

INFORMATION TO USERS

This material was produced from a microfilm copy of the original document. While the most advanced technological means to photograph and reproduce this document have been used, the quality is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help you understand markings or patterns which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or "target" for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is "Missing Page(s)". If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting thru an image and duplicating adjacent pages to insure you complete continuity.
2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a large round black mark, it is an indication that the photographer suspected that the copy may have moved during exposure and thus cause a blurred image. You will find a good image of the page in the adjacent frame.
3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., was part of the material being photographed the photographer followed a definite method in "sectioning" the material. It is customary to begin photoing at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue photoing from left to right in equal sections with a small overlap. If necessary, sectioning is continued again — beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.
4. The majority of users indicate that the textual content is of greatest value, however, a somewhat higher quality reproduction could be made from "photographs" if essential to the understanding of the dissertation. Silver prints of "photographs" may be ordered at additional charge by writing the Order Department, giving the catalog number, title, author and specific pages you wish reproduced.
5. PLEASE NOTE: Some pages may have indistinct print. Filmed as received.

Xerox University Microfilms

300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106

74-17,206

KOS, Eugenia Lyda, 1942-
MESSIANISM IN THE NOVELS OF ROMULO GALLEGOS.

The University of Oklahoma, Ph.D., 1974
Language and Literature, general

University Microfilms, A XEROX Company, Ann Arbor, Michigan

THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

MESSIANISM IN THE NOVELS OF ROMULO GALLEGOS

Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Spanish

By

Eugenia Lyda Kos

Norman, Oklahoma

MESSIANISM IN THE NOVELS OF ROMULO GALLEGOS

APPROVED BY

Lowell Tompkins

Raymond Feiler

James P. Artman

Desae A. Clement

James H. Chitt

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. THE BACKGROUND OF THE MESSIANIC IDEA: THE NATURAL, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT.....	11
III. THE NATIONAL SPIRIT: CHARACTERS DRAWN FROM THE UPPER AND LOWER CLASSES OF VENEZUELAN SOCIETY...	35
IV. THE EVOLUTION OF THE MESSIANIC CONCEPT: THE DIANOA IN GALLEGOS' NOVELS.....	55
V. ANALYSIS OF MESSIANIC CHARACTERS: THEIR PURPOSES, FRUSTRATIONS AND TRIUMPHS.....	65
VI. FOLKLORIC BELIEFS: FURTHER MOTIVATIONS OF THE MESSIANIC IDEA.....	111
VII. ESSENCE AND IMPACT OF GALLEGOS' MESSIANIC IDEOLOGY.....	126
VIII. SYNTHESIS OF GALLEGOS' MESSIANISM IN THE STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS OF HIS NOVELS.....	138
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	151

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to acknowledge a very real debt of gratitude to Professor Lowell Dunham of the University of Oklahoma for his assistance in the preparation and elaboration of this study done in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctor's degree at the University of Oklahoma. In particular, I wish to express my appreciation to Professors James H. Abbott, Seymour Feiler, Besse A. Clement, and Jim P. Artman for the patient and detailed attention with which they have supervised the composition of this project at every stage, from its inception to the final draft.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One of the principal difficulties of a writer, creative or theoretical, is the choice of the topic and the point of view. The creative writer becomes fascinated by a central idea, and then proceeds to work upon an adequate form. This is the proper sequence, in spite of the assurance of the formalists to the contrary. But a serious dispute about priority would be futile: matter and form stand in reciprocal relationship, the one conditioning the other. A critic may choose some special peripheral problems according to his preference and specialization, or he may look for the central idea in a writer's work from which all structural elements spread, and which converge again in the central theme.

Objections might be raised that the presentation of a critical analysis through a central theme may prove amateurishly subjective and scientifically insufficient, or that a critical study should be handled strictly according to the demands of elaborate criteria of literary criticism. But the one procedure does not exclude the other. On the contrary, it seems that the latter technique, the purely scientific, should be subordinated to the former for the sake of coherence and a more total understanding of the author. Subjectivism-Objectivism in the evaluation of a literary work is a continuous dispute among liter-

ary scholars. The former is based primarily on the intuitive grasp of the overall significance of a given work, and the latter ensues from an objective application of theoretical norms. This problem, however, emerges from a more basic contention: can the Humanities ever become a science?

The tendencies to create a science of literature are present in contemporary literary criticism, for example, in the works of Northrop Frye, Rene Wellek, or Austin Warren. Aesthetics, or the theory of art, a subdivision of philosophy since antiquity, must become a science in our age, following the emergence of the sciences of psychology and sociology. But can aesthetics become a science also? The history of literary criticism gives a decisively negative answer to such a possibility. Literary conventions have been shaped and reshaped continuously. The very essence of art as freedom belies the possibility of worthwhile creations according to strict formulas, which are always relative and can never be constant in the way mathematical norms are. Undeniably, literary criticism today has become a more precise study. Gone is the purely romantic critic who was simply a secondary artist paraphrasing a given author in poetical or rhetorical language. Progressive literary theory eliminates and successfully defines components of different genres and structural elements; it studies figurative language, and creates precise literary terms used as analytical terminology. The student today finds more guidelines for evaluation than ever before. But precise theoretical knowledge is still not a guarantee of correct evaluation. The result of a purely mechanistic approach is comparable to the presentation of human personality in numbers, a computerized

picture compiled from answers to a questionnaire.

The relativity of critical directives is obvious. Suffice it to point out differences between various critical schools in the evaluation of the same author, or quite opposite opinions of respected critics about the same work of art. Literary criticism is still searching for a constant, a steady component such as exists in mathematics which could eventually constitute the basis for a scientific approach to literature.

A partial solution to the objective versus subjective approach has been suggested by Northrop Frye, the author of the "myth theory." Frye acknowledges the chaotic entanglements of critical approaches and does not give preference to any school, but suggests a compromise by shifting theoretical considerations from the peripheral plane toward the center:

. . . what is at present missing from literary criticism is a coordinating principle, a central hypothesis, which like the theory of evolution in biology, will see phenomena it deals with as parts of a whole. Such a principle, though it would retain the centripetal perspective of structural analysis, would try to give the same perspective to other kinds of criticism too.¹

What follows from this demand is that critics of different schools of thought would be able to reduce subjectivism by concentrating in their own individual ways on permanent patterns inherent in literature. Frye acknowledges only one constant in creative writing: matter prefigured in myth.

Myth is the structural element in literature Literature as a whole is a 'displaced' mythology . . . and revolutions in

¹Northrop Frye, Fables of Identity (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1963), p. 9.

the history of literature are invariably revolutions in literary form.²

By directing critical attention to what is essential, Frye warns against the superficiality of formalistic pedantry. A critic who is too concerned with accepted regulating aesthetic canons (which differ in every consecutive generation) proceeds like an apprentice to a sculptor. He measures the proportions of a beautiful face according to his master's directions. Every feature taken separately is perfect, but the face as a whole is a monstrosity. Thus, by concentrating on the perfection of the parts, the sculptor missed the perfection of the whole; a total coherence, the spirit, is missing.

Similarly, Frye emphasizes the importance of the apprehension of the totality of a work of art which, above all, must be discovered and taken into consideration by the critic, rather than a dependence on ever-shifting norms. Timeless, absolute evaluating criteria do not exist. A canon for one generation becomes a farce for another. Rolf Hochhut, the editor of an excellent selection of contemporary continental short stories, makes the following statement which is admirable for its sincerity:

Ich huete mich zu sagen, die Masstaebe seien nicht da, um zu bestimmen . . . Ich gestehe nur: ich konnte diese Masstaebe nicht finden. Und keinen Menschen, der sie mich lehren konnte.³

In order to read and evaluate properly it is necessary to perceive the ideological and aesthetic values simultaneously. Only extensive reading of creative art can bring this about:

²Ibid., p. 1.

³Rolf Hochhuth, ed., Europäische Erzähler des 20 Jahrhunderts (Köln: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1966), p. 3.

The texture of any great work of art is complex and ambiguous, and in unravelling the complexities we may take in as much history and philosophy as we please, if the subject of our study remains at the center. If it does not, we may find that in our anxiety to write about literature we have forgotten how to read it.⁴

Frye has successfully destroyed the tabu created by formal criticism that insists on philosophical, moral, cultural, or any other aspects outside purely aesthetic ones in literary analysis.

Many similar restrictions have been defeated by creative and critical literary practices. Every particular school had at a given time a complex index of prohibited themes, expressions and forms which, together with the favored ones, have been respected only temporarily. Classic, Romantic, Realist, and many other literary schools have been equally subjected to the biological process of birth, maturity and death. Innovations become conventions; brilliant metaphors become cliches, hence the constant rebellions against traditionalism, as in the comparatively recent extremist movement from drama to anti-drama, or from novel to anti-novel.

In view of the continuous changes and relativity of critical norms, it is a rewarding task to look for a permanent element in literature. In his search for a timeless element in a work of art, Northrop Frye rediscovered the Aristotelian concepts of dianoia and anagnorisis, and introduced them into literary criticism as the unifying principle of analysis. Dianoia is the central idea conceived by the writer, that which motivates his choice of matter and form. Anagnorisis is the recognition of this idea by the reader; it is the essence that underlies

⁴Frye, Fables of Identity, p. 9.

all details. These two concepts are almost synonymous, differing only in that dianoa refers to the writer, and anagnorisis to the reader. When the average reader acknowledges the impact of a writer as an unforgettable experience, in spite of long forgotten details of plot, characters and action, he has reached anagnorisis, the central idea of the work. To give some examples:

In Dostoevsky, dianoa-anagnorisis is his profound interest in, and analysis of the puzzle called human nature; in Cervantes, the double aspect of reality, the duality of matter and spirit in creation, and man caught in it; in Unamuno, existential and metaphysical anxiety; in Kafka, total alienation. The central idea of a work of art does not necessarily have to be of a profound philosophical or social nature. If a writer decides to create formless nonsense, then this very decision is his dianoa, and he will be remembered as the one whose purpose was to destroy sense and form. The anagnorisis in this case would be conscious incoherence. Whether positive or negative, dianoa-anagnorisis is always present in a work of art.

The dianoa-anagnorisis of the Venezuelan artist Rómulo Gallegos (1884-1968) is messianism. Gallegos presents his novels in such a way that the messianic idea cannot fail to strike the reader as the origin and entelechy of his entire creative work. It is the unifying structural principle; everything takes shape if considered from the point of view of messianism. Every element receives its motivation, justification and direction with messianism at its center. Details reveal themselves not as simple technical retardation or information of the kind encountered in Latin American costumbristas, but as conscious

preparation for a logical result, the necessary emergence of a long awaited messiah. The more conscious Gallegos becomes of the idea of redemption, the more the accomplished artist emerges. The difference between his first novel, Reinaldo Solar, and Canaima, a novel of his maturity, illustrates this point. Both originate with the messianic idea and the author's concern for its proclamation, but messianism in Canaima is much more impressive, more convincing and enduring because it is aesthetically better developed. There is hardly another author in world literature so dedicated to messianism as is Gallegos. His interpretation however, differs widely from the accepted form. A brief review of the messianic idea in world literature will show the difference.

Messianism as a literary motif appears in writings with romantic trends, especially in authors whose country and people suffered a long political oppression, and economic exploitation. Slavic nations, for example, once deprived of their national independence, produced literature with messianic messages. In most cases the biblical Passion and Resurrection served as the model. The suffering of the oppressed was presented as the crucifixion followed by a prophetic announcement of a future Resurrection. The promise of salvation in this romantic messianism was no more than mystical consolation. The suffering nations were to be delivered from slavery through the myth of the Birth-Death-Rebirth archetype. But salvation as a necessary, spontaneous result of suffering is a rather sentimental idea; on a national and social plane such miracles do not happen. Passion is not necessarily followed by Resurrection, contrary to what romantic messianism assures.

Better motivated is the messianic idea applied to the individual. This moral messianism inspired two great Russian writers, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy. In spite of great differences in their Weltanschauung, both believed that suffering is the prerequisite of a morally developed personality. In this respect romantic and moral messianism have one major characteristic in common: both stress the function of suffering as a delivering force. Moral messianism on an individual scale expresses a profound truth. By suffering, man becomes better. He conquers impulses such as violence, lust and greed; man becomes humanized. Unfortunately, individual moral messianism found its extension on a collective plane. Even with Dostoevsky such a confusion occurred: the long-suffering Russian people would eventually deliver the whole world of evil; Moscow would become a third Rome (after Constantinople), the true defender of Christianity and social justice on a global scale. Applied in this way, moral messianism is extremely pretentious if not ridiculously utopian.

Social utopianism is another aspect of messianism. It reappears in the mythological structure of Communism and its eschatological content, as observed by Mircea Eliade:

Marx takes over and continues one of the great eschatological myths of the Asiatico-Mediterranean world—the redeeming role of the just . . . in our day, the proletariat, whose sufferings are destined to change the ontological status of the world . . . Marx enriches this myth by the Judaeo-Christian messianic ideology: on the one hand, the prophetic role and soteriological function that he attributes to the proletariat and, on the other, the final battle between Good and Evil, followed by the complete victory of the former.⁵

⁵Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1959), pp. 206-7.

Romantic, moral and socialist messianism have in common the emphasis on suffering. Resurrection is inherent in Passion. It is no coincidence that socialist movements produced naturalistic writings, a literature of the underdog. In most cases, this messianic attitude is a passive, mystical expectation, propagating the belief that the sufferings of the just will be avenged by the historical process.

Messianism in Gallegos, although in some ways similar to the aspects discussed above, follows a different vein. The stress does not lie upon suffering, but on an active preparation for the advent of a messiah. Although the vision of redemption predominates in Gallegos, he makes an important shift from romantic sentimentalism and naturalistic documentation toward a realistic activism. He shifts the idea of the redeeming power of suffering itself toward a cessation of this suffering through decisive action. This is the specific characteristic of Gallegos' realistic messianism, if such an oxymoron be permitted.

According to Gallegos, the present historical status quo is intolerable not only for the tortured population but for those in power, and especially for the corrupt among them. No miracle is expected; no one person can accomplish the task of redemption. The messianic call is addressed to all in potential power to accomplish salvation for Venezuela. The soteriological obligations and possibilities of the responsible educated classes, contrasted with the helplessness of the lower, are not presented mythologically, but are factually and historically discussed. Only the vision of redemption and the atmosphere of an advent belong to the myth. Gallegos' vision of the messiah is

secularized: only a collective effort of enlightened, just leaders organized in the spirit of true democracy can save the nation. Messianism rooted in reality becomes in Gallegos the central idea and the unifying structural principle in his culturally oriented novels.

CHAPTER II

THE BACKGROUND OF THE MESSIANIC IDEA:

THE NATURAL, CULTURAL AND

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The hoped for advent of a messiah, metaphorically present in all the novels of Rómulo Gallegos, emerges as a necessity when the natural and cultural background is considered. When lingering on natural or social environmental details, the author is not interested in arousing curiosity through topical exoticism or picturesque primitivism of customs; he is beyond costumbrismo. His descriptions contain a direct appeal to emotions such as compassion, disgust, or the urge to help. These are all emotions vital to the messianic message of his novels because he is presenting man in conflict with his environment, and in need of a savior to help him. Vast areas of Venezuela are deprived of necessary mechanization. Man's struggle against wild nature is hopeless without the intervention of technology. The devastating power of a tropical climate and natural forces unharnessed by man's engineering spirit continuously destroy the heroic endeavor of primitive agriculture and husbandry. Droughts and floods not only ruin all human efforts, but claim many lives as well. The rushing waters of powerful rivers are not only dangerous for human and animal survival, but unharnessed, they are a waste of tremendous energy which could be used

for electric power plants and thus work for man and not against him.

Mucho río, agua como para abastecer todo el país, y sin embargo, tierras secas que dan tristeza ... las calamidades de su tierra, donde todo lo que fuese obra del hombre corrigiendo la naturaleza estaba todavía por hacerse ... Imagínese lo que significa para Guayana y quizás para todo el país el aprovechamiento de esas caídas de agua ... Millares de caballos de fuerza que se están perdiendo en esos saltos.¹

All those concerned, the educated and primitive alike, feel that the present conditions cannot be endured, that much has to be done. The motif of hope and waiting, a strong sentiment within the population, builds the messianic mood, the spiritual atmosphere of Gallegos' novels which is so exceptionally captured in the closing apostrophe of Doña Bárbara: "Llanura venezolana! Propicia para el esfuerzo como lo fue para la hazaña, tierra de horizontes abiertos, donde una raza buena ama, sufre y espera."² Hard working men of courage, possessing admirable dexterity, are often handicapped by elemental forces impossible to cope with unaided. "La muerte es un péndulo que se mueve sobre la llanura de la inundación a la sequía y de la sequía a la inundación."³ The situation is no less frightening for men living and working in the forests: "Las calamidades de aquella region substraída al progreso y abandonada al satánico imperio de la violencia eran de la naturaleza de las calamidades bíblicas."⁴

The characterizations of the natural environment in general terms, expressive as they are, would sound hollow if not exemplified in

¹Rómulo Gallegos, Canaima (Buenos Aires: Espasa Calpe, 1945), pp. 31 and 70.

²Rómulo Gallegos, Doña Bárbara (Barcelona: Editorial Araluce, 1937), p. 389

³Ibid., p. 382.

⁴Canaima, p. 69.

details. These are given in abundance, one being the devastation caused by fire during a drought. Not only the burning sun, but also the primitive method of clearing the fields turn vast regions of the prairies into a burning hell: " ... el empleo del fuego ... como único medio eficaz para que renazcan los pastos agotados por la sequía."⁵ The terror of fire is captured in vivid, impressive images. One does not only read of this raging force—one experiences it:

... de pronto ya tiempo que los pastos se abatieron al soplo de una racha huracana, empezó a suceder algo extraño; bandadas de aves palustres que volaban hacia el sotavento lanzando graznidos de pánico, numerosas y eguades, reses sueltas o en madriñas que corrían en la misma dirección, unas, rumbo a los corrales del hato, otras hacia el horizonte abierto en precipitada fuga ... fuego.⁶

Animals, panic stricken by fire, menace human lives and dwellings.

Cattle gone mad, foxes struck by rabies and poisonous snakes: " ... el ataque de los zorros rabiosos ... se metían en las casas ... las serpientes que también las invadían huyendo del fuego."⁷ The living conditions of these people, unprotected by the knowledge of an industrial civilization, demand corrective changes. In the attempt to explain natural disasters such as fire in the prairies, or in the virgin forests, popular imagination creates stories which become legends:

Las Humaredas ... todas las selvas están ardiendo desde el Orinoco hasta el Cuyuní. Según unos, porque el indio, cansado de las otomías y maluquezas de los explotadores del caucho y del purgo, se ha decidido a pegarle fuego a sus montes para acabar con esos palos de goma que son la causa de la esclavitud a que lo somete el blanco; pero, según otros, porque con la gran calor que está saliendo del centro de la tierra, todo el

⁵Doña Bárbara, p. 218.

⁶Ibid., pp. 217-18.

⁷Ibid., p. 223.

oro que hay bajo los bosques se está derritiendo y ya son ríos de fuego los que corren por todas partes ... no solo las cosas de este mundo, sino que también las del otro parecen estar albrotadas.⁸

The fusion of the realistic and the mystical in the vision of nature, and the forces manifested in it, folkloric symbols, apocalyptic imagery, all reveal the hostile environment of tropical regions and its spirit working in the people. Myths are the attempts of primitive men to find motives for disasters in supernatural mysteries. The drama of men cursed with calor africano, color africano is recreated by Gallegos in a realistic manner, after the fashion of the naturalistic school. But something else is also added to his novels: a spiritual sense that is always present.

The importance of folkloric mythology as a source for a better understanding of human nature has been revealed by contemporary anthropology, psychology, and literature. In Rómulo Gallegos this tendency toward the mythical is one of the outstanding characteristics of his artistic temperament; it impregnates the atmosphere, giving a mystical tone and mood to his writings:

Detrás de aquellas lejanías estaban las tierras de la violencia impune, el vasto país desolado del indio irredento, las misteriosas tierras hondas, calladas, trágicas.⁹

The sequence of key words, lejanías, vasto, desolado, misteriosas hondas, calladas, trágicas, points toward a mystique of animated nature. The fictional characters of Gallegos, especially the potential

⁸Rómulo Gallegos, Cantaclaro (Buenos Aires: Espasa Calpe, 1945), p. 132. (Italics mine)

⁹Canaima, p. 71

messiahs among them, are endowed with a sixth sense in tune with this mystical twilight zone. They feel and hear nature.

Reinaldo Solar, the potential messiah in the novel by the same name, experiences ecstasy when contemplating nature:

¡Todo el paisaje de la tierra natal, que es una embriaguez de luz y de color! ...¡Allí está mi camino! ¡La incomparable belleza de mi tierra grita, llamándome en la luz y en el color de su paisaje, en la desolación de su pobreza, en la infinita melancolía de sus dolores bajo la infinita alegría del sol!¹⁰

The mystical vision of nature is linked by Gallegos to the cycle of birth-death-rebirth, the Christian version of which is the messiah myth of crucifixion and resurrection.

Un día ... fue la lluvia de falenas. Millares de gusanos que de pronto empezaron a caer de las ramas de todos los árboles, y treinta días después ... fue la explosión de las crisálidas, el repentino florecimiento del aire ... donde de pronto aparecieron revolteando millares de mariposas ... y se cerró el círculo de la vida en el vuelo nupcial de los insectos recién salidos del letargo creador, se unieron allí mismo dos extremos del torbellino: la fecundación y la muerte, cajuña y canaima.¹¹

Natural phenomena and their repercussion in human life express the abandonment of helpless but heroically struggling people, a situation that cannot be witnessed with indifference. The tropical sun is a fire which burns the plains to a desert and claims human lives. Cantaclaro wonders about God's creation:

¡Llano! ¡Llano! ¿Porqué lo hiciste tan grande y tan seco, Dios mío? ... porqué no pusiste una mata en este banco de sabana? ... Seis horas llevamos atravesando este reyentadero de sol sin una jeciñta de sombra. ¡Llano! ¡Llano!¹²

The insolación and luminosidad of the Venezuelan plains con-

¹⁰ Rómulo Gallegos, Reinaldo Solar (Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe, 1947), p. 75.

¹¹ Canaima, p. 183.

¹² Cantaclaro, p. 40.

dition the life and mentality of the llanero. Martín Salcedo, an intellectual of the progressive group, summarizes the psyche of the llanero conditioned by this environment:

Este panorama llanero, esta mezcla absurda de transparencia suma y de misterio—pues lo misterioso, o como ustedes dicen, lo espantoso del llano reside precisamente en su excesiva luminosidad—este paisaje monótono y obsesionante se repite dentro de ustedes con abrumadora uniformidad.¹³

Martín Salcedo succeeds in avoiding the spiritual enchantment of the plains, but he succumbs physically; the tropical sun kills his resistance. The once healthy caraqueño is reduced to a sickly body consumed by fever:

Era un joven aniquilado por el paludismo, de rostro macilento y ensombrecido por una barba negra y revuelta. El fuego de la fiebre que lo consumía, visible en el fulgor de los ojos cavados, le daba un aspecto delirante.¹⁴

Tropical nature not only destroys health and claims lives; its mysterious beauty creates an obsession which enslaves the human spirit. This supraterrrestrial fascination with nature, be it angelic or satanic, has dramatic consequences for man. It either submerges him into lethargic apathy or brings him close to insanity. Energetic characters, the potential leaders toward progress, become voluntary hermits, tormented by el mal de la selva, and everything concerning society and civilization becomes insignificant and unimportant:

He aquí la selva fascinante de cuyo influjo ya más no se libraría Marcos Vargas. La selva anti-humana. Quienes trasponen sus lindes ya empiezan a ser algo más o menos que hombre. La deshumanización por temeridad ... de cuya resistencia depende la vida.¹⁵

¹³Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁵Canaima, p. 177.

The impact of this obsession to the point of total absorption, the identification of man with nature, is symbolically represented in the epiphany of Marcos Vargas: man takes the shape of a tree. Marcos literally becomes a tree, a transformation witnessed by his companions. The vision materializes and then dissolves, but Marcos remains a prisoner of the forest, unable to return to civilization.

The redemption of all kinds of physical and spiritual ailments rooted in the natural environment must, when possible, come from civilization, for civilization is the struggle of enlightened men against hostile nature. Writers concerned with social criticism expose the failures of a limited civilization; the natural background is linked to the cultural. The geographical division of Venezuela into mountains and plains is matched by a corresponding social division of the population into the higher privileged and the lower underprivileged citizens. The mountainous areas of the country are propitious for human life and the development of culture. Large cities, situated in a mild climate, with the capital Caracas as the leading cultural center, offer educational and economic opportunities, an easier way of life and refinement: "De todos los puntos ... del exterior y de las provincias acudían a Caracas genuinos representantes de la intelectualidad venezolana."¹⁶ So did the workers, and all who aspired to better living conditions.

Life in the provinces is harder, and hardest of all in the remote corners of the country where climatic conditions are adverse and

¹⁶ Reinaldo Solar, p. 182.

civilization has made little progress. The cultural gap between the upper classes, the city dwellers and the lower classes composed mainly of prairie and forest dwellers is great. To be sure, a classless society is a utopian abstraction. But in Venezuela the cultural and economic gap between the classes is enormous. An antonymic table illustrates this gap:

<u>A City</u>	<u>B Province</u>
mild climate	harsh climate
civilization	wilderness
large foreign capital	small local capital
job opportunities	exploitation of cheap labor
luxury	misery
White	Indian and Black
universities	no schools
hospitales	no doctors

Similar opposites could be added ad infinitum, all positive under A, all negative under B. Such a division might seem to be an exaggerated simplification of actual realities but it is, nevertheless, a close summary of the striking differences in the cultural background of urban and rural areas.

Half a century has passed since Gallegos' messianic novels, since his passionate appeal for help for the neglected and forgotten poor. But in spite of some improvements, due partly to liberal governments and foreign aid, it is to be feared that the existence of a large part of the population as described by Gallegos is still neglected. The following optimistic statement refers surely to a small part of the population only, those living in or near large cities:

Gracias a las grandes cantidades de dinero que las compañías petroleras pagan al gobierno en derecho e impuestos, también ha sido posible realizar un vasto programa de obras y servicios públicos: casas, escuelas y hospitales para los trabaja-

dores."¹⁷

The life of the workers in the oil fields is still primitive; the contrast between the luxury of the foreign managers and the misery of the Venezuelan labor force is still marked. "Petróleo ... la estupenda suerte ajena al descuidado infortunio propio, sobre la misma tierra."¹⁸

Farmers and cattlemen, caucheros and miners, all types of hired hands are abused for the economic advantages of the proprietors: foreign capital, the government, the landowners, or businessmen. The poor, unprotected by law or by any insurance system, "endurecidos por la tiránica necesidad de subsistir,"¹⁹ are the tragic actors in the social drama of Venezuela.

