



**Special Issue dedicated to  
CARLOS FUENTES**

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## ÍNDICE

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Carlos Fuentes at UCLA: An Interview . . . . .   | 3  |
| The Fuentes' Interviews in Fact and in Fiction . . . . .   | 16 |
| <i>Gloria Duran</i>  |    |
| The Pyramid and the Volcano: Carlos Fuentes' <i>Cambio de piel</i><br>and Malcolm Lowry's <i>Under the Volcano</i> . . . . . | 25 |
| <i>Susan F. Levine</i>   |    |
| Archetypal Patterns in Carlos Fuentes' "La muñeca reina" . . . . .   | 41 |
| <i>Ross Larson</i>   |    |
| <i>La cabeza de la hidra</i> : Residuos del colonialismo . . . . .   | 47 |
| <i>Phillip Koldewyn</i>  |    |
| Celestina as <i>Terra Nostra</i> . . . . .   | 58 |
| <i>William L. Siemens</i>  |    |
| Fuentes' "Chac Mool": Its Ancestors and Progeny . . . . .  | 68 |
| <i>Richard Reeve</i>   |    |
| A Note on an Early Published Fragment of <i>Terra Nostra</i> . . . . .   | 76 |
| <i>Margaret Sayers Peden</i>   |    |

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MESTER

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## Carlos Fuentes at UCLA

The following is a transcription of a taped public interview of Carlos Fuentes that took place May 15, 1980, at the University of California, Los Angeles. The panelists who directed questions to Mr. Fuentes were Profs. José Miguel Oviedo, Richard Reeve, and John Skirius of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese; and Prof. Raymond Paredes of the English Department, all faculty members at UCLA. The graduate students who staff the editorial board of *Mester* would like to thank Mr. Fuentes for allowing the publication of this transcription. The transcribing and editing were completed by John Akers and Librada Hernández Lagoa.

REEVE: Carlos, would you tell us a little about your family? Yours is not the typical Mexican childhood. You mentioned your childhood in the capitals of Latin America and in Washington, D.C. In fact, you were almost at the point of losing the Spanish language and only speaking English.

FUENTES: Yes, Richard, I spent my childhood in Washington, D.C., in a very vibrant decade, the decade of the thirties. I was there more or less through the crash and the fair, between the inauguration of citizen Roosevelt and the interdiction on Citizen Kane. I think you are more or less what you eat; you are also the comics you read as a child: I was there more or less between the time Dick Tracy met Tess Truhart and Clark Kent met Lois Lane. My father was counselor of the Mexican embassy in Washington, and he taught me the history, the geography, the story of Mexico—an imaginary country, I then thought, invented by my father in order to nourish my infant imagination. It was a sort of wonderful Land of Oz with a green cactus road. It was a story of defeats that contrasted exceedingly with the story of victories, of successes, I was taught at the American public schools I went through as a child. To the south there were sad songs, nostalgia; to the north a sense of optimism, progress and faith in the future. I went to school and I was a popular child. One has to be popular at all ages in the United States, and I was popular until a certain day in May—to be precise it was the 18th of May in 1938—when I suddenly ceased to be popular. What had happened was that Lázaro Cárdenas, the President of Mexico, had expropriated the foreign oil holdings, the companies that held Mexican oil. I suddenly became a pariah in my school. The newspapers of the time were full of blazing headlines denouncing the Communist government of Mexico, threatening President Cárdenas and demanding sanctions against Mexico. Some were even demanding the invasion of Mexico in the sacred name of private property. There were epithets in my school; there were even blows. Children know how to be cruel, and the cruelty of elders is basically a residue of that malaise we feel from childhood toward things, other things, strange things that we do not understand. But this political

act suddenly revealed to me that my country existed, that it was not a figment of my father's imagination made to entertain me, and that I was part of it. I saw pictures of Cárdenas, and he did not belong to the glossy repertoire of American ideals. He was a "mestizo," a man of mixed blood, Indian and Spanish, with a grim far-away look in his eyes that made him look as if he were trying to remember a mute and ancient past. I asked myself, "Is this past mine as well? Is this identity mine as well?" It was a tremendous revelation that my identity was Mexican, an identity that I really did not complete until the second stage of my childhood.

I followed in my father's footsteps in the early 40's and went to Chile. Chile in the early 40's had a government of the Left: the Popular Front of Pedro Aguirre Cerdá. It was a country that vibrated with democratic activity, political campaigns, electoral campaigns, active parties, active unions and active newspapers. It was also not by mere coincidence the country of the great Latin American poets: Gabriela Mistral, Vicente Huidobro, and Pablo Neruda. It was a politically verbalized country, because it was also a greatly verbalized country at the level of literature, at the level of hope. This was a great second lesson for me.

I met Neruda only many years later. I've always thought of him as a King Midas of poetry who really turned everything he touched into poetry. I remember that once I visited the region of Lota in southern Chile where the coal mines are and the miners go deep into the Pacific Ocean to extract the coal. They come out on their knees from their daily work, and on that occasion when I was there they sat around the bonfire with guitars and sang a song that I quickly recognized as a poem by Pablo, a poem from the *Canto general*. When they ended, I said how happy the author would be to know that his poem had been set to music. They stared at me blankly and said, "What author?" They thought it was anonymous poetry that came from afar, from the origins of time, like Homer's poetry.

That was another great revelation to me: to have my identity as a Mexican, and then to understand that I could only give light to that identity, give expression to that identity, through a language, the Spanish language. I became a writer in the Spanish language, a man who only knows how to dream and insult and make love in Spanish. I know a challenge in the Spanish language I did not feel in the English language. I thought there was something to do with Spanish that I did not feel with English. I thought that the English language knew how to take care of itself, and that if it ever became drowsy there would always be an Irishman who would come along . . .

REEVE: That leads us into Raymond's question about English literature.

PAREDES: Yes, my question has to do with influences. William Faulkner is often cited as the writer from the United States who has an enormous influence among writers from Latin America, perhaps an even greater influence there than here. What is it about Faulkner that is so appealing and so compelling to writers from Latin America?

FUENTES: You're absolutely right about Faulkner, Professor Paredes. You know, sometimes we say that Latin America starts south of the Mason-Dixon line: it is our way of appropriating Faulkner for ourselves. When I think of this vast influence of William Faulkner in Latin America—which as all influences is more than an influence, a coincidence, a deep coincidence—I believe it is because he knows the people and talks about defeat. The great gulf between the U.S. and Latin America has been a gulf between a success story and a story that has been very difficult, the story of defeat. Seventy-five percent of the history of the world has been a history of defeat. The U.S., upto Vietnam, has an exceptional history of successes. It is very difficult to identify with success, especially when you are not successful; but you can identify with defeat, especially with tragic defeat and the work of William Faulkner. What do I mean by this? I mean that the sense of defeat in Faulkner is not manichean or moralistic. Faulkner is not singling out those who are guilty, as you would do in the spirit of melodrama. He is a tragic author, a profoundly tragic author who is saying we are defeated because first we defeated ourselves; he is saying we defeated ourselves because we divided ourselves as we divided our lands. The name itself of the mythical county of Faulkner, its Macondo of the South, Yoknapatawpha, comes, of course, from a combination of two Chickasaw words that mean "the divided land." The South was defeated by the South before it was ever invaded by the North. The reconstitution of the community, the reconstitution of unity, the rural concept of time that makes the past present, that brings the past back to us, that gives priority to the instant and not to the illusion of the future as a time in which the values of tragedy can meet and perhaps reconstitute unity and community, is, I think, a great literary lesson.

This lesson gave us a vision that was coincidental with the needs of Latin America. Besides, Faulkner used a mythical procedure, not only a tragic reality but a mythical procedure—this also was a profound coincidence with our cultures that have very strong mythical elements, especially those that are rooted in the Indian "castas," as in the case of Mexico. But there is something that always struck me in the reading of Faulkner and then in the reading of the mythical and tragic writers of Latin America, such as Juan Rulfo in *Pedro Páramo*. It is interesting to know that "myth," which finally came to mean "the word of words," "mythos," originally had the opposite meaning. It comes from the Greek, "mou," which is exactly what it sounds like, what the cows do, "moo," which is an inarticulate expression. From "mou" is derived "mystos," which means "mystery," and finally "mythos," which means "the word of words." This transmigration of words I find very interesting because in Latin the word "mutus," which means "mute," becomes the French word "mot," which means "word." I think that this curious reunion of myths and mysteries and "muerte," and I would say "Mexico," to go on with the m's, is something that Juan Rulfo, who is a good reader of Faulkner, achieves splendidly in our own literature. So, we have here a brilliant example of how literature communicates with itself, breaks

down barriers, breaks down frontiers and permits us to achieve this transition from the "moo" of the cow, to the "mythos," the word of words; permitting us to go from silence to articulation to human expression.

REEVE: Our next question comes from Professor Oviedo. We have asked him to give one of his questions in Spanish for those of you who would like to compare the beauties of his Peruvian dialect with the Mexican dialect of Carlos' answer.

OVIEDO: Con bastante frecuencia tus novelas, Carlos, parecen haber sido escritas a partir de modelos reconocibles y explícitos que provienen de la misma tradición novelística en algunos casos: *Under the Volcano* para *Cambio de piel*, por ejemplo; o del cine, "Citizen Kane," para *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*; o del arte, como Bosch, Signorelli y tantos otros para *Terra Nostra*. ¿Qué relación se establece entre esos modelos y tu obra propia? ¿Por qué, con qué intención los escoges? ¿Para reinterpretarlos, para parodiarlos, para negarlos . . . ?

FUENTES: Bueno, mira, me planteas ejemplos de tres novelas mías: *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*, que apuntó bien, *Cambio de piel* y *Terra Nostra*. Déjame despachar las cosas un poco en orden, porque por lo que hace a *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* es indudable que contiene un homenaje a "Citizen Kane" y a la obra de Orson Welles, y te voy a decir por qué: mi padre me llevó de la mano en 1939-40 a ver la película de Welles cuando se estrenó en N.Y., y para mí fue la revelación del mundo. De repente entendí el mundo, la política, la pasión, la ambición, el orgullo, la derrota, mil asuntos; y en cierto modo quise hacer un homenaje a Welles. Pero hay una cosa: no veo lo que dices respecto a *Cambio de piel* y la novela de Lowry, *Under the Volcano*. No veo tan cerca las dos obras en el sentido de que la obra de Lowry es una obra esencial y muy desesperada, mientras *Cambio de piel* es desesperada pero superficial en lo popular de la cultura urbana para de esa manera consagrarla y darle viabilidad literaria.

OVIEDO: Estamos hablando en realidad de lo que se hace con la tradición porque mi pregunta parte de la convicción de que en la literatura no hay creación a partir de la nada. No hay creación "ex-nihilo", sino que toda obra nace de una tradición. Es decir que la nueva creación presupone una tradición.

FUENTES: Los libros siempre vienen de algún lado; generalmente son hijos y nietos de otros libros. Yo creo que *Madame Bovary* está mas cerca de *Don Quijote* que de la historia de una mujer provinciana que se suicida, la que leyó Flaubert en una gaceta. Es menos importante eso para *Madame Bovary* que la nieta de *Don Quijote*. *Madame Bovary* es un Quijote con faldas que cree en lo que lee, se vuelve loca y se mata. Malraux en su testamento literario dice que no es concebible la poesía de

Rimbaud sin la poesía de Banville. Es una inflexión que prolonga una tradición, la trasciende y la supera, desde luego. Yo creo en la realidad de la tradición, la extracción de las obras literarias, en una tradición.

Pero en seguida me mencionas una cosa que me interesa mucho porque ya no tiene que ver con la tradición y es la presencia de ciertos cuadros famosos en *Terra Nostra*. La presencia de esos cuadros de Signorelli y Bosch tiene un papel muy importante para la novela, un papel estructural; ayuda a estructurar esta obra que, después de todo, es una obra obsesionada con los orificios, con los hoyos, incluyendo los hoyos de la mirada. Es una obra de miradas en la que el sujeto no se reconoce en el objeto del espejo sino que ve una ausencia. Esa ausencia se llama su deseo. A partir de esta negación del sujeto en el reflejo se establece una dialéctica de la obra que podríamos llamar la dialéctica de la accesibilidad y de la inaccesibilidad del hoyo por el cual se puede salir de la prisión, pero con el terror de ser expulsado al mismo tiempo del hogar. En esta tensión creo que se desarrolla toda la obra. El Escorial en esta creación es una especie de prisión que va a evitar Felipe Segundo con el terror de estar enterrado en vida y el de ser expulsado. El terror de todos los personajes de esta obra es el mismo. Es el terror de la señora, la reina, porque no ha sido desvirgada por el rey, porque tiene que ser un ratón el que le coma el coño. Otra vez el hoyo porque el señor, el rey, nace en una letrina, en un hoyo, porque su padre quiere contar con la inaccesibilidad de las ropas de la reina y nunca llegar a ella. Pone ese pretexto porque Felipe no es capaz de tomar a una campesina que se llama Celestina y tiene que dejar que su padre lo haga. Por lo tanto tiene que negarse a toda penetración por Felipe, llamar sólo a una mujer a la cual no puede tocar, que será esta Isabel que quiere ser tocada como no lo es por su esposo. Finalmente lo es por su hijo en la violación de lo inaccesible que es el incesto a través de este Don Juan que posee a su madre y termina condenado a vivir en una prisión de espejos, comido por la vagina de la monja Inés. Mientras tanto su padre, el rey, se pudre en una enorme tumba-prisión de piedra, y la reina construye con retazos de las momias reales, una momia final, la momia de España que constituye el horror supremo del Barroco. El Barroco, nuestro Barroco, tiene este sentido de darle vida a lo monstruoso, la monstruosidad final de lo accesible y de lo inaccesible; parto de Signorelli, parto de Bosch, parto de la mirada y de los hoyos del cuerpo, en este renacer de un muerto. Finalmente lo que propone *Terra Nostra* es el horror supremo delirante que merezca el poder de nacer de un cuerpo muerto—y me pregunto si no nacimos todos de un cuerpo muerto en la América Española.

SKIRIUS: You have shown interest in urban problems of Mexico City in your novel *La región mas transparente*, which was first published in 1958 and translated into English as *Where The Air is Clear*. Now, today, in 1980, Mexico City has about 14 million inhabitants, and if the projections are true and the present birth rate continues, by the year 2000 greater

Mexico City may have up to 40 million inhabitants. My question is threefold: What kind of urban problems and urban life styles do you foresee, not only for Mexico City but for other great metropolitan centers such as Los Angeles, in the next 20 years? Secondly, would you want to live in such a city? And thirdly, could you see yourself writing a sequel to *La región mas transparente*?

FUENTES: Can I answer you by mounting on my horse? . . . I have written a sequel to *La región mas transparente*, *La ciudad perdida*, which appears in Mexico in August, and I think the best thing I can do is answer you by reading a passage that expresses my fears of things that might happen not only in Mexico City, as you have very justly said, but in all these great urban centers which are seething with violence.

[At this point Carlos Fuentes read a selection from *Agua quemada*, eventually published in Mexico by the Fondo de Cultura Económica in 1981. See "La brigada," pp. 131-133. To date, *La ciudad perdida* has not been published.]

REEVE: In 1956, Selden Rodman, a journalist, talked to you about a story, which you never did write, in which Mexico became the fifty-first state of the U.S. In 1975, in *Terra Nostra*, you have the U.S. invading Mexico and its last remnants, the guerillas fighting for their independence in the mountains around Veracruz. Are you that pessimistic about the relationship between the U.S. and Mexico? How do you see the future of the U.S. and Mexico?

FUENTES: Now let me say first of all—you mentioned my fictional story—that I wonder if three years from now the U.S. will not be asked to be admitted to the Mexican union? But you know the story, which I will finally write in a book called *Political Fictions*, in which Mexico is admitted as the fifty-first state, and then rapidly proceeds to demoralize the U.S. senators and deputies in Washington—and they take care of matters rather quickly—so the U.S. says, "Now please get out of the union, and you can have the whole Southwest back again." Mexico says, "Thank you very much: we accept everything except Texas." Our problem right now is twofold: One is that we do not want to interfere in the internal affairs of the U.S. We've always defended non-intervention in our own affairs. Secondly, we do not want the U.S. to depend overly on Mexico; we want the U.S. to become independent of Mexico, especially as regards oil. There is a problem of understanding, obviously, and it derives from so many facts: we are different. There is something more than a frontier between the U.S. and Mexico. One has to think it's a very important frontier because it's also the frontier between the U.S. and all of Latin America. . . . It's also the frontier between the U.S. and all the Third World, the only one. In fact, it's the only frontier between a highly industrialized Western nation, capitalistic nation, and the Third World. We are different. We are Shiites, Mahayana Buddhists and orthodox

Augustinians; you are Sunnies, Hanayana buddhists, Carolingian heretics. We come from the abundance, the Catholic largesse, baroque largesse of Rome; you come from the—how should I say it—“estreñimiento” of Protestantism, of Luther. You have a problem we have solved: How do you transform Pocahontas into the Virgin of Guadalupe? But we have a problem too: How could we retransform Montezuma into a member of the Kennedy dynasty? How could we make a ritual out of eating a hamburger at McDonalds? How could we computerize an enchilada? How could we say in Spanish “to be or not to be,” since in English we cannot distinguish our “ser” from our “estar”? The differences are there; the legality is different. You descend from the common law; we are descendants of Rome, the sense of Roman law through Spain. Law only exists if it is written; for you, law exists in custom, in the creation of the community. You were prosperous from the very start. England was the rising mercantile and capitalistic power of the 17th century. We were, in a way, the colonies of the colony. One reads Alonso de Carranza, a Spanish economist writing in 1629, who said that in 1629 already seventy-five percent of the bullion gold and silver from the mines of the New World had slipped through the hands of Spain and ended up in four European cities: Rouen, Amsterdam, London and Paris. “Let us sell merchandise to the Spanish,” ordered Louis 14th of France in a famous letter, “and get the gold from them.” They squandered it. We were, as I say, “economically deformed” from the very start.

The differences between us are very great: I think that the basic issue, the issue from which all depends is really the one that the President of Mexico, López Portillo, has approached in his conversations with your President, Jimmy Carter. We must first of all understand ourselves as two different nations with different physiographies. Let us identify each other; let us understand the problems globally. We can't start out by dealing with tomatoes only, and then when tomatoes are stalled, a desert: nothing happens. Mexico is surprised because, suddenly, there is a “dumping,” there is an operation intercept, or the tortilla wall is erected; everything is done by surprise, Mexico is taken by surprise—without proper consultation—basically because there is not the understanding that Mexico is a civilization, that Mexico is, as I have said before, a nation and not an oil well; it is first of all a nation that has to be understood. We have to understand the U.S., I agree, but first of all there must be this fundamental act of identifying each other and of identifying our respective national interests: they are not the same. The U.S. must stop thinking of its foreign policy in terms of friends and enemies. No such thing exists. There are different national interests, and these national interests must be perceived mutually as valid, as honorable. Because they differ from the interests of the U.S. does not mean they are evil. The U.S. government loves to think in terms of good guys and bad guys, white hats and black hats. Reality is not like this. This is what I can say to start with—because I know we will talk more of it—but sometimes I look at the problem with

desperation, and I ask myself, "Does the U.S. have a foreign policy at all, or does it only have Barbara Walters?"

PAREDES: My question is related to the previous one. What is your view of the future relations between Mexican-Americans and "mexicanos"? As you know, Mexican-Americans often feel slighted and despised by Mexicans. Is this feeling justified, and do you think the situation will improve?

FUENTES: I think there has been a counter-revolution of public opinion. It is true that there have been times in the past when Mexican-Americans were considered as "pocho." I think that in the last few years there has been an evolution from "pocho" to ally. There is the possibility of—why not say it clearly?—of having a Mexican lobby in the U.S., the same way Israel or Greece or any country seems to have a lobby. Why don't we have a lobby? I think that more and more we will realize that we live in a world not of self-sufficiency—which is impossible—but of self-reliance and of cultural identification. I think it is very important to understand that what we are seeing right now is a death of ideologies. After all, only two ideologies have been paramount in the world, and they are in some ways similar to each other. Both come from the eighteenth century, from the great faith in human perfectability and progress, and they have been, in a way, unmasked or degraded by the terrible cruelty of the twentieth century. What are now appearing on the stage of the world are the cultures, the deep cultures, of nations, of groups of nations, historical continents, Islam, China, Japan, Western Europe, Slavic culture, the culture of Latin America and the culture of the U.S. The Mexican-Americans belong to the U.S., but they are close, very close, to the culture of not only Mexico but of Latin America and of the Hispanic world. I think we should act as a culture; I think that there is much to be done for the good of peace and good relations, of good understanding between the two nations through the friendship between Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. I think we are rapidly moving from a bipolar to a multipolar world, and all that it implies. The two great powers creak under the tensions created by this escape from the equilibrium of terror and the self-hypnosis imposed by the post-war period. Nations are wrestling to create new centers of powers, to create a multipolar world. I think Mexico has achieved a specific weight, a specific importance. It has a long tradition in foreign relations, in the construction of a nationality and of a national state, and is ready to play an important role in this new multipolar self-reliant—not self-sufficient—world. I think we need to help Mexican-Americans. I think we will need your help in order to identify before the American public the nature of our relations, the physiognomy of our culture. I think we will need your help to make it clear to the American government and to the public opinion of this country that what our country is fundamentally looking for is a better world in which to live, with a new world economic order. The U.S. has been very slowly recog-

nizing the necessity for a new world economic order. The order created at Breton Woods after the Second World War no longer exists. There is a decolonized world. There is a totally different picture, and we are still ruled by the visions of 1946. Something new has to be created. I think that the Mexican-American can make the U.S. understand that many of the things Mexico and the Third World are looking for are no more than what the U.S. gave to itself through legislation to resolve deep social problems, to give attention to deep social demands. I think of the social advances of the Social Security Act of 1933 or '34, the Fair Labor Relations Act of 1938, the Equal Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. All these great pieces of legislation in the U.S. are what Mexico is demanding for in the new world economic order. This should be understood in the U.S., but instead I hear that Willie Brandt comes to Los Angeles, and he is denied access to television. He is not on television; he cannot explain the contents of his new book on relations between the North and the South.

