino desgraciada! Suelta ese látigo y sal de aquí.[1]

This act has symbolic reverberations both on an individual and collective level of society. Among the workers who return to their homes in silence, meditating the significance of the scene which they have just witnessed, are Juan Marino and his family. It is his son, Juan Luis, who voices the psychological repercussions in the minds of all:

> --Y ahora, ¿qué harán los servidores de Dionisio Azcárate, a quien le tenían miedo? Cuando se nos arrebata de pronto el miedo con que se nos ha amasado la vida, nos quedamos tambaleando, vacíos por dentro, y nos asustamos de nosotros mismos, sin látigo de domador sobre nuestras cabezas.[2]

The implications of this statement transcend the confines of the immediate situation. The broader implications are those

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[1] Ibid., p. 35.

[2] Ibid., p. 37. Italics mine.

of the national psychology in a similar critical moment. For Dionisio, at a local level, represents the same social phenomenon as the dictator. Both wield the "látigo de domador" to which the people are so accustomed that without its directing power they are filled with a sense of emptiness. This is the basic factor in the psychology of dictatorship--the people's fear of their own inability to govern themselves. And what happens when the people no longer feel the sting of the lash? They search elsewhere for the same violence that has characterized their lives. Thus, when Juan Marino accuses his daughters of having dishonored themselves with Dionisio, he flies into a rage and beats them. His wife, trying to protect the girls, asks why her husband is reacting in this way. Juan Luis completes the psychological explanation begun earlier by answering: "--Porque cuando se nos arrebata el miedo nos enfurecemos."[1] This is the psychological phenomenon which the novel as a whole probes: the students, having lost their fear without replacing it with some sort of productive direction, have degenerated into forces as violent and brutal as that from which they have just found freedom.

The author builds up to the particular tragedy of the university youth by exploring the emotional crisis of two social extremes whose lives run parallel until they finally meet in the social equalizer, the university. These

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[1]Ibid., p. 39.

extremes are personified in Florencia and Juan Luis, in love with each other since childhood but separated by the vast social breach that sets the "bonito mundo" of the aristocracy apart from the "mundo feo" of the humble working class. Both rebel from their respective worlds, and the paths of both lead toward the university in the search for orientation.

Juan Luis is another of Gallegos' optimistic figurations of the young mestizo, idealistic, spiritual. His aspirations to rise above the confines of his social position are symbolized in his incessant contemplation, as a youth, of a particular species of bird; noted for its daring despite its timid appearance,

> el pitirre es un pájaro pequeño que en remontado vuelo acostumbra atacar al aura tiñosa, pictoeándole la cabeza encarnizadamente hasta hacerla abatir el altanero vuelo; pero sería muy aventurado suponer que con ello persiguiera intención del orden moral de castigar elevamientos después de hartazgos de inmundicias.
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> Sin embargo, Juan Luis lo creía, y todas las simpatías de su espíritu se empinaban a complacerse en la contemplación de la hazaña del pequeño atrevido.[1]

Despite his parents' apprehensions for the son "propenso a 'mirar para arriba,'" Juan Luis cannot share their ingrained humility before the aristocratic class. For this class stands in his way, blocking his path like the dragon of his childhood fantasies. The most substantial symbol of Juan Luis' social position is that of

> el ancho y alto portalón abierto en el muro que

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[1] Ibid., p. 19.

> cerraba el fondo de la angosta calle ciega por delante de la cual estaba su casa, en las goteras de Guanabacoa. El tenía unos cinco años, y desde el umbral de la puerta de aquélla miraba las invitadoras lejanías campesinas, deseoso de corretear por los verdes prados sobre los cuales volaban bijiritas, tomeguines y sinsontes y de internarse en los palmares profundos...
>
> Pero en medio de la angosta calle estaba siempre echado un perro corpulento, de largas orejas y seguramente de terribles colmillos, haciendo las veces de dragón guardián de país encantado, y nunca se movió del umbral de la contemplación.[1]

But Juan Luis finally does lose his fear, and passes beyond the threshold of contemplation and through the symbolic door to freedom.