A problem apart is the Indian population. Submerged in a melancholy apathy of decline, this race lives in an isolated world, incapable of integration, disinherited by the conquistadores and abandoned by the Republic:

Allí languidecía, desmoralizada, una brava gente aborígen ... 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.²⁰

Gallegos dedicates one of his novels, Sobre la misma tierra, entirely to the Indian problem. The author never forgets the Indian blood which created the predominant ethnic type of Venezuela, the mestizo, but his analysis concerns the overall picture of their national existence in

¹⁷Frederick S. Richard, Hispanoamérica Moderna (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1972), p. 109.

¹⁸Gallegos, Sobre la misma tierra (Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe, 1968), p. 113.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 38.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 89-90.

Venezuela without focusing on any specific ethnic problems. Gallegos' subject is Venezuela in its entirety. Although he is artistically at his best when he considers rural areas and the rural population, he also incorporates the city into his novels.

In Gallegos' novels, the city has the qualities of European cultural centers such as Paris, Madrid or London. The city is the focus of national energy as represented by the affluent middle classes and the intelligentsia of the latter half of the nineteenth century, before the advent of intensive industrialization and the subsequent rise of the proletariat. The intensive mechanization which occasioned a mass movement to the factories changed the positive image of the metropolis into a nightmarish monstrosity. In literature, as the mirror of the new reality, the metropolis became a necropolis which has culminated in recent horror utopias featuring city-dwellers as dehumanized robots in an ant hill, people condemned to be executed by air pollution, overpopulation, crime and an ever-pending atomic war.

Caracas, as seen by Gallegos in his time, has none of the characteristics of the twentieth-century European and North American horror utopias. Venezuela, underdeveloped industrially, is considerably distant from over-mechanization and its aftermath. The target of Gallegos' analysis is the upper and middle classes. His social criticism is concerned with the psychology and the morality of the bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia. He advocates liberalism and freedom from prejudice and violence.

The competition between the old hereditary aristocracy and the new plutocracy is ridiculed by the liberal author, who exposes pre-

tentiousness and concern for appearances only. The exclusiveness of the proud aristocracy is a hard barrier to penetrate (as seen in the adventures of Victoria in La Trepadora). The plutocracy, affiliated mostly with commerce and industry, leads an exclusive existence also, alienated from other groups and from the masses, and competing for prestige with the hereditary aristocracy, now in economic decline:

Ya habían desaparecido en Caracas casi todas las viejas mansiones solariegas, nobles y austeras como las gentes que en ellas vivieron en tiempos definitivamente idos, para dar lugar a las casas modernas, incómodas y cursis, sobrecargadas de ornamentos baratos, disparatadas y exóticas, como los espíritus de los advenidizos que reemplazaban en la primacía social a las familias de raigambre y de verdadera selección.²¹

The disdain for the nouveau riche is clearly heard in this nostalgic evocation of past times when the mantuano was a respected representative of a refined culture.

The alienation of the intelligentsia from the masses is a most unfortunate symptom in the life of the nation because educated people should be responsible for the cultural level of the masses. Ambitious intellectuals enjoy the comfortable life of the economically secure, concerned only with personal careers. They ignore the call for sacrifice on behalf of the illiterate and defenseless majority of the population. The young generation of intellectuals—agricultural engineers, doctors, teachers—should go to the rural areas and work for the people. We find, however, only isolated instances of such altruistic dedication (for example, Santos Luzardo in Doña Bárbara).

The masses of the people, especially those living in the rural

²¹Reinaldo Solar, p. 221.

areas, need education for a better way of life, but they are being used for political purposes. Rival groups of politicians precipitate numerous civil wars and recruit followers by offering tempting promises. Needless to say, promises remain unfulfilled, and the blood of the people is shed in vain; the only result of political strife is that politicians with little or no concern for public welfare are replaced by others of the same kind. Political problems galvanize the city. Students debate and the universities become centers of political organizations with varied affiliations, some with idealistically romantic ideologies which are practically ineffective, others functioning as agents for unidentified destructive forces.

La brizna de paja en el viento is a novel dedicated entirely to the problem of politics at the university level. The events take place in Cuba, but it is obvious that the situation in adolescent political activities is very much the same in Caracas. In many instances, agents provocateurs of the lowest ethical standard take advantage of trusting idealists, causing much harm until, in some lucky cases, they are unmasked. Considering the situation in many universities all over the world today, the speech of Professor Luciente has a very contemporary ring:

... hoy ... que dentro de esta Universidad, cuyo decoro estamos obligados a defender, funciona una cátedra de pistoleroismo que le hace injuria a la institución y gravísimo daño al país, 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 orden personal de los dirigentes del llamado movimiento estudiantil, contra cuyo calificativo han de protestar los verdaderos estudiantes que

aquí me oigan.²²

This speech is a warning. It does not mean, however, that the students should not be concerned with the political and economic problems of the nation. Students have to function in actuality, but they first need the educational and moral preparation provided by the institutions, acquired by extensive reading and by experiences gained through the confrontation of ideologies with reality.

Thus Reinaldo Solar lives through many ideological phases, which vary according to his reading. He is consecutively impressed and convinced by the ideas of Tolstoy, Rousseau, Darwin, Haeckel, Renan and Nietzsche. Gallegos is all in favor of a liberal education, and he satirizes severely the presumptions of dictatorial educators:

... Jaime Payares, personaje todo huesos y severidad, que padecía una desagradable hipertrofia del "yo" y ejercía una especie de monopolio de la cultura de sus alumnos, burlándose groseramente de toda la que fuera adquirida extra aulas, porque estaba convencido de que tenía derechos absolutos sobre las inteligencias que se le confiaban.²³

Since in Venezuela there still exist teachers and schools of the Dickensian type, the problem of where to acquire a worthwhile education arises. One option is study abroad, primarily in Europe and North America. The opinion of Gallegos concerning education abroad is ambiguous, but favorable comments predominate:

Caracas no era sino un pueblo grande, con mil puertas espirituales abiertas al asalto de los hombres de presa, algo muy distinto todavía de la ciudad ideal, complicada y perfecta como un cerebro, donde toda excitación va a convertirse en idea y de donde

²²La brizna de paja en el viento (Madrid: Ediciones Aguilar, 1959), p. 260.

²³Reinaldo Solar, p. 29.

toda reacción que parte lleva el sello de la eficacia consciente, este ideal solo parecía realizado en la vieja y civilizada Europa.²⁴

Some individuals return home disappointed with Europe where they are looked upon as inferior, pobres indiecitos. On the whole, voyages and studies abroad are desirable, but they cannot be a panacea for all national ailments:

El Dorado fue la ficción inventada por el indio para intentar perder al español, y la gota de sangre del indio ... es lo que nos hace pensar hoy en la fuga a Europa, que es otro El Dorado.²⁵

In many instances, education abroad makes the individual feel superior, a cosmopolitan alienated from his own "inferior" nation. To become a citizen of the world is wonderful, but it is an idea of the future.

To abjure one's own nation in the meanwhile is harmful:

Quiero ... que venga pronto sobre el mundo el día de las fronteras borradas, pero no creo que pueda ser buen ciudadano de la tierra entera quien no sabe serlo hoy del pedazo de ella que es su país.²⁶

Many positive characters in Gallegos' novels are indebted to the influence of Europe and North America for shaping their constructively oriented liberal personality. The mestiza Remota Montiel, heroine of Sobre la misma tierra, becomes an active pioneer for Indian liberation because of her extended stay in Germany and the United States, and the humanitarian spirit working in these countries. She returns to Venezuela determined to fulfill her obligation to her people on her mother's side, the exploited, enslaved Guajiro Indians.

²⁴Doña Bárbara, p. 27.

²⁵Reinaldo Solar, p. 120.

²⁶Sobre la misma tierra, p. 114.

A total overview of Gallegos' novels shows that in Venezuela a new era of true liberalism is beginning. There are reassuring indications of radical changes, of spiritual awakening, of courage to act according to reason and one's own moral conscience instead of according to deeply instilled but questionable public opinion and moral codes. "Yo admiro a toda persona que no quiera vivir sino dentro de su verdad."²⁷ Dedicated, enlightened patriots break with inherited patterns of behavior and leave the city in order to begin working in a true democratic spirit for their country in defense of the neglected and exploited.

Gallegos has many reservations as to the material and spiritual culture of the urban society, but his major preoccupation is with the chaos that reigns in the rural provinces. There is a complete lack of civilization in the areas where the population needs it most. There are no schools or hospitals, no protection by law or social institutions such as workers' unions, health and life insurance. Dangers inherent in a tropical environment and criminally corrupt authorities create an incredibly harsh existence for these people. Gallegos blames civilized society for this situation.

The link between the city and the province is provided in most cases by the landowners who spend part of their time in the city and part on their rural lands. This pattern is used as a structural device in Gallegos' novels, and provides the confrontation of the two social classes: the master and the slave. Some educated liberal

²⁷Ibid., p. 113.

masters stay in the rural areas as pioneers of civilization (for example, Santos Luzardo, in Doña Bárbara). Except for these few, civilization is represented by the local administration: the caciques, the parish priest, the small merchants, the tavern owner—all contributing to the quality and quantity of misery caused by such a civilization.

The administration of the province is the responsibility of the caciques políticos, all corrupt, greedy and despotic. Semi-educated, recruited from former mediocre military duties, they are committed only to the accumulation of private fortunes by any means: "La eterna calamidad de los caciques políticos, que son el azote de esta tierra, pues no hay empresa productiva que no la quieran para sí solos."²⁸ Anarchy and demoralization reign instead of law and order; criminal activities flourish under legal cover. With few exceptions, the mayor of a province conforms to a standard pattern:

Se parecía a casi todos los de su oficio, como un toro a otro del mismo pelo; pues no poseía ni más ni menos de lo que se necesitaba para ser el jefe civil de pueblos ... una ignorancia absoluta, un temperamento despótico, y un grado adquirido en correrías militares.²⁹

To reach their goal, the caciques políticos intimidate, extort and even murder. Marcos Vargas, the hero of Canaima, who, with the help of Manuel Ladera started a promising business of transportation, witnesses the murder of his protector and loses everything because both dared to compete with the interests of the mayors:

... los Ardavines ... lo han dejado a Vd. en la ruina, mataron

²⁸ Canaima, p. 27.

²⁹ Doña Bárbara, p. 153.

las mulas, saquearon las mercancías, quemaron los carros, después de haberlos rociado con el mismo kerosene que traían para los Vellorinis, y machetearon a los peones, que no tuvieron tiempo a coger al monte.³⁰

Apolonio Alcaraván explains his appropriations of foreign goods by the impertinent but truthful statement: "Otro te lo habría quitado por las malas."³¹ He, on the contrary, only asks the helpless criollo to oblige. The pattern of appropriations reveals the usual sequence: the cacique decides to buy a property, offering a sum much below its value; if the criollo refuses, all sorts of pressures are brought to bear. If they are not effective, the cacique stages an armed assault and the ruin of a prosperous farmer is completed. Extortion is another widely used factor. The mayor, under the pretext of preventing a Socialist riot, robs peaceful miners of their meager wages: "Mande a los policías que se aposten a la salida de la mina ... 24 horas de arresto ... o una libra esterilina de multa por cabeza."³² The miners, in need of work, have to pay.

Such custodians of law and order only deepen the mistrust and hatred of the population toward everything concerning civilization. The duality of such authorities, azote y amparo, was evident to all concerned; bribery and submission were inevitable. The criminals who collaborated with the caciques were protected, but the honest working people could never find justice. It is no wonder that in such a situation a Doña Bárbara was not only possible, but typical—a shrewd

³⁰Canaima, p. 172.

³¹Ibid., p. 129.

³²Ibid., pp. 130-31.

criminal advancing rapidly toward power and great wealth through extortion, terror and murder.

The economy is dominated by politics. Employers, depending on the caciques and cheap labor, abuse the impoverished population. Foreign capital dominates the basic sources of the national economy: oil, steel, iron. What is left for the local private enterprise of small capitalists is the extraction of rubber in the virgin forests, and of gold from rivers and sandy banks. Such enterprises enlist needy men. The underpaid workers have to penetrate deeply into the wilderness, which debilitates their health and often claims lives. Hoping for a better future, men went:

... a las selvas caucheras del interior, los que se sentían aptos para arrostrar peligros y fatigas físicas e iban a exponer en la aventura el riesgo de la vida contra las fiebres, las fieras y los bandoleros de la región malsana y salvaje.³³

Climbing high into the trees, fighting poisonous snakes and tropical diseases, totally unprotected, many of the unfortunate workers have been trapped into permanent slavery by the sistema del avance. This diabolical invention of the proprietors provides advances of groceries and money which in many cases are the only hope for survival of a worker with a large family. Others take the advanced money and spend it recklessly in places of amusement. Deceived by hopes of prosperity, and tempted by advances of money, the worker is seldom able to pay back his debts and becomes virtually the property of the industrialist. Manuel Ladera, the voice of Gallegos in Canaima, summarizes

³³Reinaldo Solar, p. 88.

the situation:

Al purgúo y al oro los llaman la bendición de esta tierra, pero yo creo que son la maldición, despueblan los campos y no civilizan la selva, dejan tierras sin brazos y las familias sin amparo y corrompen al hombre, desacostumbrándolo al trabajo metódico, pues todos nuestros campesinos ambicionan hacerse ricos en tres meses de montaña purguera ... La tragedia de purgúo no consiste solo en que empresarios sin conciencia exploten al peón por medio del sistema del avance,—dinero y bastimentos que saquen—que equivale a comprar un hombre por cuatro reales y para toda la vida,—sino también, en que el peón le toma el gusto a venderse de ese modo, coge el dinero del avance y no le importa malgastarlo.³⁴

Demoralization is worse than poverty. A succession of riotous fiestas, drunken carousing and wild parties is the sole expression of "freedom" for those in the lowest classes of society. In order to boost the humiliated ego, men let themselves go—barro humano in all its nakedness:

... nadie se mudaba la ropa, sino que cuando ya no podía cargarla encima de puro andrajosa y mugrienta, compraba otra nueva en las tarantines de los buhoneros, al aire libre y allí mismo en medio de la calle y a medio día en punto, se desnudaba y se cambiaba. Y eran puñados de oro en bruto o rimeros de libras esterilinas o de águilas americanas los que se ponían al paro y al pinto del dado.³⁵

Illegal commerce recruits men who arm themselves and terrorize villages, taking advantage of the opportunity for their own private business:

Piratería disimulada bajo patente de comercio lícito era la industria ... desde Ciudad Bolívar hasta Río Negro ... saltaban a tierra sólo con sus rifles al hombro.³⁶

Insensitive to the burning sun as well as indifferent to morality, sinister men, themselves a product of the criminal system of the

³⁴Canaima, pp. 29-30.

³⁵Ibid., p. 138.

³⁶Doña Bárbara, p. 31.

Establishment, work for corrupt administrations and illicit commerce. Strong and alert men are now a loss to the nation, for they are directed into channels for destructive action. The humble bear their disasters with fatalistic resignation; the proud rebel in many different ways:

... eran juntos con los de presa ... los segundones de la fortuna o del mérito: el ambicioso, el manioto, el tarambano, el que se llenó de deudas y el que se dió a la trampa, los desesperados y los impacientes, uno que necesitaba rehacer su vida ... el hombre de presa, fugitivo de la justicia o campante por sus fueros, el Hombre Macho, semidiós de las bárbaras tierras, sin ley ni freno en el feudo de la violencia ... el espectáculo mismo de la selva antihumana.³⁷

Ironically, the fugitive from justice was often a man with a strong sense and need of justice. Repeated bad experiences with corrupt authorities and the realization of the uselessness of official channels for the administration of a just verdict forced him to take the law into his own hands and become an outcast.

These rebels become folk heroes, praised in ballads as the avengers of the oppressed. El bandolero generoso becomes the incarnation of popular resentment and anger:

... la tierra de violencia impune lo ha arrojado a la selva, fugitivo de la justicia ... pero a su aureola sangrienta no podían faltarle esos destellos que forman la legendaria del bandolero generoso en el ánimo de quienes están siempre dispuestos a admirar la hombría y la bravura sin frenos.³⁸

El Sute Cúpira is one of many pathetic examples of wasted energy and organizational talent. He is operating in the forests as the leader of bandoleros:

³⁷ Canaima, p. 14.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 201.

... su gente, doce hombres siempre dispuestos a cuanto les ordenase, y a los cuales llamaba apóstoles, que sólo para decir tal monstruosidad solía tenerlos en aquel número.³⁹

In view of the atrocious living conditions, it was difficult to believe in the efficiency of steady work. Farmers and cattlemen, assaulted by floods and droughts, by bandits and senseless civil wars, often faced ruin:

... todo el llano está infestado de partidas revolucionarias—el ganado no vale nada; por lo que uno ofrezca se lo dan ... El hombre de trabajo se desalienta.⁴⁰

And:

Tres largas sequías consecutivas habían cubierto de osamenta la pampa desnuda de hierba y ya venía la pobreza.⁴¹

Conditions like this are propitious for any jefe civil to take over. In Cantaclaro Gallegos describes in unforgettable tragic images the fate of a farmer, Juan el Veguero, whose property was taken over by a cacique. He and his family were driven away to live on the uninhabited plains. One by one, the starving children died. The mother, through repeated shock and pain, turned into a stammering idiot. The father, having buried his children near the hut, stares at the crude crosses and at his idiot wife.⁴² Filled with silent rage, the man harbors a subterranean force, suppressed but steadily accumulating, ready to explode—a feeling of impending vengeance.

³⁹Ibid., p. 202.

⁴⁰Gallegos, La Trepadora (Lima: Editora Latinoamericana, 1960), p. 15.

⁴¹Sobre la misma tierra, p. 25.

⁴²Cantaclaro, pp. 33-37.

Gallegos' story of criollo parents ruined by their legal protectors surpasses in its emotional and tragic impact some of the best creations of the naturalist school. Gallegos does not only focus on misery as such, but primarily on what it does to the human spirit in cases where people are not responsible for their misfortune. In helpless rage they accept the inevitable, but inwardly they never forget the humiliation inflicted on their human dignity. It is precisely this spirit of rebellion which carries with it the capacity for survival. A race is indeed lost if it gives up all hope, and refuses to rebel, as have some Indian tribes in Venezuela: "Gente degenerada, brutalizada, definitivamente hundida en los abismos inhumanos de la humillación sin rebeldía."⁴³ In the world of nature, the strong devour the weak. Does the same law inevitably govern human life? If so, " ... los simples y crédulos han sido creados para que los astutos hagan su juego con ellos."⁴⁴

Gallegos' highly moral personality and rebellious temperament would never resign itself to a helpless tolerance of such a philosophy, nor to a social structure based on it. To Gallegos one of the most outrageous crimes committed by man against man is the use of the innocent and trustful by the unscrupulous and cynical, the enslavement of the poor and defenseless by the rich and protected. Such a situation in the social community is intolerable. A holy anger surges in the heart of the just, a desperate cry of indignation rendered so

⁴³Sobre la misma tierra, p. 70.

⁴⁴Ibid.

aptly in the biblical phrase: "When will the messiah arrive to clean up the temple?"

The natural, cultural and social background, analyzed in detail by Gallegos, presents a lamentable picture of the Venezuelan panorama. Nature in all its unchecked grandeur is hostile and deadly to human life. Disasters caused by elemental forces must be checked, even though they contain a grandeur which will be diminished by the encroachment of technology. The wilderness must be adjusted as far as possible to make human life endurable. Salvation must come from the civilized world.

Natural calamities, gigantic as they are, do not surpass disasters inflicted by man on his fellows. A political and economic system based on the exploitation of the illiterate and poor, leaves no doubt where major corrections must be made.

En él [Gallegos] se manifestaba una preocupación profunda y reflexiva acerca de las desastrosas condiciones sociales y políticas existentes en Venezuela; había también el ansia por un despertar por parte de los ciudadanos de Venezuela para que asumieran las responsabilidades del país.⁴⁵

Gallegos believes in a better future. It is the task of the socially responsible Venezuelan intelligentsia to show the way for all. The final verdict is an energetic call for action, not to linger in apathy "como una nación de Pilatos donde todos estamos constantemente lavándonos las manos."⁴⁶ A variety of characters, fictional but based on reality, people from all social and ethnic groups functioning within

⁴⁵ Lowell Dunham, Rómulo Gallegos: Vida y obra (México: Ediciones de Andrea, 1957), p. 43.

⁴⁶ Gallegos, Reinaldo Solar, p. 203.

the nation in many different ways toward moral regeneration and social improvement, justify the author's messianic call and his hope for salvation. Gallegos believes in a better future because he has faith in human dignity and its soteriological mission.

CHAPTER III

THE NATIONAL SPIRIT: CHARACTERS DRAWN FROM THE UPPER AND LOWER CLASSES OF VENEZUELAN SOCIETY

As he develops the many facets of his fictional characters, Gallegos re-creates the Venezuelan society of his day. Characters are drawn from reality as the author sees it. Many are entangled in the vicious circle of social and racial antagonisms that create overwhelming psychological problems. Blacks and whites face each other as irreconcilable opposites, the latter personifying superiority and virtue, the former inferiority and vice. This general image, and similar anachronistic absurdities, still cause much harm in Venezuela, and the racial gap is also matched by the social and economic inequities that exist within the different groups. These factors inhibit the integration that is necessary for the strong foundation of a free society. Gallegos, who knows his country well, participates intellectually and emotionally in the human drama enacted during his lifetime in the national arena. He moves around the country, observing and studying the endless variety of people of all social classes and conditions. He presents a just and objective portrayal of different social and racial groups. Gallegos is never a fanatical defender of the underdog, nor does he blindly accuse the master. He sees good and evil on both sides.

Noble and vile characters score triumphs or suffer physical and spiritual defeats.

As will be seen in the discussions of this chapter, and throughout this study, Gallegos believes that the salvation of Venezuela will be accomplished only through good will on both sides. The privileged classes must forget their feeling of superiority, and regain the confidence of the lower classes by sincere constructive work for the benefit of all. On the other hand, the lower classes must abandon the destructive hatred toward those above them; they must free themselves of their tormenting inferiority complexes, especially those of a racial nature. Both social classes, the rich and the poor, must reject their prejudices, for such attitudes are misleading and dangerous simplifications of a very complex reality.

The novel Pobre Negro opens with an allegory that dramatizes the racial problem. Although the majority of the population is of a mixed race, separatism and social ostracism exist in the conservative mentality of the exclusive and predominantly white society, and to a great extent in the hostile attitude of the Negro toward the Blanco. Gallegos advocates a fusion, which is in reality already taking place, but is still resented by both groups. Pedro Miguel, the illegitimate son of a white aristocratic girl and a black slave, symbolizes the inevitable mingling of social and racial opposites, a fusion which, when fully accepted, will create a constructive harmony in Venezuelan national life: " ... la existencia de Pedro Miguel es algo más significativo que la suya propia ... es la armonía constructiva de una nación, aceptando a plena conciencia el hecho consumado de su

mestizaje."¹ The wise philosopher, Cecilio el Viejo, sees a deeper meaning in the factors which merge to create the mestizo Pedro Miguel:

... creo descubrir la manifestación de una voluntad trascendente. Pedro Miguel no es fruto vulgar de unos apetitos ciegos en ocasión propicia, ni sólo del transtorno de un alma pura, sino la criatura dramática de un plan que tenía que cumplirse, de una idea que buscaba su Forma.²

Pedro Miguel is an exceptionally dramatic character. His personality carries within it the double aspect created by the antagonistic elements of his socio-racial mestizaje. He is tormented by a double allegiance, by problems of self-determination, by doubts leading to desperate actions—often toward self-annihilation: all problems created by a predominating false ideology in a society which maintains an obscure medieval structure of racial and social exclusiveness of classes. The sins of the accommodated and protected are many, but above all looms their indifference to the suffering and misery of the common people, whose work gives them their own prosperity. Selfishness, criminal maneuvers, disdainful and unfair treatment of subordinates, create in the population a latent distrust, a hatred which breeds and manifests itself in sporadic armed rebellions, often abetted by politicians, and resulting in tragic civil wars.

The urban society is alienated from the very roots of the nation, for it is a heterogeneous community that absorbs foreign patterns of behavior, and puts great emphasis on outward appearances. Thus, this part of the Venezuelan population cannot be said to represent the

¹Pobre Negro (Madrid: Aguilar, 1958), pp. 182-83.

²Ibid., p. 104.

true national character. The majority of the urban society, which harbors many influential foreigners, is a debilitated group, spoiled by comfort, leisure and luxury. The more serious observers of these phenomena in Gallegos' novels are exasperated by what they see. Reinaldo Solar, the brooding protagonist of the novel by the same name, draws the following picture of his father:

Daniel Solar fué un enfermo en quien se manifestaron patentes los síntomas de la degeneración de las razas históricas ... la familia Solar es un caso típico: hasta la generación de mi abuela llega sana y viril ... mis tíos unos desorientados ... papá un místico fracasado; en suma: fuerzas detenidas. Ahora yo: en mí renacen o quieren renacer los antiguos bríos de la familia, pero son fuerzas que no encuentran su trayectoria. Estos entusiasmos míos, seguidos inevitablemente de abandonos totales ... son ... los últimos esfuerzos de un organismo que se siente morir y, queriendo producir movimientos, sólo produce convulsiones.³

The urban society is degenerate, and the intellectuals who create the spiritual image of their nation, and who represent the highest achievements of mind, reason, and imagination, are too few in number to represent the Venezuelan national character. They belong rather to the great international family of intellectual leaders.

Gallegos' major emphasis, and indeed his sympathy, goes to the common people, whom he considers to be the strong, life-giving force within the Venezuelan ethnic unity. Gallegos is artistically at his best when dealing with popular characters and their fate. He studies human nature not so much from an individual and psychological point of view, but more from a social perspective. He operates, therefore, with fully developed personalities rather than with stereotypes.

³Reinaldo Solar, p. 33.

Although the external behavior of Gallegos' characters is motivated to a great extent by inner psychological factors, he does not lose himself in psychoanalysis. His concern is primarily with the social conditions which determine Venezuelan life, and which affect the activities of his characters.

The lower classes, and primarily Venezuela's rural population, which are deprived of economic stability and are thrown in all directions by capitalistic and political fluctuations, are often defeated in their heroic struggle for survival. Their downfall is occasioned both by the social conditions that prevail, and the adverse physical environment that surrounds them. It is this struggle for survival that is at the core of Gallegos' messianic novels. From this social milieu there emerges the figure of the messiah as a soteriological necessity, a savior who rises spontaneously in answer to the urgent needs of the poor people of Venezuela. Groups are represented in Gallegos' novels as sharply defined individuals who, in spite of superficial differences have much in common. Minor figures of the drama of Venezuelan life are often placed daringly and commandingly in the foreground. Few of the protagonists belong to the lower classes, but the people—the root of national life—are always present in a significant way. Moral consent and agreement between good and honest men results from their function as interpreters of the needs of their people.