I think you can help, Mexican-Americans, can help public opinion and the government of the U.S. see that we have to submit the very powerful multinational companies to legal order, that they cannot operate without any legal boundaries. These companies are enormously powerful. Their gross product amounts to eight hundred thirty billion dollars, which is the equivalent of the total gross national product of all the Third World with the exception of the oil-producing countries. They account for thirty percent of the commerce of the world, and yet they act without any boundaries. They transfer prices as it interests the companies and not the nations in which they operate. I think here there is a voice also. You are a mirror to the American public opinion, to the American government. I think that in this growing world, in this growing multipolar world, in this world in which Mexico, I assure you, will no longer be a defensive subject but an active subject of international relations, I think it is important for you to help us make the American public and government understand that great changes are being wrought in Latin America, in Central America—to be precise, in Nicaragua today; tomorrow, Guatemala, El Salvador—and that it should be understood that probably these governments will go very much to the left, call themselves socialist, but that they will only become stooges of the Soviet Union if the U.S. forces them to be such. The U.S. must open with your help, with people like you, all these wonderful people that I've met in Los Angeles. We should make the U.S. understand that there will be plurality in the world, that there will be competition, that in Nicaragua the U.S. should compete with Germany and the Soviet Union, and nothing extraordinary will happen. There is great opportunity for the "nicaragüenses," who after the devastation of civil war have launched a campaign against illiteracy in which I think we should all collaborate. Mexico is helping Nicaragua with oil, with teachers, with technical assistants. We will not let Nicaragua stand alone and isolated as was the case

of Cuba in '59. This mistake should not be repeated. The U.S. should give the new regimes in Central America nothing more and nothing less than that which during forty years it gave to Somoza and to all the dictators whom it helped to improve.

SKIRIUS: Carlos, the same political party has run the Mexican federal government for years, as we know. Do you think the P.R.I. will hold its almost monopolic control of the government bureaucracy much longer? Let's take for example the new factor of the oil discoveries. I know that you wrote a novel, *The Hydra Head*, with an international espionage scene of dispute over this new oil. Might this be a factor of instability in the fall of the government? Or might it be a factor of stability in that the P.R.I. would actually distribute the wealth for more reform programs so that it would become an authentically revolutionary party again? If not, what might we expect to happen in Mexican politics?

FUENTES: You've really asked me a \$64,000 question. Let me try to tell you what I believe. Several things: Mexico is a country that has on many occasions been invaded, humiliated, mutilated, because it could not pay its debts. The Juárez moratorium on foreign debts triggered the intervention of the French and the creation of the empire of Maximilian of Hapsburg. In 1838, there was a mutiny in Mexico City and the pastry shop of the French "boulanger," M. Remontel, was destroyed. He protested, asked to be paid, asked for the intervention of the French government; and they sent an "armada" to Veracruz in order to protect the private property of Monsieur Remontel. This was called the "War of the Pastries" in Mexico. We had a commission, a mixed commission of reclamations, to pay for many problems of this nature created during the Mexican revolution. President Cárdenas refused to compensate the expropriated companies in '38 because he felt that money should be used in order to promote agrarian reform and give the country something to eat at the same time it was developing its own oil industry. So when President López Portillo now says that Mexico for the first time in its life will be financially independent, this means a great deal in Mexico because of our past history.

Let me draw another parallel to what I just said. Mexico succumbed to the U.S. in the war of 1846-48 because it was a totally disorganized, anarchical country. The eruption was the liberal revolution of 1854, and the decision of Juárez and the men of the liberal revolution was that what happened in '48 should not happen again; that Mexico should have a strong, national, liberal state in order to be able to preserve its territorial integrity and its power of self-determination. Now we have these vast oil wells that I believe are calculated to be able to produce something around 150 billion barrels (notably inferior to the oil wells of this country—probably the greatest producer in the world at around 700 billion barrels); but, of course, the U.S. would rather see that others use their oil before it even touches its own. That's another problem.

We have the opportunity now to solve many age-old problems. I think that the Mexican state, this state which is born really from the revolution of the liberals headed by Juárez in 1854, is very conscious that if it misses this opportunity it will be committing suicide. This is its last opportunity. If the people see that the government is not solving problems with an income of 18 billion, 20 billion, 25 billion dollars a year from oil exports, then private enterprise in Mexico will say, "Move over, I can administer the oil if you cannot." It will administer the wealth for its own benefit, I assure you, not for the benefit of the community and the Mexican people. What the government can do is to administer in benefit of the majority. I think that there are temptations to do things wrong, to perhaps funnel too much wealth toward the private interests to resurrect the Hamiltonian theory that wealth accumulates at the top and then drops down toward everyone else—something that has not happened, has never happened and will never happen. There could be the temptation of creating a sort of fake welfare state, of subsidizing poverty, of subsidizing mendicity, as it were. There is the ever-present danger of corruption, but there is perhaps also a clear-sighted political, economic, social and human decision to finally solve many secular problems of our country. We have great problems of unemployment, the demographic problems and the problem of agriculture. If Mexico grows at its present rate, in about 20 or 25 years we will be using all the money we received from oil in order to pay for the food we import from abroad: this cannot be. I understand that there is a new national project for development that has been recently published in Mexico City, and President López Portillo has put special emphasis on solving the problems of Mexican agriculture in creating something called the "Mexican Food Systems." In order to go to the bottom of the problem, I agree that consequently, as I have always said, the first priority is to restore the Mexican agricultural base. I'm thankful this is what the government has seen as its priority. Now, about the political situation with this particular economic perspective: the country changed very much in 1968. '68 gave a great jolt to Mexican society and to the Mexican state that had fallen asleep on its laurels. It was a self-congratulatory state that was shaken out of its complacency, out of its somnolence, by a rebellion of urban, middle-class youth. It was caught unaware and it responded brutally, with massacre, with blood. I think that it says a great deal about Mexico that instead of going to the pits of a repressive military dictatorship as in the southern part of the hemisphere, Mexico was able to offer other alternatives, other solutions, in order to avoid the repression. I think that it was the function of the Echevarría government to open up the society and create an equilibrium that permitted the present government to do an important thing, which was to initiate the political reform that has taken place. Under the acts of the present government, the Communist party may operate within the political system and have real participation in the Congress. Where particularly the Communist deputies have been very active, very agile, is

torpedoing initiatives from the executive and making the executive feel it is no longer all powerful, that there is an opposition for the incompetent. But there is an even more important fact in the political reform. As you know, the P.R.I. has always legitimized itself by saying, "There is no left to the left of the P.R.I. We are the left; we are the revolution. There is nothing to the left." Suddenly, there is something to the left, and the P.R.I. admits it. That is a change in the distribution of political power.

SKIRIUS: So you see there is still a resilient, strong party. You expect it to last much longer.

FUENTES: You know they are "mucho más maquiavélicos que las arañas".

REEVE: We won't translate that . . .

FUENTES: You know that General De Gaulle sent a commission of twelve experts to Mexico to study the P.R.I. and to see if he could reproduce it in France. It is a very efficient political machine, but it creates very many problems, especially since Mexico is more and more a diversified society; and even though the P.R.I. is more ideologically diversified than your two-party system. There are more ideological tendencies within the P.R.I. than you find between the Republican and Democratic parties—and even John Anderson—in this country. Still, I think that the solidification of a society, of a culture, demands a greater participation in pluralistic organizations. I think numerous organizations are there. I was present when some young communists visited President Echevarría in 1970 and asked for the legalization of the party; and he said, "Sure, when you really have a party. You don't have a party right now: you have two thousand members and half of them are members of the CIA. Go and work in the factories; achieve a proletarian base." They have done that, they have worked in an organized fashion, and I think that now the Communist party in Mexico is a real political party with real roots in the working class. It is destined to grow and have a very important role in the future. Any of the parties that disagrees with the Communist party or the parties of the left will also find its support and its clientele. I believe that we are going toward a multi-party system in Mexico.

OVIEDO: El poeta Jorge Zalamea decía hablando de la poesía primitiva de la América hispana que en poesía no hay poetas subdesarrollados. Tú has señalado alguna vez que la novela moderna tiene hoy dos centros: América Latina y el mundo Centroeuropeo. ¿Cómo es y por qué crees que se ha producido esta situación?

FUENTES: Yo creo que básicamente lo que sucede es que la novela tiene mucha importancia en América Latina y en Europa Central. Aclaro que cuando hablo con los novelistas de Hungría y Checoslavaquia, dicen que no están en Europa oriental. Ven el mapa, estamos en el centro de Europa,

y el oriente de Europa es otra cosa. En Moscú es otra cosa. Yo creo que la novela está muy viva en estas dos regiones del mundo porque en ellas hay mucho que decir, y la novela es la forma literaria de la máxima amplitud para decir todo lo que no se podría decir de otra manera. Yo creo mucho en la vitalidad de la novela, en su misión, en su función, en su vigencia. Cuando me pregunto a mí mismo en dónde empezó el mundo moderno, no pienso nunca en la caída de Constantinopla en manos de los turcos, la publicación del sistema de Copérnico o en el descubrimiento de América. Pienso que el mundo moderno nació un día de 1605 en que un caballero que subió a su caballo salió con los caminos de la Mancha. Se llamaba Don Quijote. Es el fundador del mundo moderno porque lo que hace Don Quijote, a través de la forma de la novela, es dejar atrás el mundo de la certidumbre medieval, en el que todas las cosas se parecían a sí mismas y lo que se leía era verdad, para salir a un mundo en el que nada se parece ya; y en el que hay que volver a encontrar la analogía de las cosas sin sacrificar su diferencia y las diferencias, sin sacrificar la analogía, un mundo esencialmente conflictivo que es el mundo del humanismo moderno, del humanismo renacentista. Don Quijote es el caballero de ese mundo, y nos guía hacia ese mundo a través de la forma de la novela, pone en duda el mundo, lo que es función de la novela, y sabe a la vez que la novela nace de la historia, que surge de la historia, pero que a través de su libro y de toda gran novela lo vemos también salir de ella para contemplarnos a nosotros mismos, para no ser víctimas ni de nuestro individualismo, ni del excesivo peso de una abstracción histórica. A través de la novela el hombre es reintroducido a su destino, a su lenguaje; yo creo que esta función es particularmente aguda y exigente en la América Latina y en Europa Central, pero no deja de ser una función que está reencontrando una sensibilidad que se entiende en todo los países. La novela es una de las grandes creaciones de Occidente; es una de las grandes creaciones de la civilización. Creo que es una salida intelectual muy importante en el futuro que yo creo que jamás será sacrificado.

## The Fuentes' Interviews in Fact and in Fiction

In thinking about interviews, a first question comes to mind: is the interview a literary genre? Does it have rules of composition as, let us say, a short story, a poem, or, in the terminology of journalism, a feature article? Are there any formal principles that interviews need respect, principles by which we may judge a successful performance from a less successful one? May we even assert that an interview is fact, not fiction, and that the information that the interviewer obtains must be one hundred percent reliable?

The literary critic dealing with interviews is on relatively uncharted ground. Although we practice interviewing, we may feel out of our domain, in a land already appropriated by the popular media. What is the correct attitude to assume in questioning the famous writer? Should we attempt to elicit revelation of character or only information? Should an interview be a trial of strength, an adversary relationship in the flamboyant style of Oriana Fallaci or do we restrict ourselves to the kid gloves approach of a Bill Moyers?

In fact there seem to be no ground rules for interviewing. Certain literary magazines like the *Saturday Review* seem to favor a middle course between the personal (and possible embarrassing) questions and those of a purely literary nature. The popular magazines like *Esquire* and *El* (its Mexican counterpart) naturally favor the exposé, or what Fuentes would call "the intellectual strip-tease." *The Paris Review* interviews, at the opposite extreme, allow the interviewee to cover up any inadvertent revelation by personally editing the interview.<sup>1</sup> If there is any formula at all for interviewing, perhaps it is the one proposed by *Time Magazine's* Thomas Griffith:

Interviews are like riding a seesaw. If a player prevails too easily, one end bangs to the ground. There should be no automatic victors—neither overbearing interviewers nor subjects too slickly practiced in evasion. The real winner is supposed to be a third party, the public.<sup>2</sup>

But for Carlos Fuentes the standard in interviewing is even higher. His own models are Plato and Cervantes. According to Fuentes, Plato and Sancho Panza conduct book length interviews with their respective teachers for the eternal benefit of readers.<sup>3</sup> For Fuentes, therefore, the interview is synonymous with the dialogue. But it is dialogue of a highly didactic nature. It is a tool that equally serves Fuentes' purposes and our own. Fuentes informs; we learn. At rare moments we may even learn more than Fuentes intends that we should.

But by and large his interviews contain relatively little of personal revelation. As Sara Castro-Klaren points out in her analysis of interviews

with Latin American writers, the idea of warm, personal encounter with the writer is subverted by the implicit presence of the public. Literary interviews "cannot be expected to reveal anything about the true self of the interviewee; they are only another appearance of the writer's *persona*."<sup>4</sup>

Fuentes is a virtuoso of what Castro-Klaren calls the "friendly interview." This is one in which the initiate interviewer poses puzzling questions born of a deep study of the master's work. Here texts are generated because questioning is a prodding for the writer to continue to develop his main or obsessive ideas.<sup>5</sup> A model for this type of interview could be the one by Emir Rodríguez-Monegal, first published in *Mundo Nuevo* in July of 1966 in which Monegal asserts, "La tarea principal del entrevistador fue provocar y estimular esa energía en movimiento que es Fuentes, encauzarle invisiblemente para que produjera más y mayores exploraciones dentro de su propia y auténtica sustancia."<sup>6</sup>

In the "friendly" interview, so popular in Latin America, conversation does not follow a formal set of questions but allows dialogue to flow and permits long interventions by the interviewer. (According to Rodríguez-Monegal, in his prologue to *El arte de narrar*, the interviewer is even permitted to make a few insignificant editorial changes.)<sup>7</sup> In the Latin American interview, therefore, the partnership becomes much more nearly equal than in the *Paris Review* interviews where it is the interviewee who is allowed to elaborate a written text out of the rough oral product.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, the typical friendly interview with Fuentes need not be confined to the Spanish speaking interlocutor. Fuentes' two interviews with Bill Moyers which were televised in June and July of 1980 were in the Latin American pattern. Although not strictly literary in scope, they contained no clash of antagonistic personalities. Like Fuentes' interviews which are published in literary magazines, his televised performances are extremely smooth. According to Marie-Lise Gazarian, who also conducted several televised interviews with Fuentes in 1980, Fuentes even rejected the opportunity to examine her questions before facing the cameras.<sup>9</sup> As a professional interviewee, he could be nearly certain that they would contain nothing of a personal nature, nothing with an emotional charge that might throw him off balance. Friendly interviews, whether published or televised, are perfectly suited to Fuentes' talents for expressing his ideas on art, philosophy, politics or literature. Most of Fuentes' interviews, in fact, are largely literary criticism in dialogue format.

Nevertheless, there are exceptions. When Fuentes exposes himself to questions by an anonymous public, as he did at the Simposio Carlos Fuentes at the University of South Carolina in April of 1978, the relationship cannot always be characterized as "friendly." For example, responding to a question about his own reported statement that he was "not concerned about having readers for *Terra Nostra*," he replies, "Perdóneme las bromas que hago con los entrevistadores, en primer lugar, *because they're asking for it*."<sup>10</sup>

He also has been known to treat requests for autobiographical material by outright rejection. Asked by another member of the audience at the Simposio in South Carolina to comment on some facts of his childhood that could throw light on his current literary activity, Fuentes replies, "No soy un autor autobiográfico. Tengo mucho miedo del solipsismo. Me interesa mucho más el mundo fuera de mí . . ." And he adds, "Respecto a mi biografía infantil, creo que todavía, a mi avanzada edad, no tengo bastante perspectiva ante ella. . . ." <sup>11</sup>

Again, when asked by James Fortson in the course of a 159 page interview published as a supplement to *El* if he has ever been psychoanalyzed, Fuentes replies, "¿Estás loco? Yo, mis demonios, que los tengo, los exorcizo escribiendo . . ." Furthermore he states that he will not reveal his feelings in an interview "por buena educación y buen gusto." <sup>12</sup>

If we are to take Fuentes at his word, therefore, he does not provide us with biographical information of a really personal or intimate nature in his interviews for three reasons: he is restrained by the dictates of a proper education, by modesty and finally by self-ignorance. Thus most interviews with Fuentes, unlike those with Mailer, Styron, Burroughs or in the field of Hispanic writers, those with Borges, Neruda or Cortázar <sup>13</sup> tell us relatively little about the man. Although they may provide the public with insights about his personality, the main value of Fuentes' interviews lies in their contribution to literary criticism of his work.

And yet Fuentes has serious reservations about his interviews as literary criticism. In commenting upon Jonathan Tittler's remark that the reader has to be instructed in how to read his works, Fuentes makes an implicit comparison between himself and Velasquez, Antonioni and Fellini to whom the public grants the right of explanation in a way that is begrudged writers. He laments that "this problem of language is overly explained; you run the risk of killing yourself . . ." And he adds that he does not like to talk too much about language. <sup>14</sup> In another interview with Regina Janes he remarks, "my books must speak for themselves. I can't be always explaining this and that." <sup>15</sup>

The Janes' interview also reveals some of the other pitfalls of the interview from the writer's viewpoint. He states that talking about a new project is dangerous in that "if I said anything, I would never write it." He is afraid of talking himself out, a fear he shares with García-Márquez. This is one of the reasons he tells Ms. Janes that he will give no more interviews. <sup>16</sup> Yet Fuentes is as ambivalent about interviews as he is about almost everything. A short time later he tells Jonathan Tittler that "writing is such a solitary occupation one has a yearning to talk sometimes. So I just try to be choosy about my interviews, that's all." <sup>17</sup>

The interviews, of course, will go on. According to Daniel DeGuzman, Fuentes is a self-confessed "talking machine." His biographer also implies that Fuentes must talk compulsively because he wishes to silence not the person with whom he talks but an inner accusatory voice. <sup>18</sup> However, this interpretation is DeGuzman's application of the psychoanalytical

theories of Dr. Edmund Bergler. It is not a confession elicited from Fuentes in an interview.

But the fact is that DeGuzman accurately observes Fuentes' compulsion to explain, to express the truth as he sees it. In talking to Ms. Janes, he says, "All our history is lies, and if the writers do not speak the truth, it will not be spoken . . ." <sup>19</sup> With Tittler he spells it out again, "Since I was twenty-one I was driven more than anything . . . by the desire to inform in my own culture, in my own country . . ." <sup>20</sup> He repeats substantially the same message to Bill Moyers. Fuentes as a person becomes engulfed in the flood of ideas that he generates. As interviewee, he often sounds as if he were on a pulpit or a podium.

Nevertheless, when the roles are reversed, when it is Fuentes asking the questions instead of answering them, we begin to realize that Fuentes has a Platonic vision of the possibilities in the interview form. As journalist he has orchestrated at least one stunning interview with his friend, Luis Buñuel. It appeared March 11, 1973, in the *New York Times*. The interview ends with Buñuel confessing a terrible fear of dying alone in a strange hotel, of not knowing who will close his eyes. The interview almost fades out, like a Buñuel film. Although some two thirds of the article is pure Fuentes writing as a film critic, in the interview proper he allows Buñuel to have the camera all to himself. There is not even the tell-tale "C.F." as questioner.

But in contrasting Fuentes' roles as interviewer and interviewee, I intend no criticism of those critics who have supplied us with interviews of the writer. Rather the problem, if one exists, lies with Fuentes who is so careful to project the *persona*, the writer's mask. The fact is that Buñuel, with all his antics, is a more dramatic subject than Fuentes himself in that the film-maker naturally identifies with his inner, surrealistic self. Fuentes, however, is artist enough to understand this and to fashion of the Buñuel interview a tool which serves equally for exposition and for drama.

Fuentes uses this technique of dramatic interview in many of his fictional works. We may remember how in *La región más transparente* the characters' biographies and even their innermost thoughts are often transmitted through interviews with Ixca Cienfuegos, the omnipresent confidant who probably earns his living as a journalist. Cienfuegos, in the fashion of Fallaci, tries to impell self revelation and catharsis in his interviewees. He says to Rodrigo Pola, "Dilo, dilo. Dale rienda suelta a tu retórica. ¿No es esto lo que querías: un testigo? No te aprietes. Habla."<sup>21</sup> The fictional interview in which we, as readers, are merely voyeurs, serves the same purpose as the confessional with Ixca as the high priest of the forbidden, secret religion.