Florencia, too, must seek her orientation outside her class, which is just as stifling, inversely, as that of Juan Luis. She aspires to more in life than being the idolized "muñeca" of her aristocratic family. Just as Juan Luis is deeply moved by the "función de circo," Florencia herself returns home to seriously analyze her actions:

> Lo importante, lo angustiosamente necesario, por momentos, era analizar aquello de haberse encontrado al haberse salido de sí misma y que se le desvanecía de la intimidad consciente al tratar de formulárselo con pensamientos discursivos, quizá porque no estaba perfectamente claro en su noción de sí propia qué era Florencia Azcárate. El haberse acostumbrado a que la llamasen la Muñeca podía haberle creado una superposición de personalidades, mitad mujer, mitad juguete.[2]

In Florencia we see the author's vision of the modern Hispanic woman, whose role must be more realistic than that of an overprotected Ibsenesque heroine, "mitad mujer, mitad juguete."

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[1] Ibid., pp. 19-20. [2] Ibid., p. 40.

She, too, needs a new orienting force in her life, but it can only be attained by breaking the false and unrealistic image of her traditional role in life. The symbolic act of such an emancipation could not be clearer than in Florencia's dramatic self-dialogue before her mirror:

> --¿Qué te pasa? ¿Por qué me miras así? ¿Te me he perdido?... ¿Que no te gusto? ¡A mí qué! Tu a mí tampoco, porque no eres sino una niña tonta, presumida... Farsante, tú también. ¡Muñeca! Nada más que muñeca... ¿Me has sacado la lengua? Vuelve a hacerlo para romperte la cara.
>
> Y cogiendo del tocador el frasco de agua de colonia, de cristal tallado, lo arrojó contra el espejo, a la cara de su imagen.
>
> Entraba en esto la negra Natividad, y exclamó:
>
> --¡Muñeca! ¿Qué has hecho?
>
> --Romper la muñeca. No se te ocurra decirme así otra vez. Se acabó la Muñeca Azcárate.[1]

Florencia is determined to attend the university, where she hopes to find the path to a useful role in society, and after fruitless consultation, the family cedes to the demand of "la voluntariosa"--"Se abrió el puño de la Mano Azcárate."[2]

The university toward which Florencia and Juan Luis hopefully direct themselves is a battlefield, "una cátedra de pistolerismo que le hace injuria a la institución y gravísimo daño al país."[3] There, the tragic "desviación"[4] which the revolutionary ideals have suffered is personified in the figure of Justo Rigores, "El Caudillo." Like Juan Luis, Justo is of humble origin (the illegitimate son of a

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[1] Ibid., p. 41. Italics mine.

[2] Ibid., p. 45. [3] Ibid., p. 129.

[4] Title of Part II.

simple pensión keeper), but he has sought to rise above his social position by

> desviando cada vez más el espíritu del estudiantado de sus fines propios hacia los campos de la violencia, ya no por motivos que puedan ampararse en razones políticas, discutibles en todo caso, sino por causas más o menos inconfesables del order personal...[1]

Posing under the guise of a "justiciero riguroso," from which he takes his false name, he initiates a reign of terror in which he and his "segundones" intimidate both students and faculty.

The opposition is headed by Professor Rogelio Luciente, whose name is significant of his enlightened attitude, and the student Mauricio Leal. It is Professor Luciente who voices the mission of the university and who continually struggles to orient those students either intimidated by the "gatillo alegre" or fascinated by the magnetic appeal of "El Caudillo."

Juan Luis, upon contact with Rigores--"al acercarse al ídolo"--, is completely disillusioned with his hero. Gradually, through the influence of Professor Luciente and Florencia, Juan Luis seems removed from the danger of being absorbed in Rigores' group. But even the strongest idealist can be swayed by a chaotic environment, and when Dionisio seduces Juan Luis' sister, the youth's reaction is toward violence as he straps on the gun "que ya formaba parte del

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[1]Ibid., pp. 129-130.

nuevo Juan Luis."[1] Once again the symbol of the door is recalled, and once again the dragon, Dionisio and all that he represents, has blocked the passageway to a constructive future. With his father ill from a stroke brought on by anger, Juan Luis must leave the university to assume family responsibilities. Brought back to the "calle ciega" of harsh reality, his future is as nebulous as the distant countryside glimpsed through the doorway:

> ¡Aquel bonito campo! ¿Podría acaso volver a pasearse por él sin humillante pensamiento de precio de honra? Que nunca más se abriera aquel portón, para que ningún otro contemplativo, mirando las invitadoras lejanías del campo a que por él se entraba, acariciase deseos de trasponerlo.[2]

Totally disillusioned, unable to seek vengeance in Dionisio (who has fled the country), Juan Luis turns to Justo Rigores--"A entregarle al viento la brizna de paja."[3] The "Trágico Encargo"[4] which Juan Luis accepts refers not so much to the "encargos de muerte" (assassination "commissions") which Justo delegates to his cohorts as to that which society has imposed through the betrayal of ideals. Thus Juan Luis gives himself over to the road to violence, as did Santos Luzardo in a similar moment of emotional crisis: "La vida me ha dado encargo de matar en ejercicio de venganza personal contra Dionisio Azcárate..."[5]

Juan Luis is welcomes by Justo, whose power has

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[1]Ibid., p. 161. [2]Ibid., p. 174.