One minor but unforgettable character is Encarnación Damesano in Canaima. He had to sell himself as a purgüero " ... en la hora men- guada del hambre en su casa."⁴ He is a representative example of the

⁴Canaima, p. 159.

common man as seen in Gallegos' novels. He is a good worker and a responsible father to his numerous family. Simple and sincere, he is a faithful friend to people of his choice, and a popular philosopher of the stoic kind. Marcos Vargas, the temporary capataz of the enterprise, feels an instinctive attraction toward this man:

A menudo llegábase Marcos Vargas hasta donde se oía ... el golpe del machete del purguero solitario, del peón fatalista e irónico ... y que a el estaba enseñando ahora muchas cosas acerca del alma de su pueblo, su gran sentido de la realidad y su íntima rebeldía bajo la total sumisión aparente.⁵

Damesano knew that his situation was hopeless. No matter how hard he worked he would never be able to clear the debts he had contracted with the enterprise for the benefit of his family through the system of advancement. Is it any wonder, then, that the less responsible preferred to choose a life of banditry? Damesano's death is brutal and sudden. He is bitten by a poisonous snake while alone in the forest. In a desperate effort to eliminate the venom from his system, he literally butchers his body. An observer tells how " ... encontramos a este hombre revolcándose en su sangre. Traía el color de la muerte y despedía hedor de carroña, ardía en fiebre y venía delirando."⁶

It would be idle to argue that the death of Damesano was an accident, or that poisonous snakes are inevitable in the jungle. The objection to such an argument leads to the question why nothing is done to prevent such accidents. The workers exposed to such dangers are left to their own resources. They are not taught what to do, nor are they provided with any antidote. First aid stations, doctors, and

⁵Ibid., p. 190.

⁶Ibid., p. 195.

hospitals are not available. It may be that at times there is little hope of saving a man if he is bitten by certain types of poisonous snakes. The truth remains, however, that in Gallegos' portrayal of the conditions that prevailed at the time nothing was done to protect the workers, who were constantly exposed to a sudden and painful death.

People have really nothing to hope for from a society which abandons them to misery and unknown terrors, a society in which men are less valuable than cattle. They are simply hombres baratos, underpaid, undernourished, with no social security or life insurance. They are nothing but helpless, illiterate beasts of burden. The working conditions in the mines are no better: "Se había agotado la veta fabulosa ... minaron la mina, y el agua negra, sucia y fea del Juruarí se precipitó dentro de ella y la inundó. ¡Cuántos negros perecieron allí? ¡Quien iba a tomarse trabajo de sacar cuenta!"⁷ Because of this, one of the outstanding character traits of the poor workers is a total withdrawal into themselves. Juan Solito, an Indian tiger hunter, " ... siempre anda solo, que es la mejor compañía del hombre ..." and gives good advice to the inexperienced Marcos: " ... no cargue su alma tan en los ojos como la lleva Usted por esos caminos."⁸

The independent Indian with a skill useful to the landed gentry is an exception; he leaves his Indian community far behind and becomes prosperous. As for the majority of Indians, their absolute disregard for hygiene and their total disdain for culture testifies to the government's shameful abandonment of its obligations. Some tribes

⁷Ibid., p. 138.

⁸Ibid., p. 40.

that live in the midst of contemporary civilization exhibit a shocking state of barbarity:

Cuyubini abajo habitaba una comunidad de indios guaraúños ... Extraían el "bureche" ... con que acostumbraban embriagarse para celebrar sus fiestas, danzas primitivas a que se entregaba toda la comunidad durante días y noches continuos, hasta que los rendió el cansancio o los derribaba la borrachera—en plena barbarie.⁹

Extreme misery as well as extreme luxury causes a people to degenerate. Undernourished Indian tribes, repeatedly debilitated with borrachera delirante y bestial, raise serious doubts as to any possibility of improvement and change in their way of life. Occasional charity is not the answer. "La caridad es una ofensa. ¡Una porquería! Humilla a quien la recibe y pervierte a quien la hace."¹⁰ Romantic compassion and volatile enthusiasm for the noble savage is no answer to the problem either. It is Gallegos' firm conviction that a pragmatic and logical approach is needed, along with patient—often discouraging, but persistent—work by people dedicated to the Indian problem.

The Negro, like the Indian, is another controversial and not easily resolved problem of great importance to Venezuela. In a better position than the indio de la selva, the Negro working on plantations is closer to culture. Nevertheless, he is still submerged in the hopeless existence of a beast of burden. Resentful toward the white landowner and his administrative helpers, superstitious and distrustful, the Negroes feel like human beings only during their pagan celebra-

⁹Ibid., pp. 210-11.

¹⁰Reinaldo Solar, p. 56.

tions, while dancing to frenetic music:

Tambor de San Juan, tambor de San Pedro ... Allá se quedaron las divinidades bárbaras, pero el alma pagana aquí también celebra con danzas sensuales las vísperas santificadas. Y es un grito de Africa enigmática el que estremece las noches de América. ¡Airó! ¡Airó!¹¹

Cecilio el Viejo, the wise intellectual of liberal principles, summarizes the Negro question: "Privados de economía propia, analfabetos y envilecidos por el hábito secular de la sumisión, eran todavía parias."¹² His proposal to give the Negro land for cultivation en medianería with the landowner is met with the cynical objection that the Negro would make no profitable use of money. Cecilio's answer is that at first money will be " ... perjudicial para sí mismos ... Pero junto con eso ... les iremos dando también ideas, que les formen hábitos provechosos."¹³ Cecilio also points out that the white upper class is indebted to the Negro in many ways:

Ellos nos cultivan la tierra y nos explotan la mina, ellos nos sazonan la comida, nos dan leche de sus pechos ... nos sirven y cuidan amorosamente, y de niño nos duermen con el cuento ingenuo, por donde empieza la formación de nuestra alma.¹⁴

Even if the racial question is set aside, it is still true that superhuman demands have been continuously made of the lower classes, of men who sacrifice themselves, even if unwillingly, so that the bourgeoisie may live in comfort. The poor gain nothing but the contemptuous identification with subhuman creatures.

. . . humanity in its average ranks, is so created that it must not be submitted to too difficult tests and asked for too hard

¹¹Pobre Negro, p. 17.

¹²Ibid., p. 205.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 206.

sacrifices, such as renunciation of a quiet life and care of one's own affairs and family; it must not be made to cut too bad a figure, indeed it should be helped not to do so.¹⁵

This "not too bad a figure" of humanity is exactly what Gallegos is concerned with. The author emphasizes the living force of the spirit as contrasted with the sterility of matter alone. Prosperity is important in the formation of man's personality. Indeed, man cannot be deprived of hope for prosperity, for such a deprivation leads inevitably to the destruction of a morally progressive life. A materialistic outlook on human existence is, however, alien to Gallegos' thought. He fights against misery and exploitation not so that men may live in comfort but so that they may develop their spiritual life and thus attain true human stature.

. . . labour, without the friction but also without the stimulus of competition, might perhaps increase the products of the earth and of the hand of man, it would forever impoverish the souls that would make use of this wealth, and in the end it would dry up the true fountain of wealth, which is liberty of the human spirit, and men would become like those whom Leonardo defines as "passages of food": a religious idea this too, but of true and actual and not metaphorical abatement.¹⁶

In Venezuela, of all the poor beasts of burden, the peón fares best. He is the servant and farmhand of the landed gentry. He has little to call his own: a place to live with his family, and sufficient food so as not to starve. A grandfather tells of his individual plight: "La herencia que me dejaron los hijos: once bocas con sus dientes completos . . . los hijos y las mujeres de los hijos me los arrasó el

¹⁵Benedetto Croce, History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century, Trans. by Henry Furst. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963), p. 202.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 38.

gusano."¹⁷

Although he is poor, the peón, unlike the Negro and the Indian, has the liberty to change masters. But when treated with respect, he prefers to stay with one. The peones are faithful, take pride in their work toward improvement of the landowner's prosperity, and feel as though they belong to the family. The older ones often know the grandfather and the grandsons. Thus the returning Santos Luzardo is cordially greeted by the peonada of his hacienda. The capataz, oldest by age and first in rank, even displays a great skill in psychologically maneuvering some of the toughest among the peones in order to gain a complete acceptance of the young master. Santos, a lawyer, debilitated by studies and life in the capital, does not seem to be able to cope with the difficult management of his rural inheritance. But when Santos proves to be courageous, authoritarian, and just, and shows respect for humanity, the peonada joins him in his crusade against corruption, crime and barbarism.

The relationship between the landowner and the servant-worker sheds much light on the character of the simple people. When their spirit is not thwarted by oppressive treatment, they are truly admirable. Not jealous of their master's riches, they are good workers; proud of their skills and artistry, they display them in dangerous fishing and hunting competitions. In occupations and diversions which give them an opportunity to excel as accomplished equestrians, they are fearless, made strong through hardships and the challenges of

¹⁷Doña Bárbara, pp. 49-50.

nature, with absolute contempt for personal danger:

¡La doma! La prueba máxima de llanería, la demostración de valor y de destreza ... Cachilapear—no solamente un trabajo, sino un deporte predilecto del hombre de la llanura abierta, donde la fuerza es todavía derecho.¹⁸

Very susceptible to any offense to his dignity, the peón is a servant only during working hours, and if treated with respect, does not consider himself as such even then. Because of the treasured feeling of independence and faithfulness to a good master, Pajarote, the peón of Santos Luzardo, disobeys orders given to him after working hours, knowing that his disobedience might save his master's life. In this way he puts himself on the same level with his master, acting freely according to his own choice. He knew that when Santos was challenged to a nocturnal meeting with El Brujeador, "espaldero predilecto de Doña Bárbara, a quien nunca lo mandan a conversar,"¹⁹ the lawyer would not shoot first. So Pajarote performs for Luzardo the barbaric job of killing the would-be murderer before the latter has a chance to strike.

The peonada is an organized and disciplined group of people, almost a patriarchal family. Unlike the slaves on plantations, they are not resentful, and do not envy the better living conditions of their masters. Free of any inferiority complexes, they divide their time between hard work and many kinds of recreation. And being free, in spite of being hired farmhands, they have a marvelous sense of humor. The uncomplicated simplicity of their lives and ambitions allows them

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 88.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 341.

time to wonder about life, and this gives rise to the folk philosophy that is expressed in proverbs. They enjoy folk songs, and their fantastic imagination invents incredible stories, with Christianity combined with pagan elements.

During the fiestas, with the patrón and his family as the honored guests, folk singers and poets compete in singing coplas or in telling embustes, all of their own invention, and which many improvise on the spot. Such entertainment, so challenging to the imagination, is very popular: "Torneos de cuentos extravagantes, afición predilecta del llanero fantaseador, los cuentaembustes."²⁰ Numerous coplas, embustes, proverbs and metaphoric expressions of the simple people attest to the fact that the human mind, when perceiving analogies and contrasts, and creating meaningful symbols, has a latent need to move in a spiritual realm above materialistic concerns. Art provides a respite from daily routine, it helps one to forget his sorrows and it elevates the spirit: "... cantar ... cuando se hace camino largo a solas o se apodera del alma la melancolía."²¹ Cantaclaro, the hero of the novel by the same name, and the famous inventor of coplas, was given the eloquent surname "Quitapesares." Whenever he sang, people forgot their cares, and were happy.

Folk singers like Cantaclaro usually choose a life which enables them to move freely about the country. They love freedom and adventure, and they welcome the chance to acquire experiences which they later use

²⁰Cantaclaro, p. 228.

²¹Sobre la misma tierra, p. 17.

in their songs: "Fué una vida hermosa, toda libertad y rebeldía. Se llevaba los ganados y dejaba las leyendas ..."²² Above all the folk singer treasures his independence. He is thus the embodiment of a supreme need of the human spirit: freedom. Although he appears to be a useless vagabond, he is the true custodian of his nation's soul. A daredevil, never able to settle down, and used to hardships, the Venezuelan folk singer of the prairies is bound only by his love for his horse:

Caballo negro, retinto,
Ya estan trocadas las suertes
Hasta hoy me cargaste en vida
Desde hoy me cargas en muerte.²³

Genuine emotion and wisdom alternate with humor and satire:

Dos cosas hay en el mundo
que no sirven para viajar:
la plata, por lo que pesa
y el no quererla gastar.²⁴

Lighthearted, carefree, always on the move, he is a free man, confident of good fortune. He resents and avoids any kind of imprisonment, even imprisonment by love:

Hoy te quiero y hoy te olvido
pa recordarme mañana.
Que si me quedo contigo
yo pierdo y tu nada ganas.²⁵

Of no practical use to the rural community, folk singers are nevertheless always welcome in every house. By their very existence they express love of freedom, of open horizons, sentiments which are

²²Cantaclaro, p. 62.

²³Ibid., p. 41.

²⁴Ibid., p. 15.

²⁵Ibid., p. 10.

rooted in the soul of the nation, and mirrored in their songs:

¡Llanero, abandona el trabajo que te esclaviza al hombre, ensi-
lla tu caballo y sígueme! Era una voz antigua, pero siempre
oportuna, a cuyo encuentro salía el alma del llanero, la voz de
la sabana, del vasto horizonte abierto invitando al nomadismo.
Pero quizás también la gran voz que arrebató el corazón de todo
el pueblo mesiánico ...²⁶

The folk singers are talented people who are hungry for new experi-
ences. Only a few of them have the privilege of a formal education,
and this fountain of folklore proves that original creative and intel-
lectual talents are latent in the masses.

International folk tales are concerned with the triumph of jus-
tice, virtue and moral courage. Venezuelan folklore is mainly con-
cerned with freedom—a messianic longing of a largely oppressed popu-
lation. Venezuelan folklore also reflects the impact of Catholicism
on the people. The Venezuelan criollo has adapted Catholicism to his
superstitious pagan needs. What attracts him most is the splendor of
the Church and the expectation of miracles. Objects offered to Chris-
tian saints are believed to be as protective as pagan amulets. Prom-
ises of penitence and bargains with God, in most cases involving the
intervention of the Virgin Mary, are strictly kept: " ... devotos que
cumplían promesas hechas en trances mortales—a la Virgen milagro-
sa ... " ²⁷

The veneration of the Virgin stems largely from an almost sacred
respect for the mother of the family, who holds a very special posi-

²⁶ Ibid., p. 155.

²⁷ Sobre la misma tierra, p. 11.

tion among women. The Venezuelan man is ashamed of emotions, and is eager to prove his virility. The hombre macho is a dominant male who does as he pleases and demands unconditional submission on the part of a lover or wife. He does not display tenderness toward women, but is confident that his virile sensuality suffices. These tough men, however, become tender, mild and loving when dealing with their mother: "El culto de la madre era ... el único sentimiento tierno y verdaderamente noble de aquellas almas brucas."²⁸ An offense to the mother can provoke bloody vendettas; people who do not respect the mother deserve contempt even from a bandolero: "Déjeme lavarme los ojos que se me acaban de ensuciá, mirando esa cara de hombre que se sonríe de lo que merece respeto."²⁹

Aside from el culto de la madre, the pronounced religiosity of the criollos is rooted in pagan sorcery and Christian demonology, a mixture of the White and the Black Mass, a double faith similar to the pagan-Christian faith in Europe, especially in Italy during the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance. Fear of an angry and punishing deity is widespread and very strong. The prayers of the people to be saved from sin often lead to frenzied rapture:

... era ya de cada uno de aquellos orantes la expresión de inconsciencia fanatizada que iba acentuándose a lo largo de la plegaria, hasta formas geminas de delirio religioso ... lo mismo ... que en los antiguos tiempos del culto al Sol y a la Luna acostó cuerpos de hombres vigorosos sobre las piedras de los holocaustos, ofreciendo el pecho al cuchillo de obsidiana destrozador de corazones en la mano del sacerdote implacable y condujo doncellas al borde del cenote sagrado, devorador de virgi-

²⁸Canaima, p. 207.

²⁹Ibid., p. 208.

nidad.³⁰

This excerpt from the novel Tierra bajo los pies brings out in extreme contrasts the profane profession of faith by the indifferent upper classes who frequent the Church for appearances only, and the profound religiosity of the simple people who instinctively fear the unknown and respect anything sacred. Sacred images and statues abound everywhere. The common people cross themselves and invoke heavenly protection against the devil on every occasion, even when it is a question of insignificant trifles. The parish priest, however, is more respected and influential in the urban communities. In the provinces he is often a comic figure, whose parishioners know that what he preaches against publicly he indulges in privately. But he is accepted nevertheless with a condescending indulgence. The priest in La Trepadora is a typical rural type:

Era éste un clérigo español, retaco, peludo y nada limpio ... cura ... entre hipócrita y socarrón: "Hay que hacer también algo por la vida. No todo ha de ser para el alma, que al fin y al cabo, solo la misericordia divina puede salvárnosla."³¹

Apart from religiosity, another salient characteristic of the Venezuelan lower classes is a strong sense of justice. There are few men who are more cynical about life than the fatalistically resigned criollo. Rebels, bandoleros, and ambitious social climbers, show a precocious talent for organization and a quick instinct for seizing opportunities, together with "un apetito immoderado de placeres, sed de

³⁰Gallegos, Tierra bajo los pies (Barcelona: Salvat Editores, 1971), pp. 36-37.

³¹La Trepadora, pp. 8-11.

aventuras, una gran confianza en sí mismos, una enorme ambición ... dentro de ... corazón impetuoso."³² Most citizens regard the law as corrupt, since the land is controlled and exploited by methods of terror and intrigue. No matter in whose hands the law is, it always seems to favor the rich over the poor, the powerful over the weak. While the aristocrats are concerned with grandeur, the middle class with financial security and respectability, the masses of the population have to struggle hard for mere survival.

Conservative circles oppose the more progressive outlook of incorporating the masses into the national life. The masses are considered too stubborn, too illiterate to fit into the modern scheme of things. The controversy even turns into heated arguments when it is a question of the national character of the Venezuelan lower classes. Gallegos takes an active part in the debate by introducing in his novels all types of rural characters to the middle class, so that they may see the virtues and understand the vices of the majority of the population. That is not to say that Gallegos advocates unlimited tolerance. On the contrary, as a highly moral writer he feels contempt for irreverence, for vulgarity, violence, deceit, hypocrisy and smug self-indulgence. In spite of his moral inflexibility, Gallegos asks his readers to consider the reasons for things being as they are. Under the unenlightened leadership of the caciques, feudalism was permitted to exist, and illiteracy prevailed in much of the mid-twentieth century, particularly in isolated regions of Venezuela. It is no wonder then

³²Ibid., p. 23.

that the official government was often considered the enemy, while the outlaw was often the hero. If we view this fact from the right perspective, the people's mistrust of the government can be more understandable.

Various character traits common to popular types of the rural, basically the lowest, but ethnically the most authentic Venezuelan class, merge in Gallegos' novels into a specifically national character, created by heredity, tradition, environment, social structure, the home and various institutions. Since the more fortunate citizens of industrially and economically more highly developed countries characterize the Latin American as lazy, stubborn and impulsively violent by nature, it is necessary to submit such one-sided erroneous generalities based on ignorance and an unmotivated feeling of superiority to a substantial correction. Gallegos, in summarizing the outstanding character traits of individuals into an abstract concept of the typically Venezuelan national character, creates a complex but specific image:

... el hombre de la llanura era: ante la vida indómito y superior, indolente e infatigable; en su lucha: impulsivo y astuto; ante el superior: indisciplinado y leal; con el amigo: receloso y abnegado; con su 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 pié y soberbio a caballo. Todo a la vez y sin estorbarse, como están los defectos y las virtudes con las almas nuevas.³³

It was Gallegos' conscious intention to introduce the Venezuelan

³³Gallegos, Doña Bárbara, p. 266.

popular character to the alienated middle classes of urban society. He was firmly convinced that the intelligentsia must become involved with the pressing problems of the masses, and the decisive step toward encouraging such a commitment was to become thoroughly acquainted with the people in question. Whatever else Gallegos' novels might have accomplished, they surely presented the rural masses in a different light to the urban intellectuals, leaving some young men wondering perhaps about their messianic call and their duty to follow it. Because of his profound love and passionate defense of the rural population Gallegos succeeded in destroying the indifference of many Venezuelans and moving them to action.

CHAPTER IV

THE EVOLUTION OF THE MESSIANIC CONCEPT:

THE DIANOIA IN GALLEGOS' NOVELS

Gallegos was convinced that his times demanded a writer who would explore the pressing social and political problems within his nation. The problem he faced was how to reconcile his ideological tendencies with artistic forms. Literary language operates figuratively. The meaning of words and statements comes to its own through connotative values rather than through denotative content. The intention of a writer should be expressed subtly so that the problem or ideological content of the work may not interfere with the development of the plot. The reader receives aesthetic and intellectual satisfaction if he is exposed to the task of arriving at the anagnorisis. That is to say, a good writer should avoid direct statements or persuasive language which may be more suitable for the expository purposes of the essay.

Since novels have a more general and immediate appeal than essays, Gallegos used this medium of expression in order to reach the largest audience possible. The novel has, in addition, a substantial advantage over the essay: while the latter is generally limited to one aspect, being directed toward the intellect or emotions, the former involves the totality of the human being—intellect, passions, emotions, the senses, the conscious and subconscious, the rational and the intui-

tive. Literary language is able to express the otherwise inexpressible through the universality of symbols, by transforming images from the microscopic to the macroscopic scale, and by evoking existential situations. Thus, the novel is multidimensional, operating on several levels.

It was not an easy task for Gallegos to combine his social ideology and his zeal for reform into a very special world of literary creation. He made a poor start with his first novel, Reinaldo Solar. In his subsequent novels, however, he steadily developed the many literary qualities that culminate in his best novel, Canaima. Reinaldo Solar is a programmatic novel. In this work the reader is confronted by many complex questions, as well as discussions concerning various attitudes toward a central messianic idea. This novel is a nucleus or compendium of ideas which governed the mentality of the young author. It is an internal dialogue dealing with the clarification of the goals, methods, possibilities and limitations of his humanitarian campaign. The density of ideas, however, results in aesthetic chaos. Gallegos realized later that specific topics have to be dealt with separately and at length, a technique he uses in subsequent novels.

The evolution of the messianic concept from Reinaldo Solar to later novels shows considerable artistic progression. In his later works the maturing artist avoids confusing his ideas with one another, and he does not make direct comparisons of the protagonist with a messiah. He becomes careful, and does not use obvious analogies, and he abandons the attitude of a school teacher pointing out his message to the reader. The comparison of three novels, Reinaldo Solar, Doña

Bárbara, and Canaima, suffices for the evaluation of the author's progression in the artistic handling of his messianic concept.

Reinaldo Solar openly states his vocation: "... te prometo que entregaré mi corazón a una obra sobrehumana. Yo me siento capaz de llevarla a cabo."¹ He writes a research novel, Punta de Raza, which is an analysis of several Venezuelan generations. Influenced by studies of Darwin, he becomes "... convencido de que su yo es el centro del universo, se traza un violento plan de vida y de acción en el cual había de imponer implacablemente el imperativo categórico de su voluntad."² He accepts social evils as inevitable in the present scheme of things, but he does not lose his juvenile enthusiasm: "El deber es reformar el mundo , expurgándolo de errores y perjuicios."³ Everything Reinaldo thinks, talks about and does is directly related to his assumed messianic role. He goes to Caracas "... en busca de más amplio campo para sus aspiraciones."⁴ There he meets Francisco López, the leader of "Los Subterráneos," a group of student revolutionaries. López addresses Reinaldo as a true Savior: "Yo he visto en usted a ese Mesías."⁵ What saves this incredible platitude is the satirical irony implicit in the situation, and which is explicitly stated: "¡Que tipo éste! A leguas se advierte que frecuenta el cinematógrafo. Le ha cogido todos los trucos a los conspiradores de películas."⁶ Direct allusions as to the advent of the messiah, half

¹Reinaldo Solar, p. 30.

²Ibid., p. 31.

³Ibid., p. 41

⁴Ibid., p. 89.

⁵Ibid., p. 139.

⁶Ibid., p. 140.

serious half ironic, are scattered all through the novel: "Cualquier día, cuando menos lo pensara, iba a toparse con 'El Hombre'. El tenía el presentimiento de 'El Hombre' y quería creer que las señas del tiempo anunciaban por fin la hora."⁷

What a difference there is between such direct statements in Gallegos' first novel and in his later works. Progressive improvement in the aesthetic structure of his novels may be easily traced, especially impressive being the development in the handling of his messianic ideology. Messianism in Gallegos is both his weakness and his strength. It is a weakness because too strong an ideological commitment is a handicap for the artist—it limits the possibility of detached inquiry. It is also his strength because it is deeply and sincerely rooted in the artist's personality; he believes in what he writes.

He is not successful, however, in Reinaldo Solar. Reinaldo is a pathetic idealist who organizes impractical, meaningless societies. He broods too much, and he is unsure of his relations with others. Humanly, he is an endearing character, almost an apology for juvenile enthusiasm, but as the structural center of the novel he is a failure. A young intellectual, engrossed in bookish ideologies, debating with himself and his colleagues, he experiments with methods of reform. His rhetorical but sincere recitations are forgivable, especially because the author himself looks at him condescendingly. Thus Reinaldo is a believable character. The handling of the novelistic material,

⁷Ibid., p. 182.

however, shows definite weaknesses. There is a predominance of theoretical debates and repetitive patterns of action. The intentions of the author are expressed blatantly, without subtle artistic crafting. As a whole, messianism in this first novel is so obvious that it becomes aesthetically unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, Reinaldo Solar remains an interesting study of Gallegos' nascent fascination with messianism, the novel being above everything else an inquiry into the psychological and ideological values of men like Reinaldo Solar, and indeed, of the young author himself.

Only gradually does Gallegos realize that in order to give his ideas universality, he must give them adequate artistic form. If an idea is to affect the re-creative mind of the reader convincingly, it is not enough that it be carried as a banner by the protagonists. The idea must be present in the atmosphere, in the tone, and in the various motivations and different situations of the work. It must be present in the whole artistic background, which in turn should suggest rather than explain the main purpose of a given novel. In his subsequent novels, the author comes back to the basic ideas put forth in Reinaldo Solar, but he takes up the structural and thematic elements separately. He limits the field of action and the ambitions of the protagonists, and he presents a realistic picture of Venezuelan life.

Gallegos' formidable personality, along with his militant humanism, always dominate his real and fictional world. While decadent literature, assailed by post-Freudian paranoics, proceeded toward the destruction of the positive, noble image of humanity, Gallegos' novels injected into the genre a note of energy, sanity, and the hope of

regeneration. In spite of a pessimistic outlook produced by his historic moment and place, Gallegos affirms his belief in a rebirth of constructive values which he sees as deeply embedded in the human soul: " ... esa literatura morbosa que ahora está de moda ... no hay derecho que se nos revuelva el estómago ... nadie tiene derecho a convertir su incapacidad o su infortunio en prédica negativa de la exigente misión del hombre sobre la tierra."⁸ Although he was without illusions about the innate goodness of human nature, Gallegos still preferred to discover the good in men, even in the ones society condemned as criminals. Such men " ... no había sino demostrar cuánto de divina substancia encierra el barro humano."⁹

Neither ethnography nor journalism, Gallegos' novels are realistic evocations of Venezuelan life. He writes of what he knows intimately and cares about intensely. His literary interests are, therefore, restricted, and often the necessary distance between the suffering man and the creative artist is destroyed. But if we look at Gallegos' novels in chronological order, it becomes evident that the author tries to suppress personal and moralizing comments, and that he makes progressively successful attempts to overcome this tendency. When Reinaldo Solar, Doña Bárbara, and Canaima are compared, the author's improvement in the artistic handling of the motivating force of his writings is evident. It is seen in the shift from burdensome theoretical discourses, such as are encountered in Reinaldo Solar, to

⁸La brizna de paja en el viento, pp. 233-34.