The framework of the interview also appears in Fuentes' more recent fiction. In *La cabeza de la hidra*, for example, an unidentified narrator relates the action up to the climactic dialogue between himself and the character who has heretofore been the protagonist. And as in so many of

Fuentes interviews, dialogue does not merely deal with facts and events but also contains generous doses of the writer's views on history, politics, metaphysics, etc. Of course countless other novelists have also used the stage of fiction for their inner dialectical meditations, splitting their schizophrenic selves into many characters. Nevertheless, the process of creating interchangeable characters, of having characters generate new characters out of their own minds is carried by Fuentes to lengths that even Borges may not have anticipated. By the conclusion of *Cambio de piel*, for example, all the characters clearly represent divergent parts of the narrator's mind. The dramatic interplay of conflicting personalities is lost. *Cambio de piel* finally sinks under the intellectual weight of its narrator, of its monologues masquerading as dialogues, of novel which is really essay.

Fuentes' later novels partially correct this tendency. Although the amateur spy of *La cabeza de la hidra* retains some puppet-like characteristics, the narrator's intellectual ideas are still Fuentes', but in the novel they have emotional roots. The drama inherent in the situation of an unconfessed homosexual attachment lies beneath the disquisitions of the super-spy. The final interview in the novel, therefore, is emotionally charged in a way not to be found in most non-fiction interviews where Fuentes himself is the subject.

Fuentes, in fact, could be indulging in a little self-criticism when he has the amateur spy say to his inquisitor (who is now about to enlighten him), "Empieza por lo que te gusta, esas grandes generalizaciones, sácate eso del cuerpo primero."<sup>23</sup>

Is Fuentes consciously thinking about an interview when he writes these dialogues? Is it accurate to designate as "interview" a private conversation not intended for publication within the fictional framework? If we refer to one of Fuentes' factual interviews, the answer is "yes." To Jonathan Tittler he says:

Many great novels are, in the final analysis, a form of the interview. . . in every novel there are several voices, there is an interview, a dialogue going on. I think Sancho Panza is interviewing Don Quijote throughout the novel. And Don Quijote, from his loftiness, is also interviewing Sancho Panza and hearing the popular voice. . . All novels are a questioning of the world and a questioning of history. In this they are interviews also.<sup>24</sup>

In short, the interview for Fuentes is equally a dialogue between fictional characters or a dialogue between Fuentes and a friend. He uses the term in its widest possible meaning of face-to-face encounter. Fuentes' gregarious nature is at least one of the reasons why he can no more stop giving interviews than he can avoid processing information in his fiction through the form of dialogue. For example, although *La cabeza de la hidra* is supposed to be a novel of pure action, a spy thriller, the action is presented as having already taken place; it is action that can be blended with dialogue and metaphysical analysis.

However, dialogue in Fuentes' fiction is not always heavy and intellectual. He still has a keen ear for popular speech as several of the vignettes in *Agua Quemada* amply demonstrate. "El Día de las Madres," for example, is also a masterpiece of the interview as revelation or catharsis. The entire story builds up to the climactic moment when the father can unburden himself to his son, justify himself, explaining his relationship to his own father and to his dead wife.

Fuentes' fictional interviews, therefore, exude a sense of drama and tension that we will not find in the majority of his interviews with critics. But with or without drama, these interviews are valuable to the reader because of the clues that they furnish to the mysteries in his fictional works. As long as Fuentes continues to live and to write experimental fiction, there is no way he can be spared the role of exegete of his own texts, whether he wishes this role or not. For Fuentes, as for other members of the "Boom" generation, the interview form is the natural vehicle to bridge the gap between the writer's unconscious or metaphysical desires translated into fiction and the reader's often anguished attempts to trace pattern and meaning.

The need for some guide in the jungle of surrealist literature may help to explain the current popularity of the interview, particularly in Latin America. And just as the new mythically inspired works of fiction break with the old concepts of linear time and of restricted space in their creation of divisible characters who move in a sea of limitless, circular time, so the Latin American style interview must also be free to meander, to be spontaneous and even to tap the unconscious. The interviewer's enhanced importance in these dialogues (as explained by Rodríguez-Monegal) may be a reflection of his growing importance as a bridge between writer and the general reading public.

The writer of mythical fiction recognizes that he has no monopoly over his subject matter. He in fact invites the reader to participate in the creative process. And since the critic is no more than a glorified reader, he eagerly avails himself of the invitation. The interview, therefore, provides the setting for this new symbiotic relationship in which the critic's role is not only analytical but also creative. Between them, author and critic can generate new ideas or at least collaborate to explain old ones.

In the "friendly" interview, therefore, the roles of author and critic are no longer clearly defined. Fuentes in many of his interviews acts as co-critic rather than master, and the work of literary analysis becomes a joint endeavor. It is this joint discovery of a work of art that constitutes the drama or excitement of the "friendly" interview. It is a drama inherent in the process of creation. Since Fuentes has said, "I do not create my novels; they create me."<sup>25</sup> does it not also follow that they create his critics? (After repeated exposure to Fuentes' writing do we all not exhibit a tendency to Fuentification?) In the presence of the work of art both writer and critic tap each other's enhanced creativity. In fact it almost seems as if it is not the writer who is being interviewed but the novel itself.

And if one novel creates Fuentes, who in turn writes another novel, is not each novel the child of its predecessor? Thus to understand *Las buenas conciencias* we should interview *La región más transparente* (of course, in the presence of Fuentes). And to understand *Aura* or *Artemio Cruz*, the twins of 1962, we should have to interview *Las buenas conciencias*.

To a certain extent this is exactly what literary criticism of Fuentes has become, interviews with his previous novels. But how do we explain such disparate twins as *Aura* and *Artemio Cruz*? Once Fuentes is born again out of his novel, does he not add something of himself to the succeeding work of fiction? If he did not, each novel would be the child of the very first and not merely carry its genes. There would be no generations in his novelesque geneology.

Fuentes and his vital experiences, therefore, even according to his own scheme of creation, necessarily play a role in his literary production. For this reason the "friendly" interview with a single focus on the writer's work leaves a gap in our understanding. It is not out of prurient curiosity that we also need to know something about Fuentes, the man. This privileged information can occasionally be ferreted out by recourse to the words of his fictional characters. But in concentrated form it also can be found in the interview with James Fortson.

Although conducted as a rambling conversation between two friends, this interview is certainly not "friendly" in the context of Castro Klarén. Fortson badgers Fuentes, complains about the one thousand dollar fee that Fuentes has charged for this intrusion upon his time and repeats rumors about Fuentes' love life. He questions him about drugs, alcohol, politics, his past Don Juanesque role-playing, his current relationship with his wife, Silvia. He even tries to buy the Buñuel article from him at a bargain price. And for hour after hour Fuentes with amazingly good humor obliges by explaining and defending himself.

In his prologue to the work, Gustavo Sainz describes it as "un ratrato impresionante, fiel, inolvidable y satánico" and concludes by saying it includes "una cantidad superior a cualquier otro documento avalado por Carlos Fuentes, noticias dictadas desde la primera línea- en el frente- de su interioridad, sorprendentes noticias de él mismo, una inmersión en su masvida."<sup>9</sup>

It is the Fortson interview that also confirms our hypothesis that Fuentes the man and Fuentes the writer are mutually interactive. Discussing "ciertas experiencias amorosas," he says, "Una vez pasadas. . . en todo caso las puedes trasponer literariamente, que es lo que me interesa a mí. . . Allí (en la literatura) estoy diciendo lo que todo esto significó para mí. . ." (64) But he emphasizes that it is only his old, spent self that enters into fiction. Still talking about his romantic experiences, he says, ". . . esas cosas, mientras las vives, no puedes contarlas, porque las destruyes verbalmente; no tiene sentido cambiar la realidad por las palabras en estos casos, ¿verdad?" (64)

In short what we learn from Fuentes' interviews is that the writer as a man enters his novels only as history, as the ghost of his own past. Yet we realize that once Fuentes is inside his literary work, he is a ghost who breathes life into what otherwise would be disembodied ideas. The greater the role he permits himself, the more he is willing to reveal, the more convincing his novels become.

But the metaphysical content of his novels is apparently self-generating. That is, the ideas seem to reach out to shape Fuentes, his critics and his interviewers. They are the hungry ghosts of the present, which is an eternal present. They are the unseen participants in the "friendly" interview, whispering to Fuentes and to his interlocutors simultaneously. His novels are a battlefield between two ghosts, the ghost of himself and the ghost of archetypal ideas. But the "friendly" interview banishes the ghost of Fuentes. Archetypal ideas interrogate each other through the lips of writer and critic. There is equality of relationship in the "friendly" interview, but it is often an equality devoid of human content; rather it becomes a dialectic of ideas.

For the theoretically minded, such interviews are seductive in the extreme, seductive to conduct and fascinating to read. But for the fuller understanding of Fuentes they are not enough. We need the Fortson interview to supplement them. And we also need to listen to the interviews in Fuentes' fiction.

#### NOTES

1. Wilfred Sheed, *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews*, ed. George Plimpton (New York: Viking Press, 1974), IV, xiv.
2. Thomas Griffith, "Interviews, Soft or Savage," *Time*, March 30, 1981, p. 47.
3. Jonathan Tittler, "Carlos Fuentes," *Diacritics*, September, 1980, p. 46.
4. Sara Castro-Klarén, "Interviewing and Literary Criticism," *Ideologies and Literature*, I, no. 3 (May-June, 1977), 70.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
6. Emir Rodríguez-Monegal, "Situación del escritor en América Latina," *Mundo Nuevo*, no. 1 (July, 1966), 5.
7. Rodríguez-Monegal, *El arte de narrar* (Caracas: Monte Avila, 1968), p. 9.
8. Sheed, *Writers at Work*, xiv.
9. Marie-Lisa Gazarian supplied this information in a telephone conversation.
10. Isaac Jack Levy, et al. *Simposio Carlos Fuentes, Actas*. (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1978), p. 216.
11. *Ibid.* p. 219.
12. James R. Fortson, *Perspectivas mexicanas desde París: Un diálogo con Carlos Fuentes* (México: Corporación Editorial, 1973), supplement to *El*, p. 78.
13. A typical interview with Styron appears in the *Saturday Review*, September, 1980; another with Mailer can be found in the same magazine, January, 1981. Burroughs appears in *Writers at Work: the Paris Review Interviews*. Borges has given book-length interviews, as for example Richard Burgin's *Conversations with Jorge Luis Borges* (New York, 1968). For other interviews see Rita Guibert's *Seven voices* (New York; Knopf, 1973).
14. Tittler, *Diacritics*, September 1980, p. 56.

15. Regina Janes, "No More Interviews," *Salmagundi* 43 (winter, 1979): 94.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Tittler, *Op. cit.* p. 46.
18. Daniel DeGuzman, *Carlos Fuentes* (New York: Twayne, 1972) p. 139.
19. Janes, *Op. cit.* p. 91.
20. Tittler, *Op. cit.* p. 47.
21. Carlos Fuentes, *La región más transparente, Obras Completas* (México: Aguilar, 1974), I, 200.
22. If we are to judge by Fuentes' words, he would regard this "rooting" of character either as an error of understanding on my part or as a failure on his own. In his interview with Tittler he says:  
 I tried to write this novel based on characters who are nothing but their names and actions which are nothing but verbs . . . I think that is the fashion that both formally and intrinsically best depicts the world to which I am trying to give reality . . ." p. 54.  
 (Could it be that Fuentes, the novelist, has bested Fuentes, the intellectual?)
23. Carlos Fuentes, *La cabeza de la hidra* (Barcelona: Librería Editorial Argos, S. A. 1978), p. 225.
24. Tittler, *Op cit.* p. 46.
25. *Bill Moyers' Journal*, (New York, N.Y.: WNET Thirteen, Library #M-46, Show #520), p. 14. (The air date here is June 19, 1980.)

## The Pyramid and the Volcano: Carlos Fuentes' *Cambio de piel* and Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*

Twenty years separate Carlos Fuentes' *Cambio de piel* (1967) from Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano* (1947); yet Lowry's depiction of Mexico of the late 1930's coincides in interesting ways with Fuentes' Mexico of the 1960's. Although Carlos Fuentes knows and admires *Under the Volcano*, he did not have it in mind when he wrote *Cambio de piel*.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, because the two novels provide insights into certain aspects of Mexican culture, because they view the human condition from a similar perspective, and because they are remarkably alike thematically and technically, a comparative study of the two books can enhance a reader's appreciation of both. The comparison will, of course, emphasize similarities but cannot blur the sharp contrasts between two very different works.

Both novels are set in Mexico in the Mexico City-Cuernavaca-Cholula area, and both convey a feeling of transcendent regionalism which is a significant part of the total experience contained in each. As the reader moves with the drunken Consul through Quauhnahuac and nearby Parián, he feels the imposing presence of the volcanoes and the lush semi-tropical natural surroundings. In his biography of Malcolm Lowry, Douglas Day identifies five thematic levels in *Under the Volcano*: the chthonic (earth-bound), the human, the political, the magical, and the religious. Referring to the chthonic level, Day says, ". . . the natural and man-made setting for the novel is quite possibly the most vital element in it, and as expressive of the 'meaning' of *Under the Volcano* as any of its other thematic levels. It is this chthonic level that gives the work its extraordinary textural density, its oppressiveness which is sometimes almost insupportable. Everything in nature is rendered alive and febrile. . . ."<sup>2</sup> In *Cambio de piel* on various levels—human, mythic, religious, political, as well as chthonic—the Mexican setting also provides "extraordinary textural density." The reader constantly feels its emotional power: the overwhelming sense of continuation in the remains of ancient civilizations in the pyramid at Cholula, the anomaly of the Church resting above the pyramid, the ominous feeling surrounding the asylum below, the pathos of the poverty visible in the streets of Cholula and dating back to the time of the Conquest, the electricity of the constant threat of arbitrary violence.

While the Mexicanness of the surroundings is extremely important in both novels, the principal characters are either foreigners or are familiar with foreign cultures and ambivalently feel love and hate toward the Mexican environment and toward each other. In neither novel, however,

does the ambivalent attitude toward Mexico overshadow the magnetism of the environment. In general, Fuentes' works, even when critical of certain aspects of Mexican society and politics, reveal the author's love for that country and his profound interest in its past, present, and future. Lowry's attitude is positive in a similar way. Jorge Ruffinelli in his study of Lowry sees a basic difference between Lowry's portrayal of Mexico and that of other foreign writers: "Lowry fue uno de los pocos escritores extranjeros a México que no denigró en su obra al país, caso contrario a los de Lawrence y Greene, aunque tenía—entre otras cosas, por la angustiosa deportación ilegal en 1945—sobrados motivos para hacerlo. La visión de México—que de todos modos es bastante sombría y crítica—aparece compensada por la luminosidad de la atmósfera y el paisaje, y hasta con la idea de un posible paraíso que pudiera encontrar en esa tierra su lugar de residencia."<sup>3</sup> Residence in Mexico for a long period of time seems not only to have enabled Malcolm Lowry, an Englishman, convincingly to describe the experience of foreigners living there, but also to have given him an extraordinary sense of closeness to Mexico and its people. Although Carlos Fuentes is Mexican, he has spent much of his life in other countries. The combination of an international perspective with an intimate knowledge of all aspects of Mexican life lets him view his own country with the familiarity of an insider as well as with the distance, and often with the sense of wonder, of an alien.

The principal action in both novels significantly takes place on a day that celebrates the myth cycle of Life and Death. *Under the Volcano* begins on the Day of the Dead in November 1939, one year after the day during which the principal action occurs. In *Cambio de piel* the story that is related on a "September night" (see CP 9 and 365) takes place on April 11, 1965, Palm Sunday. At these special times characters in each work descend into an abyss of darkness and death.

The basic story in each novel is relatively uncomplicated, while the way it is told is complex and transformational. In *Cambio de piel* the story is a simple mystery. In it four people traveling in Mexico on the weekend of April 11, 1965, are being spied upon by the narrator, Freddy, who says that he is going to kill one of them. The travelers—a middle-aged Mexican professor and his wife, who claims to be from a Jewish family from New York, Javier Ortega and Elizabeth Jonas de Ortega, and their respective lovers, Javier's Mexican student Isabel and a middle-aged Czech man named Franz Jellinek—stop in Cholula and are forced to stay there overnight when they find that the gearbox of their car has been destroyed. While they are in Cholula, a youthful group of Nazi hunters called "los Monjes" (the Monks) arrive. Isabel has put these "hippies" and "Vietniks" in touch with Freddy, who is also an "old rebel." When Isabel takes Franz, Javier, and Elizabeth to visit the great pyramid in Cholula at midnight, Freddy leads the Monks there. The Monks then leave Freddy outside and follow Franz's group to the center of the pyramid, where they take their vengeance on Franz. One learns in the course

of the novel that Jakob Werner, the Monks' leader and the only one of them who dresses conservatively, is the son of a Jewish girl named Hanna whom Franz had loved in Prague before he became an architect for the Nazis. Near the end of the war when the Nazis' cause was lost and their behavior was dictated by panic, Franz had searched out, mutilated, and killed the already dying prisoner who had fathered Jakob in a concentration camp.

The characters' hopes, illusions, deceptions, and disappointments take the form of stories shown in scenes and related in conversations interspersed among the events of the night in Cholula. Throughout the novel, Freddy intrudes; he talks to Elizabeth and at times to Isabel. Writer and taxi-driver, Freddy is a kind of perceptive madman, who asks himself, "¿Seré realmente un rebelde sin causa envejecido, un angry young man rancio, a middle-aged beatnik?" (CP 73) He is watcher, listener, collector of information, and teller of a tale in which he, too, participates. In his conversations with Elizabeth and Isabel, Freddy refers to experiences he has shared with them, to their relationships with other characters, and to past backgrounds of all major characters. He apparently acquired much of this information in previous conversations with the women, especially with Elizabeth, but he also has in his possession a trunk full of memorabilia from Elizabeth's past. In spite of having promised Elizabeth not to reveal the contents of the trunk, he uses the material to create his own fiction, which he shares with the Monks, who are themselves a part of his fictional creation. The Monks in their turn create their own version of the story, stealing its elements (what Freddy has told them and what they find in Elizabeth's trunk), parodying the behavior of the principal characters, and holding a mock trial before confronting Franz. As the Monks impose their will on the outcome, Freddy is in an especially ambiguous position; although he is the narrator and in a sense the Monks' creator, he cannot control their behavior.<sup>4</sup> At the end of the novel the reader learns that Freddy has been telling the story in an asylum where Elizabeth is either a fellow patient or is visiting him. Freddy signs his narrative "Freddy Lambert."<sup>5</sup>

In *Under the Volcano* the story opens on the Day of the Dead in November of 1939 in a Mexican town called Quauhnahuac, modeled on Cuernavaca. Jacques Laruelle, a French movie director who has been living in Mexico, reminisces with a Mexican doctor, Arturo Díaz Vigil, about their friend Geoffrey Fermin who was killed on the same day a year earlier. After the men separate, Jacques continues to remember Geoffrey and Geoffrey's ex-wife Yvonne, who was also killed on the day of Geoffrey's death. The novel jumps back in time to the fatal day in 1938. On that day Yvonne returned to Geoffrey, who had been the British Consul and was now an unemployed drunk. But it appeared that because of Geoffrey's chronic alcoholism and because of his bitterness about Yvonne's past behavior, reconciliation would always be impossible no matter how strongly the desire to love persisted. An added

complication was the presence of Geoffrey's younger stepbrother, Hugh, who came a short time earlier and was still visiting when Yvonne arrived. Since Hugh and Yvonne were as attracted to each other as they had been in the past, they spent much of the day together, while Geoffrey wandered around in a deliriously drunken state.

The culminating actions of the novel occur in simultaneously timed chapters in which Yvonne and Geoffrey are killed. In Chapter XI Yvonne and Hugh are walking in a storm through the forest near the casino where Geoffrey is drinking when they hear a couple of gunshots. Hugh attributes the sounds to target practice. A short time later, while Yvonne is walking separated from Hugh, the storm intensifies, bringing heavy lightening and thunder and blocking out the sound of an approaching runaway horse. By the time Yvonne realizes that the horse is there, it has trampled her; she perceives herself being transported toward the stars. In Chapter XII, at approximately the same time, Geoffrey releases the same horse because he knows that its owner is dead. (He recognizes the horse because it has a number 7 branded on its rump.) Then, after a conflict with Mexican Facist officials, one called Chief of Rostrums and another called Jefe de Jardineros, who is not a gardener at all but rather a Spanish Facist in Mexico to enlist Mexican support, Geoffrey, considered a British spy ("espider"), is shot and thrown into a nearby barrance. He descends as if into a volcano and then as if into the collapse of "the world itself." While the action moves toward this violent conclusion, throughout the novel many symbolic acts and references prefigure what is to come. Flashbacks to scenes, conversations, and thoughts reveal the characters' backgrounds and their interrelationships with each other.