[3]Ibid., p. 176. [5]Ibid., p. 177.

[4]Title of Part III.

begun to fade, taking with it his supply of funds from corrupt government officials who no longer consider his protection a "good investment." Justo's plan is to use Juan Luis as bait to induce Florencia into a trap and to hold her for ransom. Professor Luciente, aware not only of the youth's current affiliation with Rigores but also of his role in the tragic national drama, tries desperately to dissuade him from his suicidal path:

> --Sí --repuso Luciente--. Se te aconsejó no ser brizna de paja en el viento y fuiste a realizarlo, tal vez sólo por el efecto que te produjo la frase de Mauricio Leal. ¡Qué dramática situación! ¡Qué interesante ser personaje de un drama de destino trágico! Todo Cuba debe de estar pendiente de lo que vaya a hacer el viento con la brizna de paja. ¿Dónde la arrojará? --se preguntará toda ella, consternada...--. En un basurero, respondo yo.[1]

But more than the provocative probing of Luciente (whose often sarcastic manner is reminiscent of Cecilio el Viejo), it is Florencia who, through a gesture of generous love, offers to walk into the trap, thus bringing Juan Luis to his senses. When he refuses to help kidnap Florencia, Rigores threatens him:

> Y ya tenía la pistola en la mano homicida. Sacó la suya Juan Luis, sin levantarse del asiento. Sonaron dos disparos. Cayó Rigores, muerto ya. Y Juan Luis, sin levantarse del asiento, murmuró con voz sombría:
> --Yo tenía encargo de matar.[2]

Like the "pitirre atrevido," Juan Luis has attacked and

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[1] Ibid., p. 197.

[2] Ibid., p. 204.

defeated the "aura tiñosa."[1] Through his act, Luciente's idealism and Florencia's love triumph. Juan Luis pays the price of his ideals with a prison term, but Florencia--"la pura mujer sobre la tierra"--will be waiting for him.

The novel closes with a symbolic parallel between the now peaceful society and the "tiempo muerto," the time of rest following the sugar milling. The crushing, grinding mechanisms (of the mills and society) have ceased, and the land reposes awaiting the promise of the future harvest:

> Entraron las últimas cañas entre las mazas de los molinos y corrió el turbio jugo hacia su destino de azúcar. Cesó el estruendo del hierro y luego el zumbido del fuego; regresó el brazo jornalero a la diversa ocupación habitual durante el tiempo muerto y entre las guardarrayas, desnuda, la incansable tierra se tendió a esperar que volviesen a surcarla y a sembrarla.[2]

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[1]Cf. note 1, p. 273.

[2]*Ibid.*, p. 204. Italics mine.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

I first met Rómulo Gallegos at his home in Caracas in November of 1959. Ricardo Montilla, in arranging my interview, had explained to the writer the purpose of my visit. When Sr. Gallegos asked the exact area of the study that I intended to make, I replied that I wished to analyze the function of symbol in his novels. "¡Ah!," he sighed, "¡Me cansan todos estos doctorcitos que encuentran tantos símbolos en mi obra!" He then went on to explain that he considered the symbol important, as he had pointed out in several works of self-criticism, but that he felt that the critics were making too much of it.