⁹Reinaldo Solar, p. 30.

a spontaneity of action motivated by realistic situations. In Doña Bárbara and Canaima Gallegos achieves a tone and atmosphere of aesthetically realistic messianism.

Our age of existential anguish and metaphysical despair tends to scorn social themes. Writers who engage in social criticism are accused of didacticism, materialism, positivism, all these terms to be understood as derogatory. Gallegos was even accused of atheism and communism. Gallegos is socially committed, but he is neither an atheist nor a communist, and his writings, his social commitment notwithstanding, contain enduring artistic qualities. Gallegos' quarrel is not with God but with man. He is deeply religious, and his messianic aim stems from a religious respect for life and man's duty to preserve it. He has the kind of faith professed and practiced by the true humanitarians of the world. In his novels we see his belief that social improvements depend on the moral values of individuals who are influential within the existing social structures. Thus Gallegos, totally immersed in the social question, wages in his novels the spiritual war of liberalism against obscurantism.

A chronological overview of Gallegos' novels reveals two essential achievements of the author: the artistic improvement of the structure achieved through suppressed ideology in favor of aesthetics, and the emergence of a complex messiah image, which is not only an individual, but also a soteriological spirit powerful enough to bring about a concentration of talents engaged in the struggle against natural disasters and against political and economic corruption. In addition, the author becomes ever more conscious of, and sensitive to,

the natural world and the suffering of man.

Doña Bárbara is much better written than is Reinaldo Solar.

Theorizing gives way to action. The motivation to action is not purely ideological, stemming from philanthropy and a strong sense of justice, but follows as a necessity imposed on the highly moral protagonist by circumstances. It is of no importance that Reinaldo Solar is a failure as a savior, and Santos Luzardo scores some achievements. What matters aesthetically is that the central messianic idea expressed openly in Reinaldo Solar goes underground in Doña Bárbara. Doña Bárbara develops in an atmosphere of violence. The experiences of the innocent young girl, Barbarita, a victim of male bestiality, create the mature Doña Bárbara, the "devoradora de corazones." She becomes a monster deprived of conscience or human emotions, a violent woman who uses men, seducing them one by one with her extraordinary beauty, and discarding them as soon as her need for them ceases. Doña Bárbara stands for hatred, vengeance, deceit, greed, and murder. Influential and powerful within the corrupt social structure in which she moves, Doña Bárbara is a challenging antagonist, an enemy not only of the lawyer Santos Luzardo, but a symbolic enemy of all humanity.

Gallegos makes use of symbols, metaphors and images, and skillfully attunes them to the specific background of the prairies and their trapped and hopeless inhabitants:

Estaba "enmatado", como dice el llanero del toro que busca el refugio de las matas y allí permanece días enteros, echado, sin comer ni beber y lanzando de rato en rato sordos mugidos de rabia impotente, cuando ha sufrido la mutilación que lo condena a perder su fiereza y el señorío del rebaño.¹⁰

¹⁰ Doña Bárbara, p. 26.

A particular problem becomes universal; the ideological background becomes factual. This transition represents a substantial artistic improvement in the handling of messianism as the *dianoia* in Gallegos' novels. Santos Luzardo is a landowner by inheritance, and is surrounded by honest men. Doña Bárbara is a landowner by usurpation, and is surrounded by her evil subordinates. In this antagonistic confrontation we see represented the struggle between those who uphold legality and those who wish to usurp the property and rights of others. Thus does Gallegos use a concrete situation to symbolize the war between Good and Evil that continually takes place in human society. Nevertheless, the artistic impact of Doña Bárbara depends primarily on the author's deep penetration into, and his keen perception of, the multifaceted reality of Venezuela: "El ambiente tropical, con sus pasiones bárbaras, su clima angustioso, sus peligros infinitos, sus colores eternos y violentos, sus personajes inquietantes, sus maleficios y brujerías, sus calentaduras del alma y del cuerpo, jamás ha sido pintado con tan asombrosa exactitud."¹¹

The novel Canaima makes a stronger impression on the reader than does Doña Bárbara. Canaima has a superior artistic charm, a tone and atmosphere constantly present in its background, which stems from the author's extraordinary sensitivity toward nature and his intimacy with primitive man. Gallegos is not a profound psychologist, nor is he a great philosopher. His strength as a novelist lies rather in his impressionistic ability to evoke the essential quality of seemingly

¹¹F. S. R., Nota Preliminar in Pobre Negro (Madrid: Aguilar, 1958), p. 12.

insignificant details, and to stress the metaphysical meaning of trivial situations. A specific rhythm in his prose, soft and powerful, suggests compassion and anger, both outstanding characteristics of a messiah: "Eran los negros abismos de la infinita tristeza del indio los que ahora se abrían, el fondo atormentado del alma de la raza vencida, despojada y humillada y un dolor rabioso, profundamente suyo respondía en el corazón de Marcos Vargas a la plañidera invocación de Taranqué."¹²

In Canaima Gallegos' goal of social reform is not expressed by a simple expository style, but rather by a style of writing characterized by its emotional intensity. Messianic compassion is present throughout in symbols of incomparable simplicity: " ... un mono arrugado ... aterrado ... se dejó apresar y se acurrucó lloriqueante tembloroso contra el pecho del hombre que lo levantó en sus brazos: ¡Hola pariente! ¿Que te pasa?"¹³ In Canaima Gallegos proves that the reconciliation of ideological and artistic aims is possible. It is especially so when deprived of ideological or spiritual substance, for then the humanities lose their raison d'etre. No matter how original or imaginative the form of a literary creation may be, it defies the substantial value of literature as an exponent of life if it lacks concern for the eternal verities of human existence. To be sure, Gallegos' novels interpret his own times, but in his works the given moment in history undergoes a transformation. It becomes a universal moment for mankind facing a decisive choice: to ignore or follow the messiah.

¹²Canaima, p. 214.

¹³Ibid., p. 224.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF MESSIANIC CHARACTERS: THEIR PURPOSES, FRUSTRATIONS AND TRIUMPHS

The Messiah, in Gallegos' final concept, is an abstraction, a complexity of qualities manifesting the spirit of moral and ensuing social regeneration. Individuals participating in this spirit in different ways are the potential messiahs, usually the protagonists of Gallegos' novels. They possess qualities such as integrity, energy, dedication and endurance, which single them out as leaders toward progress on many levels of existence, directed foremost toward social amelioration. Gallegos emphasizes the need to bring to social efficacy and political activity men of greater ability and greater good will. It is always in this social framework that he looks upon man.

Gallegos' messianism forbids any separation of public and private life. In this point he agrees with outstanding scholars of man in history. Such a separation is

. . . a grave sign of degradation and decadence . . . as if it were possible to search for and find the truth without at the same time feeling it and living it in action or the desire for action, and possible to separate the man from the citizen, the individual from the society that forms him and which he forms.¹

¹Benedetto Croce, History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century, Trans. by Henry Furst. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963), p. 17.

In Gallegos' first novel, Reinaldo Solar is engaged in the search for personal identification through social activities. He stands for the good will and moral integrity of the educated, who are capable, and responsible for changes in the social structure. His activities, such as involvement in student organizations, scientific approaches to agriculture, as well as his libertinism in love versus family obligations, do not diminish his function as a messiah, at least ideologically. Reinaldo's messianic function is evident. His tragic life, his unconditional commitment to humanitarian ideals through a total disregard for personal comfort and security (he almost ruins his mother and his sister through indifference and mismanagement of the family property), his heated debates as to what has to be done in order to improve the socio-economic situation of the peasants and workers, all his ideas are conceived by the author as an inspiration for others to follow in his footsteps: "¿Quién nos asegura que el más insignificante de nuestros esfuerzos no ha llegado a constituir para alguien que está necesitado de estímulos una posibilidad de regeneración moral?"²

Visions of Venezuela made prosperous through technology captivate the imagination of the dreamer who, in a given phase of his life, considers action to be the supreme happiness:

... gemía la selva imaginaria bajo el hacha incansable; rugía la tierra bajo la garra de acero de formidables máquinas que le arrancaban su entraña de oro; emigraban de los pantanos drenados aquellas garzas que eran un símbolo de la hierática contemplación, y por todas partes el augusto silencio se llenaba con el poderoso alentar de los férreos pulmones del progreso.³

²Gallegos, Reinaldo Solar, p. 77.

³Ibid., p. 52.

Technology and the integrity of all individuals who make up the leaders and the governed is, in Reinaldo's opinion, the best guarantee of a peaceful coexistence of citizens in a given social structure, a structure that must provide justice for all classes. He demands little: " ... el sencillo precepto fundamental: que cada cual cumpla su deber particular con honradez absoluta en su hogar y en su trabajo personal."⁴ Simple as such a demand sounds, it is often quite unattainable. Reinaldo, however, is adamant in his conviction. The evaluation of such a moral precept by his more realistic friends, " ... hermosa esa visión suya ... pero muy utópica, muy lírica," does not undermine his faith, as evidenced by his answer that " ... procurando cada cual el mejoramiento individual haremos patria."⁵

Reinaldo's idealism is shattered in confrontation with reality; his intentions become twisted by politicians seeking popularity, and his experiments with scientific agriculture result in a tragi-comedy, as in the case of the natural aptness of the soil being ignored in favor of a scientific discovery:

... un hecho comprobado por los modernos estudios sociales que los pueblos que se alimentan con trigo son más capaces de cultura que los que se alimentan con maíz.⁶

Impatient, eager to become a hero, Reinaldo lacks the preparation and perseverance for his assumed functions in politics as well:

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.⁷

⁴Ibid., p. 148.

⁶Ibid., p. 52.

⁵Ibid.

⁷Ibid., p. 120.

Reinaldo's final disenchantment with his beloved nation and idealized popular masses comes from his experiences as a fighter among the guerrillas:

... la convivencia con la soldadesca, mezclado y confundido en una misma masa de brutalidad, de suciedad ... tropa de asesinos.⁸

However unsuccessful and unrealistic Reinaldo's messianic enthusiasm, his sincere dedication to national causes, and his neophytic fanaticism still elevate him above the average. Gallegos, approving this attitude, states:

... quien a los veinte años no ha pretendido ser héroe o santo no pasará jamás de ser hombre mediocre.⁹

The author, highly critical as to the practical value of his hero, allows him to be defeated, even to die uselessly, but saves him ideologically by rehabilitating Reinaldo symbolically in his vision shortly before his death:

Una noche, en sueños, volvió a ver el árbol de sus pesadillas, pero ahora florecía en él una primavera mística: gajos floridos, todo blancura y olor suavísimo, cubríanlo totalmente ocultando el fatídico esqueleto que antes fuera símbolo desolador.¹⁰

This poetic homage to a noble youth inspired by a powerful messianic sentiment, contains a note of sadness, of painful melancholy similar to the emotion people feel when contemplating the monument to the Unknown Soldier or the Eternal Fire for the victims of Hiroshima—a reminder of both good and evil in man.

Pondering this controversial fictional character, the author

⁸ Ibid., p. 214.

⁹ Ibid., p. 128.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 222.

seems to question the usefulness of his own messianic writings: whether to continue a seemingly hopeless struggle or to give up in resigned apathy. Human nature, a coincidence of opposites, fluctuating between extremes, can never be totally balanced. Indeed, the gravitation toward evil seems to be stronger in a world of ruthless competition where law and power are dictated by money.

Somewhat pessimistic because of the egoistic aims and criminal competition among men, Gallegos nevertheless is not willing to commit the fatal error of acquiescence or to give up his messianic campaign. The terrible cogency of the self-evident in the state of human affairs is no reason for him not to rebel against human suffering in a social context. He wants to help as far as human possibilities permit. Gallegos, like Doctor Rieux, the indefatigable healer during the plague in Oran, faces the truth with courage, neither with pessimism nor undue optimism, but with realistic determination:

Ce qui est naturel c'est le microbe. Le reste, la santé, l'intégrité, la pureté, si vous voulez, c'est une effet de la volonté ... qui ne doit jamais s'arrêter. L'honnête homme, celui qui n'infecte presque personne, c'est celui qui a le moins de distractions possible. Et il en faut de la volonté et de la tension pour ne jamais être distrait!¹¹

Reinaldo Solar is the symbol, and Gallegos' novels attest to the tension and vigilance of the mind, a reminder of man's free will compelled in society to make essential choices.

Superficially, the novel Reinaldo Solar seems like another version of The Sorrows of Young Werther. Both noble youths are highly sensitive to honesty and honor, to nature and beauty, but they are also very

¹¹Albert Camus, La Peste (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1947), p. 251.

different. Werther, a romantic daydreamer, withdraws from society; Reinaldo, on the contrary, becomes an enthusiastic activist. While Werther's romanticism is sickly and suicidal, steeped in personal misfortunes, Reinaldo's is a militant romanticism, the ideal of the movement toward civilization and human perfection with social justice.

With his second novel, La Trepadora, Gallegos leaves theoretical abstractions and enters factual reality. The conflict between the internal and the external reality lived by men is the Leitmotif supporting the dianoia in Gallegos' novels. In La Trepadora, messianism becomes more concrete, a specific call for individual liberation from prejudice, for freedom to reason and make judgments independent of public opinion. Through the confrontation of values against social superstitions—the latter largely conditioning the hypocritical behavior of the middle and upper classes—the author challenges the intelligent and objective thinker to a re-evaluation of widely accepted but traditionally false and often anachronistic social values.

La Trepadora is a novel dedicated to social conflicts which result from conservative prejudice concerning legitimate and illegitimate children, inherited versus acquired wealth, and the importance of an aristocratic family name and racial purity. There is in this attitude a total disregard for the essential value of the individual's character inside or outside a socially accepted group. Weaklings, near imbeciles, self-indulgent egotists, are respected and influential in a degenerate society, while men of integrity and vitality, lacking social prestige, are exposed to constant insult, as in the case of los del Casal and los Guanipa.

Don Jaime del Casal, "persona de rango y calidad entre la aristocracia caraqueña y propietario de la hacienda alledana al pueblo, que era uno de los más ricos fundos cafetaleros",¹² has an illegitimate son by a mestiza, Modesta Guanipa. Their child, Hilario, a mestizo both racially and socially, proves to be quite a successful combination, resulting in a powerful character in many ways superior to the legitimate son, Jaimito del Casal. Proud and ambitious, Hilario rejects the offer of formal adoption made by his dying and repentant father. The old man, an expert administrator of his property and knowledgeable in evaluating character, easily discovers the superior abilities of his illegitimate son and tries to induce him to take his place as custodian of the family inheritance. The proud Hilario, however, does not want to owe anything to the circumstantial advantage of his birth, and even stubbornly retains the name of his mother, Guanipa. He shows unusual perspicacity in creating for himself an economic situation which would make him an equal of the legitimate children of Don Jaime del Casal. His determination is fed by hatred of Jaimito, a pretentious good-for-nothing, and by his love for an aristocratic girl whom he decides to marry as soon as he is able to provide for her an adequate standard of living.

From an early age, Hilario works buying and selling cattle, taking occasional jobs, riding through the prairies. Hardened,

¹²La Trepadora, p. 18.

resistant to discomfort, he owes his self-sufficiency and independence to "la vida del llano, que tiempla al mas flojo."¹³ By using his knowledge of man and work, and by applying his intelligence, Hilario ascends toward wealth and respectability with an iron determination. And while Hilario climbs steadily, Jaimito del Casal, debilitated by a leisurely life, and leaving the administration of his inheritance to dishonest mayordomos, finds himself in progressive economic descent, finally facing bankruptcy.

Hilario takes advantage of the mismanagement of the hacienda and cleverly arranges the purchase of the Casal coffee plantation. He marries the aristocratic Adelaida Salcedo, and now he has everything. He is master of la casa grande, he is married to a respectable lady; he has everything except the name which he himself had proudly rejected. The name Guanipa, moreover, has a plebeian sound, and Hilario's uncles had a bad reputation:

... bandoleros malos ... los hermanos Guanipas, apodados los Barbudos, bien conocidos y temidos por sus fechorías, enemigos jurados del pueblo, cuyas simpatías por la revolución eran el único motivo que ellos tenían para ser gobiernistas.¹⁴

Hilario, while still very young, becomes the hero of his small town by capturing his own uncles. He has inherited the intrepid blood of the Guanipas, but in Hilario, due to the guidance of his father, it is channelled toward positive achievements. The illegitimate son has proved himself more valuable than the legitimate, a fact that is

¹³Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 10.

not intended by the author to be taken as a fixed rule. It does, however, discredit the unjust preconceived attitude governing social mores. There is a slight suggestion also that the blue aristocratic veins can certainly use some invigorating plebeian blood.

Don Jaime del Casal, a man of independent and realistic judgment and a dedicated worker, anticipates the decline of his family and the loss of his property because he sees that his heir, Jaimito, prefers luxury and leisure. His family lives in Caracas, taking their good fortune for granted:

Doña Agueda, Jaimito, Fernanda, Eleonora y Eugenia ... florida Juventud se deslizaba en el ambiente refinado de los salones y de los viajes anuales a Europa, en un perpetuo lucimiento de belleza y distinción¹⁵

Adelaida Salcedo, unlike her cousins del Casal, commits a misalliance by marrying a Guanipa. She loses her best friend, Eleonora " ... porque comprendo que después de haber tomado yo mi determinación de aceptar a Hilario, no podemos seguir siendo lo que hasta ahora hemos sido nosotras. Tú te apartarás de mí."¹⁶ But Adelaida has the courage to disregard social opinion and to follow her own inclinations, and is determined, at the same time, to watch over the impetuous and unscrupulous Hilario. The gentle, romantic Adelaida is, however, no match for the domineering character of Hilario, who finds his equal only in the personality of his daughter Victoria:

¹⁵Ibid., p. 33.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 61.

Tú no conoces a papá [she tells her mother]: él lo que necesita, precisamente que los demás le hagan sentir que también tienen carácter.¹⁷

Victoria grows up in a healthy atmosphere, among people who are judged on the basis of individual values, and she develops an independent, self-conscious personality. Proud of the achievements of her father, she resents, however, his rejection of the aristocratic name to which she feels entitled. She decides to conquer the exclusive world of the proud aristocracy out of resentment, because of the superior manner in which her cousins acted toward her family. Rich and beautiful, Victoria receives malicious satisfaction from humiliating her now-impoverished cousins, who cannot afford everything she can, and she forces them to introduce her into the highest aristocratic circles in Caracas. The snobbish ambition of the social climber, Victoria "la trepadora," reflects the hatred of the humiliated against the proud, of the Guanipás against los del Casal.

Victoria's experiences in Caracas create chaos and disorientation for the ambitious young girl. She almost loses herself, but instinctively manages to escape disaster. The salvation of the integral personality comes from a fortunate meeting with Nicolás del Casal, an agronomical engineer, and enlightened young man, who was educated in Germany. Objective, serious, neither pretentious nor subservient, with the messianic character trait of sincerity and complete lack of hatred, Nicolás del Casal sees social and psychological phenomena in the right perspective. He helps Victoria to discover the questionable

¹⁷Ibid., p. 133.

value of social mannerisms and pretensions, and the emptiness of a life concerned only with appearances. Nicolas and Victoria fall in love, and by marrying him, Victoria reconquers the aristocratic family name. Now Hilario Guanipa's triumph is complete. His own intelligence, shrewdness and endurance have overcome all obstacles but "aún faltaba el nombre y esto había sido la conquista de Victoria."¹⁸

Although the specific details of the exterior conflict and plot may seem unimportant, the broader implications which Gallegos no doubt intended are that Nicolás brought out in Victoria her healthy ego, and opened the eyes of many to social prejudice and to the harm it can effect on a healthy personality. Thus Nicolás del Casal fulfills his messianic function toward enlightenment. A man should be judged only by who he is as an individual, and by what he does with his life - a revolutionary idea in the bourgeois society of Venezuela in Gallegos' day. The prejudice to the contrary, i.e., the evaluation of man in proportion to his wealth and social position, still prevails in a class-conscious society. Victoria is obviously a symbolic name. In the novel, her story is trivial, but it symbolizes the victory of true human values over false moral, racial, and social concepts.

Sobre la misma tierra also has a woman as the central symbolic character. Remota Montiel is the Guajiro Indian's messiah. She owes her existence to an independent, rich tavern owner, a Guajiro Indian woman, who, longing for a child, has a short-lived affair with

¹⁸Ibid., p. 239.

an adventurous white landowner, Demetrio Montiel. Demetrio, bored by the sedentary life of the landed gentry, dedicates himself to contraband, which enables him to travel and to enjoy adventures of illegal commerce. Amoral and mischievous, but a man of unusual vitality, Demetrio is widely known as "Diablo Contento," an adventurer and fortune hunter "jugándose la piragua y la vida."¹⁹

Remota's mother dies shortly after her birth, and her father is unaware even of her existence. The child grows up in the care of her aunts in a poverty-stricken Indian settlement, La Guajira, "donde el verano diezma todos los años el ganado, única riqueza del indio."²⁰ In early puberty, Remota undergoes the torture of seclusion called el blanqueo, a barbaric Guajiro custom. In this ritual, a young girl is put in complete isolation in a dark room in order to protect her from the sun, and she is kept on a starvation diet. While she is thus isolated, her parents or custodians bargain for the highest price obtainable from the respective bridegrooms. Remota is about to be sold to a rich widower, but an old Indian, a former servant of her mother, rescues her. He brings the young girl to Demetrio's boat. The captain of the boat takes Remota under his protection, warning the lustful Demetrio with the following admonition: "Será verdad que el caballo salvaje no se arrejunta con las

¹⁹Gallegos, Sobre la misma tierra, p. 46.

²⁰Ibid., p. 135.

hijas?"²¹ This is the first meeting between father and daughter. Remota is then brought safely into the care of Demetrio's sister, Selmira Weimar, who is happily married but childless. Selmira and her husband adopt the girl, and Remota Montiel becomes Ludmila Weimar. She travels with her foster parents and receives the best education available in Germany and in the United States. Remota is thus transformed from a timid Indian girl into a self-conscious western intellectual.

At the age of thirty, Remota-Ludmila returns to Venezuela. Her father had committed suicide and left her a small inheritance along with this note: "Cansado de meter contrabandos en la tierra, voy a ver si paso el de mis pecados por las puertas del cielo."²² When she arrives at her Indian village, Remota is shocked by the sub-human existence of her kinsmen: they are hungry and dirty; the sick are in the care of witch doctors. She finds her aunt like many other Indian women:

... una mujeruca andrajosa y desgredada, toda estremecida por la respiración jadeante y de cuya horrible boca desdentada salían negros hilos de saliva impregnada de tabaco.²³

Remota decides to stay and to help the Indians with all possible means at her disposal. Her greatest achievement is the liberation of a group of Indians who were once sold by her own father into slavery on a plantation.

²¹Ibid., p. 57.

²²Ibid., p. 131.

²³Ibid., p. 154.

Remota, an Indian by birth and temperament, and Ludmila, an educated western liberal, two personalities in one form the necessary qualities of a potential messiah. She succeeds partially because her field of action is restricted to a small area, but she fails ultimately because her insignificant means do not suffice for greater, more enduring improvements. This task has to be taken over by the government, and Gallegos' emphatic appeal is especially strong in this novel.

Remota's dedication is admirable. She abandons her world of comfort and pleasure to sacrifice her youth, her love and her education to the sole purpose of her life: to vindicate the sins of others. Her major triumph, the liberation of the Indian slaves, shows her to be a fearless and perspicacious woman, able to outsmart a villain. Surprisingly enough, some of her gestures, meant to be magnanimous, are theatrically pathetic, as in the case of her tearing up the check for the supposed sale of the Indians. The messianic idea comes alive not so much in Remota herself, but rather in the background against which she moves, in the juxtaposition of a poor Indian village and the adjacent oil company. In this lies the messianic tone of the novel.

As is often the case with Gallegos, minor characters are better drawn than the major ones, especially when the minor characters are simple people, los del pueblo, whose psyche the author knows profoundly. Gallegos is less successful with his female characters. They are either insignificant puppets or unbelievable heroines, most of them of extraordinary beauty and unshakable virtue. But on the whole Gallegos' female characters have a messianic function also,

their very femininity having the power to save them from brutalization. But as individuals, they have a disturbing facet of artificiality; they resemble dramatic actors on the stage. Remota plays out an absurd operatic gesture. She recovers a large sum of money, but she tears up the check, and thus with no reasonable motive she destroys property which she herself considers to belong to the Indians, a surprising gesture coming from such a strong and rational character as Remota.

Occasionally her personality does much good to others. She saves her brother, Remigio Montiel, from complete deterioration. Remigio is a gifted intellectual, but generally known as:

Marco Aurelio Peripatético Vestía de ajeno, raído y mugriento, que le venía largo y holgado,apestaba de licor y declamaba al hablar. Era un caso dramático de talento perdido dentro de un fárrago de conocimientos superficiales y heterogéneos, de inteligencia disparatada y tirada a los estricotes de la bohemia.²⁴

Everything Remota thinks, discusses and does deserves admiration, too much so for Remota to be a convincing character. Minor characters in comparison, are realistically impressive: the dedicated old Indian who brings young Remota to her father, thereby risking his own life, and Venacio Navas, the captain of the boat who forces his lustful master, by diplomatically using moral hints, to deliver his daughter safely into the custody of the Weimars. These characters are the saviors. Remota's messianic achievements do not lie in her liberation of the Indians. Her achievement is the restoration of hope in the submissive, long-suffering, resigned Guajiro

²⁴ Ibid., p. 101.

Indians:

... el inesperado auxilio ... había, sin embargo en sus rostros un despertar de humanidad recuperada, una emoción de gratitud y de esperanza en las miradas fijas en Remota.²⁵

In the same way as the novel Sobre la misma tierra, Tierra bajo los pies contains the messianic idea of salvation in the background: the way of life of the Mexican landowners and workers, their conservative attitude toward the master, fear of the stronger and respect for someone else's property, their resignation as to any possibility of a better way of life, their submissiveness rooted in their religious fanaticism, their sincere faith manipulated by masters to their own advantage. The plot is built around the difficulties of the post-Revolutionary Mexican government — after the voted agrarian reform — to distribute the land of the rich landowners to the workers. Post-Revolutionary Mexico faced a double obstacle in the implementation of the new agrarian reforms: the organized resistance of the landowners, and, surprisingly, the reluctance of the workers to accept the land because of fear and suspicion. The "messiah" for Mexicans in this historical moment of transition had not only to enforce the law with stubborn masters, but also to destroy the fatalism of the people, a centuries-long submission to powers beyond their control and understanding: the will of the master and the domination of a demanding God.