Patterns of characterization, symbolism, imagery, and allusion closely coincide in the two novels. Malcolm Lowry says that in *Under the Volcano* the four principal characters—Geoffrey (the Consul), Yvonne, Hugh, and Jacques—are "intended, in one of the book's meanings, to be aspects of the same man, or of the human spirit. . . ."6 Douglas Day explains that because of the sexual connection existing among the four (the three men have all made love to Yvonne), the group might be interpreted as a Freudian family with Geoffrey as Father, Hugh as Son, Jacques as Brother, and Yvonne as the Eternal Woman, filling all female roles.7 Unity also exists among the four principal characters in *Cambio de piel*—Javier, Elizabeth, Franz, and Isabel. Carlos Fuentes has acknowledged that ". . . el Narrador podría ser todos."8 The four with the narrator Freddy Lambert may be said to form an image of the "squaring of the circle."9 They not only form male and female pairs of doubles, each character also has certain attributes corresponding to those of the other three and to those of Freddy, who serves as a central unifying figure. The characters are like four points, separate and opposite while at the same time singularly unified by Freddy.

The concept of the "artist *manqué*" which Lanin Gyurko has identified in *Cambio de piel*10 also exists in *Under the Volcano*, where it applies to

the principal male characters. In *Cambio de piel*, a novel largely about the act of creating fiction, most of the characters are failures in one way or another. Javier is a frustrated writer unable to produce his great work, or any substantial work for that matter. He blames much of his difficulty on Elizabeth, but it seems to stem mainly from his own lack of volition. Writing is Freddy's form of rebellion. Describing his feelings after an orgiastic spectacle with the Monks in a whorehouse on Niño Perdido, Freddy says that although all were exhausted, what he most wanted to do was to write down the things that the Monks told him: "Bastante es lo que me dicen y escribirlo significa atravesar todos los obstáculos del desierto. . ." (CP 407). He also says that literature is called a "betrayal of confidence," but that as he sees it, "La verdad nos amenaza por los cuatro costados. No es la mentira el peligro; es la verdad que espera adormecernos y contentarnos para volver a imponerse: como en el principio. Si la dejáramos, la verdad aniquilaría la vida" (CP 407–408). He feels that the creation of fiction is a way of struggling to exist: "La mentira literaria traiciona a la verdad para aplazar ese día del juicio en el que principio y fin serán uno solo. Y sin embargo, presta homenaje a la fuerza originaria, inaceptable, mortal: la reconoce para limitarla" (CP 408). Time takes its toll on the artist who because of his lack of will does not write. Freddy's novel is in part the work that Javier intended to write but did not; Freddy, however, who creates fictions in an effort to assert his version of reality, does not succeed in altering his own condition, or even in completely controlling his own fictional creation.<sup>11</sup>

Geoffrey, like Javier, is a frustrated writer. In a touching scene in Lowry's novel, Jacques Laruelle finds a letter from his dead friend Geoffrey to Yvonne. In this letter, which was never sent, Geoffrey talks about a book on the occult that he had intended to write but had not completed:

Meantime do you see me as still working on the book, still trying to answer such questions as: Is there any ultimate reality, external, conscious and ever-present etc., etc., that can be realized by any such means that may be acceptable to all creeds and religions and suitable to all climes and countries? Or do you find me between Mercy and Understanding, between Chesed and Binah (but still at Chesed)—my equilibrium is all, precarious—balancing, teetering over the awful unbridgeable void, the all-but-unretractable path of God's lightning back to God? As if I ever were in Chesed! More like Oliphoth. When I should have been producing obscure volumes of verse entitled the Triumph of Humpty Dumpty or the Nose with the Luminous Dong! Or at best, like Clare, "weaving fearful vision". . . A frustrated poet in every man. Though it is perhaps a good idea under the circumstances to pretend at least to be proceeding with one's great work on "Secret Knowledge," then one can always say when it never comes out that the title explains the deficiency (UV 39).

When he speaks of Chesed and Oliphot, Geoffrey, who is well-versed in the mystical lore of the Cabbala, is referring to the Sephirotic Tree, the

tree of life, which is believed to have ten progressive emanations from physical to spiritual levels through which the adept moves towards union with God. Geoffrey, however, feels himself in the pattern of the inverted tree, on a downward path leading to Qliphot, "the realm of husks and demons."<sup>12</sup> Day interprets Geoffrey's condition as the result of this conscious decision to take "the way down": "This failed Consul, this erratic and faintly ludicrous drunk, is nothing less than a modern-day type of the Faustian-Promethian rebel, a man who turns his back on Grace, and who seeks by doing so to acquire diabolical wisdom and power. He knows, like Rimbaud, Baudelaire, and the rest of the *poètes maudits*, that the way down and the way up are one and the same; and he, like them, prefers the way down."<sup>13</sup> While the way down might lead Geoffrey to the knowledge he is seeking, Geoffrey is not able to write his book as he descends.

Hugh is in a sense also an "artist *manqué*." His career as a songwriter began when he gained some measure of success with his songs at an early age, was aborted through a series of self-created misfortunes. At the time of the novel, at 30, Hugh is a wanderer and would-be revolutionary. Jacques Laruelle, once a successful film producer, was also at a low point in his career when he came to Quauhnahuac, where he stays on during the year after the deaths of Geoffrey and Yvonne.

In both novels various characters in addition to being "failed artists" are failures as human beings. In *Cambio de piel* this is true of Javier and Franz. Both fail to act affirmatively. Javier does not write his novel. Franz, while still in Europe, did not speak out against the Nazis, but rather worked with them as an architect in the planning of concentration camps. The artistic talent that he had hoped to use creatively when he was a student became a force of destruction. At the end of the novel, as Franz and Javier wrestle in a love/hate encounter at the center of the pyramid, each represents an aspect of the failure to exert the power of the Will in a positive way in the human context: ". . . esa locura, esa negativa de aceptar el hecho individual como algo relacionado con el hecho social, esta súbita ausencia de toda restricción, ese acto silencioso, esa complicidad ciega, avanzaron con el cuerpo y la mirada da Franz hacia la inmovilidad de Javier, hacia ese contrario pasivo, ansioso de liberarse por la mentira y la fiebre antes de que llegue el ataque final, la rendición de cuentas, incapaz de convertir la compasión en respeto, finalmente inadecuado a todo el dolor y toda la alegría del mundo" (CP 370). The active Franz, who is incapable of connecting his individual choices to his social responsibility, moves with tenderness and cruelty toward the passive Javier, who is incapable of feeling for and with his fellow man. The end of *Cambio de piel* exists in two versions. At the end of this encounter, which is included in the first version, the passageway inside the pyramid caves in, trapping Elizabeth and Franz, while Javier and Isabel escape. In that version Javier later kills Isabel when she begins to talk to him the

way Elizabeth had. In the second version the encounter between Franz and Javier is implied but not shown.

Javier shares his failing as a human being with both Hugh and Geoffrey. Events in *Under the Volcano* occur near the end of the Spanish Civil War. Hugh feels strong sympathy for the Republican cause and regrets that he is not in Spain to take part in the struggle; in a way his not being there is a personal failure. In *Cambio de piel*, Javier, unconcerned about his fellow man and unable to write, forms a contrast with the successful poet Vasco Montero, who did go to Spain (see CP 172-173). Both Javier and Geoffrey have failed relationships with their wives. Each feels on the one hand an emotional and physical bond with his wife, and on the other a need to be free from her. In both cases a resentment against women can be traced back to the mother-son-relationship (in Geoffrey's case step-mother/stepson) in childhood and adolescence.

Malcolm Lowry said that his novel ". . . has for its subject the forces that dwell within man and lead him to look upon himself with terror," and that "its subject is also the fall of man, his remorse, his incessant struggle towards the light under the weight of the past, which is his destiny."<sup>14</sup> These words describe the condition of both Geoffrey Fermin and Franz Jellinek. Fuentes, like Lowry, insists on the importance of the past; mankind must remember in order to define present reality. Both Franz Jellinek and Geoffrey Fermin in their pasts committed or unprotestingly permitted horribly violent acts of war. Franz, who was an idealistic student of architecture, did not resist the Nazis when they came into power. Acting as an architect for them, he indirectly contributed to thousands of deaths. At the end of *Cambio de piel*, Franz becomes the victim of the young Nazi hunters, led by the son of a man whom he had murdered before escaping at the end of the war. During World War I, while Geoffrey was acting commanding officer on the S. S. Samaritan, his ship captured a German submarine, and before going to port, the Samaritan's crewmen, possibly with Geoffrey's consent or even aid, shoved the German officers into the Samaritan's engineroom furnace. Geoffrey received an honorable citation for the capture of the enemy submarine, but he was court-martialed because of the incident. Although he was acquitted, the memory of the deaths stayed with him. At the end of *Under the Volcano* Geoffrey is shot by Fascist sympathizers who believe that he is a British spy.

Grotesque imagery of war and chaos runs through both novels. Even though they are written at disparate times, both refer specifically to World War II; in *Under the Volcano* it is an imminent threat, and in *Cambio de piel* it is seen in retrospect. In both, the authors base imagery of semi-madness on that found in Expressionist films dating from the short period between World War I and World War II. References to *Las manos de Orlac* (*Orlacs Haende*, 1925) in *Under the Volcano* serve a function similar to that of references to *El gabinete del doctor Caligari* (*Das*



by film. Both authors have written scripts and have had direct contact with people from all aspects of the industry. Day sees a ‘lifelong influence of film on Lowry’s work.’ Indicating Lowry’s familiarity with German films, he cites a passage from an unpublished letter in which Lowry wrote, “I think I have seen nearly all the great German films, since the days of *Caligari*. . . .”<sup>18</sup> In Fuentes’ novels and essays one finds a myriad of references to movies, actors, directors, and film techniques which attest to his intimate knowledge of the medium. In *Cambio de piel*, for example, Fuentes refers to numerous films in addition to the *Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*; Elizabeth defines her reality through its relationship to the wide range of films she knows. Actions and conversations indicate that she and Javier have made film an integral part of their personal relationship (see, for example, CP 316).

In keeping with the atmosphere of semi-madness and illusion set by the film references, surrealistic elements of dream, carnival, and chaos are also present in both novels. In *Under the Volcano*, Chapter I ends and Chapter II begins at the festival fair in Quauhnahuac. Rising high above the activities is a huge Ferris wheel, visible to characters throughout the novel. In the letter to his English publisher, Lowry explained its significance: “This wheel is of course the Ferris wheel in the square, but it is, if you like, also many other things; it is Buddha’s wheel of the law (see VII), it is eternity, it is the instrument of eternal recurrence, the eternal return, and it is the form of the book; or superficially it can be seen simply in an obvious movie sense as the wheel of time whirling backwards until we have reached the year before and Chapter II. . . .”<sup>19</sup> Wheel imagery is also related to Lowry’s finding inspiration in Cocteau’s play *La Machine Infernale*, in which the Universe becomes the mechanism of destruction of human life with time as its spring.<sup>20</sup> The wheel thus becomes a symbol of the movement of time toward Geoffrey’s death. The Ferris wheel is part of the carnival through which the Consul drunkenly wanders in Chapter VIII. To escape children who are begging him for money at the fair, Geoffrey confusedly gets into a ride called “Máquina Infernal” (a “loop-the-loop” machine) which whirls him violently forwards and then backwards:

The Consul, like that poor fool who was bringing light to the world, was hung upside down over it, with only a scrap of woven wire between himself and death. There, above him, poised the world, with its people stretching out down to him, about to fall off the road onto his hear, or into the sky. 999.

.....

All at once, terribly, the confession boxes had begun to go in reverse: Oh, the consul said, oh; for the sensation of falling was now as if terribly behind him, unlike anything, beyond experience; certainly this recessive unwinding was not like looping-the-loop in a plane where the movement was quickly over, the only strange feeling one of increased weight; as a sailor he disapproved of that feeling too, but this—ah, my God! (UV 222)

Everything falls tumultuously out of the Consul's pockets, but once on the ground, with his head still spinning, he realizes that the beggar children have returned all of his belongings, and he wishes that he had been kinder to them. Throughout this experience Geoffrey's death is prefigured: "999" is the upside-down image of "666," a number referring to the Beast of the Apocalypse; Geoffrey rides in a "confession box"; he hangs upside down like the "poor fool who was bringing light to the world." Geoffrey's drunken vision, through which much of the novel is perceived, gives it an aspect of unreality and dream, or perhaps better said, nightmare.

In *Cambio de piel* Franz's death is also prefigured in a carnival scene, in a dream which Franz had during the last days of the war while he was wandering with a German child who had been serving with Nazi troops. In Franz's dream the child, Ulrich,<sup>21</sup> led him onto a stage and into a pre-Lenten carnival in which on one side of the town square mummers were celebrating and on the other children were playing. The King Momus, the representative sacrificial figure, like Hanna's son Jakob and Jakob's father, had one blue eye and one brown. The children's antics, the disguises, the revelry delighted Franz until the tenor of the dream changed. At that point the violence was suddenly directed at him:

Los saltimbanquis con uniformes grises y estrellas amarillas van trepando por el techo desde la plaza del carnaval y la cuaresma. Los niños se esconden en una montaña de arena; la niña se asoma por el hueco de un barril y señala a Franz con el dedo; la niña deja caer su muñeca de gengibre con ojos de ciruela pasa; los niños que fabrican ladrillos empiezan a arrojarlos hacia la figura detenida en el techo [Franz] mientras los saltimbanquis avanzan en cuatro patas sobre las pizarras del tejado y un buho, desde un altílo, le guía un ojo. Los saltimbanquis lo asaltan, le toman del cuello, los brazos, los pies, las ingles: . . . . . mientras los saltimbanquis, entre las risas y obscenidades de los dos reyes, Momo y Cristo, y de su corte de enanos y mendigos, baldados y menestres, monjas y mercaderes, arrastran a Franz al centro del cuadro, al pozo cuya cubeta inspecciona una vieja, una vieja que empuja a Franz cuando lo acercan a esa caída, a esa salida del combate de la carne por donde cae fuera del cuadro, mientras allá arriba, en el rectángulo de un cielo que no dejan ver las cabezas asomadas a mirar el descenso, se cierra el telón pintado (CP 303).

As the curtain closed, Franz became a witness to scenes of death, destruction, and Final Judgment. Then he awoke. When questioned by Franz, Ulrich said that he saw his German officers flee; he began to cry. Franz offered the boy advice, but a short time later he saw him killed by an American soldier who was "jest practicing" (CP 307). The war was over. Clearly, this dream both reflects Franz's feeling of guilt and prefigures his own sacrificial death.<sup>22</sup> Though very different in many ways, the carnival experiences in both novels serve to prefigure a character's death and to reveal compassion felt for the children with whom the same characters have contact.

*Under the Volcano* and *Cambio de piel* also have in common certain other symbolic references related to the central mythic imagery of Life and Death cycles, to deremonial sacrifice, and to the Mexican environment. Pariah dogs, for example, appear in both novels as symbolic presences. In *Under the Volcano*, when the Consul and Yvonne enter their home in Quauhnahuac together for the first time since their separation, "a hideous pariah dog followed them in" (UV 64). Their relationship, like the house and garden, has deteriorated. The ominous presence of the dogs throughout the novel reinforces the feeling of the precariousness of Geoffrey's position, until, at the end of the novel, one of these animals shares Geoffrey's final descent: "Suddenly he screamed, and it was as though this scream were being tossed from one tree to another, as its echoes returned, then, as though the trees themselves were crowding nearer, huddled together, closing over him, pitying. . . Somebody threw a dead dog after him down the ravine" (UV 375). Lowry likely knew of the Aztec and Mayan belief that the dog served as a guide to assist the souls of the dead on their journey through the underworld and that in pre-Columbian times dogs were frequently buried with the dead.<sup>23</sup>

Both Fuentes and Lowry in their references to the existence of underfed dogs in the areas they are describing seem to be suggesting a parallel between the fate of the dogs and that of human beings in the same areas. At the end of *Cambio de piel* the hungry yellow dog, present throughout the novel, poses an immediate threat. When Elizabeth takes a newborn child from the trunk of the Monks' car after Franz has been killed, and when, after considering other places, she leaves it on the threshold of the asylum, the defenseless child is in danger of being devoured by the hungry yellow dog: "Pero el perro amarillo y babeante de Cholula va a terminar su merienda, va a hacer trizas esas vendas sucias que aún lo atan y luego, Dragona [Elizabeth], y luego. . . Sé que su apetito no está satisfecho" (CP 442). The reference to the dog here reflects the scene at the beginning of the novel which describes what the travelers saw when they entered Cholula: "Los perros sueltos que corrian en bandas, sin raza, escuálidos, amarillos, negros, desorientados, hambrientos, babeantes. . ." (CP 11). Dogs, used for hunting and at times for food, were in Mexico before the arrival of the Spaniards, but accounts of the Conquest report that the Conquistadores were accompanied by ferocious dogs to which they sometimes fed the bodies of their victims.<sup>24</sup> In *Cambio de piel* the dog represents both victim and victimizer. Early in the novel Javier becomes nauseated at the sight of the rotting body of a yellow dog on a street in Mexico City. The dogs are hungry and neglected; but hungry dogs either live and die miserably or feed upon those more defenseless than they.

This list of coincident elements in the two novels could be expanded to include bulls, dwarf-like characters, number and color symbolism, and possibly other things, but the preceding exposition should suffice to show the similarity of pattern in *Under the Volcano* and *Cambio de piel*. A comparison of like elements says nothing about the relative merit of

either novel. It merely shows that two authors writing about the cyclical pattern of Life and Death and about mankind's struggle with the forces of Evil, and locating their stories in the same geographical area, chose many of the same patterns of imagery to create the experience conveyed in their novels. Whatever the reasons for the similarity of choice—and one might conjecture that it grows out of similar artistic and social experiences and interests—each author used the material successfully, shaping it to fit the specific circumstances of his novel:

Malcolm Lowry described *Under the Volcano* as follows:

The novel can be read simply as a story during which you may—if you wish—skip whole passages, but from which you will get far more if you skip nothing at all. It can be regarded as a kind of symphony or an opera, or even as something like a cowboy film. I wanted to make of it a jam session, a poem, a song, a tragedy, a comedy, a farce. It is superficial, profound, entertaining, boring, according to one's taste. It is a prophecy, a political warning, a cryptogram, a crazy film, an absurdity, a writing on the wall. It can be thought of as a kind of machine; it works, you may be sure, for I have discovered that to my own expense. And in case you should think that I have made of it everything except a novel, I shall answer that in the last resort it is a real novel that I have intended to write, and even a damnably serious novel.<sup>25</sup>

Fuentes says that what is important in Lowry's novel is "el mito del paraíso perdido y su representación trágica y fugaz en el amor." He groups Lowry with several authors who, he says, "regresaron a las raíces poéticas de la literatura."<sup>26</sup> Carlos Fuentes' *Cambio de piel*, like Lowry's *Under the Volcano*, is an intricately textured, poetic novel which requires close, even multiple, readings to be fully enjoyed. It too has the formal qualities of musical composition, the interpretive freedom of jazz, the confusion and brashness of pop culture, the emotion, beauty, and preciseness of poetry, the penetrating vision of cinema, the humor of comedy, the seriousness of tragedy. It is absurd and profound.

The easiest way to approach the differences between the two novels is through structure. They are not alike in form. *Under the Volcano* begins on the Day of the Dead a year after the day on which Geoffrey was murdered. Jacques Laruelle looks at the barranca into which the Consul was thrown, and time jumps back to the day's events leading to the death. The way Lowry presents these events is complex: although it is the memory of Jacques Laruelle that triggers the jump, there are flashbacks to conversations and thoughts of other characters prior to that fatal day. Much of the material is related to and colored by Geoffrey's alcoholic perception of the world and by his interest in "secret knowledge." In *Cambio de piel*, the basic story line is as simple as that of *Under the Volcano*; however, since *Cambio de piel* has a metafictional dimension not present in *Under the Volcano*, its structure is more self-consciously complex.

Fuentes' novel is so complex that the reader must not only read closely, but even participate actively in the process of creating the novel. *Cambio de piel* functions through many layers of narration. In the opening epigraph, on a September night in France, an unnamed narrator, having ended a narration, asks the reader's permission to begin the novel. At the end of the novel, the narrative is signed by a narrator named Freddy Lambert. The stories related by Freddy have been told to him by Elizabeth and Isabel, who in turn experienced them, fabricated them, or heard them from Franz and Javier. The story runs away from Freddy when the Monks enter; they take the story elements and, refusing to heed Freddy's directions, use them for their own purposes. The reader must follow all of these interchanges and must sort out diverse versions of events as well. At times, reality in the novel is presented in multiple versions, each of which is equally as valid as the others. In addition, the reader must understand a seemingly infinite number of allusions to just about everything from the established arts—painting, classical music, jazz, literature, "art" film—to pop culture—popular music, popular movies, slang, catch phrases, and so forth. News items, dreams, visions, versions of poetry, songs, and a variety of other material are interpolated freely, though with purpose and design, throughout the work. (Lowry uses allusion and interpolation in *Under the Volcano* in thematically significant ways—for example in Chapter X, when he inserts information from a folder describing Tlaxcala—but he does not integrate his allusions and interpolated material into the total structure of the novel as Fuentes does in *Cambio de piel*, as, for example, in his use of the Brahms, Verdi, and pop requiems.) Fuentes' reader must remember both what is being alluded to and what has happened at each previous stage of the novel in order to fathom the intricate relationships and transformations occurring in the book. The reader ultimately decides which version, if either, ends the work; the openness of the structure gives him the further freedom to create his own version if he wishes.