Two years later, in a conversation with Professor and Mrs. Dunham, Sr. Gallegos revealed that further study of critical interpretations of his work had led him to conclude that he must, in fact, have utilized symbols beyond the scope of his conscious creativity.[1]

Gallegos' statements bear out the contention that a

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[1]Interview at Playa Azul, Venezuela, October, 1961. Related to me by Professor and Mrs. Dunham.

writer's use of symbol may be both an unconscious and a conscious act. It follows that in the author's evaluation of his own work, he is often aware of certain symbols (those which he has intentionally plotted) and yet unaware of those symbols which arise through unconscious repetitions, juxtapositions, analogies and allusions. The use of symbol can be so much a part of the author's creative process that it becomes automatic. In this context William Faulkner has told an interviewer:

> I'm just a writer. Not a literary man. . . . Maybe all sorts of symbols and images get in. I don't know. When a good carpenter builds something, he puts the nails where they belong. Maybe they make a fancy pattern when he's through, but that's not why he put them in that way.[1]

Whether purposefully or inadvertently, Gallegos has constructed symbols and we must determine their function. For aid we may consult his intention and the circumstances of time and place. But we must look beyond these factors, for

> though [an author] be perfectly conscious of the art of writing, conscious of selecting a certain kind of imagery to reinforce a certain kind of mood, etc., he cannot possibly be conscious of the interrelationships among all these equations.[2]

It has been our purpose, therefore, to analyze not only those symbols which Gallegos has himself defined in critical writings, but also to establish the function and

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[1]Tindall, op. cit., p. 14.

[2]Kenneth Burke, The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms: Studies in Symbolic Action (New York: Vintage Books, 1957), p. 18.

interrelationship of those less tangible symbolic elements both in their individual contexts and in their role as symbolic constants throughout the entire cycle of his novels. From this analysis it can be determined that the Gallegan symbol functions in four major capacities:

I. Symbol functions as a vision of reality.

Gallegos is a man who thinks symbolically and who sees symbolic value in all that surrounds him. In his novels, the symbol is a device for creating a particular vision of "la realidad circundante" and submitting it to our apprehension. This "realidad circundante" is composed of two vast fields, naturaleza and personaje (geographic and sociological reality), which, after having been individually established, are fused to form a more universal aspect of the national circumstance.

We have already spoken of the author's symbolic process in which the first step is the selection of the natural setting, the geographic framework. Within this framework, the elements of nature are humanized and rise to a principal role, either at a protagonist level or as elements of leitmotiv in the form of recurring images or metaphors.

In the second stage of the author's selective process, he moves beyond a mere description of Nature and chooses, to personify the geographic setting, those human figures who are significant "no dentro de lo puramente individual y por consiguiente accidental, sino en comunicación directa, consus-

tanciación con el medio vital que lo produce y rodea."[1]

As a final development, the author fuses Nature and the human protagonists, and from their interaction elevates character, setting, and situation to a higher level of significance. In this stage of his symbolic process, those characters who have come to symbolize the natural forces which surround them ultimately represent a more universal aspect of the national circumstance. At this level of meaning, Gallegos' symbols become syntheses of the human and natural reality which is the basis of his inspiration, and, carried a step further when symbol and reality interfuse, symbol becomes theme. This fusion arises from a symbolic parallel in which Nature serves as an outward, concrete device for presenting the inner state (psychological, social or moral analysis) of the protagonist.

Reflections of this symbolic process are everywhere evident in Gallegos' novels. The llano, setting for two of the master works, is one of his major nature symbols. As the scene of the struggle between civilización and barbarie, the "bárbaro ritmo" is constantly felt, for the pendulous movement of life on the llano as seen in Doña Bárbara is a precarious balance between "vida hermosa" and "muerte atroz." It is as methodically measured out as the extreme change of seasons. This pendulum is ever-present: life-death, rains-drought, crimes vengeance. Its rhythm is paralleled psychologically

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[1]Gallegos, "La pura mujer sobre la tierra," loc. cit., p. 404.

throughout the course of the novel in the reciprocal gravitational pull of the protagonists toward one another and in their inner conflicts as they waver between the opposing forces.

In Cantaclaro other aspects of the llano are reflected in the psychological portrait of the protagonist. Here the inmensidad and melancolía of the llano permeate the setting for the genesis myth of a nation, a race searching for its direction among the "mil y un caminos" of the llano. The llanero, as he reacts to his natural environment, is personified in Cantaclaro, symbol of the poetic soul of his people, the psychologically nomadic race which has traditionally searched for a leader or a channel for its energies.

The selva, temple of Canaima, is another of Gallegos' symbolic natural backdrops. Here, more than in any other novel, we see Nature humanized until it becomes a principal protagonist. All its elements come alive, and as weapons in Canaima's struggle, are turned against man as he invades the jungle.