Tierra bajo los pies is divided into two parts and sustains this division as a structural principle. There are two epochs, two genera-

²⁵Ibid., p. 205.

tions, two different social structures represented in the novel. Two types of people, honest-dishonest, greedy-selfless, heroes-villains, struggle against each other in private and public interests, the major issue being the changes in the agrarian system. The first epoch is represented by Don Ignacio Orozco, an immensely rich landowner who is preoccupied with the defense of his estate, "El Encinar," and by his opponent, Feliciano Gracián. The clash between Gracián and Orozco is tremendous, since both are men of uncompromising principles. The redistribution of land was now the law. The landowner had the right to retain a certain amount of his property, but everything above the amount permitted by law had to be distributed among the workers, who were allowed to pay for their property in gradual installments. Don Orozco opposes this ruling of the government with extreme vehemence, sincerely convinced that he was the victim of robbery. Gracián believes just as firmly that the law is good, and tries to induce Orozco to obey: "La Comisión Nacional Agraria ha dispuesto que se proceda a la parcelación del excedente de tierras de El Encinar para distribuirlo entre los peones que trabajan en ellas."²⁶ But the stubborn, proud Orozco rejects the demand: "La Comisión Nacional Agraria (guardada de coyotes la llamo yo) ha dispuesto arrebatarme la propiedad de El Encinar de los Orozcós para parcelar sus tierras y repartirlas entre quienes sean osados a adueñarse de ellas."²⁷

Don Orozco, knowing the religious fervor of the people, makes

²⁶Gallegos, Tierra bajo los pies, p. 14.

²⁷Ibid., p. 16.

sure that none of his peons dares take his rightful property. He arranges a penitential mass for them. In his private chapel the people, fearful of eternal damnation, take a solemn oath to resist the temptation of accepting their master's property. Now all persuasion, all attempts at enlightenment on the part of Gracián, would be in vain. Having witnessed the fanatical oath of the peons, he cancels a projected meeting with the workers. Bitter with indignation, he reproaches Orozco for what he considers a criminal and blasphemous stratagem:

Has incurrido, Nacho Orozco, en una profanación de tu propia fé, al poner al servicio de tus intereses materiales, amasados mediante injusta e inicua explotación de trabajo mal pagado, la credulidad de una gente sencilla que comparte contigo esa fé, y en el mismo sitio donde tú le rindes culto."²⁸

In spite of the law and of the energetic activities of individuals toward its enforcement, the conservative party of the landowners triumphs. The young generation is faced with the choice of allegiance to their fathers or to the law and the people. Thus, the son of Don Orozco, a youth of charitable heart who is horrified by misery and by human iniquity, decides to work for the agrarian reform law — a fact he has to hide from his father. The young Orozco conceives a plan. His father used the religious sentiments of the people against the law; the son will use the superstitions of the people for law enforcement. The popular belief in apparitions or ghosts that bring messages to the living gives young Orozco an idea

²⁸Ibid., p. 37.

of how to induce the people to change their mind and reject the oath. Disguised as the famous revolutionary hero Emiliano Zapata, the young man appears in the hills astride a white horse. The people immediately interpret the apparition as a warning: el duende Calpulencue, the ghost of Zapata, demands that the people claim the land so that the blood of revolution will not have been shed in vain. The excitement of the peonada is great, but no practical result comes from the ingenious deceit — only tragedy. Orozco discovers his son's trick, and denounces him as a traitor. The young man is filled with despair, and unable to face his father's wrath, he commits suicide.

Gracián also comes to a tragic end. He is caught by the "capitanes cristeros de la sierra," killers hired by the landlords to defend the old order in the name of Christ:

Penetraron en la casa los cristeros ... donde se imploraba auxilio celestial, se apoderaron de Chano Gracián y del viejo ... los sacaron de la casa y se los llevaron a las afueras del pueblo, donde ... los colgaron. Llenáronles de tierra los respectivos sombreros y colgándolos en el suelo debajo de los pies de cada uno ... entre obscenidades y risotadas dijeron:

—Ahí tienen ya la tierra que reclamaban! ¡Viva Cristo Rey!²⁹

Gracian's son, Emiliano, arrives at this point, but it is too late to help. He hears the blasphemous war-cry of the retreating cristeros, and in the words of the author, " ... el brutal impacto le había dejado insensible el corazón y aquellas frases le habían quebrado y destruido la fé."³⁰ Filled with despair, Emiliano Gracián becomes an

²⁹Ibid., p. 56.

³⁰Ibid.

outcast and criminal, known as "el bandolero Malora," a feared avenger of crimes committed in the name of Christ.

The interplay of the various time periods and the contrasting characters complicates the structure of Tierra bajo los pies. In the second part of the novel the younger generation predominates. Continuity between the two parts is sustained by the presence of old Orozco, who is now an embittered half-wit. The partition of his property is now an accomplished fact. The principal roles in the second epoch are played by Orozco's daughter, Valentina, and Emiliano Gracian, or "Malora." They are the protagonists opposed by a strong antagonist named Santiago Argimírez, a former revolutionary who is now a powerful political cacique in the new settlement around El Encinar. The post-Revolutionary government needed fearless, efficient men for law enforcement, men who fought vehemence with vehemence, astuteness with astuteness, slyness with slyness. Santiago Argimírez is the right opponent for Don Orozco, as he expertly played the latter's own game, always keeping in mind his own private advantage.

... las dificultades de toda una época, no son superables en días ... Hay que utilizar de algun modo a los que se metieron a la Revolución. Y luego la necesidad de hacer cosas de prisa, aunque no quedaran bien hechas. La entrega de la posesión de la tierra al trabajador de ella, sin toda la estructura de un sistema nuevo, revolucionariamente organizado. Y algo mas difícil todavía: la formación de una nueva mentalidad.³¹

Santiago Argimírez is just the right sort of person the government needs. He implements agrarian reform, but the result is close to

³¹Ibid., p. 156.

a replacement of the old master, Don Orozco, by the new one, Santiago Argimírez himself. He is finally unmasked and destroyed by Malora, who, under the influence of the noble Valentina Orozco, dedicates himself to public affairs and is elected deputy of the district. Thus, Emiliano Gracián completes the life-work of his father.

The new life of the former peons, now small farmers, is not a paradise, simply because of "la natural diferencia entre las condiciones humanas: en unas diligencia y laboriosidad, en otras incapacidad o indolencia. ... Cuando tienen en los puños de las manos la semilla que van a sembrar, ya están debiendo la cosecha."³² Chaos is the result of envy on the part of lazy farmers who conceive a virulent hatred toward their prosperous neighbors. Some farmers have to sell their land, and the division between rich and poor emerges anew. Rivalries between hostile families and disputes over land lead to open aggression. However, in spite of all the negative aspects of the situation, some essential changes have taken place:

En El Encinar de los Orozcos no ocurrían muertes ni disputas de esa naturaleza; pero no había hombres, humanidad propiamente, sino humanidad. Sombrero en many y cabeza inclinada ante el señor, mientras ahora sí hay hombres. Con todos los defectos que se quiera atribuirles, pero hombres.³³

As always with Gallegos, the spiritual aspect of an economic situation is being emphasized. The drama of ideas, i.e., of two opposing ideologies fighting for realization, is the diancia of the novel. Tierra bajo los pies caused much indignation in certain social

³²Ibid., p. 141.

³³Ibid., p. 125.

circles. The novel seems to present militant atheistic propaganda against the clergy and the Church in general. But contrary to this superficial judgment, Gallegos defends true faith by exposing those abuses of religion that destroy faith. He is explicitly against the subservience of the clergy to wealth, and he condemns the cynical abuse of faith for egotistic purposes. He abhors, above all, murders committed by supposed Christians in the name of Christ, which he obviously considers a monstrous blasphemy. Gallegos never ridicules or undermines genuine religious faith. He recognizes the spiritual needs of man, and he opposes the secularization of the Church. The messianism of enlightenment in the novel Tierra bajo los pies is concerned with the restoration of genuine, deeply believed and fully lived moral values.

The novels Pobre Negro and La brizna de paja en el viento, unlike Tierra bajo los pies (where generations are shown in conflict) have two older intellectuals who motivate messianic activities. These protagonists serve to correct the confused ideas of the young concerning racial, economic and political problems. Both young men, Pedro Miguel, later the revolutionary leader Candela in Pobre Negro, and the student Juan Luis Marino in La brizna de paja en el viento, confront a dilemma created by the circumstance of their growing up as members of the lower class and their emotional involvement with girls of the upper class. Both have to overcome the inferiority complex which afflicts plebeians. Both are proud, gifted men, and they rebel against social injustice. Eager to prove their superiority as individuals, they

act out of spite, a feeling which they cannot justify convincingly to themselves. Both are helped towards the solution of their problems by mature progressive intellectuals. Pedro Miguel's spiritual tutor is el licenciado Céspedes, widely known as Cecilio el Viejo. A wandering scholar, he is a sort of Diogenes and Socrates in one person. Juan Luis is guided by Professor Luciente at the University of Cuba.

Cecilio el Viejo is a distant cousin of Pedro Miguel through the latter's unfortunate mother, Ana Julia Alcorta. Ana died after giving birth to Pedro Miguel. The child is the bastard son of a Negro, and he grows up in the house of the mayordomo of the aristocratic Céspedes-Alcorta family. As a teenager Pedro Miguel learns the truth about his origin. He feels humiliated and retreats into morbid isolation. His desire, however, is to be accepted as the equal of his noble relatives. Cecilio el Viejo, expert psychologist that he is, provides the link between the two worlds of Pedro Miguel and the aristocracy. Cecilio guides him in the manner of Socrates through a dialectical exploration of truth. Thus the stubborn young mestizo is persuaded to learn, in the company of the old man's son, Cecilio Alcorta, both tutored by Cecilio el Viejo.

At the age of sixteen, Pedro Miguel starts his political activities. His goal, as he sees it, is the liberation of those who are enslaved. His sympathies extend to the kinsmen of his father, and are balanced by his hatred of the landed gentry, a hatred intensified by a slap from an aristocrat. Pedro Miguel throws himself into his

political activities. He reads leftist newspapers that are in blatant opposition to the government, and he arranges clandestine meetings with the workers at night in the woods:

La luz del candil acentuaba con reflejos cobrizos los rasgos salientes de los negros rostros ... Tenían una expresión ingenua, de niños ante un juguete prometido, aquellos hombres viejos, mientras que la de Pedro Miguel era ceñuda, con vibraciones de emoción de apóstol.³⁴

Pedro Miguel's followers rapidly increase in number. The young man sincerely believes himself to be the messiah of the Negroes, but motivated by destructive hatred, he is in reality only one of many false prophets eagerly accepted by the desperate populace. This lack of objective insight, the inability to formulate a detached judgment, disqualifies Pedro Miguel as a messiah, although he demonstrates unquestionable organizational talent and true empathy with the suffering of the poor.

True messianic characters in the novel are Cecilio el Viejo and his niece Luisana Alcorta, both members of the aristocracy. Luisana is one of Gallegos' few successfully created female characters. Her very nature is charity. She is called the salt of the family, able to solve problems and to help everyone. She nurses her brother, Cecilio el Joven, who has been struck by leprosy, not because of rationalized charity, but because it is the nature of her soul to do so: "No era un espíritu caritativo que se entregara, sino un alma generosa que se expandía. —Generosidad del rosal —solía decir Cecilio, —que no abriendo sus flores para darlas, sino para ador-

³⁴Pobre Negro, p. 121.

narse con ellas, adorna y perfuma el mundo."³⁵

Pedro Miguel is strongly influenced by Cecilio el Viejo, with whom he engages in numerous discussions concerning actual social problems. However, whereas Cecilio is moderate, the young man is unalterably opposed to the upper classes, and he believes that no good could possibly be gained by cooperating or collaborating with the gentry. In vain Cecilio el Viejo explains to Pedro Miguel the fatal mistake of his misguided fanaticism:

Lo grave ... es que ... te constituyas en traidor de la causa que pretendes defender. Esa gente tiene puesta en tí toda su confianza, y tú abusas de ella al fomentarles rencores, sin ofrecerles soluciones de sus problemas. De cosas, que hasta ahora vienen siendo, yo me propongo elevarlos a la categoría de personas y tú, en vez de colaborar conmigo, tratas de enajenarme su voluntad volviéndome los recelosos...¿Qué le ofreces a esa gente ...? ¿La rebeldía? ¿Simplemente la rebeldía?³⁶

Rebellion does not solve problems. When liberty is granted to the slaves, the result is a national disaster. The liberated Negroes, having obtained freedom without responsible guidance, plunge into jubilant ecstatic fiestas. But when the shouting has died down, they discover that they are not prepared to care for themselves:

Pronto ...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!... Y comenzó la romería de la mendicidad y hubo cuñetas de caminos donde aparecieron negros muertos de hambre, mientras los más animosos andaban alzados por los montes, viviendo del merodeo y de la rapiña.³⁷

The gaps between classes must be bridged if any constructive changes

³⁵Ibid., p. 141.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 211-12.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 221-23.

in society are to result. A mutual exchange of values is indispensable: education must be brought by the upper classes to the lower ones; the endurance and vigor of the masses must strengthen the country. Pedro Miguel is finally persuaded of the truth of the constructive principles espoused by his tutor. Too late, Pedro Miguel "Candela" learns that it is not violence that overcomes iniquity, nor vengeance that heals injury. Only after plunging the country into chaos and bloodshed does Candela realize his error. Disillusioned and disgusted with himself, he finally becomes reconciled with his high-born relatives. This reconciliation is symbolized by the fusion of the two lovers, Pedro Miguel and Luisana, brought together through the good offices of Cecilio el Viejo. Pedro Miguel and Luisana go off together, leaving the wise old man to live out his remaining days near the graves of his loved ones.

La brizna de paja en el viento has as its central theme the political activities of the students of the University of Havana as they revolt against the dictator Machado. The protagonists are a male and a female student who bravely confront their determined opponents, but the central figure of the novel, as far as ideological emphasis is concerned, is a university professor, Rogelio Luciente. The setting is the University of Havana, and Luciente is an academic messiah of intellectual enlightenment. His message to the students, who are preoccupied with heated political disputes and activities, transcends the particular Cuban situation. Through the figure of Professor Luciente the author addresses all young prospective politicians in general.

Luciente acts as a dynamic force for social betterment, but is at the same time a temperate leader. He slows down violent demonstrations, stops a wave of political assassinations, and saves naive young idealists from being exploited by cynical politicians. Luciente's message of enlightenment to his students might be summed up in the single word, education. The intellectual preparation of future political leaders will enable them to guide society to a new age of enlightenment. In this way, the journey of mankind from barbarism to civilization may begin:

... es aquí, en la tierra de nuestro mayor dolor y nuestra mejor esperanza, donde parece que hubiera necesidad de recomenzar la trabajosa marcha desde el abrigo de la violencia en la caverna prehistórica hasta el ensanchado respiro de razón y de justicia en la serenidad de las cumbres de pensamiento.³⁸

Luciente insists that it is imperative to cultivate a vigilant and critical mind through serious study and conscious objectivity. No important step should be taken precipitately, and in this context, the political leader must always be on guard for agents-provocateurs, he must mistrust demagogues and those who mouth glib slogans. He must always remember that treason is often masked as patriotism in the form of destructive promises of a better future for the country. Gallegos is deeply troubled by the confusion of the young, a confusion compounded by avant-garde political thinkers, or by those who present themselves as such, but who are really enemies of society and the nation. Slogans and catch-phrases that mislead the unthinking will not deceive diligent thinkers: "Cuida tus reacciones. No seas brizna

³⁸ La brizna de paja, p. 257.

de paja en el viento."³⁹

While La brizna de paja en el viento is set in Cuba and centers on both local and universal problems, Gallegos uses his native country as a setting for Doña Bárbara.

Santos Luzardo, the protagonist of the novel Doña Bárbara is the right man for the assignment he is to perform: to promote culture by imposing lawfulness on the barbarous Venezuelan plains. These remote areas are dominated by lawless ranchers and corrupt politicians. Luzardo's field of action is clear-cut in this novel; he is to put an end to the dictatorship of Doña Bárbara, an immensely rich landowner whose fortune has been amassed by criminal methods that include terror and murder. The novel is characterized by the clash of powerful passions, personalities and ideologies, and is especially notable for its background presentation of the Venezuelan wilds. Its dianoia is the best example of the messianism of salvation as conceived by Gallegos. Doña Bárbara is, in fact, the kind of book that the author himself recommends in Brizna de paja en el viento, one of those " ... libros de orientaciones materialistas que llamaban a lucha franca en persecución de bienes positivos, concretos, terrenales, sin vista alzada a cielos de artificio."⁴⁰

Luzardo is a realist, and a practical man, but is at the same time enthusiastic about his civilizing mission in the manner of a cultured man of uncompromising moral principles. Always respectful

³⁹Ibid., p. 346.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 66.

of law and order, he finds himself suddenly surrounded by barbarians. The supreme law of the plains, as he promptly discovers, is the right of the strongest. Luzardo is a lawyer, but the primitive law he finds in the wilderness is far removed from that which he had studied in the capital.

Santos Luzardo comes to his ranch with the intention of selling his inheritance, but once acquainted with the situation, he changes his mind and accepts with iron determination the messianic function that fate has imposed on him. Thus Santos:

... decidió ... meterse en el ható a luchar contra los enemigos a defender sus propios derechos y también los ajenos atropellados por los caciques de la llanura, puesto que Doña Bárbara no era sino uno de tantos; a luchar contra la naturaleza: contra la insalubridad que estaba aniquilando la raza llanera, contra la inundación y la sequía que se disputan la tierra todo el año, contra el desierto que no deja penetrar la civilización.⁴¹

Doña Bárbara proves to be a fearful neighbor. Everyone warns Santos Luzardo not to be trapped by her beauty, or by her cunning and criminal machinations: "Dicen que es una mujer terrible, capitana de una pandilla de bandoleros, encargados de asesinar a mansalvo a cuantos intenten oponerse a sus designios."⁴² She is reputed to be a fiend who dominates the region and inspires a supernatural fear: "Tenga mucho cuidado con Doña Bárbara ... porque también es facultada en brujerías."⁴³ Thus Luzardo has to fight not only factual reality,

⁴¹ Doña Bárbara, p. 29.

⁴² Ibid., p. 13.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 15.

but superstitions of the people which often paralyze their will power and lessen their resistance.

The lawyer's first step toward order is the discharge of his dishonest mayordomo, at this point in the story one of Barbara's numerous lovers. Barbara's objective is the appropriation of Luzardo's ranch through the machinations of the mayordomo. Another step Luzardo has to take is decisive, for it determines the question of authority. The lawyer, a man from the city, has to prove himself an able administrator of his own ranch. He has to demonstrate his prowess as an accomplished rider and cowboy. He participates in competitions arranged by the ranch hands, who are doubtful of his abilities. Luzardo is, in their opinion, an urban weakling, unfit to operate a large ranch. He passes the test, however, for he was not always a city dweller. In his youth he had learned the skills so important to him in his present situation. At this point the fictional character of the intellectual cowboy is dangerously close to the muchachito image of the cinema. Gallegos' characters are sometimes theatrical. His plots often resemble the libretto of an opera. But as in the opera it is the music that is important, so with Gallegos what matters is the ideological content of the story. The dianoia is the all-important factor of the work. When reading the novels of Gallegos, one must be tolerant as to the plot which, according to Northrop Frye is ". . . a conventional, mechanical or even . . . absurd contrivance; the value of the work of art . . . is always the poetic life of a story, not the homiletic life of some

illustrated truism.⁴⁴

When it suits his purpose, Gallegos does not hesitate to permit characters to overstep the limits of the reader's reasonable expectations by exaggerating the hero's abilities. In the case of the lawyer Santos Luzardo as he imposes his authority on skilled cowboys by demonstrating his own superior abilities, the implication is obvious. If an intellectual is to become an influential and respected leader of the rural population, he must not be a bookworm or an urban weakling. He must be a man among men, able to live the life of the people, to share the hardships of work, to be physically as fit as the people who are hardened by the demanding activities of life on the plains. Whether such a combination is likely or not is questionable; it is an ideal.

The challenge is great for Santos Luzardo. His struggle with Doña Bárbara is made more difficult because of his refusal to fight violence with violence. Only reluctantly do his men support his peaceful methods. However, they come to love and respect their master, and they remain alert and on guard in order to protect him. Santos constantly tries to resist the atmosphere of barbarism which represents a great danger to his cultured and pacific nature. He is shocked when killing proves to be the only effective means to save his own life:

Por fin y por encima de su voluntad empezaba a realizarse aquel presentimiento de una intempestiva regresión a la barbarie que atormentó su primera juventud. Todos los esfuerzos hechos por

⁴⁴Northrop Frye, Fables of Identity, p. 29.

Librarse de aquella amenaza que veía suspendida sobre su vida, por reprimir los impulsos de su sangre hacia las violentas ejecutorias de los Luzardos ... y por adquirir, en cambio, la actitud propia del civilizado ... desaparecía ahora arrollado por el temerario alarde de hombría.⁴⁵

Her best espaldero killed, Doña Bárbara abandons further attempts to eliminate Luzardo through murder. Because of her superstitious and fatalistic half-Indian nature, she now believes that Luzardo is invincible. Barbara feels a presentiment of her doom, and she makes the fatal mistake of falling in love with her enemy. The fact that her passion finds no response in Santos makes her furious, but at the same time weakens her resistance. Thus, on many occasions Barbara's love, which she knows to represent her impending doom, protects Santos and decides his final victory—the victory of civilization over barbarism. Doña Bárbara finally leaves the ranch and disappears as if swallowed up by the surrounding wilderness.

The central symbol of Luzardo's intentions and achievements is la cerca. The fence is the symbol of the limitations of individual freedom for the benefit of the community. The ranch and cattle must be surrounded by a fence in order to determine the limits of the property and to prevent the loss of cattle, since the disputes about land and cattle are the major cause of violence and continuous war between the ranchers. The limitation of individual freedom is inevitable for the protection of the community, especially on the plains where freedom means the right of the stronger to satisfy boundless appetites for fortune and power. Thus Santos Luzardo insists

⁴⁵Doña Bárbara, p. 343.

on the precise determination of private boundaries:

... 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.⁴⁶

In the same vein, as Santos Luzardo ponders the future, and looks forward to the time when civilization will have spread throughout the country, the author states his own messianic intentions in the evocation of the vision of peace and prosperity that is to come:

... era muy hermosa aquella visión del llano futuro, civilizado y próspero, que se extendía ante su imaginación ... — El ferrocarril! —Algun día será verdad. El progreso penetrará en la llanura y la barbarie retrocederá vencida. Tal vez nosotros no alcanzaremos a verlo, pero sangre muestra palpitaría en la emoción de quien lo vea.⁴⁷

In Doña Bárbara, the hero admirably succeeds in his messianic mission. Civilization enters the plains and the future looks optimistic. Gallegos' messianic ideas are forcefully presented and carried out in the plot of the novel. Not so in Canaima and Cantaclaro. Nature and corrupt local political structures engulf man's attempts at civilization.

In both novels, the theme of nature is present in the foreground. In Canaima it is the virgin forests, while in Cantaclaro the open plains dominate. Nature in these novels hides an awe-inspiring and fascinating mystery, almost of a religious nature. When man contemplates Nature, he recognizes its transcendent grandeur. Sensitive to the sacred dimensions of existence, Gallegos sees the analogy of

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 126.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 126-27.

the human and the cosmic, revealed in natural elemental forces, in creative energy, and in the mysterious process of intelligence giving form to chaos. Canaima and Cantaclaro are pervaded by an atmosphere of animated nature and primitive men living close to it in a wilderness hardly touched by civilization. There is in these novels the spirit of the sacred in the profane, and of reverence for life.

Both novels deal with simple people: laborers on farms and ranches, tenants and peons, and workers in the forests. The author's messianic preoccupation retreats into the background, but it is nevertheless an essential part of these two works. There is an ever-present feeling of expectation; the characters are convincing as real people, de carne y hueso. This combination of realism and suspense elicits from the reader feelings of sympathetic involvement that makes him a participant in the world created by the author. In Canaima and Cantaclaro, more than in his other novels, Gallegos makes an irresistible ideological appeal to the reader.

The everlasting conflicts in human affairs are symbolically linked in these two novels with the mystery of the cosmos, reflected in ancient myths but revealing perennial existential anxieties:

... los indios, de sutilísimo sentido expertos en la comprensión de aquel mundo, cuando sobrevienen estos repentinos enmudecimientos totales, prestan atención expectante. — ¡Canaima! — El maligno, la sombría divinidad ... el dios frenético, principio del mal y causa de todos los males, que le disputa el mundo a Cafuña, el bueno.⁴⁸

Structural unity in both novels is achieved through the presen-

⁴⁸ Canaima, p. 180.

tation of the hero on a journey in quest of a goal. This structure gives the author the opportunity to present a variety of characters and adventures. Marcos Vargas in Canaima, and Florentino Cantacclaro in Cantacclaro move around the country meeting all kinds of people: masters and slaves, revolutionaries and pacifists, intellectuals and illiterates. Both protagonists achieve penetrating insights into the human condition through their experiences. It is by means of this technique that Gallegos acquaints the reading public of Venezuela not only with the ways of life, but also the spirit, of the rural population.

It is not only the protagonists, however, who dominate the action in these novels. There are other outstanding characters who engage in activities that benefit the people. These individuals work for and identify with the small people, the masses, neglected by the government. Nor is it only neglect on the part of the government that threatens the poor; they face also the rigors of life in the wilderness, with all the dangers and miseries that such a life implies. The main characters of these novels, however, who should be the messiahs of the people, are disillusioned and frustrated. Embittered because they cannot effect a substantial change in the conditions of the people, they retreat into seclusion and refuse to act. This is a behavior pattern that has been observed by other authors writing about Latin American socio-political phenomena. An example is the following description of a similar paralysis of will:

Yo pensé una florida pradera al remate de un camino ... y me encontré un pantano, amigo mío: hay hechos y hay hombres que

no son sino pura hiel ... y esa hiel va cayendo gota a gota en el alma y todo lo amarga, todo lo envenena. Entusiasmo, esperanzas, ideales, alegrías— nada! Luego no le queda más: O se convierte usted en un bandido, igual a ellos, o desaparece de la escena, escondiéndose tras las murallas de un egoísmo impenetrable y feroz.⁴⁹

Both Canaima and Cantaclaro are pervaded by a spirit of pessimistic melancholy, of hopelessness and despair. In Canaima Marcos Vargas is the prospective savior of the people, but he is defeated by his enemies. Marcos is of humble origin. His father was a grocer who, through his good-hearted generosity, almost ruined his family because he had groceries on credit to the poor. Marcos' mother believes firmly in the advantages of education, and to oblige her Marcos goes to the city in order to acquire a high school education. But he is not enthusiastic about his studies, and so he leaves school. He is not interested in bookish wisdom; he prefers to have life itself for his master, and he begins an education that is better suited to his adventure-loving nature.