The endings of both novels, in which Fuentes and Lowry portray characters in a downward trajectory through worlds of madness, movies, magic, and myth, can be said to serve as warnings to mankind. Lowry related his book to the period in which it is set, just preceding World War II: "On one level, the drunkenness of the Consul may be regarded as symbolizing the universal drunkenness of war, of the period that precedes war, no matter when. Throughout the twelve chapters, the destiny of my hero can be considered in its relationship to the destiny of humanity."<sup>27</sup> The imminence of war, along with the fact that Lowry had originally envisioned *Under the Volcano* as the first part of a Dantesque triptych of Inferno, Purgatory, and Paradise, may account in part for the finality of Geoffrey's descent and death at the end of the novel. Although the trajectory is consistently downward, ending when Geoffrey's body is hurled into the barranca, Lowry said that this ending should not be depressing: "I don't think the chapter's [XII] final effect should be depressing: I feel

you should most definitely get your katharsis, while there is even a hint of redemption for the poor old Consul at the end, who realizes that he is after all part of humanity. . . ."28 The novel closes with a final warning: "¿Le gusta este jardín que es suyo? ¡Evite que sus hijos lo destruyan!" (UV 376)

In *Cambio de piel*, also written at a time when the world was deeply concerned about war and violence, Fuentes takes his characters into the bowels of the earth at the center of the great pyramid at Cholula, but he allays a feeling of complete hopelessness by introducing ambiguity into the structure of his novel. Fuentes says that *Cambio de piel* contains "una serie de actos ceremoniales," and that it ends with a sacrifice in the pyramid because that is "el sentido mexicano de la novela."<sup>29</sup> Although Fuentes' story does not suggest that mankind will follow any path other than one of violence prescribed by ceremonial acts, the open structure of the novel suggests that paths other than those of sacrifice and vengeance are possible. Freddy is the Monks' *lazarillo*, and their Virgil. As he describes his decision to serve as their *lazarillo*, his tone reflects disgust with himself and with human cruelty (CP 436). When he says that he serves as "una especie de Virgilio presente y de Narrador futuro" (CP 378), his statement refers to his role as the guide who will lead the Monks into the depths of the pyramid as Virgil led Dante into the underworld and also to his role as the narrator who will later relate what he has done. But Freddy's role as Virgil might also be taken as a reflection of the philosophical position of the novel. Freddy, perhaps like Virgil,<sup>30</sup> seems to be a writer who is tired of war and vengeance. Freddy's behavior indicates that he is caught up in the violence, but his observations suggest an ironic view of the cyclical pattern of victimization and vengeance, of ceremonial sacrifice that he wishes did not continue to repeat itself. In both versions of the ending of *Cambio de piel*, the Monks kill Franz. But if two versions can exist simultaneously, an infinite number of others become possible. The implication is that just as fictional reality can be altered, it is possible for the reader to alter his own reality. Through creativity and imagination he may find a way to prevent the repeated destruction of his garden.

## NOTES

1. When asked about *Cambio de piel* and *Under the Volcano* on December 2, 1981, Carlos Fuentes said that he was not thinking of *Under the Volcano* when he wrote his novel. Citations from *Cambio de piel* and *Under the Volcano* will be indicated in the text and will refer to the following editions: Carlos Fuentes, *Cambio de piel* (México: Joaquín Mortiz, 1967) and Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano* (New York: New American Library, 1965). Text copyright year for *Under the Volcano* is 1947.

2. Douglas Day, *Malcolm Lowry: A Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 332.

3. Jorge Ruffinelli, "Malcolm Lowry: El viaje que nunca termina," *Texto crítico*, 4:9 (enero-abril 1978), 14.

4. Carlos Fuentes, "Cambio de piel en Italia," *Mundo Nuevo*, No. 21 (marzo 1968), p. 22.
5. Carlos Fuentes, "Cambio de piel en Italia," p. 22, says that the name "Freddy Lambert" refers to "el apelativo de Nietzsche y el apellido de Louis Lambert." Several critics have discussed the implications of this combination. Suffice it to say here that the name suggests a combination of references to madness and to specific applications of the concept of the human Will.
6. Malcolm Lowry, *Selected Letters of Malcolm Lowry*, eds. Harvey Breit and Marjorie Bonner Lowry (Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippencott Company, 1965), p. 60. Letter to Jonathan Cape, dated January 2, 1946.
7. Day, pp. 338-339.
8. Emir Rodríguez Monegal, "Situación del escritor en América Latina," *Mundo Nuevo*, No. 1 (julio 1966), p. 10. (An interview with Carlos Fuentes)
9. This concept appears in various religious systems. In alchemy the term describes the round and the square properties of Mercury. Mercurius is the symbol for "the mysterious transforming substance of alchemy." Carl Gustav Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, Vol. XII of *Collected Works*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 133. The symbolic representation is also related to the quincunx figure which symbolizes "The Law of the Centre" or the union of opposites in Aztec religious expression. See Laurette Séjourné, *Burning Water: Thought and Religion in Ancient Mexico* (New York: Grove Press, 1960), esp. 89-94.
10. Lanin A. Gyrko, "The Artist Manqué in Fuentes' *Cambio de piel*," *Symposium*, 31 (Summer 1977), 126-150.
11. Gyrko, pp. 143-144.
12. Lowry, *Selected Letters*, p. 65. See also, Day, p. 344; and Perle Epstein, *The Private Labyrinth of Malcolm Lowry: Under the Volcano and the Cabbala* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), esp. pp. 25 and 40-41.
13. Day, p. 345.
14. Malcolm Lowry, "Preface to a Novel," *Canadian Literature*, No. 9 (Summer 1961), p. 28. (Reprint of the preface to the 1949 French edition of *Under the Volcano*) See also, Lowry, *Selected Letters*, p. 66.
15. The original script for *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* by Hans Janowitz and Carl Mayer differs from Weine's interpretation. Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), in Chapter V, contrasts the "revolutionary" context of the original script, in which Caligari is a "real" madman, with Weine's "conformist" film, in which Caligari's story becomes the creation of an asylum inmate's imagination. Relating Weine's film to the pre-war psychology of the German people, Kracauer says that it "reflects . . . [a] double aspect of German life by coupling a reality in which Caligari's authority triumphs with a hallucination in which the same authority is overthrown" (p. 67). For a good analysis of Fuentes' allusion to this film in CP, see Gyrko, pp. 146-150.
16. Day, p. 333.
17. Lowry, *Selected Letters*, p. 69.
18. Day, p. 116. Letter to Ten Holder, dated October 31, 1951. It is also quoted in Paul G. Tiessen, "Malcolm Lowry and the Cinema," *Canadian Literature*, No. 44 (Spring 1970), p. 38. Tiessen discusses the use of cinema techniques in *Under the Volcano*.
19. Lowry, *Selected Letters*, pp. 70-71.
20. Day, p. 332.
21. Ulrich was also the name of one of Franz's friends when he was a student. In contrast to Franz, that Ulrich refused to join the Nazis.
22. In the mock trial the Monks' actions are similar to those of participants in a Mummer's Play, a vegetation rite in which a figure representing the spirit of vegetation is sacrificed. Sir James Frazer reports that in one such ceremony a group of young men cut a tree from which they make an artificial man. "The cavalcade then returns with music and song to the village. Amongst the personages who figure in the procession are a Moorish king

with a sooty face and a crown on his head, a Dr. Iron-Beard, a corporal and an executioner." This sacrificial rite occurs in the spring. See Sir James Frazer, *The New Golden Bough*, ed. Theodore Gaster (New York: New American Library, 1964), p. 304. Abridgement of *The Golden Bough* (1890). For a comparison to Frazer's description, see CP 380-381.

23. Epstein, p. 216, relates Lowry's ending to the Aztec custom. For additional information about the custom, see Donald Cordry, *Mexican Masks* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980), p. 191.

24. See, for example, Miguel León-Portilla, ed., *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico*, trans. Lysander Kemp (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), p. 144. Translation of *Visión de los vencidos* (México, 1959).

25. Lowry, "Preface," p. 28.

26. Carlos Fuentes, *La nueva novela hispanoamericana* (México: Joaquín Mortiz, 1969), p. 19. See also Carlos Fuentes, *Casa con dos puertas* (México: Joaquín Mortiz, 1969), p. 19. See also Carlos Fuentes, *Casa con dos puertas* (México: Joaquín Mortiz, 1970), p. 60.

27. Lowry, "Preface," p. 28.

28. Lowry, *Selected Letters*, p. 86.

29. Rodríguez Monegal, p. 11.

30. Michael Grant, *Myths of the Greeks and Romans* (New York: New American Library, 1962), p. 296 writes: "Virgil is war-weary, and sees the miseries and frustrations of battle. Even the death of Aeneas' wholly evil foe Mezentius is a cause for no exultation. Virgil suffers from a malaise, or from a national guilt about war, and interprets his myths accordingly."

# Archetypal Patterns in Carlos Fuentes' "La Muñeca Reina"

The common experience of humanity is expressed in its myths. Although myths are universal in their meaning, each new age must re-invent their content in order to vivify the culture. Thus the mythmaker and the poet are closely allied. Mythical stories become transformed into imaginative fiction or incorporated as substructure in works of literature. Nineteenth-century Romantic writers frequently availed themselves of specific mythological correspondences for the ennobling effect to be achieved by thus associating the creatures of their invention with culture heroes of earlier civilizations. By contrast, contemporary mythopoeic works (writings that re-create the ancient myths in renewed symbolic form) exercise an inspirational function:

The perennial appeal and vitality of mythic thinking stem from the fact that it makes us feel that in all civilizations men face analogous situations, undergo similar experience. . . . The myth is of particular import for the modern artist who feels himself estranged from the divisiveness and uniformity of our age.<sup>1</sup>

Carlos Fuentes, in his essay *La nueva novela hispanoamericana*, makes it clear that he attaches exceptional importance to the use of mythic or archetypal patterns as prefigurative structuring devices.<sup>2</sup> The presence of an anima figure in his short story "La muñeca reina" has already been noted, but the function of this and other archetypes in the work has remained unexamined.<sup>3</sup> The present study endeavors to establish the interrelation and significance of the archetypal patterns involved.

As employed by C. G. Jung, the term "archetype" refers to motifs or images recurring the world over that are capable of eliciting analogous psychological responses from all men. They evoke the "racial memory" of endlessly repeated experience. Jung postulates that archetypes are "the manifestations of a deeper layer of the unconscious where the primordial images common to humanity lie sleeping."<sup>4</sup> These contents of the so-called "collective unconscious" are patterns of potential experience; they are

first only . . . *forms without content*, representing merely the possibility of a certain type of perception and action. When a situation occurs which corresponds to a given archetype, that archetype becomes activated and a compulsiveness appears, which, like an instinctual drive, gains its way against all reason and will, or else produces a conflict of pathological dimensions, that is to say, a neurosis.<sup>5</sup>

The correlative concepts of hereditary racial memory and the "collective unconscious" are widely discredited today as unverifiable and contrary to the findings of genetic science.<sup>6</sup> This development has merely necessitated a modification of the "provisional hypothesis," which is how C. G. Jung viewed the whole structure of his analytical psychology.<sup>7</sup> It is only the source of the archetypes that is at issue. Jolande Jacobi, the distinguished associate of Jung, readily admitted that "No direct answer can be given to the questions of whence the archetype comes and whether or not it is acquired."<sup>8</sup> The origin of the archetypes remains controversial; but the fact of their existence is generally acknowledged.

Carlos Fuentes' short story "La muñeca reina" expresses the theme of reality versus illusion in an atmosphere that develops from mild mystery into delirium and horror. A young man, Carlos, looking through a book from his childhood, discovers a card that a little girl named Amilamia had given him fifteen years earlier. They had been playmates even though she was then only seven years old and he was twice her age. Amilamia had drawn a map on the card to enable Carlos to find her house should he ever wish to do so. He becomes fascinated with his memories of her, and, by following the directions she had provided, he locates the house. The occupants—Amilamia's parents—prove to be a repugnant, fearsome couple. Amilamia apparently has died. Obsessed, the two are devoting their lives to the worship of her memory in the form of a porcelain doll lying in a little coffin between sheets of black silk. The monstrous cult is conducted in a private sanctum fitted out with funerary decor and flowers, candles, incense and religious artifacts. While engaged in the perverse ritual, they seem to Carlos more pathetic than frightening, but the suffocating atmosphere overwhelms and terrifies him, and he flees to the outer world. Several months later, his idealized memories of the "true" Amilamia having overcome the horror inspired by the false corpse, he returns to the house intending to offer the child's card to the couple as a keepsake. The door is opened this time by a deformed and ugly little woman in a wheelchair. Only her gray eyes recall the vital young Amilamia he once knew. Inside the house, her enraged father shouts curses at her and threatens to beat her again for having answered the door. Frightened, Amilamia tells Carlos to leave and never return.

The structure of "La muñeca reina" is an adaptation of the familiar archetypal motif known as "the hero's quest," according to which "the hero (savior, deliverer) undertakes some journey during which he must perform impossible tasks, battle with monsters, solve unanswerable riddles, and overcome insurmountable obstacles in order to save the kingdom and perhaps marry the princess."<sup>9</sup> Carlos' memories of Amilamia correspond to a period during his adolescence when they spent many happy hours together in a small city park isolated from the din of traffic—he discovering the joys of imagination and the adventures to be found in melodramatic juvenile fiction, and she laughing, singing, rolling

on the hillside and generally presiding over his vicarious exploits. As an adult, Carlos has achieved material success. He describes himself thus:

debidamente diplomado, dueño de un despacho, asegurado de un ingreso módico, soltero aún, sin familia que mantener, ligeramente aburrido de acostarme con secretarias, apenas excitado por alguna salida eventual al campo o a la playa.<sup>10</sup>

He feels that his life has had no center, no focus since he renounced the *locus amoenus* and Amilamia, and it is this realization, one supposes, that compels him to seek her out. As an adolescent struggling towards consciousness and self-affirmation, he had acquired an incongruous conception of woman from his tales of adventure. Actual contact with the female sex aroused panic in him, presumably because it exerted a force of attraction back towards the unconscious state. Such a compulsion would explain his rejection of Amilamia the last time they played together:

caímos juntos, Amilamia sobre mi pecho, yo con el cabello de la niña en mis labios, y sentí su jadeo en mi oreja y sus bracitos pegajosos de dulce alrededor de mi cuello, le retiré con enojo los brazos y la dejé caer. (p. 31)

There are, I believe, three features of the adaptation that serve to revitalize and validate the archetypal motif for the modern reader. The first is the important role assigned to popular fiction in the initiatory process for the average young person in a society where little scope remains for exposure to real danger. As Mircea Eliade has observed, "Every man wants to experience certain perilous situations, to confront exceptional ordeals, to make his way into the Other World—and he experiences all this, on the level of his imaginative life, by hearing or reading fairy tales, or, on the level of his dream life, by dreaming."<sup>11</sup> A second attribute that relates the motif to modern life is the detective-story format in which, at least superficially, the story is cast, complete with a set of labelled clues, a resort that has value beyond technical plotting to lead the reader into the heart of the tale. As life becomes more complex, detective fiction exerts an ever stronger appeal, because it holds out the reassuring illusion of order, of a system wherein everything finally will make sense. The third feature concerns the protagonist, Carlos, who lacks the heroic qualities that are needed if he is to "rescue the princess" from those whom he perceives as "los ogros de mi invención" (p. 42). Modern literature has tended to dispense with the noble, valiant hero as unrealistic; typically, we have instead the anti-hero, an ineffectual outcast:

Often in actual life, and not infrequently in the myths and popular tales, we encounter the dull case of the call unanswered; . . . Refusal of the summons converts the adventure into its negative. Walled in boredom,

hard work, or "culture," the subject loses the power of significant affirmative action and becomes a victim to be saved. His flowering world becomes a wasteland of dry stones and his life feels meaningless—even though . . . he may through titanic effort succeed in building an empire of renown. Whatever house he builds, it will be a house of death . . . All he can do is create new problems for himself and await the gradual approach of his disintegration.<sup>12</sup>

The evolution of the human personality, the process known as individuation, entails bringing the contents of the unconscious, i.e., the archetypes, into consciousness. Without a successful accommodation and integration of these elements into ego-consciousness, the subject's life will lack satisfaction and creative potentiality. The archetypes can be discerned only when they emerge from the unconscious and are encountered as projections attached onto other people. Among the most influential of such personifications of the unconscious are the "shadow" (the inferior, "natural," darker side of the psyche, usually repressed) and the "anima" (the feminine component of a man's psyche; "animus" in the case of a woman). The shadow is thought to lie near the surface, mainly in the personal unconscious; the anima, rather deeper—predominantly, Jung would say, in the collective unconscious.

Shadow and anima, being unconscious, are then contaminated with each other . . . But if the existence of the anima (or the shadow) is accepted and understood, a separation of these figures ensues . . . The shadow is thus recognized as belonging, and the anima as not belonging, to the ego.<sup>13</sup>

In "La muñeca reina" Carlos is incapable of resolving his shadow and anima projections, and so cannot embrace and integrate either one.

As described by Carlos, the narrator-protagonist, Amilamia's parents are repulsive, grotesque, evil figures. Another observer, however, might regard them as inoffensive and harmless. If indeed this is a case of shadow projection, Carlos will be seeing them as embodiments of qualities that are really his own, attributes that he rejects and is impelled to project upon others. In the narrator's expressed disgust and revulsion for the necrolatrous couple, we have a variant of a recurrent theme in Fuentes—namely, the pernicious, enervating effect of the cult of the dead past in modern Mexico (e.g., *Aura*). Carlos submits to the spell only momentarily, as the couple begin to initiate him into the mysteries of the upper room.<sup>14</sup> His flight may be his salvation. Then again, it could mean an opportunity lost, because, like all other personifications of the unconscious, the shadow is ambivalent, having both a dark and a light side:

One never knows whether [the shadow figure] will transform itself into advocate or antagonist. It can develop either way: toward the daimonic, the advocate, to try to find courage to create our unique being-in-the-world, or it can move toward the negative pole, as an antagonist leading us into a malevolent darkness that destroys meaning.<sup>15</sup>

It is perhaps unfortunate for Carlos that he rejects utterly the guidance offered, for it is the task of the shadow to aid in bringing about "the marriage of the hero and his anima"<sup>16</sup> and to serve as "an inspiring, creative spirit . . . when the anima loses her demonic qualities."<sup>17</sup> Expressed from a different standpoint: Only when a man "has courageously acquired a shadow does [his] interaction with [his anima] open up deep creative potentials."<sup>18</sup>

Carlos takes at least a successful initial step toward psychic growth when he relinquishes conscious control and allows his idealized memories to draw him to the unconscious. The sketched map that guides him to the house is reminiscent of the treasure maps in children's literature; in this case, it serves effectively as a key to the place where he may confront his anima, in whatever form she should appear. To be sure, Amilamia may never have been as graceful in reality as she was in his cherished memories of her, but, on the other hand, the distorted development of Carlos' own personality could be the cause of his subsequent perception of her as ugly and misshapen. The nature of the anima a man projects will vary according to his experience of woman—especially, of his mother.<sup>19</sup> She may appear to him as a soul-mate, a mother-figure or as a fascinating demon. "The figure of a deformed little girl appears in numerous fairy tales. In such tales the ugliness of the hump usually conceals great beauty, which is revealed when the 'right man' comes to free the girl from a magic spell—often by a kiss."<sup>20</sup>

Unfortunately, Carlos is not equal to the challenge, he declines the call, and thus can only know the dark aspect that he sees in Amilamia, or, rather, that he projects onto her. He is doomed to continue in his prolonged state of arrested development. Frustrated in his feeble attempt to bring into full consciousness and integrate an important component of his psyche, he must resume his routine mode of being, denied the inner power of a creative imagination and excluded from a more spiritual form of life. The archetype of the anima, if allowed to function, serves as a mediator between the ego and the unconscious, a guide to creative development. As a pattern of behavior, the anima is "the drive toward involvement, the instinctual connectedness to other people and the containing community or group."<sup>21</sup>

"La muñeca reina," Fuentes has employed archetypal patterns that are as old as humanity, but he has given them especial relevance for this modern secular age in which men are intensely aware of the contingency of existence and yet, by valuing the rational above the spiritual, by giving primacy to logic over emotion, exclude themselves, individually, from psychic wholeness and, collectively, from solidarity.