Of all the major nature symbols, Gallegos endowed the river with the greatest range of symbolic value. It is a recurrent motiv in Doña Bárbara, the vehicle of her entrance and exit as well as the scene of the motivating incident of her life. The rivers of Canaima and Sobre la misma tierra parallel the meaningless trajectories of Marcos Vargas and Demetrio Montiel, and subsequently serve to channel their offspring to a new future. The river of El forastero symbol-

izes the exploitation of political leaders and the diversion of the historical course of the town (and the nation).

Within the framework of these major geographic symbols, we find a number of lesser natural elements which become charged with symbolic weight. Notable among these are: the tremedal in Doña Bárbara; the melancholy chant of the soisola on the llano of Cantaclaro; the death call of the yacabó, and the fantastic rebullones of Juan Primitos' demented imagination which are concrete manifestations of Doña Bárbara's evil; the symbolic vines of La trepadora and El forastero.

II. Symbol functions in character creation.

Gallegos' use of symbol reaches maximum height in the creation of character. We have stated that almost all his characters are based on real persons, persons in whom the author has sensed an immediacy or vitality which relates them to their natural setting: "... el impulso creador me viene siempre del hallazgo del personaje ya significativo, dentro de la realidad circundante."[1] The ultimate significance of Gallegos' characters goes far beyond the symbolic names of which he is so fond. Figures such as Doña Bárbara, Santos Luzardo or Cantaclaro far transcend the limited connotations which their names suggest, for before they have attained their symbolic stature, they have been made complex and credible human beings. This in no way lessens their symbolic value, for

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[1]Ibid.

> symbols are organic units of consciousness with a life of their own. . . . They stand for units of human feeling, human experience. A complex of emotional experience is a symbol. And the power of the symbol is to arouse the deep emotional self, and the dynamic self, beyond comprehension.[1]

Gallegan protagonists function not alone, but in relationship to one another. Operating in a framework of contrasts, for they incarnate antithetical or quarreling elements, his human protagonists are symbolic individually; but in their relationship they become part of the greater composite symbol, the sum of their parts as individuals. Gallegos' protagonists are forced to confront one another, and in this confrontation, they awaken, they find themselves, and undergo the catharsis through which Gallegos envisages the salvation of his people.

Gallegos uses this confrontation as both a positive and negative didactic element. Thus Adelaida tempers the primitive instinct of Hilario, awakens his dormant nobility and is consequently herself aroused from her state of "voluntad abolida." Santos Luzardo discovers the strength of his civilizing mission in the face of the combat with Doña Bárbara, and succeeds in awakening the "alma dormida" of Marisela (and Doña Bárbara herself). As examples of lessons in reverse, we see Juan Parao and Juan, el veguero, awaken from their lethargy to react against the injustices of Coronel Buitrago; their tragedy, like that of Marcos Vargas, is that

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[1]D. H. Lawrence, "The Dragon of the Apocalypse," Literary Symbolism, ed. Maurice Beebe (San Francisco: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1960), pp. 31-32.

they are impelled in the wrong direction and ultimately sacrifice their lives uselessly.

III. Symbol functions as message.

We have fixed Gallegos within the traditional Latin American pattern of the escritor responsable acting in the novelistic framework of a "literatura comprometida en su conjunto." The raison d'être of Gallegos' symbols lies in their instructive nature, and it is because of this that he often states his symbol directly. Through the symbol he analyzes, interprets, offers solutions. The symbol is a means of organizing and incarnating the lesson he wishes to teach. By means of the symbol, based on the concrete, the understandable, he has "implied" the abstract concepts so difficult to instill in a people saturated in the political, moral and ethnic chaos around them.

We have discussed symbol as a vision of reality, but when symbol functions as message, it is put to a higher task, for "dissatisfied with what is, the author may use symbol to create something better."[1] Symbol set to this purpose is Gallegos' principal communicator:

> The complexity of meanings that [an artist] can evoke with a rich symbol is little short of miraculous; and even more remarkable than the complexity is the clearness and precision of communication through symbols. Symbols are the artist's means of creating patterns of thought and emotion which did not previously exist and of communicating what had previously been ineffable.[2]

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[1]Tindall, op. cit., p. 15.

[2]Charles Child Walcutt, "Interpreting the Symbol," Literary Symbolism, ed. Beebe, p. 42.

The "patterns of thought" which Gallegos has created are embodied in the thematic constants which form a cycle within his work. Evolving from a search begun in the essays and continued throughout the entirety of his literary endeavor, all of these thematic constants revolve around the author's analysis of the problemática venezolana in its multiple aspects:

A. The struggle between civilización and barbarie: incarnated in Santos and Bárbara, all of the author's subsequent thematic preoccupations may be considered extensions or variations of this basic struggle.