Since childhood, Marcos has excelled in sports and has demonstrated his abilities as a leader:

Hacia la acción desbordada tiraban las inclinaciones de su espíritu, y su escuela verdadera, de lucha y de endurecimiento, había sido el arrabal y el campo circundante, a la cabeza de su pandilla de chicos del pueblo, cacique querido por su carácter expansivo y franco, al par que respetado por la fuerza de sus puños.⁵⁰

Energetic, strong and eager, Marcos sets off on the road to adventure:

⁴⁹Mariano Azuela, Los de abajo (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1958), pp. 62-63.

⁵⁰Canaima, p. 19.

... Acababa de cumplir los veintiún años que lo hacían dueño de sus actos, iba solo, la bestia que lo conducía no era suya y dinero, ni lo llevaba encima ni lo tenía en ninguna parte. Era un hombre con su suerte por el camino y ante la vida.⁵¹

It is in this way that Marcos Vargas gets his education. A first-hand knowledge of human affairs, which he witnesses and lives.

His extraordinary frankness and sense of justice, along with his extreme sensitivity in the face of the sufferings of the poor gradually render life unbearable for Marcos. Unable to combat corruption and crime, he is filled with a rebellious, but ultimately futile fury: "... dentro de su alma había algo que por momentos hacía presión amenazante de estallido."⁵² Two individuals have a great influence on the course of Marcos' life: Manuel Ladera and Gabriel Ureña. At the beginning of his journey, Marcos meets Ladera. Ladera is a rich landowner and businessman, respected and loved by his peonada. Because Marcos is eager for work and possesses unusual abilities, Ladera is impressed and offers him the supervision of a commercial transportation firm which he is currently administering. Ladera is an exception to the character of businessmen as presented in Gallegos' novels. He is very intelligent, well-educated, and is dedicated to the needs of his nation. For this reason, he is in constant opposition to the corrupt authorities. He is for Marcos not only a benefactor, but a friend and teacher. He sustains the natural messianic inclinations of the young man by calling

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 24.

⁵² Ibid., p. 185.

his attention to what has to be done to improve the standard of living of the people and what kind of men are needed for social work: " ... al oír Manuel Ladera se comprendía que hablaba con el corazón lleno de amor a su tierra, amor doloroso, de calidad mas noble ... y escuchando al hombre maduro entraron en el alma del joven aires que luego harían borrascas."⁵³

Manuel Ladera is murdered by the mayor of the district, who will not tolerate any competition in lucrative business and had accordingly long since decided on Ladera's elimination. Marcos Vargas avenges his friend by killing the murderer, who had been hired by the mayor. The effect of this murder on Marcos is great; he loses all respect for the authorities, whom he knows to be corrupt and in league with unscrupulous merchants and industrialists. Marcos is not indicted for killing the murderer, especially because the removal of the villain, a blackmailer on the rise to political power, was a welcome solution to the mayor's own difficulties. By taking justice into his own hands Marcos has proven his manliness and demonstrated that he can fight on equal terms in the defense of his own integrity and that of others.

Gabriel Ureña is the other friend who is influential in shaping Marcos' personality. An insignificant employee, timid and humbly conscious of his own limited abilities, Ureña is a great believer in education. He discovers Marcos' unusual abilities for leadership and his highly moral attitude toward people. Ureña believes that such

⁵³Ibid., p. 32.

natural endowments, combined with education, could make Marcos the leader of the nation, the long-awaited and hoped-for man who would initiate positive changes toward a just social structure:

Presenciaste la iniquidad y hasta la has sufrido en tí mismo, tienes el impulso generoso que se necesita para consagrarse a combatirla, puedes ... recoger el mensaje de la voz que clama en el desierto y solo te falta prepararte intelectualmente ... cultívate, civiliza esa fuerza bárbara que hay en tí, estudia los problemas de esta tierra y asume la actitud a que estás obligado. Cuando la vida da facultades ... da junto con ellas responsabilidades. Este pueblo todo lo espera de un hombre — del Hombre Macho ... y tú, ¿porqué no?, puedes ser ese mesías."⁵⁴

The exhortation of Gabriel Ureña is the only direct allusion to what the author meant Marcos Vargas to be. Marcos always remembers his friend Ureña as a convinced enthusiast for education. But at this moment in his life Marcos feels that it is too late for him to acquire a proper education. Thus, he continues to learn by living.

Marcos enjoys good fortune. He gets jobs easily and eventually has the chance to marry a merchant's daughter, which would provide him with security. But he hates the affluent class; his sympathies toward the poor are too strong. He would not enjoy his own prosperity amidst the misery of his fellow-men. Marcos leaves the girl he was to marry when she refuses to accept life on his terms. He hates the rich, including her father, and refuses to settle down with her as a member of their society.

Marcos Vargas seeks always to help the helpless, or at least to alleviate the hardships suffered by the lower classes. As superintendent of the empresa purgüera of the rich Villorinis, Marcos comes

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 252.

into close contact with humble, hard-working people. These workers accept their lot with fatalistic resignation, thankful and happy whenever they are accorded kind treatment. On this job Marcos learns much about the spirit of the people, but he cannot stand the situation for long. The tragic death of a friend, Damesano, proves to be decisive: Marcos leaves the job, hating the whole civilized world, and even himself:

El triste fin del peón leal afectó mucho a Marcos Vargas ... acababa de revelársele en todo su horror la tremenda injusticia que dividía a los hombres en Vellorinis y Damesanos--el entre ambos haciendo hipócrita la palabra efusiva al servicio del celo interesado--y el alma generosa ya no podía conciliar el optimismo con la iniquidad.⁵⁵

Frustrated and disillusioned, Marcos disappears into the forest, a victim, as people believe, of el mal de la selva--of Canaima, the malign spirit of the forest. "Ese es Marcos Vargas, que corre los raudales las noches de luna como un alma que lleva el diablo."⁵⁶ But more than a prey of Canaima, Marcos Vargas is the victim of social evils. He does not suffer from injustice inflicted upon him; Marcos breaks down from an overwhelming feeling of sorrow for his brothers.

Lost in the woods, indifferent to his future, moving among the endless trees, more a specter than a man, half-conscious of his existence, Marcos is saved from madness and starvation by Indians dwelling in the forest. The potential messiah has been reduced to a

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 198.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 253.

state of apathy and behaves like an automaton. Unable to react, Marcos allows himself to become incorporated into the society of the Indians, marries the chief's sister, and begets a son. In his more lucid moments, Marcos is repelled by the illiteracy, dirt, and stupidity of the tribe, by their superstitions and by their ancient traditions, which he considers unwholesome. He seriously doubts that these tribes could ever be civilized:

Los enemigos implacables del aborígen, causas de la migración de sus tribus: la tuberculosis que los diezma, y el cauchero que los explota y los tiraniza. La muerte, a la que había que dejarle la churuanta cuando penetraba en ella—dentro de un cutamari el cadáver insepulto de la víctima—e ir a plantarla más allá. ... eran y muchos los hitos macabros—osamentas al aire dentro de las viviendas abandonadas—que marcaban el éxodo de la tribu ...⁵⁷

The novel ends with a slight hope for a better future. One day Gabriel Ureña receives visitors from the forest, Indians who are accompanied by a lad fourteen years old. "Don Gabriel—dice el primero—aquí le mandan este muchacho para que Ud. lo eduque como esté educando a sus hijos... —¿Cómo te llamas? Y el muchacho responde: —Marcos Vargas."⁵⁸ What the father could not achieve, perhaps the son will: the hopes of one generation may be realized by the second. This faint optimism does not, however, outweigh the profound pessimism and despair of Marcos Vargas. The father, who has chosen experience for his master, has learned well the lessons life has to teach.

Similar to the structure of the novel Canaima, the structural

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 272.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 287.

elements of Cantaclaro follow the archetypal pattern of the hero on a journey. Cantaclaro, the son of a prosperous rancher, leaves the ranch in the care of his brother and his widowed mother and chooses for himself the life of a roaming cowboy and folksinger. Florentino Coronado, nicknamed Cantaclaro and Quitapesares, is a born poet: "Los versos están en las cosas de la sabana, tú te la quedas mirando, y ella te las va diciendo."⁵⁹ The novel is alive with a popular spirit, with songs, legends, jokes (cuentaembustes), and moves in an atmosphere between the real and the fantastic. Cantaclaro's travels across the plains hold the structure of the novel together. However, from the messianic point of view, the most outstanding character is the mysterious Doctor Juan Crisóstomo Payara, who has retired from his practice to live in his rural possessions. A man of honesty and generosity, Doctor Payara is the enemy of lies, hypocrisy and abuse. He is acutely conscious of "las grandes obligaciones del hombre ante la humanidad."⁶⁰ Having retired from practice to live on the wild plains, he becomes a legend. A man who knows how to cure diseases, who was at one time a famous general, he had in the eyes of the people the nature of a demonic spirit. His taciturn and haughty nature and distinguished appearance cause people to call him "el Diablo del Cunaviche." They suspect him of knowing mysterious secrets such as his having hanged a man in his garden. A gloomy figure who keeps his distance but helps the people, he is regarded by the llaneros with respect and

⁵⁹Cantaclaro, p. 11.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 87.

admiration mixed with superstitious fear. The popular imagination is very close to the truth: the personal tragedy of the doctor's unfortunate marriage and many sufferings have changed the once-enthusiastic believer in humanity into a gloomy, sinister demon. As a proud outsider, he despises men, including himself: "Lo primero que le ocurrió a Cantaclaro fue sentirse desconcertado ante aquel hombre que tan pronto daba una impresión de cultura y de superioridad, como asumía una actitud destemplada y derrotaba a lo bárbaro."⁶¹

While he was still actively practicing, Doctor Payara discovered several cases of yellow fever. He reported the cases, but the medical authorities had proclaimed this disease as having been eradicated in Venezuela, and so nothing was done. In order to prevent the outbreak of an epidemic, the doctor refutes the mentira oficial. Seeing that his protestations are ignored, Doctor Payara gives up his practice in the city.

Payara's supposed daughter, who was born on the ranch but reared by the doctor's sisters, is not really his daughter at all, but he keeps this a secret. When the girl comes to the ranch of her father, as she believes, the situation is again one based on a lie.

In a moment of enthusiasm, and because of his strong sense of duty, the doctor becomes a revolutionary: "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."⁶² A very efficient military man, Doctor Payara

⁶¹Ibid., p. 58.

⁶²Ibid., p. 92.

risers quickly to the rank of general. As general he is feared and hated because he demands unconditional discipline and knows how to impose his authority. He will not tolerate sloppiness and lack of ideological convictions in the Revolutionary army. But in spite of his efforts, the army does not meet his expectations. He returns home deeply disappointed with his nation:

Un pesimismo desolador comenzó bien pronto a minar su fé inicial. El pueblo que lo seguía, o mejor dicho, que él arrastraba en pos de sí convertido en tropa por la violencia del reclutamiento, era una masa amorfa de forzados sin rebeldía y de incondicionales inconscientes. Iban a la guerra ... pero nada esperaban de ella ... Era pura y simplemente carne de cañón.⁶³

Doctor Payara declines the leadership of a new Revolutionary army prepared by liberal, dedicated students, because he knows that such enthusiasm is ineffective and short-lived:

... a través de las palabras de Salcedo [a student], Payara no vislumbró sino la nebulosa de las ilusiones juveniles que pronto se desvanecería, insesiblemente en la atmósfera unánime del pesimismo y de la indiferencia ante la dramática suerte ... del país.⁶⁴

Harsh experience has taught the doctor that love, compassion and idealism alone cannot save the country. Iron determination along with firm measures are necessary if success is to be achieved: "La enfermedad de Venezuela no es para paños calientes y bálsamos anodinos, sino para hierro de cirujano. El que quiera redimir a este país de sus males tiene que inmunizarse primero contra la compasión."⁶⁵

The Doctor, however, has compassion. In spite of his apparent

⁶³ Ibid., p. 93.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 146.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 78.

indifference, he is always present where his help is needed. He practices the same kind of active help as Cantaclaro's mother, Doña Nico, who takes care of the hygienic needs of the village. She is especially dedicated to the children and teaches them that intelligence is stronger than force: "Doña Nico ... era una mujer bonísima; pero a la manera como son dulces y refrescantes los frutos de las tierras secas y los climas ásperos, que esconden pulpa jugosa bajo ríspidas cortezas."⁶⁶

Retired from social affairs, Doctor Payara lives alienated from society, helpful only to people in his immediate care, and occasional patients. A reflective intellectual and a noble character, the doctor comes to the dramatic conclusion that the frustration of his life was due to the fact that he himself lived—inadvertently—a life of falsehood: "Todo el mal provenía de que aquella mentira de su paternidad no era obra del momento mas noble de su vida ... sino del temor a la deshonra ... todo había sido cobarde en el fondo, pura condescencia con la opinión de los demás, y, por tanto, engaño y mistificación de sí mismo."⁶⁷

As an individual, Doctor Payara was not a truly liberated man. He was always on the run from evil but: "Huír no es remedio cuando la curación sólo puede venir de hacerle frente a la verdad ..."⁶⁸ To face the truth with the courage of an independent mind, to be uncompromisingly hard if necessary, and to endure in a very difficult

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 187.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 170.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 174.

struggle for freedom, is the messianic message of this novel.

Through the analysis of the messianic characters in Reinaldo Solar, La Trepadora, Sobre la misma tierra, Tierra bajo los pies, Pobre Negro, La brizna de paja en el viento, Doña Bárbara, Canaima, and Cantaclaro, Rómulo Gallegos' dianoia is clear. Even when his characters meet personal defeat, Gallegos' messianic message of salvation remains in the foreground. Through the setting and his diverse characters, the author focuses on the most pressing problems of Venezuela, and the necessary work that has to be done by a new, enlightened generation.

Energetic and dedicated, Gallegos' messianic characters are aware of social, political and racial injustice and they dedicate their lives toward social amelioration. The degree of success is secondary. What matters foremost is that these people possess the necessary qualities to affect social change and that they are aware of the need to do so.

CHAPTER VI

FOLKLORIC BELIEFS: FURTHER MOTIVATIONS OF THE MESSIANIC IDEA

Rómulo Gallegos' intention to introduce the Venezuelan popular type to the reading classes, in accordance with his messianic purpose, reaches his audience intellectually and emotionally, and especially awakens feelings of compassion for the poor and neglected. Realistic details, shocking as they are, do not suffice. For the portrait to be complete it is necessary to present, in addition to the materialistic-realistic background, the spiritual-irrational world of the primitive.

The abundant use of folklore, of legends, popular ghost stories, spells, and superstitions accomplishes a variety of purposes in Gallegos' novels: It makes an appeal for civilization to spread over the country, and to replace witch doctors and magic by medicine and hygiene. From the literary point of view, folklore enriches the realistic detailing of the story. It provides relief from gloomy reality; it is interesting and amusing, and fulfills the aesthetic need for relaxation. Glimpses into popular psychology, philosophy, and morality revealed in folkloric beliefs provide a link between the intellectual and the primitive, similar to the attitude of a benevolent parent toward a child that is frightened by the creations of

its own fantasy.

A belief in magic, in ghosts, and in demons determines in many ways the behavior of people who are isolated from a higher form of civilization. Primitive peoples believe implicitly in mysteries too complicated for modern man to understand. Unpredictable natural catastrophes, undeserved bad fortune, a sudden death in the family, an incurable illness, or other misfortunes of a similar nature create in the primitive mind the concept of fate as a fearful and unknown supreme ruler of human destinies. Eager to understand and explain these mysterious phenomena, the popular imagination creates a fantastic view of the universe. It is a specific view which psychoanalysts interpret as a protective shield for man's complex emotions and instincts. Unaware of psychological reality, the primitive mind projects its fears, wishes, and anxieties onto the external world. Everything incomprehensible or uncanny belongs to another world, a foreign chaotic space peopled by ghosts and demons. The power to harm people, attributed to the souls of the dead, is extended to living individuals: magicians, sorcerers, or witches of both sexes. Hence the necessity for protective rituals, spells, incantations, and magical practices.

The system of thought contained in folklore and in ritualistic forms is universal and very old. Folkloric motifs are international, and vary only slightly in the individual cultures of the world. Gallegos' novels reveal that in the twentieth century a large part of the Venezuelan population lives in a realm of mythology. Paganism is only superficially superseded by Christianity, and the result is a fusion of the animistic and religious vision of the univers: "The

human race, if we are to follow the authorities, have [sic] in the course of ages developed . . . three great pictures of the universe: animistic (or mythological), religious and scientific."¹ In the same vein, the following observation is revealing:

At the animistic stage men ascribe omnipotence to themselves. At the religious stage they transfer it to the gods but do not seriously abandon it themselves, for they reserve the power of influencing the gods in a variety of ways according to their wishes. The scientific view of the universe no longer affords any room for human omnipotence; men have acknowledged their smallness and submitted resignedly to death and to the other necessities of nature.²

The Venezuelan rural population, judging by the evidence scrupulously gathered in the novels of Romulo Gallegos, lives at a stage between the animistic and the religious phase in the evolution of the human concept of the universe. The feeling of terror in the face of death and disasters caused by water and fire, combined with the strong instinct of man for the preservation of life, is the basic source of superstitious, and the cause of the animistic-religious traditions. The animistic attitude attributes magical powers to spirits and persons, which they are able to convey to their victims in many ways. These enemies of the living are charged with a dangerous power to create disasters at will, to harm, and to kill. The evil intended for an individual (and sometimes for a whole community) can be lifted—if properly diagnosed—by certain ceremonial or magical performances that act as an antidote for the curse. Black and white magic also move within the same circle.

¹Sigmund Freud, Totem and Taboo, trans. and ed. by James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1950), p. 77.

²Ibid., p. 88.

The ancient fear of witchcraft, which is strong among the primitive Indians of Venezuela, reaches the non-Indian population where the pagan image of ghosts and witches merges with the fearful vision of the Christian purgatory. In cases of violent death the souls, deprived of the blessing of penitence and sacramental absolution, are believed to wander the earth, bemoaning their sins and seeking vengeance against enemies. The dead threaten the life of everyone: "Las almas en pena que recogen sus malos pasos por los sitios donde los dieron: la Llorona, fantasma de las orillas de los ríos, caños o remansos y cuyos lamentos se oyen a leguas de distancia, las ánimas que rezan a coro ... el Anima Sola ... la Sayona ... *Sígueme!*"³

Sacrifices must be offered to appease the penitent souls, which are always feared as enemies of the living. To keep the dead person's ghost at a safe distance, the superstitious population resorts to pagan and Christian practices. These rites are a strange mixture of magic and prayer, and represent an ambiguous veneration of Satan and God, Satan apparently being the more powerful, in league with the dead.

The Indians leave their dead unburied, and when a chief dies they abandon their settlement and migrate further into the forest, leaving skeletons and other remnants of human life behind. Corpses left in the open decompose rapidly in a hot climate and cause sickness: "The dead, filled with a lust for murder, sought to drag the living in their train. ... It was from corpses that the concept of

³Gallegos, Doña Bárbara, p. 72.

evil spirits first arose."⁴ The belief in the omnipotence of black magic and in the destructive powers of evil persons and demonic souls subsists in the popular mind simultaneously with a latent expectation of miracles, a power attributed to the saints. Christian martyrs and saints are believed to perform specific miracles. Their sphere of influence is limited, being divided into individual functions, similar to those of pagan gods of fertility, weather, hunting and fishing, the protection of homes, and so on. Shrines are built in places where violent death occurred, and candles are lit to protect not only travelers, but even the cattle of the region as well.

The intrusion of superstitious fear into the everyday life of the population obscures their mental horizon and places them in bondage to the irrational. It slows down any attempt at enlightenment, or progressive ideas, which are rendered impotent in the face of stubborn conservatism: "Todavía se pretende curar el gusano con oraciones, y como los brujos abundan, y hasta los inteligentes terminan creyendo en ellos, no se procuran remedios."⁵ Modern civilized man is surprised by the double aspect of the rational-irrational attitude of superstitious people toward natural phenomena. People often know the natural cause of certain sounds and visions—the rushing waterfall, the mirage—but believe simultaneously that these phenomena are the manifestations and incarnations of spirits, especially of penitent souls who have been condemned to a purgatory on earth. This ambiva-

⁴Freud, Totem and Taboo, p. 59.

⁵Doña Bárbara, p. 259.

lent attitude is very common on the plains: "¿Cómo pueden ustedes darse simultáneamente las dos explicaciones contrapuestas: Saber la verdad y a la vez creer lo absurdo de un hecho cualquiera?"⁶ This is a sobering question from a student, a question that is ignored, however, by those whom he addresses. People keep talking about apparitions, afraid of the presence or of the return of the dead person's ghost: "Vamos a ver si nos deja dormir tranquilos el Anima Sola ... la Llorona ... se aparece ... a diez leguas se escucha el quejido ... los espantos del agua son peores que los de la tierra."⁷ Even animals change into phantoms. Isolated people refer to the wolf, the dog, meaning something quite different from just a wolf, or a dog. Magical transformations of inanimate objects, e.g., stones logs, saddles, trees, and even words pronounced in a certain way in specific circumstances are feared as a threat: "... todas las palabras que se pronuncian estando a solas, que es como generalmente se halla el hombre por estas tierras, se convierten en fantasmas."⁸ Doctor Payara, one of the main characters in Cantaclaro, was endowed by popular imagination with this double aspect. He was simultaneously a real person and a demon. People knew him as a helpful and efficient doctor, but they feared him also as a man possessed of Satanical powers. He was called "El Diablo de Cunaviche ... que se aparece por allí cuando llegan forasteros y los hace seguir su marcha sin dejarlos descansar[er]."⁹ A legend concerning the doctor's grandfather contributed

⁶Cantaclaro, p. 23.

⁷Ibid., p. 21.

⁸Ibid., p. 27

⁹Ibid., p. 25.

to the mystery of the Diablo de Cunaviche. Aquilino Payara hated women, and in his last will he forbade any woman to enter his house. However, he did not let matters stand at that:

... no se contentó con la cláusula testamentaria ... sino que 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: el trote de un caballo que se acercaba empezando a oírse al punto de medianoche, su brusca parada ante la casa ... el jinete echaba pie a tierra ... penetraba, traspasando las puertas cerradas, y se llegaba hasta las camas de las intrusas para echarlas de allí sacudiéndolas."¹⁰

To protect oneself against a spell, the sign of the cross usually suffices. The daredevil Cantaclaro is not free from superstitious fears, and even he crosses himself dutifully to keep malignant spirits away:

Por ser la primera vez
que yo en estas tierras canto
me hago la cruz en la frente
por librarme del espanto.¹¹

When frightened, people cross themselves, say prayers, or recite magical incantations. Some disguise themselves in order to conceal their identity, or they change their names and wear protective amulets:

" ... al pecho ... terciado el escapulario de la Virgen del Carmen, junto con la mugrienta almohadilla del amuleto donde cada cual lleva un trozo de su propio cordón umbilical disecado, para que lo libre de daños y peligros la madre, viva o muerta, a la que así siempre se mantiene unido."¹² A witch or a sorcerer often needs to be in possession of something that belongs to the intended victim: hair, nails,

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 89.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 43.

¹² Pobre Negro, p. 19.

a piece of clothing. In some cases an effigy must be made. The black magic consists in the belief that whatever harm is done to the effigy is done to the living original.

All those ancient practices of sorcery, magic rituals and miraculous potions, similar to the Faustian ambitions of the age of the alchemists, are still alive in Venezuela and are performed with the intention of giving a sinister power to the initiated, a power to shape reality according to their wishes, thereby commanding fate. The success of Doña Bárbara was attributed to the fact that she was instructed in witchcraft by wise Indians: "... la iniciaron en su tenebrosa sabiduría toda la caterva de brujos que cría la bárbara existencia de la indiada. Los ojeadores ... sopladores ... ensalmadores ... las más groseras y extravagantes supersticiones."¹³

A diabolical power resides in the eyes of the dañeros, and there is terrible force in herbs and roots, used as aphrodisiacs and potions. Charms must be met with counter-charms; a person must be careful not to give any part of his body or of his possessions to the magician. Among other protective instructions, there is the taboo of the name: a person should not betray his name to a stranger. "No me lo dirá por nada del mundo. Ellos creen que entregan algo de su persona cuando dan su nombre verdadero."¹⁴ The Indians are very careful to keep their real names secret: "In the view of primitive man, one of the most important parts of a person is his name. So that if one knows the

¹³Doña Bárbara, p. 37.

¹⁴Canaima, p. 18.

name of a man or of a spirit, one has obtained a certain amount of power over the owner of the name."¹⁵ Analogies between the studies of primitive psychology by Freud, brilliantly interpreted in his book Totem and Taboo, and Gallegos' presentation of the popular beliefs and magic rituals of Venezuelan Indians, Negroes, Whites, and Meztizos in rural regions are striking. Gallegos is fascinated by the poetic aspect of legends, ghost stories, and by the entire attitude of the primitive mind toward the supernatural, manifested in nature and in human fate; but he is at the same time repelled and saddened by the abysmal primitivism, stupidity and stubbornness of the superstitious, frightened people. They are very conservative in their beliefs and practices, and are suspicious of any innovations. Consequently, they are often incapable of receiving enlightenment. Various political movements and social utopian schemes are popular with the masses, and are of mythological structure and religious significance, stemming from superstitious attitudes toward the pseudo-occult. Rational arguments against the irrational are not convincing for people who live in the mythological age.

Customs and rituals related to hunting are amusing: "De cacería, iniciándose en las candorosas supersticiones aprendió [Marcos Vargas] que la presa no debía sacarse del monte sin precaución de cortarle y enterrar las orejas en el sitio donde hubiera caído y atarle luego las patas de dos en dos y con cierto bejuco, pues de lo

¹⁵Freud, Totem and Taboo, p. 81.

contrario nunca volvería a tropezarse el cazador con otro semejante."¹⁶ The tiger hunter, the Indian Solito, demands to be paid with gold coins. The legend says that he buries the gold in the soil from which it was extracted in order to appease angry spirits who cause calamities, and to punish the impertinent people for robbing the earth: " ... [Solito] exige que se le pague con una esterlina y dicen que es para enterrarlas para devolvérselas a la tierra de donde fue extraído el oro, que según él es la causa de la maldición ..."¹⁷

Gold and treasures buried in the earth haunt the popular imagination. In Venezuela and in all of Latin America, the general belief is that the Spanish Conquistadores used to hide their riches in monasteries, and the prosperity of monastic communities is vividly remembered in legends. In popular legends, there is usually an apparition of a monk, who indicates to the fortunate ones where the buried treasure lies: " ... la noticia de la aparición del fraile ... se dejaba ver por allí desde tiempo inmemorial inmóvil en un claro de la sabana a punto de salir la luna y murmurando con voz cavernosa, que a muchos les había puesto los pelos de punta — ¡Aquí, aquí, aquí!"¹⁸ Such treasures, however, if they exist beyond the legends, remain buried. It is better to resist the temptation of looking for gold, for it is considered to be sacrilegious to disturb the peace of the occult world, the "cosas de ultratumba, que nunca traen buena suerte."¹⁹

¹⁷Ibid., p. 40

¹⁸Ibid., p. 94.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 92.