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## NOTES

1. Harry Slochower, *Mythopoesis: Mythic Patterns in the Literary Classics* (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 14-15.
2. *La nueva novela hispanoamericana* (Mexico: Joaquín Mortiz, 1969).
3. Gloria Durán, "La bruja de Carlos Fuentes," in *Homenaje a Carlos Fuentes: variaciones interpretativas en torno a su obra*, ed. Helmy F. Giacomani (Long Island City, N.Y.: Las Américas, 1971), p. 259; and in her *The Archetypes of Carlos Fuentes: From Witch to Androgyne* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1980), pp. 198-99.
4. *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), p. 76.
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7. C. G. Jung, cited by Morris Philipson, *Outline of a Jungian Aesthetics* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1963), p. 141.
8. Jolande Jacobi, *Complex / Archetype / Symbol in the Psychology of C. G. Jung*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1959), p. 31.
9. Wilfred L. Guerin et al., *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper, 1979), p. 162.
10. Carlos Fuentes, "La muñeca reina," in his *Cantar de ciegos* (Mexico: Joaquín Mortiz, 1964), p. 33. Subsequent references are included in the text.
11. *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper, 1958), p. 126.
12. Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968), p. 59.
13. C. G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy, The Collected Works*, XII, trans. R. F. C. Hull, 2nd ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968), p. 177n.
14. Although "La muñeca reina" is essentially a tale of terror, it does not rely upon use of the supernatural—the only exception being the existence of this upstairs room in the "casa de un piso" (p. 47). The hallucinating mood is created instead by means of a sustained assault on the reader's senses—including synaesthetic interference with perceptual organization—and by the subtle manipulation of traditional symbols, e.g., the "upper room" (The Acts of the Apostles, i. 13) at the head of twelve steps.
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## ***La cabeza de la hidra:* Residuos del Colonialismo**

En esta novela Fuentes dramatiza dos problemas que son fundamentales para muchas naciones que, como México, tienen una herencia colonial: el de la identidad cultural y política; el del terrorismo endémico en las relaciones entre conquistadores y dominados, y perpetuado hoy en diversas formas. A través de la novela estos dos problemas son reiterados y examinados hasta que, finalmente, sus manifestaciones se intensifican tanto que transforman o destruyen las vidas de los protagonistas. El principal de éstos es Félix Maldonado, economista, burócrata federal y, más or menos improvisadamente, agente de un incipiente servicio de inteligencia mexicano. Si *La cabeza de la hidra* fuera una sencilla parodia de las novelas de espionaje internacional, sería posible verlo a Maldonado como un James Bond de muy reducidas posibilidades, puesto que sólo cuenta con la limitada tecnología y experiencia que le puede proporcionar un país del tercer mundo. El texto de la novela, sin embargo, no autoriza tal comparación sino en forma muy superficial. La vida de Maldonado sigue una trayectoria relacionada -a grandes rasgos- con el desarrollo de la industria petrolera mexicana. Sólo se convierte en agente del servicio de inteligencia cuando hace falta defender los recursos naturales y las esperanzas que ofrecen para el futuro de México contra sutiles amenazas foráneas. Al examinar la historia personal de Maldonado descubrimos las raíces concretas del primer problema relacionado con el colonialismo: la identidad.

Fuentes alude a la destrucción de los símbolos físicos de la identidad cultural azteca por los españoles en las primeras líneas de la novela. Así comenzó el colonialismo; pero es su aspecto económico en el siglo veinte, según Fuentes, que nuevamente ha exacerbado el problema de la identidad hasta el punto de crear otra vez íntimas subversiones culturales y políticas. El padre de Maldonado tenía que confrontar este colonialismo económico en forma muy individual como uno de los pocos empleados mexicanos de las compañías petroleras holandesas, inglesas y norteamericanas durante el primer tercio de este siglo. La actitud colonizadora de estas compañías se evoca cuando Maldonado recuerda la forma en que su padre era periódicamente sometido a la sutil denigración de su identidad como mexicano y ser humano. "Trabajaba en Poza Rica para la compañía El Aguila, subsidiaria de la Royal Dutch, como contador. - El gerente recibía a mi padre dos veces al mes. Pero mi padre nunca le vio la cara. Cuantas veces entró al despacho, encontró al gerente sentado dándole la espalda. Era la costumbre, recibir de espaldas a los empleados mexicanos, hacerles sentir que eran inferiores, igual que los empleados hindús del raj británico."<sup>1</sup>

La "cara" adquiere una relación simbólica con respecto al concepto de la identidad en esta novela. Negarse a mirarle la cara de un hombre es un acto mínimo pero significativo de negación de su identidad. En este ritual bimensual el mexicano nunca puede ver la cara del extranjero; y debemos entender que éste nunca le mira a la cara del mexicano. Fuentes describe el fin de la dominación extranjera en los campos petroleros como el comienzo del tiempo cuando "las gentes se miraron a la cara" (210). Contrariamente, si otra vez llegara el dominio extranjero sobre los recursos mexicanos, sería "el día en que los mexicanos dejaríamos de mirarnos a la cara" (214). Años después, cuando agentes enemigos desean robarle la identidad personal a Maldonado, lo hacen quitándole la cara mediante una operación quirúrgica (por lo menos, eso es lo que le hacen creer, como se explicará más adelante). En todavía otra instancia simbólica, el gran parecido entre su cara y la del pintor Velázquez en sus autorretratos le hará pensar en la posibilidad que su identidad quizás no sea única y únicamente suya. En varias formas Fuentes también hace uso de un símbolo semejante al de la cara: es el de las "máscaras," tan bien conocida en otras obras de Fuentes. Las vendas que le ponen en la cara de Maldonado después de la operación forman una máscara que él trata de arrancar. Los disfraces de su jefe en el servicio de inteligencia son otras máscaras cuya función es despistar a los enemigos; pero, además, confunden a Maldonado y lo mantienen en la oscuridad con respecto a cómo está siendo manipulado por diversos motivos y grupos. La configuración simbólica del texto establece, poco a poco, una oposición entre "máscara" y "cara": es igual a la oposición entre "identidad postiza" e "identidad auténtica." Por extrapolación asociativa de este simbolismo, el mexicano máximo posee solamente una máscara en vez de una cara en esta novela: "el Señor Presidente sufría del mismo mal que Félix Maldonado, no tenía cara, era sólo un nombre, un título" (59). Está claro, entonces, que el problema de la identidad no afecta sólo a Maldonado, sino posiblemente a la mayoría de los mexicanos si el Señor Presidente es aceptado como representante de ellos.

Maldonado se cree estrechamente vinculado con los esfuerzos de otro presidente, Lázaro Cárdenas, por mexicanizar los recursos naturales; esfuerzos que harían posible que los mexicanos se miraran a la cara y aprendieran a reconocer en las caras de sus hermanos la auténtica identidad mexicana. "Alegaba con calor . . . que fue concebido el 18 de marzo de 1938, día de la nacionalización, porque nació exactamente nueve meses después" (210). Este hecho lo hizo beneficiario de todos los programas médicos y educativos creados por el gobierno de Cárdenas en los campos petroleros. La creación de PEMEX hizo posible que el padre de Maldonado ascendiera, unos años después, al puesto de jefe de contadores, y que instalara a su familia en la capital donde el hijo pudo seguir la carrera de economía en la Universidad Nacional. Llega allí con mucho orgullo respecto a la nueva identidad que él y la nación han comenzado a elaborar. Dos experiencias personales, sin embargo, le sugieren dudas

sobre las expectativas para lograr esa meta. Primero se fija en las divisiones profundas entre mexicanos de distintos grupos socio-económicos; divisiones graves en las que Fuentes insiste varias veces a través de la novela. Segundo, Maldonado conoce a una joven judía, una compañera en la facultad de economía, cuya identidad cultural es de índole tan fuerte y profunda que ofrece un contraste notable con la del joven estudiante mexicano. Años después, un antiguo profesor de Maldonado, también judío, teoriza sobre este contraste entre las dos culturas diciendo, "un judío es tan viejo como su religión y un mexicano tan joven como su historia. Por eso ustedes la recomienzan a cada rato y cada vez imitan un modelo nuevo que pronto se hace viejo" (127).

La joven judía, Sara, emerge poco a poco como un símbolo de memoria cultural, de continuidad en el desarrollo de valores humanos. Sara ayuda a perpetuar una tradición inquebrantable, capaz de facilitar la creación de identidades personales recias y valientes bajo condiciones sumamente difíciles. Estos valores en la personalidad de Sara quendan consagrados cuando sacrifica su vida en la lucha contra los judíos extremistas que quisieran negar el desarrollo de valores humanos dignos de conservarse en otras culturas como la árabe. Al referirse a un joven árabe que lucha por la misma causa que ella, Sara declara, "Jamil y yo somos aliados de la civilización que no muere" (107). Los extremistas árabes y judíos que finalmente asesinan a los dos son, en cambio, agentes destructores de la civilización, representantes de "los poderes pasajeros" que bien se saben pasajeros, y por eso se entregan a los métodos crueles del terrorismo (107-8). Aliándose con los árabes palestinos excluidos por los israelíes, Sara presenta un contraste con la actitud de Maldonado ante los excluidos de la sociedad mexicana, los indígenas y otros pobres económica y culturalmente supeditados. Todas las naciones de herencia colonial tienen sus grupos de población marginada, separada por un gran abismo de aquella porción afortunada de la población que ha participado en las últimas etapas desarrollistas del colonialismo. Maldonado se encuentra entre esta porción modernizada después de sus estudios universitarios en México y luego en Nueva York. Estas experiencias lo dejan incapaz de aliarse con los excluidos como indican los pasajes siguientes: "era lo malo de caminar a pie por la ciudad de México. Mendigos, desempleados, quizás criminales, por todos lados. Por eso era indispensable tener un auto, para ir directamente de las casas privadas bien protegidas a las oficinas altas sitiadas por los ejércitos del hambre. . . . Desde la acera de enfrente, vio que la mujer era una niña indígena, de no más de doce años. Descalza, morena, tiñonita, con el bebé en brazos, tapadito por el rebozo" (23-4). Así la discontinuidad cronológica creada cada vez que los mexicanos imitan un nuevo model está acompañada por la discontinuidad socio-cultural observable cuando Maldonado se enfrenta con la mendiga indígena. A pesar de la historia de su padre como un excluido, Maldonado ahora sólo piensa en tratar de evitar a los marginados de la sociedad actual en vez de aliarse con ellos.

A las discontinuidades históricas y sociales ya indicadas Fuentes agrega una tercera, esta vez de índole síquica. Con dos paradigmas simbólicos convergentes él señala una creciente ruptura entre los valores biológicos y cerebrales, o entre el "amor puro y hasta intelectual (y) el puro sexo" (42) como dice Ruth, la esposa de Maldonado. El primer paradigma simbólico está presentado en forma muy abstracta y de tal manera que el lector tiene que darse cuenta de alguna asociación metafórica, por más indirecta que sea, entre la discontinuidad síquica en Maldonado por un lado y, por otro lado, las oposiciones y rupturas trascendentales que se encuentran en las mismas bases de la civilización mexicana. El primer paradigma, en forma de dos símbolos opuestos, surge en el momento cuando Maldonado, al comienzo de la novela, entra en el Zócalo, sitio de ceremonias rituales tanto hoy (rituales políticos) como en los tiempos de los aztecas (rituales sagrados). Es un simbólico "centro del universo" donde el hombre puede descubrir los secretos y las esencias de la realidad transcendental. En varias novelas de Fuentes un protagonista se detiene en semejante lugar sagrado donde se ofrece un despliegue de símbolos evocadores de conceptos básicos para entender las inquietudes más íntimas de ese mismo personaje.<sup>2</sup> Los símbolos que abruptamente captan la atención de Maldonado en el Zócalo son el sol, unos perros y una anciana vestida de negro. Al entrar en la gran plaza fue cegado por "un sol opaco, brillante, duro, y lejanamente frío como la plata. . . . Por eso no pudo ver lo que lo rodeaba" (15). Todavía deslumbrado por esos símbolos obvios de la racionalidad, la agresividad y la dureza masculinas, Maldonado "tuvo la sensación horrible del contacto inesperado e indeseado. Una lengua larga se le metió por el puño de la camisa y le lamió el reloj. Se acostumbró rápidamente a la camisa y le lamió el reloj. Se acostumbró rápidamente a la luz y se vio rodeado de perros callejeros. . . . Una vieja envuelta en trapos negros le pidió perdón. -Dispense, señor, son juguetones nomás, no son malos. . ." (15). Un repentino e inesperado contacto sensorial con un animal y la presencia de una vieja envuelta en trapos negros que declara que los animales no representan "el mal" sino "el juego" son interesantes variaciones de tradicionales símbolos femeninos.<sup>3</sup>

En las manos de un estudiante del mito y del símbolo tan experto como Fuentes estos dos juegos de símbolos, uno masculino y el otro femenino, forman un reducido sistema binario. En su forma más básica los dos polos del sistema son *logos* (el sol, la iluminación racional, pero también la dureza de la agresividad masculina) y *eros* (lo animal y sensorial, lo negro, desconocido, lo que carece de forma concreta, como los juegos inocentes de los perros). Las asociaciones metafóricas insinuadas en varias partes de la novela autorizan una extrapolación simbólica de cada uno de estos polos, primero al nivel histórico y nacional, y luego al nivel de la vida personal de Maldonado. El *logos* alude a Cortés y el imperalismo español: los aztecas creyeron que Cortés era un dios y, por eso, la asociaron con el sol: pero él impuso la dureza del colonialismo dedicado

principalmente, al comienzo, a buscar plata. Las imágenes brillantes y luminosas, pero también duras y frías, del *logos* aluden, además, a la joya o “piedra clara” (12) del Dr. Bernstein con cuyos secretos él piensa ayudar a supeditar a México a una nueva especie de colonialismo económico. El *eros* se vincula, en cambio, con los indígenas, con la anciana y sus perros que representan la sabiduría primaria de los juegos espontáneos y de lo sensorial. Fuentes indica que esta sabiduría eterna está actualmente enterrada en sentido metafórico debajo del Zócalo moderno donde quedan las ruinas de la ciudad azteca con todos sus tesoros. Lo hace describiendo a un “loco” que pasa todo el día buscando el tesoro de Moctezuma con un aparato electrónico. Su locura, por supuesto, consiste en creer que el tesoro sea oro o plata en vez de sabiduría primaria. El *eros* está vinculado, también, con la Malinche y su tierra descritas en el epílogo de la novela. Si las tierras de Campeche, Tabasco y Veracruz representan una renovada esencia y savia de México, su petróleo; entonces la Malinche representa la posible traición de ese tesoro negro como esperanza futura, por motivos mal distinguidos pero en gran parte pasionales.

Si las anteriores son las asociaciones metafóricas al nivel histórico y nacional, para dilucidar la situación personal de Maldonado hay que analizar los valores simbólicos de las mujeres en su vida. Ellas forman el segundo paradigma simbólico. La brillante inteligencia de Sara y su relación platónica con Maldonado la destacan como el obvio símbolo del *logos*. El pulsante erotismo de Mary y el hecho que es cómplice en el asesinato de Sara indican que es una obvia encarnación del *eros*. La esposa de Maldonado, Ruth, adivina la manera en que este simbolismo binario expresa una de las dimensiones más perturbadoras de la crisis de identidad en él. Ruth se supone que una íntima necesidad para su esposo es poder crear una síntesis síquica entre sus propios elementos de *logos* y *eros*. Las intensas presiones creadas por los peligros de su misión de inteligencia están paulatinamente destruyendo los pocos éxitos que Maldonado ya había logrado. Estas pérdidas síquicas lo hacen parecer un hombre cada vez más dividido e inseguro de su identidad. Ruth cree que él se casó con ella porque tanto en su vida cotidiana como en sus relaciones afectivas, ella le ayuda a integrar sus impulsos de *logos* y *eros*. Por eso, la siguiente acusación de Ruth contra Maldonado es mucho más que una mera explosión verbal de una esposa celosa. “A Sara siempre la quisiste de lejos. Con Mary te acostabas. Pero para ti un amor puro sexo sin amor, no resuelve nada. Tú necesitas una mujer como yo . . . Yo puedo ser tu ideal intocable por momentos, tu puta a veces” (42). Mas las peripecias de la misión de inteligencia lo llevan a Maldonado lejos de Ruth, y nuevamente lo ponen en contacto con Sara y Mary, las compañeras de su juventud. Ruth observa los resultados en términos de una regresión psicológica dentro de Maldonado. “Estoy segura de que me has partido por la mitad, Felix. Prefieres tener por separado lo que yo quise darte unido en mí. Como si desde hoy quisieras ser joven otra vez” (43).

Es importante que Ruth ve esto como un retorno a la inmadurez, porque la falta de unidad síquica suele ser típica de esta etapa de desarrollo y es una causa principal de la fragmentación y la crisis de identidad. El abandonar la unidad interna ofrecida por Ruth presagia una pérdida íntima y grave para Maldonado. El choque de esta pérdida está apropiadamente simbolizado en la escena del Zócalo cuando la ruptura entre *logos* y *eros* metafóricamente lo acosa a Maldonado: el sol lo deja ciego, deslumbrado; el contacto con el perro lo deja con una sensación horrible.

El mismo día que Maldonado escucha las acusaciones proféticas de Ruth, agentes extranjeros empiezan una campaña para desprenderle de su identidad en forma definitiva. Varias personas en su lugar de trabajo, la Secretaría de Fomento Industrial, se niegan a reconocerlo, y él descubre que no hay manera de identificarse para que lo acepten como Félix Maldonado. Sólo el Director General de la Secretaría lo reconoce; pero en el próximo momento lo acusa, enigmáticamente, de tener "demasiadas existencias" y "tantas personalidades" (37). Le aconseja, "pierda una y quédese con las demás. ¿Qué más le da?" (37) Mucho más tarde Maldonado descubre que el Director General es el jefe de los agentes árabes en México. Ha urdido un plan para provocar a México a alinearse con los países árabes contra los israelíes, así impidiendo la posibilidad que el petróleo mexicano ayude de la causa de Israel en alguna crisis futura. El plan incluye el asesinato del Presidente de México en una situación donde será posible hacer que todos crean que el asesino es Maldonado. Éste se escapará, pero otro hombre será fusilado y enterrado con el nombre de Maldonado. Esta persona es Jamil, un joven árabe palestino, víctima del colonialismo británico e israelí, y finalmente del extremismo árabe. Según otras partes del plan, tanto él como Maldonado serán robados de su identidad. La nueva identidad de Maldonado será la de Diego Velázquez, un hecho que se le impondrá mediante varios métodos de lavado cerebral expertamente aplicados por el Director General. Éste cree que el plan servirá los propósitos árabes puesto que Maldonado está casado con una judía y es un judío por conversión (aunque sólo para complacerle a ella). Todos creerán que actuó como agente israelí al tratar de asesinar al Presidente.

El atentado contra el Presidente fracasa debido a la astucia del jefe de Maldonado, el director del servicio de inteligencia mexicano. Los agentes árabes, sin embargo, prosiguen con su plan para robarle la identidad a Maldonado. Las dudas de éste sobre la solidez de su identidad experimentadas cuando sus colaboradores en la Secretaría se negaron a reconocerlo empiezan a cristalizarse cuando los matones del Director General lo llevan narcotizado a una clínica médica privada donde sufre una operación quirúrgica de la cara. Cuando se despierta le hacen creer que ahora tiene otra cara, lo cual le obligará a renunciar su identidad original. "Cuchillos y puños ajenos jugaron con lo más distintivo que tiene un hombre como si fuera plastilina" (219), pero esa manipulación física de la cara constituye, además, una "manipulación moral." El significado com-

pleto de las palabras "jugaron" y "manipulación moral" queda aclarado cuando Maldonado se enfrenta con un antiguo profesor suyo, ahora revelado como un agente de los extremistas israelíes, el Dr. Bernstein. Se presenta ante él después de la operación quirúrgica y queda asombrado porque Bernstein no vacila ni un instante en reconocerlo. Éste observa, después de escuchar las explicaciones de Maldonado, que sólo puede ver en su cabeza" una puntadita aquí, una ligera modificación acá . . . la cabeza al rape, el bigote nuevo." Observa que todo esto no ha bastado para borrar la identidad de Maldonado: "-Tu única cirugía es la de la sugestión, sonrió Bernstein . . . -Basta saber que un hombre es buscado para que todos lo vean de manera distinta. Incluso el perseguido" (132). Así Bernstein trata de explicar a Maldonado que sus enemigos están aprovechándose de su básica inseguridad con respecto a su identidad para convertirlo en esclavo de voluntades ajenas. Jugando con su cara obtienen la clave para manipular su identidad.

Unos días después, Maldonado se encuentra físicamente preso y cada vez más confuso mentalmente, casi hipnotizado por el Director General. Es significativo que Fuentes señala cierto parecido entre el agente árabe y Victoriano Huerta (35, 196), el general traidor que en 1913 urdió el asesinato del Presidente Madero. Huerta, como su antiguo jefe, Porfirio Díaz, servía los intereses del colonialismo económico. Al mismo tiempo, hay cierta semejanza entre Maldonado y Madero. Los dos son hombres de acción, pero se encuentran más y más manipulados por sus enemigos, y en gran parte debido a su ingenuidad e ignorancia con respecto a sus problemas internos: Madero con respecto a los sociales y políticos; Maldonado con respecto a los psicológicos. El Director General procura consolidar sus manipulaciones de Maldonado con tácticas psicológicas:

-Oyeme bien. Lo único cierto de esta aventura es que tú nunca sabrás si eres el verdadero Félix Maldonado o el que por órdenes nuestras te sustituyó. . . . Regresa al momento en que despertaste en la clínica y pregúntate si puedes asegurar que entonces sabías quién eras. Habrá para siempre un antes y un después en tu vida. . . . De ahora en adelante, lo que puedas saber de tu pasado quizás sea sólo lo que nosotros, benévolutamente, querramos enseñarte.

.....