B. The fuerza desorientada with its implications of the fracasado: the incapacity, both individual and national, to find a constructive direction as seen in the figures of Reinaldo Solar, Florentino, Marcos Vargas and Demetrio Montiel.

C. The alma dormida and the corollary function of awakening it: this theme is analyzed both in individuals--Adelaida, Marisela, Juan Parao and Juan, el veguero--and in the collective tragedy of the entire town in El forastero.

D. The conflicts provoked by mestizajes: figures such as Victoria Guanipa, Pedro Miguel, Remota Montiel and Juan Luis Marino, despite the inner torments arising from their racial duality, ultimately transcend their mestizo nature to symbolize the author's vision of their significance in his nation's racial destiny.

E. The pecado contra el ideal: the treason against ideal (and ultimately against self) which, as seen in Reinaldo

Solar and Marcos Roger, can only result in destruction or a sterile sacrifice of principle.

IV. Symbol functions as a universalizing agent.

The two major criticisms most consistently voiced against Gallegos are that his symbols are too elemental and that his technique is antiquated in the light of 20th century literature. In answer to the first of these, we have tried to show that Gallegos' symbols are far more subtle and complex than their di statement implies. Gallegos is a writer whose symbols are clearly expressed because he means them as communicators. The very act of writing has, for Gallegos, a transcendent function. In this context, his role as an author may be equated to the term symbolic action, employed by Kenneth Burke to designate the unconscious or conscious "ritual" which the writer undergoes in the creation of a literary work and which he embodies within it:

> There is no need to "supply" motives. The interrelationships themselves are his motives. For they are his situation; and situation is but another word for motives. The motivation out of which he writes is synonymous with the structural way in which he puts events and values together when he writes.[1]

Gallegos' motivation as an author has determined his artistic function and form. It has also determined the selection and function of his symbols, whose aesthetic value lies in the author's ability to transcend regional and temporal barriers, to elevate to a more universal level those characters, circumstances, actions and values which he takes

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[1]Burke, op. cit., p. 18.

from material reality:

> A través de lo circunstancial de esta temática, Gallegos ascendió hacia un tiempo novelesco puro en que, superando cualquier 'ismo' y 'actualismo' literarios, se puso a ahondar en la pasión humana. Su obra marca un determinado tiempo pero más que éste, más que una cronología exacta, es tiempo mismo de ficción, es época. Ella nos entrega la crónica, el retrato, el relato, las costumbres, pero más que todo eso, la imagen de Venezuela andando y desandando tiempos psicológicos. Imagen que logra la abstracción por la síntesis hasta volverse símbolo.[1]

In reflecting "la condición humana venezolana," Gallegos' creative artistry has carried his symbols beyond the confines of any certain literary technique, beyond even the confines of his national barriers, for as a creator of symbols, he has crystalized and given definitive form to the archtypes of his cultural heritage:

> The discovery of new symbols is not the only function of a writer, but the writer who cares about this must be fascinated by reality itself, as a butterfly collector is fascinated by the glimpse of a new specimen. Such a specimen was Mme. Bovary or M. Homais or M. de Charlus or Jupien; these specimens were precious to their discoverers, not because they repeated an age-old pattern but because their markings were new. Once the specimen has been described, the public instantly spots other examples of the kind, and the world seems suddenly full of Babbitts and Charlus, where none had been noted before.[2]

This has been Gallegos' role--that of the discoverer, of the keen observer with his sensitivity attuned to his own reality, a reality which he has been able to immortalize

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[1]Liscano, op. cit., p. 216.

[2]Mary McCarthy, "Settling the Colonel's Hash," Literary Symbolism, ed. Beebe, p. 48.

through a dramatic vision of his national panorama. He has been, like the author described by Mary McCarthy,

> a listener and observer, who can pay attention to reality, like an obedient pupil, and who is willing, always, to be surprised by the messages reality is sending through to him. And if he gets the messages correctly he will not have to go back and put in the symbols; he will find that the symbols are there, staring at him significantly from the commonplace.[1]

In the commonplace of his own ambiente, Gallegos has recognized the symbolic potential available to him, and in breathing symbolic life into his surroundings has awakened in the reader the consciousness of the Venezuelan existence in a universal function.

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[1]Ibid., p. 54.

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