Birds and animals also have magic powers. They often warn and help people. Certain birds sing only where rich veins of gold are to be found, others are incarnations of evil intentions. Prophetic gifts are usually attributed to a half-wit or a village idiot, who is able to interpret the behavior of birds and to predict crimes: "Greñudo, piojoso y con una barba hirsuta ... era el recadero de Doña Bárbara, un bobo con alternativas de lunático furioso ... unos pájaros fantásticos que denominaba rebullones ... una especie de materialización de los malos instintos de Doña Bárbara ... pájaros diabólicos."²⁰

Animals do not seek revenge, as do humans. The spirits of dead animals, buried alive in the foundations of a mansion, protect the property: "Building sacrifice is closely bound to the cosmogonic myth of life produced from the immolation of a primordial being: If a construction is to endure (be it house, temple, tool, etc.) it must be animated, that is, it must receive life and soul. The transfer of the soul is possible only through a blood sacrifice. The history of religions, ethnology, folklore, record countless forms of building sacrifices."²¹ In Venezuela, bulls offered in a cruel ritual become the guardian spirits of the landowner. The apparition of el familiar, as such sacrificial animals are called, always means a change of affairs toward good luck, prosperity and happiness.

Benevolent spirits coexist with the malignant ones; people commend themselves to the protection of good spirits. Not only patron

²⁰ Doña Bárbara, pp. 173-74.

²¹ Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, p. 56.

saints, but the souls of innocent victims are venerated as powerful protectors. Shrines erected along a road where a murder took place are common in the provinces. Travelers invoke the help of these spirits: "Parasco fué un carrero de alma bondadosa a cuya ánima se recomendaban todos los de Juruarí cuando se ponían en camino ... A orillas del camino está el rústico mausoleo que le levantaron los del gremio ... ofrendas de velas ... luces para su convoy invisible."²²

A special group among the spirits are ghostly jokers who frighten people just for fun. They drive cattle around in order to annoy the rancher, they enter the house and defy the inhabitants to fight with them; they like to sit in the rocking chairs and rock violently:

"El Muerto de La Carata" arrea los ganados de aquí para allá sólo por molestar los dueños de la finca, se llega hasta las puertas de las casas e insulta a sus habitantes desafiándolos a pelear con él, con airadas palabras en el aire, sin forma visible de donde provengan, o se mete en ellas, se apodera de las mecedoras, por las cuales demuestra rara predilección y comienza a moverse violentamente.²³

Jesting spirits are very popular. Stories of humorous ghosts, los cuenta-embustes, are abundant in Venezuelan folklore. They provide distraction from the oppressing fears of the occult, and they testify to the need for relaxation. Benevolent spirits are internationally popular in all mythologies. Similar to the Roman protectors of the home, the Lares and Penates, are the spirits that populate the northern countries, the "little people," such as leprechauns or Heinzelmannlein, as they are known in the north. In the southern Slavic

²²Canaima, p. 78

²³Ibid., pp. 78-79.

countries they are known as domonyky (Latin dom=house), and in Venezuela they are called el muñeco: "Es superchería muy generalizada en el bajo pueblo venezolano, que cuando alguien desempeña con acierto y prontitud los haceres de su oficio, sin dar muestras de excesiva laboriosidad, se le crea asistido de la colaboración de un duende familiar y propicio, al cual se denomina su muñeco."²⁴

Such amusing and highly poetical stories do not, however, counterbalance the gloom of the ever-threatening supraterrrestrial world. Superstitious, frightened people are easy prey to false prophets who predict the end of the world, or to fanatics calling for collective penitence and promising salvation for their followers. Pseudo-religious movements of that kind arise sporadically in times of extreme crisis, in which the very existence of the community is at stake. The Black Death that raged in Europe in the fourteenth century terrified the people, driving them to extremes of religious madness, and creating penitential sectarianism, and cruel sacrifices to the demanding god of wrath. Superstitions revive in times of cultural transition characterized by chaos, disorientation and despair. This is visible even in our own nuclear age, heavy as it is with apocalyptic anxieties. Self-appointed political leaders, rebels for rebellion's sake, and "God-sent" messengers claiming to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, gain followers easily when " ... todo ... está revuelto esperando el fin del mundo."²⁵

²⁴Cantaclaro, p. 157.

²⁵Ibid., p. 132.

Chapter IV of Cantaclaro discusses the impact of El Profeta on the masses. He is in reality a vulgar, demented visionary, without any messianic characteristics. But solely through his oratory and the hypnotic power of his eyes, he is able to gather hundreds of people around him. His only message is a vision of the end of the world, supposedly revealed to him in a premonitory dream in which, as a special grace, the only gate to salvation was indicated to him. Since the entrance to Paradise is restricted to this single portal, the false prophet persuades the people to follow him:

Todo ese llano se está ... en marcha detrás de él. Peonadas enteras que abandonan los hatos por donde él pasa, anunciando apocalipsis. Un gran candela que ya está prendida en las cuatro puntas del mundo, de donde viene esta gran humareda que cubre todo el llano. Una gran culebra de fuego que viene rodeando la tierra, pero que no se empatará, por el lugar donde estuvo la puerta del Paraíso, que sólo el Profeta sabe donde es, porque el Señor se lo reveló en un sueño muy especial ...²⁶

The popular acceptance of pseudo-religious and socio-political doctrines have a variety of causes. Frustrated people, hampered in the development of an economically prosperous life, illiterate people, the poor, weighed down by adversity, fear impending doom and hope for miracles. This attitude of latent expectation, assisted by popular beliefs in curses, black magic, spells and other occult powers, pushes the impoverished masses into rebellion, civil war and magico-religious pilgrimages. The consequences are disastrous: work is abandoned, people turn to robbing or begging for food, cattle disappear from the fields, and the neglected soil renders no harvest.

The messianic generation of Venezuelan intellectuals as envisioned

²⁶ Ibid., p. 133.

by Gallegos will face tremendous obstacles in their battle for enlightenment. Not only must witch doctors be defeated by medical science, not only must unsavory customs be eliminated by hygienic measures, the entire attitude of the people must be changed completely. It is implicit in Gallegos' novels that legends, ghost stories, miracles and mysteries must be relegated to the realm of folklore where they belong. They deserve survival as poetry and ethnology, but the irrational fear of spirits, of black magic and of demons must not be permitted to determine the behavior of the people. It is to be hoped that technological and economic advances will effect a dramatic change in the attitudes of the populace. Until such a change occurs, however, they will continue to see in the unpredictability of nature and the evanescence of human fortunes the workings of malignant spirits.

CHAPTER VII
ESSENCE AND IMPACT OF GALLEGOS'
MESSIANIC IDEOLOGY

The life-giving force of Gallegos' writings is ideologically and aesthetically his messianic idea of justice and salvation. The overwhelming moral sense of justice generates two basic messianic emotions in Gallegos: love and hatred. Alternating throughout his work, these two vital passions correspond to the double image of Christ the Savior: as Love, consoling people with tenderness and hope, and as Hatred, enraged against them for corruption in the temple. Love for the noble and hatred for the evil in human nature provide Gallegos' novels with a dimension of vitality which transcends the didactic tendency of his sociological messianism. The moralist and teacher recedes to bring to the foreground the deeply felt messianic emotions.

Guided by a powerfully developed social consciousness and strong moral rectitude, Gallegos demands justice above all. Passionate by temperament as a humanist and poet, Gallegos is at the same time an objective observer. A man of sober disposition relying on the facts of experience, he analyzes the structure of the Venezuela of his times in all its ramifications. The premise of his analysis is his conviction that a well-organized and properly functioning state must be concerned with the spiritual as well as the physical aspects of the individuals who form the human community. What follows from this

conviction is the primary importance of the moral education of political leaders and their followers. No satisfactory human society can be formed without regard for morality and justice. Santos Luzardo in Doña Bárbara devotes his life toward this goal.

For Gallegos, teaching proficiency in citizenship is equivalent to teaching ethics: how to become good and honest. To achieve this, one has to acquire the Socratic knowledge of virtue.

By this 'knowledge' he [Socrates] did not mean of course a purely theoretical knowledge which needed only to be learnt, but an unshakeable conviction based on the deepest insight into and realisation of what is really valuable in life, a conviction such as he himself possessed.¹

Gallegos subscribes fully to this belief. Man's conduct individually and socially depends on his knowledge of moral virtue. Hence his conviction that only a completely new concept of politics in the sense of moral education of the people could bring about any improvement in the state of social affairs. In Pobre Negro, Cecilio el Viejo educates Pedro Miguel toward this responsibility.

Gallegos does not only philosophize about the moral regeneration of the state in general terms. Throughout his novels, he indicates the possibilities as well as the limitations of a new socio-political structure based on justice. Gallegos agrees that man's well-being is his own private affair but he argues that man's physical well-being is public responsibility and depends on lawfulness. Evils within society come from the corruption of the individuals in power. Marcos Vargas

¹Eduard Zeller, Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy, trans. and ed. by L. R. Palmer (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1958), p. 119.

in Canaima was ruined financially by the corrupt mayor José Francisco Ardavín. Unscrupulous despots, such as the rich landowner Don Orozco in Tierra bajo los pies, as well as undisciplined masses, those who blindly follow the false prophet in Cantaclaro, are dangerous for the welfare of the state. A remedy leading to improvement is not to be found in constant replacement of one government by another, neither in the legislative equalization of all men. In his novels, notably in Pobre Negro, Sobre la misma tierra, and La Trepadora, Gallegos promotes a social order based on proportional equality according to which the rights of the individual correspond to his merits.

The awareness of great disproportion in civil rights was growing among the idealistic youth of Gallegos' contemporaries, evident in the author's first novel, Reinaldo Solar. But no one except Gallegos articulated this feeling so powerfully. His messianic novels shaped and voiced these nascent social undercurrents and cried out for the regeneration of Venequela as a state based on justice. Thus Gallegos fulfilled a writer's vocation:

...the artist is the vessel of his country's selfhood, the speaker who has arisen among his² countrymen to articulate if not to immortalize their age.

Gallegos' novels shape the social structure of his times. With Ibsen and Shaw he shares the realistic approach in the analysis of an individual within a given social structure. Through the characters Hilario and Victoria in La Trepadora, Gallegos explores both the rural

²Robert W. Corrigan, ed., Theatre in the Twentieth Century (New York: Grove Press, 1963), p. 34.

and the urban society of Venezuela. Mostly dealing with the life of the poor, he satirically exposes philistinism and insincere liberalism. In dissecting the state's politics, economics and social ethics, Gallegos does not stop, however, at criticism for its own sake which in most cases leads to pessimism. The criticism of administrative authorities, especially strong in Doña Bárbara, Canaima, and Cantaclaro, is incorporated into his messianic goal as a vehement protest against abuses. His passion for justice can well be equaled to Voltaire's:

Das Grundpathos seines ganzen Lebens war...ein flammendes Rechtsgefühl, ein heisser, verzehrender, fast trunkener Hass gegen jede Art öffentlicher Willkür, Dummheit, Bosheit, Parteilichkeit. Wenn die Welt heute nur noch zu zwei Fünfteln aus Schurken und zu drei Achteln aus Idioten besteht, so ist das zu einem guten Teil Voltaire zu verdanken.³

Gallegos' messianic novels may rightly claim the same Voltarian merit. They instilled awareness in ignorant minds and recruited the better minority for the messianic purpose. Since Gallegos' novels, the intelligentsia had to answer the urgent question:

"The country one lives in is in trouble...Do I really belong to it heart and soul? Or don't I? If I don't, then I can smash or leave it...But if I do belong to it, then I must adapt myself to the slow process of history, by work, by persuasion, and gradual change."⁴

In Gallegos' phrase the nación de pilatos finally realized that a citizen could not wash his hands, discarding all civic responsibilities, but had to become involved, involved in a slow process of

³Egon Friedell, Kulturgeschichte des Neuzeits, p. 640.

⁴Alexander Solzhenitsyn, August 1914, trans. by Michael Glenny (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1972), p. 583.

gradual change. Sporadic local revolutions that take place in Gallegos' novels attest to their futility. Even heroic death for the cause is useless. Solzhenitsyn's phrase echoes Gallegos' conviction:

The process of history is much more complex than you, with your crude plans to lay violent hands on it, can imagine.⁵

Gallegos dedicated his life and his writings to the national cause in all its aspects. The author himself powerfully states this:

Yo escribí mis libros con el oído puesto sobre las palpitaciones de la angustia venezolana... uno de ellos fue leído dentro de las cárceles donde se castigaba... la justa rebeldía de los jóvenes.⁶

All the messianic characters in Gallegos' novels, notably Santos Luzardo in Doña Bárbara, Remota Montiel in Sobre la misma tierra, and Marcos Vargas in Canaima, are conscious of their civic obligations, even to the degree of self-sacrifice. They attest to the fact that the author never separates the man from the citizen, the individual from the community. Only the two elements in symbiosis make the whole man:

...tanto más se pertenece uno a sí mismo cuando más tenga su pensamiento y su voluntad, su vida entera puesta al servicio de un ideal colectivo.⁷

Gallegos became a national hero. Every outline of Venezuelan history praises the author as a national leader. His fame as the defender of the underdog spread widely throughout the country. People

⁵Ibid., p. 583.

⁶Gallegos, "Mensaje al otro superviviente de unas contemplaciones ya lejanas", Una posición en la vida (México: Ediciones Humanismo, 1954), p. 383

⁷Ibid.

looked up to him as to a messiah who promised hope for a better life. In his memoirs, Gallegos singles out an unforgettable experience which brings to light how the people felt about him. Once a woman came to see him:

...era una mujer del pueblo...limpiamente negra, con aspecto de eficaz trabajadora doméstica y mirada de buen ser humano... y cuando ya espero el pedimento de algun auxilio...murmura con entrecortada voz:
-Bueno. Ya puedo irme porque ya lo conocí.⁸

Gallegos' comment on this almost biblical experience further attests to his dedication to the people:

No vale bien toda una vida esa ingenua emoción de un alma sencilla y humilde, pero atravesada de viejas esperanzas nunca satisfechas? Esa gran esperanza mesiánica...⁹

The motif of waiting is very strong in Gallegos' messianism. The poor look up to the privileged ones in expectation. Gallegos urges the intelligentsia to abandon their exclusiveness, get to know the rural masses, become aware of their problems and, most of all, to get involved. Remota Montiel in Sobre la misma tierra is one among many of Gallegos' messianic characters who works for justice. Gallegos also calls for radical changes in the attitudes within the middle class from which national leaders are recruited. Political positions must not be looked upon as a means for personal ambition, power and wealth, but have to be sought with full realization of the responsibility for the welfare of all citizens. Aware of this fact, the student Martín Salcedo in Cantaclaro goes in search for Doctor Payara to lead a new liberal group.

⁸Ibid., p. 384.

⁹Ibid., p. 385.

The hypothetical messianic generation of leaders as envisioned by Gallegos has to sacrifice personal comfort, lucrative jobs and a peaceful life for the needs of the hitherto neglected people—the illiterate, exploited, hardworking rural population. The new government has to be concerned not so much with the distribution of material goods as with the creation of adequate economic opportunities. Welfare measures are useless and demoralizing, for the people possess tremendous latent energy which will be productive when given the opportunity.

Like Solzhenitsyn, Gallegos sees in the pueblo a vigorous, inexhaustible spiritual strength. Hardened through perpetual struggle against hostile nature, hampered by corrupt regimes the people, nevertheless, are stubbornly determined to endure.

...just as stones dragged along by a glacier survive the melting ...simply lying where they are so [the peasants] sat it out and were not dislodged. Ingrained in them was the lesson inherited from their forefathers, the inexorable lesson of centuries: suffering must be borne, there is no way out.¹⁰

Both authors attest to the spiritual strength of the rural population in comparing it to indestructible elements in nature. The rural population offers a strong contrast to the uprooted urban classes whose narrow, comfortable existence and unhampered morality submerge the spirit into matter, and human values become reduced to standards of socio-economic efficiency.

There is more humanity in the sense of ethical rectitude and nobility of character among the humble people, such as Pedro Miguel,

¹⁰Solzhenitsyn, August 1914, p. 247.

Juan Coromoto, Marcos Vargas, than among the privileged ones, such as the landowner Don Orozco, the mayor Vellorini, and the aristocratic del Casal family, a fact observed by Gallegos who carefully avoided unrealistic sentimental apotheoses of the lower classes.

Gallegos' vision of a human being within a social structure is of vast scope; it never rests in the narrow boundaries of a melioristic sociology. And without this supra-materialistic vision, without messianism in all its aspects as the dianoia of his writings, Gallegos' novels could have been schematic, unilinear, predictable social commentary.

Gallegos sought to integrate matter and spirit, intellect and emotion. He achieved a refinement of ethical feeling in his messianic characters. Marcos Vargas, Pedro Miguel, Reinaldo Solar, Santos Luzardo are vivid reflections of the essential parts of his own soul. Gallegos' messianic novels are impregnated with the undefineable essence of humanity, with a delicate sense of the human situation individually and socially. He believed that there was more to the rebirth of society than a technological, economic, or even an intellectual change.

Love and justice set against corrupt administrations, education and skill set against the harsh aloofness of nature is the leitmotif of Gallegos' novels. The author operates repeatedly with this subject matter: the conflict between Don Orozco, the landowner, and the agrarian reformist Chano Gracián; Santos Luzardo versus Doña Bárbara and all she stands for; Marcos Vargas against the corruption and injustice in the rural region of Canaima.

Centered on the most pathetic of people, on the helpless, long suffering rural population, Gallegos' messianic novels do not call so much for better living conditions, as for a profound understanding of the people's soul. His novels call for love and dedication which would enable the new generation of leaders to solve the most urgent problems within the nation.

Gallegos' novels do not deal in the strictest sense with social problems; they focus on moral problems having social implications. Society for Gallegos is not only a sociological concept but above all a moral one. His messianism reflects the author's imagination haunted by the ideal of what man and society might be if he could realize his humanity to perfection. This special human dimension of Gallegos' social messianism singles him out from a majority of social writers; the difference being of a sometimes excellent social commentary and passionately lived messianic hopes.

The ideological ferment caused by Gallegos' writings is significant. They set in motion a nationwide deliberation, reawakened concern and created an atmosphere of public opinion and pressure which could no longer be ignored by the authorities. Books are power. Gallegos believed in his literary mission: to stir the conscience of the nation. When raging against bureaucratic arbitrariness and dishonesty of the government, the author, true to his mission, appeals foremost to his nation's conscience. He rages against corruption and extends his love to the exploited suffering population. Thus hatred and love, the two par excellence messianic emotions, complement each other in Gallegos' novels causing a nationwide concern.

The emphasis on messianism as the *dianoia* in Gallegos' novels should not create the erroneous impression that the author operates only with abstract ideas. Dialogues, debates, particular situations, fate and history of individuals and families, illustrate proficiently Gallegos' directives for practical changes leading to moral and ensuing social improvement.

Gallegos is concerned with the waste of national wealth—in water, field and forest, especially evident in Canaima.

Imagínese lo que significa para Guayana y quizá para todo el país el aprovechamiento de estas caídas de agua...millares de caballos de fuerza los que se están perdiendo en estos saltos.¹¹

He urges the adequate scientific use of natural resources. He points out glaring shortcomings in the national economy and the indolence of a self-centered government. In spite of this, the author does not present any specific political or social program, nor is he concerned with this. He leaves the details to the new generation of leaders, making only strong basic demands in the area of racial integration, notably in Pobre Negro, just treatment of all social classes in Sobre la misma tierra, and urgently calls for special attention to be given to the rural population in Canaima and Cantaclaro.

Gallegos is decidedly in favor of a peaceful evolution. He speaks out against violence:

Este mal [revolution] es incurable. Está en la sangre. Somos incapaces para la obra paciente y silenciosa. Queremos hacerlo todo de un golpe; por eso nos seduce la forma violenta de la revolución armada.¹²

¹¹Gallegos, Canaima, p. 70.

¹²Gallegos, Reinaldo Solar, p. 152.

To avoid senseless revolutions the rapprochement of those above and those below must be reached. Gallegos' emphasis on this point is of primary importance. He intentionally dwells at length on the ways of life, environment, customs, folklore of popular characters. His purpose is to endear those people to the alienated urban society, to set in motion a populist movement with the hope that a constructive cooperation among the classes will begin.

Changes for the better must come from the professionally and ethically educated upper class. The lower classes, mostly in rural areas, must regain confidence in the leaders and accept important innovations.

Gallegos had his doubts and moments of hopelessness when considering the bridging of a century-long cleft between the classes. He was aware of insoluble dilemmas facing the new messianic generation of social builders trying to break through the wall of popular disillusionment, suspicion and mistrust on one side and the proverbial official corruption on the other. But adverse circumstances and difficult problems must spur courageous men to face the challenge. The fighting, activist spirit of Gallegos' messianism is effective because its call for work and sacrifice is genuine, a deeply felt conviction.

Gallegos, to be sure, is a writer of predominantly national importance. His concern and love belong to Venezuela. Some problems under discussion of dynamic actuality for the agrarian Venezuela of his time, a country even today far behind the technological age, might be of little interest or even obsolete in the atomic complexity of a technologically developed society. Problems dictated by a given historical

situation are, however, secondary issues. What matters is the author's attitude toward the problems, toward the human being as an individual living in that community.

Gallegos' strong ethical personality is the primary outstanding issue reflected in his writings, overshadowing specific temporary items. Thus Gallegos' literary inheritance transcends national boundaries, his messianism goes beyond a specific moment in the history of his nation, and transcending space and time with its predominant humanitarian qualities, becomes timeless, universal.

CHAPTER VIII

SYNTHESIS OF GALLEGOS' MESSIANISM IN THE STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS OF HIS NOVELS

The artistic structure of Gallegos' novels is determined by the messianic myth. Christ, as the central symbol in the myth, is presented in a double aspect: as a Teacher, Saviour, Leader and, as an innocent victim excluded from society, the archetype of the scapegoat. Since Gallegos' messianism is socially oriented, these two aspects are interchangeably emphasized. The purely religious essence of Christ as God disappears in Gallegos' writings behind the Saviour-Victim image. When socially interpreted, the image corresponds to the divisions within society which for Gallegos is of primary concern. His heroes are leaders, deliverers from social evils and victims, scapegoats—all fighting within a corrupt community.

Gallegos made a conscious choice of possibilities open to every creative writer: the choice between solipsistic, introspective, contemplative and an outgoing, suggestive, didactic literature. His decision to become a socially oriented writer is the story of Cecilio el Joven, created as the author's double.

...le había puesto prisiones a las tendencias contemplativas porque...de espíritu constructivo...podía dar de sí mismo mucho que algún día le permitiese ser un hombre con las soluciones de problemas de otros hombres, en sus manos abiertas para todos.¹

¹Gallegos, Pobre Negro, pp. 132-33.

Gallegos' choice, dramatized in the character of Cecilio el Joven, was in harmony with his personality, with his political activities and with the ideological current of his times. To discuss social problems in literature was for him not only a duty born out of conviction, but a sincere desire which, when linked with the messianic myth, became his artistic inspiration. Gallegos the writer never ceased being the teacher above all:

Pero si es verdad que su profesión ha sido la de escritor, su vocación más profunda ha sido la de educar.²

A conscious attitude toward a writer's aim imposes teleological directions which in most cases imply limitations of his aesthetic creativity. Such an objection, however, known in literary criticism as teleological fallacy, applies to artists forced to respect censorship or eager to comply with a literary fashion. It follows that such an objection cannot be applied to a writer who freely chooses for himself the subject matter and form of his work. This choice can lead to art for art's sake, an attitude taken by artists hostile to the society with no hope of changing it. But Gallegos' aim was exactly the opposite. He wanted to change society for the better. He not only believed in that possibility, but considered it his duty to contribute constructive thoughts about aims and methods for his envisioned messianic generation.

All structural elements in Gallegos' novels diverge from and converge toward the myth of salvation which is the unifying frame

²Angel Damboriena, Rómulo Gallegos y la problemática venezolana (Caracas: Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, 1960), p. 125.

of his creative work. The messianic myth is closely linked in his novels with the propagation of Goodness, Truth and Beauty. These are the concepts to which Gallegos' aesthetics are subordinated; basic concepts unified by the messianic myth. He writes for the good of his nation and mankind, he tells the truth, pleasant or unpleasant, and his prose creates beauty.

Gallegos' allegiance to Goodness and Truth classifies him basically as a realistic writer with humanitarian tendencies. His sensitivity to beauty and mystery, however, endows his realism with romantic overtones emotionally and with impressionistic cultivation of form aesthetically.

Impressionistic features of Gallegos' prose are his ability to create an atmosphere of a specific mood, to capture delicate play of light and shadow, and to create visual images of characteristic movements and situations:

Una inquietud indiscernible que iba apoderándose de su ánimo en remitencias periódicas. Una impresión ya casi visual de cierta sombra proyectada sobre ella, de algo espantosamente negro, que fuera a echársele encima por momentos. Cerraba los ojos, temerosa de que aquello se hiciese de un tono visible, y era entonces una horrible noche oscura...³

Insensibles al tórrido sol los bronceados cuerpos sudorosos, apenas cubiertos por unos mugrientos pantalones remangados a los muslos...⁴

Although realistic in his tendency to explore socio-political situations, artistically Gallegos is a poet and mystic "cuyo rea-

³Pobre Negro, pp. 23-24.

⁴Doña Bárbara, p. 9.

lismo alcanza una asombrosa capacidad evocadora".⁵ His temperament cannot sustain the objective realism of a disinterested observer; he cannot control his emotions which erupt with indignation, anger, pity and suffering:

Negro bueno, pobre negro de mi pueblo venezolano...Negro bueno, sufrido y rebelde...¿Hasta cuándo estarás muriendo a los pies de tu jefe?⁶

Although Gallegos' novels are linked with the realists and naturalists thematically, more often the artist leaves the earthly social plane. In his novels, the realistic setting, the factual problematics, and the didactic tendency are contained within a superstructure in "...el trasmundo de la obra".⁷ His world oscillates between immanence and transcendence. In his poetical vision the empirical reality merges with a mystical consciousness of the mysteries of existence. This irrational aspect of Gallegos, mimetic reality, the mysteries of nature, the demonic complexities inside and outside the human being, obliterates to a great extent his social tendencies in favor of aesthetic values.

Gran parte del mérito literario de Rómulo Gallegos estriba en que ha sabido aprovechar y sublimar las esencias más puras de la corriente criollista del costumbrismo y la perfección estilística del modernismo.⁸

⁵F.S.R., "Nota Preliminar" in Canaima, p. 13.

⁶Cantaclaro, p. 214.