-Te lo aseguro . . . cada vez que pienses en el pasado de Félix Maldonado, estarás recordando algo que yo te enseñé mientras estabas inconsciente en el hospital. Y mientras vivas el presente de Diego Velázquez, sólo sabrás de él lo que yo te diga sobre él. (198)

Que el Director General ayuda a perpetuar el uso de los métodos clásicos del colonialismo no puede dudarse. Destruir la confianza de un individuo y luego de un pueblo con respecto a su identidad con todos sus valores y logros elaborados en el pasado evidentemente ha sido una parte del proceso de dominación en México y otras partes del mundo. Frantz Fanon, por ejemplo, ha analizado algunos de los resultados psicológicos e

intelectuales de semejantes procedimientos colonizadores en África.<sup>4</sup> Para Latinoamérica, Fernando Morán ha estudiado la manera en que varios novelistas procuran rescatar el pasado precolonial para luchar contra la mentalidad colonialista mantenida no sólo por reconocibles agentes de los dominadores, sino también por algunas de sus víctimas que ingenuamente han asimilado esa mentalidad.<sup>5</sup> Si vemos a Maldonado como un símbolo de México actual, a veces en peligro de ser hipnotizado y ciegamente usado por agentes de naciones extranjeras, entonces las palabras del Director General son muy claras con respecto a sus deseos de borrar valores y recuerdos autóctonos, base de toda identidad viable. Un pueblo -así como un individuo- sin una sólida identidad propia se presta con relativa facilidad a manipulaciones destinadas a servir intereses ajenos. Este mensaje simbólico no es necesariamente la opinión de Fuentes sobre lo que en efecto ocurre actualmente en México. De acuerdo con su conocida visión cíclica de la historia, se puede aceptar como su apreciación de lo que ocurrirá como repetición parcial del pasado colonial si los mexicanos no saben oponer sus propias necesidades internas a la acumulación de fuerzas mundiales tendentes hacia la creación de formas contemporáneas del colonialismo. Son las mismas fuerzas dominadoras y últimamente terroristas que provocan a los extremistas israelíes a asesinar a Sara Klein, y a los extremistas árabes a asesinar a Jamil, los dos representantes de una juventud dedicada a la coexistencia de culturas distintas dentro de una civilización humanizada, capaz de apreciar, sostener y nutrir sus diversas identidades.

Cuando el Director General finalmente logra quitarle la identidad a Maldonado, procura obligarle a aceptar otra: la de Diego Velázquez. Éste pudiera ser cualquier nombre inventado al azar por el Director si no fuera que Maldonado tiene gran afición a las obras del famoso pintor español del mismo nombre. Esta afición está basada en el hecho que Maldonado se parece mucho a la imagen del autorretrato de Velázquez. Por varias razones Fuentes ha escogido esta nueva identidad para Maldonado. Unas están indicadas en los comentarios ofrecidos por Fuentes al analizar las obras de José Luis Cuevas cuyas esencias artísticas coinciden en algunas pinturas con las de Velázquez. Fuentes cree que una persona sensible ante ciertas pinturas de Velázquez, Van Eyck u otros maestros clásicos, puede sentirse en contacto con las figuras representadas o hasta incluido por las dimensiones atemporales de la pintura. "Tiempos y espacios de personajes y espectadores se interpenetran: identidades también."<sup>6</sup> Una parte del problema de Maldonado, entonces, no tiene nada que ver con los complotos de agentes foráneos. Es un aspecto existencial que puede surgir en cualquier persona capaz de reconocer la interpenetración de esencias humanas a través de los siglos. El papel de la herencia cultural específica en la determinación de la identidad también es importante para Fuentes. Cuando Maldonado contempla el autorretrato de Velázquez descubre algo sobre los orígenes multiculturales de su propia identidad. "Miró su cara en el espejo y recordó el parecido con

Velázquez, los ojos negros rasgados, la frente alta y aceitunada, la nariz corta y curva, árabe pero también judía, un español hijo de todos los pueblos que pasaron por la península" (3940). Es de esperarse, por lo tanto, que cuando Maldonado tiene que usar otra identidad al funcionar como agente secreto, aún antes de sus encuentros con el Director General, él recurra al nombre de Diego Velázquez. Debido a todo esto, es, también, relativamente más fácil que Maldonado acepte definitivamente la identidad de Diego Velázquez bajo las presiones gradualmente intensificadas por el Director General para que él abandone la identidad de Félix Maldonado. Además, resulta que su propio jefe en el servicio de inteligencia mexicano quiere que acepte la nueva identidad porque esto hará posible que los árabes lo reciban como dolaborador; luego podrá obtener información útil sobre sus operaciones. El último episodio deja indeciso al lector sobre si o no esto es lo que pasará. Otra vez Maldonado está involucrado en un renovado intento de asesinar al Presidente. A Maldonado lo rodean agentes árabes y mexicanos, pero es imposible saber quién controla más sus acciones. Lo más importante, sin embargo, es que Maldonado ha perdido la lucha para retener su auténtica identidad. Ha podido derrotar tanto a los árabes como a los israelíes en la lucha para obtener la piedra clara de Bernstein, depósito de información vital sobre los pozos, oleoductos y refinerías mexicanos. También ha castigado con la muerte a Abby Benjamin, el asesino de Sara Klein. Pero queda derrotado en lo más esencial. Otra vez el hombre mexicano se encuentra desviado de la trascendental labor de elaborar su identidad, cediendo ante la necesidad de descuidar los deberes más íntimos para defenderse contra incursiones extranjeras.

En el epílogo de la novela Fuentes compara estas posibles incursiones a las primeras invasiones españolas. Ambas comienzan en la misma región: Campeche, Tabasco, Veracruz; "la tierra de la Malinche" (281). Ambas se enfocan -por lo menos en sus primeras etapas- en la búsqueda de tesoros escondidos: el oro; el petróleo. Ambas necesitan destruir identidades para asegurar la ayuda de personas claves en los planes urdidos para apoderarse de esos tesoros: la Malinche; Felix Maldonado. Cortés consiguió la ayuda decisiva de la Malinche, la "niña maldita," cuyo nombre indio era Malintzin; "la bautizaron los astros porque nació bajo un mal signo" (281). Los padres nobles de ella trataron de evitar el mal anunciado por los astros. Lo intentaron cambiando su identidad, dándole la de una muchacha esclava que murió la misma noche de su nacimiento. La regalaron a otra tribu, y ésta a otra, hasta que, años después, fue regalada a Cortés. Después de convertirla dos veces, "primero al amor; en seguida al cristianismo," (282) Cortés la usó para descubrir las debilidades ocultas del imperio azteca. Las semejanzas entre la Malinche y Maldonado empiezan con sus nombres y sus connotaciones. Ella fue un "mal donado" varias veces porque las tribus indígenas querían deshacerse de esta mujer maldita por el destino. Lo irónico es que la maldición no se realizó hasta que la entregaron al extranjero. Maldonado también fue

entregado por conjunciones históricas y a instancias de su jefe en las manos de un extranjero buscador de claves para controlar el petróleo mexicano. Como la Malinche, también fue convertido a una religión extranjera por su esposa (se convirtió al judaísmo al casarse con ella), lo cual había contribuido a que fuera involucrado en los complots extranjeros. Las conjunciones más o menos accidentales de todas estas situaciones crean un gran mal potencial para la nación. Es posible que Maldonado mismo sepa evitarlo, pero eso queda por ver. Ni Malinche ni Maldonado son "males" sino víctimas ciegamente manipuladas por fuerzas históricas; fuerzas a veces dominadas por terroristas resueltos a crear un mundo que corresponda sólo a sus estrechos criterios culturales y políticos.

Las ideas de Fuentes sobre el terrorismo merecen un análisis más sistemático en otro estudio. Sus ideas sobre el problema de la identidad como un residuo del colonialismo no son nuevas como se ha indicado en las referencias a Fanon y Morán. Lo nuevo e interesante es la creación de un personaje cuya vida gira alrededor de este problema, y que Fuentes ha situado la dramatización del problema dentro de un contexto de mucha actualidad. Efectivamente, un gran tema de debate ahora es si el desarrollo de la industria petrolera en México debe obedecer a criterios y necesidades propiamente mexicanos, o a presiones derivadas de inquietudes y crisis del sistema político-económico internacional. No es un dilema fácil de resolver. *La cabeza de la hidra* -aunque juzgada como obra relativamente superficial por algunos críticos-<sup>7</sup> presenta una síntesis importante de los valores humanos e históricos que habrá que tener en cuenta para evitar una solución contraproducente de ese dilema.

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#### NOTAS

1. Carlos Fuentes, *La cabeza de la hidra* (México: Joaquín Mortiz, 1978), 209-10. Todos los pasajes citados serán de esta edición.

2. En *La región más transparente* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1968), 241-42, Ixca Cienfuegos se detiene en el mismo Zócalo para contemplar ciertas asociaciones simbólicas. En *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1962), 35-36, Cruz hace la misma cosa, pero delante de la Catedral de Puebla. En *Zona sagrada* (México: Siglo XXI, 2a. edición, 1967), la primera sección entera es una contemplación de símbolos desplegados en una playa y sus cercanías. Véase: P. Koldewyn, "Mediation and Regeneration in the Sacred Zones of Fiction: Carlos Fuentes and the Nature of Myth," *Journal of Latin American Lore*, Vol. VII, No. 2.

3. Consúltese cualquier obra de Carl G. Jung sobre mitos y símbolos, por ejemplo *Man and his Symbols* (New York: Doubleday, 1964); o una obra de Mircea Eliade como *Myths, Rites, Symbols* (New York: Harper, 1975). Un buen estudio de estos símbolos en una novela latinoamericana es: Graciela Maturo, *Claves Simbólicas de G. García Márquez* (Buenos Aires: García Cambeyro, 1972), especialmente los capítulos X y XI.

4. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 206-248.

5. Fernando Morán, *Novela y semidesarrollo* (Madrid: Taurus, 1971), 171-78.

6. Carlos Fuentes, *Casa con dos puertas* (México: Joaquín Mortiz, 1970), 254.

7. Gloria Durán, *The Archetypes of Carlos Fuentes* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1980), 183-84, 188.

## Celestina as *Terra Nostra*

One of the more striking features of the opening pages of *Terra Nostra* is the unexplained appearance, in the role of the archetypal Woman associated with an influx of new life, of a character named Celestina. For the reader who is at all familiar with Spanish literature this constitutes an anomaly of the first magnitude, simply because the Celestina created by Fernando de Rojas in 1499 is generally thought of as a promoter, not of life, but of sterility, for she not only engages in the merchandising of sexual pleasure and the attendant avoidance of procreation, but practices witchcraft and deals with the dead. Yet if there is any well established point in the criticism of *La Celestina* it is that the work is fraught with ambiguity. One simply does not know what attitude toward his central character Rojas *means* to convey, if indeed that point is of any importance, since this powerful woman quickly took possession of the book that its author had named *La comedia de Calixto y Melibea*, permanently affixing her own name to the title page in place of those of the characters Rojas considered the central ones.

Rojas clearly opened up Pandora's Box, and the first item to emerge was the Earth Mother, who, like everything else from the box, is out of the control of the one opening it. For one thing, as Earth Mother she simply cannot be portrayed in totally negative terms; she is the goddess of fertility, from whom all life springs. The problem is that all life forms return to her in death as well, and she, like the closely-related moon, is capricious and can be dominated by her negative aspect. Carlos Fuentes, for his part, has simply set aside the traditional Christian viewpoint on the Rojas character and accepted her as having been a fundamentally positive figure in her youth, whose old age has left her fearful, embittered and cynical. Although her profession has nothing directly to do with the *procreation* of life, Fuentes views it, as practiced in her youth, as involving the *exaltation* of life, as she promotes the free and guiltless practice of love. Later on, unable to enjoy it herself except vicariously, she immerses herself increasingly in the negative aspects of life, her actions leading ultimately to a series of gruesome deaths, her own being the first of them. Presumably the crux of the problem is the lack of any possibility of her return to her youth and a positive influence in the world.

It is at this point that Fuentes begins the construction of his Celestina, basing her on the theory that since the Earth Mother archetype is always with us, so is there always one incarnation or another of it in action in the historical process. For dramatic effect he has chosen a more or less mechanical means of passing on that identity from an aging Celestina to a young girl, involving the magical transfer of a snake tattoo from the lips of the former to those of the latter. It is stated on various occasions that the tattoos represent memory, so that their recipient comes into

possession of all the experiences of the archetypal Celestina, presumably since the beginning of all things, while the donor forgets it all, to become only an old woman. Thus there is an unbroken chain of individual Celestinas through history, each representing the eternal Celestina for a time, and one of them is able to tell el Señor—himself one of many incarnations of the eternal tyrant, having received that identity from his father and ultimately from Tiberius Caesar—that she is and is not the Celestina he used to know. That is, as archetypal figure she is but as individual she is not. Later he is to deal with the old hag who corresponds to Rojas' character; she too is and is not the Celestina he used to know, for while she is the woman with whom he had dealings, what might be called her cosmic identity has been passed on to the younger person. The old woman is now free to exhibit fully the negative characteristics of the Earth Mother, so that she is perfectly at home in aiding the tyrant in neutralizing the hero.

One question that emerges from this situation is, if Celestina is something of an Earth Mother-figure, how does she relate to the book's title and frequently-expressed motif, *Terra Nostra*? The question gains relevance in the light of the fact that in some mysterious way the earth itself, or the cosmos as a whole, seems to be initiating and guiding the processes leading to final renewal.<sup>1</sup> It should be worthwhile investigating Celestina's role in the novel and her relationship to the earth.

One of the more obvious mythic themes incorporated by Fuentes into the work is that of Penelope's twenty-year wait for Odysseus. When Ludovico departs with the three young boys for a tour of the Mediterranean world, Celestina states that she will meet them at the Cabo de los Desastres after twenty years have passed. She also tells Polo Febo on the bridge in Paris that she has been waiting for him, since they had made a date in another time and place to meet there. Near the end of the text, too, there is seen an Indian woman with Celestina's tattooed lips, who sits weaving and undoing a mask as she waits for a man.<sup>2</sup> The point to note is Fuentes' use of the universal image of a woman waiting at the Center of the cosmos for the returning hero while representing in herself the spiritual essence of that threatened Center, for she and her destiny are inextricably bound up with that of the geographical location.

Through most of the text the threatened Center is located in El Escorial, the site where the tyrant has constructed a palace in the form of St. Lawrence's torture grid on the spot where an eternal spring had been. It is here that Fuentes toys with the Triple Goddess theme, for in addition to Celestina's presence in the palace there are the Dama Loca and La Señora, the first loosely based on the historical Juana la Loca and the second even more loosely on Queen Elizabeth I of England. They share with Celestina an obsession with producing an heir to the throne of *Terra Nostra*, conceived at first as Spain and later broadened to include the New World and finally the world at large. In her desperation the Dama Loca picks up one of the youths who appear on the Cabo de los Desastres and molds his

features to the appearance of the first El Señor of the work. He comes to be known as the Idiot Prince and ends his life in bed with the dwarf Barbarica. The Dama Loca's desire to continue a hopelessly corrupt line, to say nothing of her demented preoccupation with death, results in failure.

La Señora, like Celestina, is inclined to use witchcraft to attain her ends. Believing in the superstition that the proper care of a mandrake growing at a place of execution will produce another man, she buries one in the sand of her room. It has been taken from the ground where El Señor burned Miguel de la Vida, the solar figure who represents Spain's potential salvation in the melding of the strengths of the three "peoples of the Book," Christians, Jews and Muslims. Her attempt has two results: a grotesque homunculus who emerges from the mandrake, probably representing the pitiful remains of the *convivencia* of Alfonso el Sabio's day, and her belief that the hero she seeks is to be found at the Cabo de los Desastres. The one that she brings from there to the palace, ironically, appears to be her own son by the first El Señor. He becomes known as Iohannes Agrippa, and engages in feverish sexual activity with La Señora, as Fuentes' hero of many faces even assumes the mask of Oedipus with his mother the queen for a time.

Eventually, however, Juan departs to play the role of Don Juan in the palace at large, finally escaping El Señor's clutches to travel to the New World and promote his version of sexual liberation there. La Señora is reduced to a pitiful attempt to continue the royal line by assembling a composite ruler from the remains of her husband's ancestors. In the attempt she avails herself of occult practices, for this is Fuentes' way of uniting all things to bring about renewal; even Satan must be brought into the process, and Celestina at one point makes a pact with him. He tells her,

No llores, mujer. Hay quien se apiade de ti. Ya sabes lo que el mundo te ofrece si obedeces la ley de Dios y en recompensa sufres la crueldad de los hombres. Piensa que en otro tiempo la mujer fue diosa. Lo fue porque era dueña de una sabiduría más profunda. Sabía la antigua sabia que nada es como aparenta ser y que detrás de todas las apariencias hay un secreto que a la vez las niega y las completa. Los hombres no podían dominar al mundo mientras las mujeres supieran estos secretos. Se unieron para despojarlas de dignidad, sacerdocio, privilegio; mutilaron y enmendaron los antiguos textos que reconocían el carácter andrógino de la primera Divinidad, suprimieron la mención de la esposa de Yavé, cambiaron las escrituras para ocultar la verdad: el primer ser creado era a la vez masculino y femenino, hecho a imagen y semejanza de la Divinidad que unía ambos sexos (pp. 531-32).

The alliance is of no effect in La Señora's case, however, and all that she is able to accomplish is an accentuation of the grotesque, macabre element that has contaminated the royal line in the first place, as the composite

ruler is set up in the throne room to be animated only by the voice of the homunculus, screaming, "¡Muerte a la inteligencia!" (p. 747). La Señora eventually departs to become Queen Elizabeth I of England (the "Virgin Queen"!) and combat Spain's policies from there, while the Dama Loca, a quadruple amputee but alive nonetheless, finds her niche in the chapel that her son has dedicated to death, and remains there even when all believe her to be dead.

Nevertheless these two, along with Celestina, have attempted to play the role of the Triple goddess who is so often associated with the birth or resurrection of a savior (even the male-oriented Christian faith having three women as witnesses of Jesus' resurrection, Mark 16.1). Each has instinctively gone to the Cabo de los Desastres and recovered one of the youths who have completed their twenty-year voyage of initiation and returned to the threatened Center. None of them is successful in achieving renewal through the hero at that time. Even Celestina, who rescues the Pilgrim, only manages to set in motion the forces that bring into being a highly imperfect New World. Yet they have at least initiated the process that is to lead to the final renewal at the end of the millennium, in that Don Juan escapes with the liberated nun who is so suspiciously similar to Sor Juana, so that the two of them may begin breaking the stranglehold of death-oriented religion there, and the Pilgrim dies in the sea so that he may emerge from the waters to keep his appointment with Celestina in Paris in 1999.

As the struggle continues, Celestina becomes involved in the myth of Persephone in several of its forms. In the youths' Mediterranean experience they are given advice on a beach by a woman with the usual tattooed lips. As she walks away, one of the youths sees her being followed by a herd of swine (p. 558). The allusion may be general; it may only recall that the moon goddesses of several cultures from ancient Iberia to the South Pacific are associated with pigs on account of the resemblance of their tusks to the crescent moon. Robert Graves even believes that the Spanish word "cerdo" (which is used here) is related to the name Cerdo, Cerridwen or Caerdmun, a goddess of Iberia accompanied by the animal in question.<sup>3</sup> Or this scene may recall the guidance given by Circe to Odysseus after she had changed his men into swine, since the youths are engaged in a twenty-year Mediterranean odyssey. But it is also possible that it specifically recalls an obscure segment of the story of Persephone, which states that as she tumbled into the underworld a herd of swine followed her into the abyss. It is even possible that all these are in view, of course.

The fact is that Celestina and her unnamed counterparts of the tattooed lips are associated in other ways as well with Persephone, the goddess of vegetation who is *in the earth*. As a young girl she fills dolls with grain, which is related to Ceres, Persephone's mother. It is stated in this context that flour is the color of the moon and contains the hidden goddess of all

the ages (p. 532). On one occasion El Señor's lackey Guzmán states, "Si el Señor quiere encontrar en algún lado al demonio, encuéntrelo en la horrenda conjugación de la mujer y el mundo" (p. 325). It would appear, as stated earlier, that this is indeed the case; the real threat to El Señor's reign of death and darkness, his attempt to suppress the exuberant fertility of the earth, is on the part of the Earth Mother, *Terra Nostra*, incarnate in Celestina—the conjugation of Woman and world, for it is stated shortly thereafter that nature and woman are similar (p. 363). Furthermore, when Celestina has brought the Pilgrim into the palace he finds a stalk of wheat growing from the stone.

Celestina by another name—that is, the woman with tattooed lips—is viewed in still another setting reminiscent of Persephone, when the Pilgrim descends to the underworld in Mexico and encounters the Butterfly Lady whom he has previously met in a more positive setting. Here she is the goddess of the underworld, wife of the Lord of the infernal regions, once again the goddess in the earth. In this case her negative aspect is in view, for with her consort she is engaged in blocking the rebirth of the people. Here she must be defeated by the hero, since the Earth Mother cannot be viewed as a wholly life-enhancing figure, and often appears, as does the Indian goddess Kali, as the promoter of death. Her presence, like that of the moon, can portend fertility or doom.

One of the more fascinating discrepancies in the mythologies of the ancient world is that between the Minoan and Hebrew interpretations of the motif of the woman, the tree and the serpent, and illustrates this dual aspect of Woman, each culture essentially having laid hold of one pole. On the island of Crete the woman is the goddess, the tree is the Tree of Life, and the serpent represents the perpetual renewal of life as well. In the early chapters of Genesis, in contrast, the tree is that of the knowledge of (or acquaintance with) good and evil, access to the Tree of Life being dependent upon the avoidance of this one; the serpent is the agent of the *loss* of eternal life; and the woman is about to be duped into becoming mortal and bringing death to her race. Later the Pharisees and then the Christians would present immortality as a resurrection of the body at the conclusion of the linear unfolding of the ages, having rejected the cyclical form implicit in the serpent's ability to shed his skin. It is the latter, however, which is emphasized by Fuentes throughout *Terra Nostra*. One of the oft-repeated themes of the work is that nothing ever really dies, but that everything only reappears in another form in some other time and place. Thus Christ, Agrippa and the slave Clemens fail in Tiberius' time, only to be reborn in that of El Señor to make another attempt as the triple hero, and finally reappear in 1999 as Polo Febo to complete their task and that of all heroes who have struggled to assert the principle of life over that of death. With Celestina the process involves a continuity rather than occasional reappearances, for she is in a sense the bearer of that continuity, while the hero need only reappear from time to time to pour new power aggressively into the system.