⁷Ramiro Mata, Ricardo Güiraldes, José Eustacio Rivera, Rómulo Gallegos (Montevideo: 1961), p. 137.

⁸Angel Damboriena, Rómulo Gallegos y la problemática venezolana, p. 86.

Gallegos' style is a mosaic of sober realistic, rational statements about characters and their actions, and of dreamlike impressionistic flashes about nature, its impact on man and the coincidence of opposites which is our existence.

Technically, Gallegos' sentences and paragraphs tend toward expansion. He uses a prolonged prose filled with adjectives. His pace of narration progresses slowly, full of details.

Alzaronse con ruidoso vuelo torpe las negras y repugnantes aves necrófagas que allí se regalaban con el festín de las podredumbres en los cuerpos de las reses recién muertas, entre las peladas osamentas de otras muchas que ya habían sido devoradas, y el camión pasó a toda velocidad a través de la pestilencia de que estaba saturado el aire.⁹

In addition to extended paragraphs, marked in Gallegos' style is the agglomeration of qualifying adjectives and individualizing nouns: "...agua negra, sucia y fea...mono arrugado, parvudo, aterrido...crímenes, monstruosidades, torturas."¹⁰

Carefully chosen, the sequences of complimentary or antithetic adjectives, "tierras salvajes, insalubres, inhóspitas",¹¹ sustain the imagery and the mood providing musicality and flow to the narration, a technique favored by the modernists.

Sólo los hombres estaban enteros todavía, derechos sobre las bestias jadeantes, insensibles al hambre y a la sed; roncos de gritar, pero aun cantando...¹²

⁹Sobre la misma tierra, p. 141

¹⁰Canaima, pp. 233 and 216.

¹¹Doña Bárbara, p. 229.

¹²Ibid., (Italics mine)

One of the most beautiful passages also illustrative of Gallegos' modernist style, is the description of Santiago Argimírez' horse in Tierra bajo los pies:

Una hermosa bestia...Blanco, sin un pelo de otro color, sedosas las crines, rosados los belfos, finos y fuertes los remos, brillantes los ojos y una sensibilidad tan briosa que al tocarlo, apenas, se le estremecía todo el cuerpo...¹³

Gallegos' stylistic mastery is striking. He is able to capture living nature, not matter subjected to mechanical laws, but spirit which manifests itself in forces beyond human control and comprehension. A number of Gallegos' critics, Ramiro W. Mata, Juan Liscano, Pedro Diaz Seijas, and Angel Damboriena emphasize his talent to vitalize nature:

El paisaje..es algo mas que telón de escenario; aún más que fondo luminoso mediante el cual adquiere sentido la palabra y transcendencia la acción, es resonancia espiritualizada, es animismo y relación poética de las cosas en un paralelismo vital con los personajes y sus emociones; es, también representación plástica exterior de un estado de alma.¹⁴

A stylistic device, the apostrophe, which Gallegos often employs, further vitalizes nature. Direct address to nature and to abstract characters alternate with lyrical passages. The author and his characters are interwoven in the tapestry of man-nature dialogues which usually begin with explosive apostrophes:

¡Llano! ¡Llano! ¡Por qué lo hiciste tan grande y tan seco, Dios mío?...¡Llano! ¡Llano!¹⁵

¹³Tierra bajo los pies, p. 73.

¹⁴A. Damboriena, Rómulo Gallegos y la problemática venezolana, p. 86.

¹⁵Gallegos, Cantaclaro, p. 40.

¡Llanero, abandona el trabajo que te esclaviza al hombre, ensilla tu caballo y sígueme! Era una voz antigua, pero siempre oportuna, a cuyo encuentro salía el alma del llanero...pero quizá también la gran voz que arrebató el corazón de todo un pueblo mesiánico...¹⁶

Connected with the frequent use of the apostrophic exclamation is the author's direct commentary on the actions of his characters, on causes and results, on situations and problems. Whenever this freedom of the omniscient author is carried too far, if the comments explain obvious symbols, it is aesthetically a drawback. Thus, for example, an effective self-evident symbol in Doña Bárbara is the fence, la cerca. Needlessly, the author explains what it stands for:

¡La cerca! El símbolo central del orden: todo lo que contribuyese a suprimir ferocidad...¹⁷

Such an explanation destroys the symbol. Its essence is indirect, suggestive connotation, its content complex and beyond verbalization. This is one area where the teacher in Gallegos supersedes the artist. At times like this, he is too conscious of the ideology he wants to convey.

Gallegos' literary language changes depending on the theme and setting. When the author writes about the city and its dwellers, the language is straightforward, balanced, matter-of-fact prose. But when he talks about nature, the provinces and its humble inhabitants, the language becomes feverish, exalted, full of tension.

To heighten a specific emotion or mood, Gallegos likes to use

¹⁶Ibid., p. 146.

¹⁷Doña Bárbara, p. 125.

repetitions of key words or key motifs:

¡Arboles! ¡Arboles! ¡Arboles!...la exasperante monotonía de la variedad infinita, lo abrumador de lo múltiple...hasta el embrutecimiento...la grandeza estaba en la infinidad... repetición obsesionante de un motivo único al parecer. ¡Arboles! ¡Arboles! ¡Arboles!¹⁸

Exalted lyrical passages such as the above disappear when Gallegos writes about the city:

Caracas no era sino un pueblo grande, con mil puertas abiertas al asalto de los hombres de presa, algo muy distante todavía de la ciudad ideal...¹⁹

The disparity in style when writing about the city and when writing about the rural areas, goes hand in hand with Gallegos' messianic purpose. He is foremost an advocate of the humble people, the humiliated and the poor; he is an activist for their salvation.

Si mis simpatías están con el pueblo, es porque este representa la porción sufrida, la porción oprimida por las injusticias que se han venido acumulando sobre la actual estructura social.²⁰

Gallegos' character delineation exhibits the same predisposition in favor of the province. Critical and disdainful toward the city dwellers, the author is an admirer of the strong, moral, heroically enduring rural population. His popular types come to life more convincingly than his urban types. Secondary characters such as Juan Parao and Doña Nico in Cantaclaro, Antonio Menéndez in Reinaldo Solar, Venancio Navas in Sobre la misma tierra, Encarnación Damesano, Manuel Ladera and Gabriel Ureña in Canaima, exert a positive influence on

¹⁸ Canaima, p. 176.

¹⁹ Doña Bárbara, p. 27.

²⁰ Gallegos, "Soy un hombre que desea el orden" in Una posición en la vida (México: Ediciones Humanismo, 1954), p. 149.

the main characters in these novels. Gallegos' portrayal is objective. His rural types are neither noble savages nor self-centered brutes. In every novel, Gallegos' popular characters are individualized accordingly. The author sees much humanity, good will and stoicism in the rural population, morally superior characters to his urban dwellers.

Gallegos subordinates all structural elements, main characters in particular, to the unifying dianoia of his writings: the messianic myth which he elaborates in many different ways. Foremost is the author's latent hope and expectation for the neglected rural population, a call for active help directed to the new generation of leaders.

Since all of Gallegos' characters gravitate around the messianic purpose, they are of necessity functional. A character when primarily conceived as a function, type or symbol is usually static, visibly manipulated by the author. Many of Gallegos' characters are too direct; they utter the precise words in accordance with the author's purpose.

Eso me propongo. [States Santos Luzardo] Acabar con ciertas costumbres del Llano...es necesario civilizar la llanura... acabar con el cacique...²¹

...el progreso del país [states Reinaldo Solar] no puede ser obra de uno sobre muchos, sino obra de todos a la vez, resultado visible del mejoramiento espiritual.²²

The characters act as demanded of them by the logic of the situation

²¹Doña Bárbara, pp. 231 and 259.

²²Reinaldo Solar, p. 149.

in a given time and place. They are rooted in the present, with few complexities inherited from their personal past.

Technically, a repetitive feature of Gallegos' realistic writing is his manner of introducing any new character.

Era el padre Moreno un mestizo de estatura larga y desgarrada, voz gruesa y presuntuosa y fama de incomparable orador. En su continente duro y soberbio todo revelaba al profesional del púlpito, en quien había desaparecido completamente la emoción del apostolado, dejándole en el corazón la sequedad maleante de la misantropía.²³

The character is introduced by a short paragraph describing his physical appearance, followed by a short analysis of his moral and psychological nature: Rather than a characteristic, it is a label which emphasizes a single dominant trait sustained in the further actions of the character.

Gallegos' fictional characters are schematic, determined by their role in the plot. Even characters with psychological complexities- Reinaldo Solar, Pedro Miguel, Marcos Vargas- act in accordance with the basic, preconceived pattern of their character. This is due to the fact that Gallegos' interest does not lie in psychology or philosophy but in sociology, ethnology and ecology.

The depth of Gallegos' writings lies in his sensitivity for dramatic situations, his ethical imperativism and, above all, his messianism. Gallegos can operate with stylized characters and still sustain a high artistic level, because his questioning concerning humanity transcends the historical time and place.

The plot in Gallegos' novels is schematic. Like his characters,

²³Reinaldo Solar, p. 57.

it is also subordinated to emphasize the messianic myth. The pattern, with slight variations, is as follows: The hero begins his journey toward his messianic goal, faces obstacles through incidental discoveries, and is helped toward victory by a character of exceptionally strong moral principles. In Pobre Negro, Luisana saves Pedro Miguel from hatred and total despair through her love; Nicolás del Casal shows Victoria the true values in life when her ambition threatens to destroy her moral character in La Trepadora. In Tierra bajo los pies, Valentina Orozco, the daughter of an impoverished landowner, restores faith in the embittered avenger Emiliano Gracián, thus bringing law and order to the whole community.

In most cases the seemingly defeated hero triumphs in many different ways: partial achievement in propagating culture and justice, a better understanding of national problems, self-discovery concerning his place and duty toward society, realization of one's mission, awareness of strong and weak aspects of one's character. Even if external misfortunes occur, if the hero dies, Reinaldo Solar, or is lost for society, Marcos Vargas, there is an internal upward movement in accordance with the author's constructive intentions. The plot's single elements, episodes, incidents, descriptions and dialogues, compensate for the too evident schematization of the main plot line. The motivation of the action within the plot is realistic and logical.

A major aesthetic achievement of Gallegos is his handling of the atmosphere, the setting combined with a prevailing appropriate

mood. The sustained messianic atmosphere of his novels renders Gallegos' creative world multidimensional. His social concern gives rise to the deeper problematic of man's self-discovery: determinism versus free will, materialism versus idealism, individuality versus social concerns. The author does not discuss directly the larger human problems, but they emerge from the tone and the atmosphere as well as the strongly felt personality of the author behind his work.

Gallegos en sus obras...nos acerca a los más ingentes problemas sociales, históricos, espirituales de nuestro pueblo.²⁴

The artistic unity in Gallegos' novels is provided by the central myth and by the consistency of the tone. All structural elements in his novels converge to form the spiritual superstructure of messianism. Although the external pattern of a novel must be responsible for the inclusiveness of scenes and dialogues, the unity is achieved by the rapport des valeurs. Gallegos achieves this aesthetic harmony through the medium of an indescribable atmosphere which hovers between the realm of the actual and the irrational, between empirical reality and intuitive mystery.

El ideal de la redención nacional...de nuestro pueblo... se asoma con tenaz insistencia en todos y cada uno de los momentos creadores del novelista.²⁵

Messianism, the inner life of the work of art, gives Gallegos' novels the artistic, purely literary justification. Main themes and

²⁴Pedro Díaz Seijas, Rómulo Gallegos-Realidad y Símbolo (México: 1967), p. 120.

²⁵Ibid., p. 32.

various subordinate themes, correlatives between man and nature, the environment, and man in action are all elements aiming toward the unifying center. In Gallegos' novels, it is the idea of suffering and salvation, of expectation, and the call for the advent of a messiah.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Author's Works

- Gallegos, Rómulo. Canaima. Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe, 1945.
- _____. Cantaclaro. Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe, 1951.
- _____. Doña Bárbara. Barcelona: Editorial Araluce, 1937.
- _____. La brizna de paja en el viento. Madrid: Ediciones Aguilar, 1959.
- _____. La Trepadora. Lima: Editora Latinoamericana, 1960.
- _____. Obras Completas. 10 volumes. Edited by Ricardo Montilla for the III Festival del Libro Venezolano: Homenaje a Rómulo Gallegos. Lima: Editora Latinoamericana, 1960.
- _____. Pobre Negro. Madrid: Ediciones Aguilar, 1958.
- _____. Reinaldo Solar. Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe, 1947.
- _____. Sobre la misma tierra. Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe, 1968.
- _____. Tierra bajo los pies. Barcelona: Salvat Editores, 1971.
- _____. Una posición en la vida. México: Ediciones Humanismo, 1954.

Critical Works

- Alegría, Ciro. "Notas sobre Rómulo Gallegos," Repertorio Americano, XLVIII, No. 18 (Diciembre 15, 1954), pp. 277-278.
- _____. "Notas sobre Rómulo Gallegos y su obra," Suplemento de Novedades (México), No. 292 (Octubre 24, 1954), p. 3.

- Andujar, Manuel. "Tres lectores imaginarios y 'Doña Bárbara'," Suplemento de El Nacional (México), No. 395 (Octubre 24, 1954), p. 6.
- Angarita Arévalo, Rafael. Historia y crítica de la novela venezolana. Berlin: August Pries, 1938.
- Araujo, Orlando. Lengua y creación en la obra de Rómulo Gallegos. Buenos Aires: Editorial Nova, 1955.
- _____. "Sentido y vigencia de la obra de Gallegos," Revista Nacional de Cultura, No. 153 (Julio-Agosto, 1962), pp. 34-51.
- Arciniegas, Germán. "Novela y verdad en Rómulo Gallegos," Cuadernos Americanos, Año XIII, No. 4 (Julio-Agosto, 1954), pp. 37-43.
- Azuela, Mariano. Los de abajo. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1958.
- Baeza, Ricardo. "Doña Bárbara," Humanismo, Año III, No. 22 (Agosto, 1954), pp. 19-24.
- Bartoli, Humberto. "Rómulo Gallegos, maestro de pueblo," Humanismo (Agosto, 1954), pp. 77-81.
- Beroes, Pedro. "La brizna de paja en el viento, novela de Rómulo Gallegos," Venezuela Gráfica, No. 409 (Julio 31 de 1959), pp. 6-7.
- Betancourt, Rómulo. "Apuntes para una interpretación de Doña Bárbara," Repertorio Americano, XXI, No. 13 (Octubre 4, 1930), pp. 201-202.
- Blanco, Andrés Elroy. "Doña Bárbara, de lo pintado a lo vivo," Humanismo, Año I, No. 6 (Diciembre, 1952), pp. 18-19.
- Boehm, Wilhelm. Faust in neuer Deutung. Köln: E.A. Seeman, 1949.
- Bollo, Sarah. "Páginas Críticas II: La novela de Rómulo Gallegos," Revista Nacional (Montevideo), XLII, No. 125 (Mayo de 1949), pp. 186-199.
- Booth, Wayne C. The Rhetoric of Fiction. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.
- Camus, Albert. La Peste. Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1947.

- Castanien, Donald G. "Introspective Techniques in Doña Bárbara," Hispania, XLI, No. 3 (September, 1958), pp. 282-288.
- Castro, Américo. The Structure of Spanish History. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954.
- Coronel, Rafael. "Canaima, novela por Rómulo Gallegos," Anales de la Universidad de Chile, Año XCIV, No. 24 (Cuarto trimestre de 1936), pp. 293-295.
- Corrigan, Robert W., ed. Theatre in the Twentieth Century. New York: Grove Press, 1963.
- Crespo de la Serna, Jorge. "El printor de 'Doña Bárbara'," Humanismo, Año III, No. 26 (Diciembre, 1954), pp. 60-68.
- Croce, Benedetto. History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century. Trans. by Henry Furst. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963.
- Crow, John A. "The Essays of Rómulo Gallegos," Hispania, XXXVIII, No. 1 (March, 1955), pp. 35-40.
- _____. "Perspectiva de la novela de Rómulo Gallegos," Humanismo, No. 22 (Agosto, 1954), pp. 37-40.
- Damboriena, Angel, S. J. Rómulo Gallegos y la problemática venezolana. Caracas: Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, 1960.
- Danziger, Marlies K. and Johnson, W. Stacy. An Introduction to Literary Criticism. Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., 1961.
- Díaz Seijas, Pedro. "Cual es la obra maestra de Rómulo Gallegos?," Venezuela Gráfica, No. 409 (Julio 31 de 1959), pp. 8-9, 13.
- _____. "Hacia una interpretación de Doña Bárbara," Revista Nacional de Cultura, XX, No. 127 (Marzo-Abril, 1958), pp. 58-79.
- Dunham, Lowell. "Rómulo Gallegos and the Generation of 'La Alborada'," Hispania, XXXIX, No. 2 (May, 1956), pp. 186-189.
- _____. "Rómulo Gallegos: creyente sistemático," Books Abroad, XXXII, No. 1 (Winter, 1958), pp. 5-8.
- _____. Rómulo Gallegos, vida y obra. México: Ediciones de An-
drea, 1957.

- Eliade, Mircea. The Sacred and the Profane. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1959.
- Englekirk, John E. "Doña Bárbara, Legend of the Llano," Hispania, XXXI, No. 3 (August, 1948), pp. 259-270.
- Forster, E. M. Aspects of the Novel. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1954.
- Freud, Sigmund. Totem and Taboo. Trans. and ed. by James Strachey. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1950.
- Friedell, Egon. Kulturgeschichte der Neuzeit. München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1969.
- Frye, Northrop. Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays. Princeton: University Press, 1957.
- _____. Fables of Identity. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963.
- González, Manuel Pedro. "Apostillas a la última novela de Rómulo Gallegos," Humanismo, III, No. 22 (Agosto, 1954), pp. 71-76.
- Henríquez-Ureña, Pedro. Las corrientes literarias en la América Hispánica. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1949.
- Hochhuth, Rolf., ed. Europäische Erzähler des 20 Jahrhunderts. Koeln: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1966.
- Iduarte, Andrés. "Rómulo Gallegos, novelista de América," Humanismo, Año III, No. 22 (Agosto, 1954), pp. 49-63.
- _____. Veinte Años con Rómulo Gallegos. México: Ediciones Humanismo, 1954.
- Johnson, E. A. "The Meaning of civilización and barbarie in Doña Bárbara," Hispania, XXXIX, No. 4 (December, 1956), pp. 456-461.
- Leo, Ulrich. "'Doña Bárbara' obra de arte," Revista Nacional de Cultura, Año II, No. 17 (Abril, 1940), 21-50.
- _____. "'Doña Perfecta' y 'Doña Bárbara,' un caso de ramificación literaria," Revista Iberoamericana, XVI, No. 31 (Julio, 1950), pp. 13-39.

- _____ . Estudios filológicos sobre letras venezolanas. Caracas: Editorial Elite, 1942.
- _____ . "La invención en la novela. Apuntes acerca de la trayectoria estilística de Rómulo Gallegos," Revista Nacional de Cultura, Año V, No. 38 (Mayo-Junio, 1943), pp. 96-121.
- _____ . "Rómulo Gallegos," Repertorio Americano, XLVIII, No. 18 (Diciembre 15, 1954), pp. 280-283.
- _____ . Rómulo Gallegos, estudio sobre el arte de novelar. México: Ediciones Humanismo, 1954.
- Liscano, Juan. Ciclo y constantes galleguianos. México: Ediciones Humanismo, 1954.
- _____ . "Encuentro con Rómulo Gallegos," Cuadernos, No. 6 (Mayo-Junio, 1954), pp. 17-24.
- _____ . Rómulo Gallegos y su tiempo. Caracas: Dirección de cultura Universitaria, 1961.
- Lubbock, Percy. The Craft of Fiction. London: Jonathan Cape, 1928.
- Luis, Leopoldo de. "Las Coplas de Cantaclaro," Índice Literario de El Universal (Caracas), 8 de Octubre de 1959.
- Maestri, José Anibal. "Doña Bárbara," Humanismo, Año III, No. 23 (Septiembre, 1954), pp. 77-79.
- Magdaleno, Mauricio. "Imágenes políticas de Rómulo Gallegos," Cuadernos Americanos, LX, No. 6 (Noviembre-Diciembre, 1951), pp. 234-259.
- Mancera Gallati, Angel. Quienes narran y cuentan en Venezuela. México: Editorial Caribe, 1958.
- Martínez, Marco Antonio. "Las noches en el Miedo," Revista Nacional de Cultura, XX, No. 127 (Marzo-Abril, 1958), pp. 43-57.
- Massiani, Felipe. "De 'El último Solar' a 'La Trepadora'; la iniciación de un novelista," Revista Nacional de Cultura, Año II, No. 13 (Noviembre, 1939), pp. 115-130.
- _____ . El hombre y la naturaleza venezolana en Rómulo Gallegos. Caracas: Editorial Elite, 1943.
- Medina, José Ramón. "Proyección americana de Rómulo Gallegos," Venezuela Gráfica, No. 409 (Julio 31 de 1959), pp. 4-5.

- Meléndez, Concha. "Don Segundo Sombra, La Vorágine, Doña Bárbara," Cultura Venezolana, Año XIV, No. 116 (Noviembre-Diciembre, 1931), pp. 121-132.
- Melich Orsini, José. "La brizna de paja en el viento," Revista Nacional de Cultura, Año XIII, No. 94 (Septiembre-October, 1952), pp. 137-139.
- Molinero, Julius. "Doña Bárbara y Pygmalion," Quaderni Iberoamericani, Nos. 19-20 (Diciembre, 1956), pp. 212-215.
- Montilla, Ricardo. "Algunas noticias sobre Doña Bárbara," El Farol, Año XX, No. 179 (Noviembre-Diciembre, 1958), pp. 42-53.
- _____. "Ficha bio-bibliográfica de Rómulo Gallegos," Revista Nacional de Cultura, Año XXI, No. 135 (Julio-Agosto, 1959); pp. 19-28.
- Moreno Garzón, Pedro. "Rómulo Gallegos" en Venezolanos ciento por ciento. Caracas: Editorial Cecilio Acosta, 1943, pp. 34-39.
- Muir, Edwin. The Structure of the Novel. London: The Hogarth Press, 1954.
- Nieto, Ramón. "El mundo efervescente de Rómulo Gallegos," Mundo Hispánico, Año XIV, No. 156 (Marzo, 1961), pp. 26-27.
- Pardo Tovar, Andrés. "Rómulo Gallegos, novelista de América," Revista de las Indias (Bogotá) II, Nos. 66-67 (junio-Julio, 1944), pp. 165-188.
- Pareja Diezcanseco, Alfredo. "Invitación a pensar en Rómulo Gallegos," Cuadernos Americanos, LXXVIII, No. 5 (Septiembre-October de 1954), pp. 124-139.
- Pérez Díaz, Lucila L. de. "Evolución progresiva de un protagonista de Rómulo Gallegos," Revista Nacional de Cultura, Año VII, No. 53 (Noviembre-Diciembre, 1945), pp. 13-22.
- Picón Salas, Mariano. Formación y proceso de la literatura venezolana. Caracas: Editorial Cecilio Acosta, 1940.
- Piña-Daza, R. "Un curioso personaje de nuestra novelística," Revista Nacional de Cultura, Año VI, No. 41 (Noviembre-Diciembre, 1943), pp. 37-44.
- Piper, Anson D. "El yanqui en las novelas de Rómulo Gallegos," Hispania, XXXIII, No. 4 (November, 1950), pp. 338-341.

- Planchart, Julio. Temas Críticos. Caracas: Imprenta de la Dirección de Cultura, 1948.
- Ramos Calles, Raúl. Los personajes de Rómulo Gallegos a través del psicoanálisis. Caracas: Editorial Grafolit, 1947.
- Ratcliff, Dillwyn F. Venezuelan Prose Fiction. New York: Instituto de las Españas en los Estados Unidos, 1933.
- Rial, José Antonio. "La idea moral en Doña Bárbara," El Universal (Caracas), 2 de Agosto de 1959.
- Richard, Frederick S. Hispanoamérica Moderna. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1972.
- Rivas Rivas, José. "Santos Luzardo," Revista Nacional de Cultura, XX, No. 127 (Marzo-Abril, 1958), pp. 23-42.
- Ross, Waldo. "La soledad en la obra de Rómulo Gallegos," Revista Nacional de Cultura, XXIV, Nos. 148-149 (Septiembre-Diciembre, 1961), pp. 28-45.
- Rumazo González, Alfonso. "El ser de Gallegos," El Universal (Caracas), 2 de Agosto de 1959.
- Sabat Ercasty, Carlos. "Gallegos es un hombre integral," Repertorio Americano, Tomo XLVIII, No. 1163, Costa Rica (15 de Diciembre de 1954), p. 278.
- _____. "La lección de Gallegos," Cuadernos Americanos, Año XIII, No. 6 (Noviembre-Diciembre, 1954), pp. 77-84.
- Sánchez, Luis Alberto. Proceso y contenido de la novela hispanoamericana. Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1953.
- Schultz Cazenueve de Mantovani, Fryda. "Doña Bárbara y la América de Rómulo Gallegos," Sur, No. 230 (Septiembre-October, 1954), pp. 79-96.
- Semprún, Jesús. "Una novela criolla," Cultura Venezolana, Año II, No. 14 (Junio, 1920), pp. 178-184.
- Sisto, David T. "Doña Perfecta and Doña Bárbara," Hispania, XXXVII, No. 2 (May, 1954), pp. 167-170.
- Soizhenitsyn, Alexander. August 1914. Trans. by Michael Glenny, New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1972.

- Suárez Calimano, E. "Sobre Rómulo Gallegos, Doña Bárbara," Nosotros, XXIV, Nos. 254-255 (Julio-Agosto, 1930), pp. 128-138.
- Suarez Solís, Rafael. "Gallegos y su América," Humanismo, III, No. 22 (Agosto, 1954), pp. 65-68.
- Torre, Manuel. "Rómulo Gallegos—el rapsoda de la llanura," Repertorio Americano, XL, No. 15 (Agosto 21, 1943), pp. 225-226.
- Torres-Pioseco, Arturo. "Rómulo Gallegos," Grandes novelistas de la América Hispana. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949, pp. 43-76.
- Urdueta, Sancho. "Cantaclaro, el nuevo libro de Rómulo Gallegos," Atenea, XXVII, No. 109 (Julio, 1934), pp. 62-68.
- Uslar-Pietri, Arturo. Letras y hombres de Venezuela. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1948.
- Vila Selma, José. Procedimientos y técnicas en Rómulo Gallegos. Sevilla: Publicaciones de la Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos de Sevilla, 1954.
- Villalba Villalba, Luis. "Ideas sociales en la novelística galleguiana," Venezuela Gráfica, No. 409 (Julio 31 de 1959), pp. 10-11.
- Welsh, Louise. "The Emergence of Rómulo Gallegos as a Novelist and Social Critic," Hispania, XL, No. 4 (December, 1957), pp. 444-449.
- Zeller, Eduard. Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy. Trans. and ed. by R.L. Palmer. New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1958.