Rather than allow the serpent to regain the fundamentally positive value it had in the Minoan civilization while leaving Satan in his role as the totally negative destroyer, Fuentes has chosen to avoid the Judaeo-Christian tradition altogether and treat the devil as the destroyer whose destructiveness can be directed against the structures that promote death rather than life. Thus the young Celestina is able to learn the nature of the cosmos from him, and even make a pact with him, without vitiating the process of exalting life. Placing it in existential terms, one might say that Satan's power is destructive, but that as such it may be turned against the structures of nonbeing so that Being may then be re-established, for destruction is not always the tool of nonbeing. Celestina's action may even be viewed as something of a redemption of Eve, for in her encounter with the serpent Celestina is able to promote life, she does gain the wisdom promised to Eve, and one of her offspring (the Pilgrim) does bruise the heel of the negative, death-dealing image of Satan presented in Genesis. This negative image appears in Tiberius' vision of the tyrant as a serpent devoured by ants, as well as in El Señor's flash of insight to the effect that his palace is a serpent.

One of the revelations of Satan to Celestina is that of the androgynous nature of the first god and the first created being, which again looks back to Genesis (as well as many other creation stories) in its second assertion, and forward to the events of the end of the novel. Adam is depicted in Genesis as an androgynous being before Eve is drawn from his side, and Fuentes brings his Eve-figure and his redeemer-figure (Christ as the Second Adam) back into hermaphroditic form after the decisive battle between life and death. Once again the connection is made between Woman and the earth, for the latter is the meaning of "Adam": red, earth, mankind; and it is from Adam that Eve emerges. Guzmán's fear of the horrible conjunction of woman and the earth is proven to be justified at this point as well.

In this connection Fuentes returns yet once more to Eden in reviving the memory of that hazy and mysterious sixteenth century sect known as the Adamites. They may never have existed, but that is of no importance in his work, for it seems to be the will of the people, as expressed in the word, that confers reality upon an entity. Fuentes conceives his Adamites as struggling for a return to Eden to set things right—to return to the origins of human sexuality in order to free it from the shackles of guilt and conflict. In this case too the return to origins is successful, for those principles are established at the end of the work as well.

According to the ideology of this novel, the devil's power is circular (p. 10); as developed throughout the novel, this means that time constantly returns to the Instant of love (p. 738). The concept is perhaps best expounded by reference to Paul Tillich's oft-reiterated definition of love as the longing for reunion of that which has been separated. All of *Terra Nostra* might be subsumed under that definition, since it consists of a re-writing of the history of two millennia to cause all the events in them to

issue in a climactic reunion of hero and goddess, separated perhaps in Adam and Eve—whose reunion in the act of love was flawed—in order to begin again with a new concept of life and love. As has been stated, the biblical Adam is a hermaphroditic figure, since it is his feminine component which is drawn from him to become Eve. Following this movement from unity to diversity, sexual union is possible and the world may be populated. Fuentes, however, has a slightly different outlook, for his "Third Age of Mankind" begins with a strange sort of sexuality within the androgynous being that Celestina and Polo Febo have become—so great is his desire to avoid the possibility of conflict inherent in a situation where two persons confront one another.

As indicated, Celestina is more of the nature of the Minoan goddess than the first woman of Genesis, who brings death even though her name means "life," and that goddess of Crete is derived from the Middle Eastern goddess Ishtar. For all the railing of the Old Testament prophets against the latter, it appears that the dove that announces salvation and the advent of a new world to Noah is taken from the Mesopotamian story in which Ishtar, whose symbol is the dove, both causes the Great Flood and saves a man from it in her crescent moon boat. Thus as Celestina is engaged in the act of a devouring female in sending Polo Febo off to his death by drowning, a light that resembles a dove descends to her forehead (p. 35), for she, like Ishtar, will also be present—at the Cabo de los Desastres—to rescue him from a boat and initiate the process of building a new world. In fact, in Paris a few months after the drowning incident, she is to witness the total destruction of the old world and take the initiative in rebuilding it.

A moon goddess such as Ishtar always demands human sacrifice in order that she might exercise her powers on human blood to produce new life, since in ancient thought blood *is* life (as witness the desperate attempt of the shades of *The Odyssey* to gain access to the blood of Odysseus' sacrifice). Therefore Celestina, in her identity as the Butterfly Lady in Mexico ("Tierra del ombligo de la luna"), plays this role both in the underworld and on the sacrificial pyramid, even in the same context in which she serves as guide to the Pilgrim who would abolish human sacrifice if he could. One of the symbols present throughout the novel is a certain mask, described on page 470 as "el mapa de ese nuevo mundo." It is made of feathers, but with a center viewed variously as being of spider webs or ants. The feathers recall the identity of Quetzalcóatl, the Plumed Serpent, assumed by the Pilgrim, but the confusion of spiders and ants is more difficult to explain, having to do with the fact that the Mexican goddess with tattooed lips appears here as the Spider-Woman (p. 412). The moon, the spider, woman as weaver, are traditionally held in awe as the fabricators of the web of fate and destiny, and true to form, it is the spider's thread that leads the Pilgrim through the jungle, in the manner of Theseus and Ariadne. The perception of the web as consisting of dead ants involves the memory of Tiberius' dream of a serpent de-

voured by ants, the meaning being that even a large, threatening animal is capable of being overwhelmed by something as insignificant in its individual expression as the ant, provided there are enough of them. Tiberius then inadvertently sets in motion the process of fulfillment as he decrees in a curse that three descendants of his should be born in a time of dispersion and continue multiplying in this way until no one would be Caesar because everyone would be. The curse begins to be fulfilled when the three youths, each bearing the identities of a rebellious slave, Jesus of Nazareth and a pretender to the throne, are born in El Señor's kingdom. Thus the ants are about to overwhelm the death-dealing serpent of Eden and fulfill the destiny indicated by the spider's web. The action of the common people over the centuries *constitutes* destiny, even though millions must die for the cause. Such is the "true map of the New World," not, however, meaning America, for it too is flawed to the end; it is rather the world to emerge at the close of the millennium in Paris, as all mankind dies like so many ants.

Fuentes uses the mask in accordance with the doctrines of Mexican mythology, in which a person assumes the identity of an archetype by wearing such a mask. As Celestina sleeps on the way from the Cabo de los Desastres to El Señor's palace, the Pilgrim places the mask on her, not only because he recognizes her as identical to the goddess he met in the jungle, but because of the role she is about to play in introducing him and his story of a New World to the court. Later, in Polo Febo's apartment in Paris, he and Celestina wear the masks as they unite, for they are not to make love as individual human beings but as incarnations of the male and female cosmic principles—sun and moon, heaven and earth. The masks fall off in the midst of their frenzy, indicating, no doubt, that they have now lost their individual identities in that of the androgyne.

It is fitting that the mask should be produced and bestowed by an Earth Mother-figure, for she represents the soul of the world to be renewed. She is Tezcatlipoca, born of the waters on 3 Crocodile Day, in another appearance of the sacred number three and of the traditional dragon or serpent of chaos often associated with the creation. This is the day when the Pilgrim arrives, the day when all things return to unity in the Earth Mother (pp. 393-94). It is she who creates the gods of various colors and thereby sets in motion the process issuing in the emergence of a succession of suns, the sacrificial system, and perpetual conflict. Therefore, although she is related to the life-giving moon, she has produced what can be called "estas tierras de la luna muerta" (p. 474). Renewal will come, according to the ancient one in the temple, at the time when "nos confundiremos con nuestro contrario, la madre, la mujer, la tierra, que también es una sola y sólo espera que nosotros volvamos a ser uno para volver a recibirnos entre sus brazos" (p. 395). It is apparently for this reason—that the Mexican gods have not yet been capable of resolving their conflicts and returning to unity—that the Pilgrim is unable to unite sexually with the goddess, as she declares that it will not be possible until

their times coincide again. Furthermore, they are caught in their attempt, and the Pilgrim is forced into exile, like Quetzalcóatl in the same circumstances.

Nevertheless, in an earlier passage they have attained a union which results in a unity anticipating the final one of the book's conclusion. In uniting with her the Pilgrim senses that he is one with his total surroundings—that is, that he has achieved that union with the earth prophesied by the ancient one—and that their identities have merged: "Ella era yo" (p. 413). Still, even this is only anticipatory, for it is symbolic only of the European hero's attempt to create a new world by merging his soul with that of America, and he has yet to view what havoc will be wrought in that enterprise by his own shadow side. It is only on that predestined day when the conflicts within man have been resolved that he will be able to fulfill his hero-destiny ("Para conocerla había nacido," p. 413), of a final union with *Terra Nostra*, not in a new geographical location but in a new age of the spirit, for the narrators state a number of times that this New World is to be sought in time rather than in space.

The Middle Eastern goddess upon whom the identity of Athena is based is born of Mummu, the Word, for in the Middle East it is by the agency of the Word that Being asserts itself against nonbeing so that a new world emerges. At one point in our text Celestina, in an act reminiscent of Yahweh's endowment of the still lifeless Adam with his own spirit, finds one of the three youths dead; "La mujer acercó sus labios a los del hombre y le reanimó con su aliento, pasándole la vida de la boca a la boca. Luego dijo: 'Los labios son la vida. La boca es la memoria. La palabra lo creó todo'" (p. 548). Elsewhere it is stated that the end of memory is the end of the world (p. 402), and it is specifically memory that Celestina communicates to Polo Febo as they kiss at the novel's conclusion. The point would seem to be that memory is transmitted by the word, whether oral or written, and it is traditionally the memory of the Paradise that emerged from the act of creation which serves as the impulse to build a great civilization. In this connection it should be remembered that for the primitive every act of founding is a new creation of the world. This was certainly the case on the North American continent, to which untold numbers of settlers came to escape what was viewed as a hopelessly corrupt Europe and restore the lost Eden, the memory of which had been transmitted by their Bible. Athena, whether born of the Word or sprung from the head of Zeus, is the protectress of heroes and guardian of the values of civilization against the tyrant.

So is Celestina in *Terra Nostra*. As an embodiment of the Earth Mother she bears within her the memory of the way things were in the beginning, and transmits that memory to the hero, embodiment of the male principle, in the act of love. It is the Word that regenerates the cosmos. It is significant that Fuentes removes the Logos from its traditional masculine identity to replace it in the feminine sphere, as it was with Mummu.

As indicated earlier, Fernando de Rojas' *Celestina* is a highly unlikely candidate for the role of Woman in a novel spanning two millennia and ultimately returning even to the primordial Paradise. One has only to remember that that role was played by the Virgin Mary for centuries in Western culture. What Fuentes has perceived, though, is that, just as the aged *Celestina* is in dire need of rejuvenation, of a restoration to her youthful joy in unrestrained love, so is the earth which she represents in some mysterious way. It was, in fact, the agony of a Jew seven years after his people had been expelled from Spain that produced this pathetic and powerful figure, and Fuentes does a great deal with the Jewish contribution to the Spanish people's seemingly hopeless struggle against the eternal tyrant. So she is redeemed in the novel and made to play the role of the Earth Mother in her desperate attempt to recall the sentient world to its origins. In the end it is in her renewal in union with the solar figure that the cosmos itself is restored.

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#### NOTES

1. Some critics have insisted upon viewing the "cold sun" of the last sentence of the novel in negative terms. It seems clear, rather, that it represents the birthday of the Sun and therefore the advent of a new world. It comes on January 1, 2000, close enough to the traditional December 25 date for the sun's birthday in Mithraism.
2. Carlos Fuentes, *Terra Nostra* (Mexico City: Editorial Joaquín Mortiz, 1975), p. 739. All further references to the novel will appear as page numbers in the text.
3. *The White Goddess* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966), p. 68.

## Fuentes' "Chac Mool": Its Ancestors and Progeny

With more than three decades of writing behind him that include almost a dozen novels plus theater, short stories and essays, Carlos Fuentes has easily attained the pinnacle of success that was early predicted for him. While he is widely acclaimed for his efforts in producing and publicizing the so called Latin American "New Novel," his excellent contributions to the short story still remain relatively unrecognized. As a student he practiced composing short tales<sup>1</sup> and at the age of twenty-one published his first story, the little known "Pastel rancio."<sup>2</sup> Five years later Fuentes achieved early prominence in Mexican literary circles with a collection of short fiction entitled *Los días enmascarados* (1954). The volume, as with most of his writings, was soon the center of a storm of controversy. Alí Chumacero called it the most debated book of 1954: "sus cuentos fueron comentados con la misma pasión que si se tratara de una obra didáctica literaria o de desatinos políticos."<sup>3</sup> The collection's initial story was "Chac Mool." Although strangely enough it has not, to this writer's knowledge, been translated into English, it remains a great favorite of many readers and at last count had been included in at least a half dozen anthologies of Mexican and Latin American literature. Also up to this time apparently no extended analysis has been made of the piece, something that this brief study will only in part attempt to remedy with an emphasis that will be on the work's development and influence.

The history of "Chac Mool" really begins with another story, "Pantera en jazz," which Fuentes published in the January-February 1954 number of the relatively obscure journal *Ideas de México*.<sup>4</sup>

"Pantera en jazz" follows the ill-fated adventures of a man pursued by a jungle beast. The unnamed protagonist awakens one morning only to think he hears strange growls coming from behind the closed door of his bathroom. Upon seeing huge newspaper headlines warning of the escape of a black panther from a nearby zoo, our hero avoids his bathroom and instead hurries off to work. That evening a visitor complains about the sounds and is summarily expelled from the apartment. Days pass in which the man becomes increasingly obsessed with the mystery behind the locked door. (Fuentes offers no clue about how the man can live without his bathroom!) He forgets his job, seldom strays from his room and in desperation even kidnaps a child and tosses her into the bathroom as a kind of expiatory sacrifice. The final scene finds the protagonist scratching the walls and his own body as he, like the animal he fears, lies in wait for the enemy footsteps coming up the stairway and closer and closer to his door.

It seems obvious that Fuentes' purpose in writing "Pantera en jazz" is to portray modern man in his confrontation with the natural world. No

one is ever named; characters are simply "el hombre," "la divorciada," "el carpintero" and "la niña." Neither does the black panther appear and the reader soon begins to question the animal's very existence. As with many horror tales, there is no escape, no logical way out. At no time does the man ever consider the natural reaction of calling the police or the zoo. It is as if we were witnessing the life and death struggle of naked and weaponless primitive man with the beasts of the jungle. In "Pantera en jazz" we have our first example in Fuentes' fiction of a theme that he will treat with increasing frequency in later years—the isolation of modern man and his inability to communicate.

Five years separate "Pantera . . ." and Fuentes' first short story, "Pastel rancio," and in that interim our author demonstrates a steady improvement in his style and narrative technique. Descriptions are richer and metaphors are more daring and experimental. We have before us the writer who in the next decade or more would complain of the fossilized and archaic Spanish tongue that he and his generation of writers were forced to utilize.<sup>5</sup> The recurrence of anglicisms ("toughguy," "indian summer," "collegeboy") recalls Fuentes' early years spent in Washington D.C. during which his father served in the Mexican embassy. The location of the story's action is ambiguous, but the anglicisms and the life style suggest the United States, the same locale of "Pastel rancio." A further autobiographical note can be observed in the humorous description of bureaucratic office life. Fuentes had only recently returned from Geneva where he had worked for some time in the offices of the Mexican delegation to the United Nations.<sup>6</sup>

An intriguing question is why Fuentes has never included "Pantera en jazz" in any of his volumes of short stories, and in particular in *Los días enmascarados*, which would appear only a few months later. The obvious answer lies in its close similarity to the lead story in the above-mentioned volume, titled "Chac Mool." In reality, there are two versions of "Chac Mool," an earlier one published in the August 1954 issue of the *Revista de la Universidad de México*, and the later piece in *Los días enmascarados*, which arrived in the bookstores of Mexico City in late November of 1954. The differences are not marked: there is really more of a polishing of style.

Filiberto, the protagonist of "Chac Mool," is a minor Mexico City bureaucrat in the same mold as "el hombre" in "Pantera en jazz." He recalls his student days and the prevailing optimism for the future: "Otros, que parecíamos prometerlo todo, quedamos a la mitad del camino, destripados en un examen extracurricular, aislados por una zanja invisible de los que triunfaron y de los que nada alcanzaron."<sup>7</sup> Filiberto's office responsibilities are minimal, and the major event of the day is when a co-worker pours red dye in the water cooler as a practical joke.

The protagonists of both stories lose their jobs, "el hombre" because of his obsession with the panther and Filiberto through dismissal after "una

recriminación pública del Director, y rumores de locura y aún robo."<sup>8</sup> The motive for the robbery and apparent madness, as we later learn, is Filiberto's purchase of a life-size statue of a Mayan idol that eventually comes to life. For a passing moment the narrator had cherished dreams of fame: "Debo reconocerlo: soy su prisionero. Mi idea original era distinta: yo dominaría al Chac Mool, como se domina a un juguete . . ."<sup>9</sup> But his hopes are dashed; with no money the water to his house is cut off, and he is forced to carry it by bucket from a public fountain to keep the rain god amply supplied. One night when the Chac Mool has gone out, Filiberto escapes hurriedly to his old vacation spot in Acapulco to make plans for a new life. But he drowns in the surf forgetting that the Mayan god controls all waters, those in the heavens and those on earth.

One theme that runs throughout "Chac Mool" and "Pantera . . ." is the conception of reality. In the first the unnamed narrator creates his own reality with his vision of evil behind the door. But we never see, nor does he, the black panther. Filiberto recalls the famous Coleridge speculation of a man dreaming about paradise and receiving a flower in heaven only to awaken and find a flower in his hand. As in reading "Pantera . . ." we remain doubtful about the sanity of our hero only to have Fuentes surprise us with the appearance of the Chac Mool in the final scene. A friend has just brought the body to Filiberto's house, supposedly in preparation for the wake, when the door is opened by an ancient Indian:

—Perdone . . . no sabía que Filiberto hubiera . . .

—No importa, lo sé todo. Dígale a los hombres que lleven el cadáver al sótano.<sup>10</sup>

Thus the narration comes to an end. The surprise conclusion changes our categorization from a psychological story to one of fantasy. As the Mexican critic Emmanuel Carballo observes: "Comienza estrictamente apegado a la lógica . . . todo parece indicar que se trata de un cuento realista."<sup>11</sup> Fuentes makes good use of the diary technique to tell his tale: a narrator, an old friend of the victim, reads the notebook in which Filiberto has recorded his most intimate thoughts. Until this moment the friend has no inkling of the torment his office companion was suffering. Once again we see the problem of communication that had plagued "el hombre" in the earlier story and that will be developed to a finer pitch in Fuentes' next novels: *La región más transparente* (1958), *Las buenas conciencias* (1959) and *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* (1962).

Fuentes' growing genius for writing can be detected in his ingenious choice of time and setting for "Chac Mool." "Pantera . . ." in trying to depict an "everyman" in "Everyplace" had been too diffuse. "Chac Mool" would be universal but also intensely Mexican. North American readers who tend to live and think in the present may find unbelievable this curious blend of the past and present which permeates the Mexican way

of life. Mexico is a land of contrasts, a land with an ancient past that one can still witness in the grandiose monuments throughout the country. Even such seemingly twentieth-century activities as excavating a subway only unearth more treasures from the Aztec past. The modern Mexican also unites the duality of present and past in his physical makeup: his unique mestizo bloodline.

Fuentes recalls that the inspiration for "Chac Mool" came from a newspaper article he read that described a traveling Mexican art exposition in Europe and the torrential rains that began with the disembarking of the Mayan god of rain, the Chac Mool.

Los datos de la nota roja artística enfocaron mi atención en un hecho evidente para todos los mexicanos: hasta qué grado siguen vivas las formas cosmológicas de un México perdido para siempre y que, sin embargo, se resiste a morir y se manifiesta de tarde en tarde, a través de un misterio, una aparición, un reflejo.<sup>12</sup>

Comparing the two versions of "Chac Mool," the earlier one in *Revista de la Universidad de México*, and the definitive text in *Los días enmascarados*, we do not note any radical changes in the story line, but rather the later version shows stylistic polishing as the author has had time to review his work. The Hispanicized word for the German food "sauerkraut" is changed to the masculine form, while the Latin "en memorandas" becomes "en memoranda." The arid zone in Mexico where Filiberto wants to use the god's powers to bring rain changes from the specific "Altata" to the more general "el desierto." Several phrases are added, but onomatopoeic words reproducing sounds in the street are now omitted.

Finally, an even different climax to the tale is suggested in an interview that Fuentes gives some ten years later. The book and magazine versions conclude with the surprise meeting and brief conversation between the friend of Filiberto and the idol. On the other hand, Fuentes tells interviewer Luis Harss: "In the end, the owner replaces the god in the flea market."<sup>13</sup> If indeed these are Fuentes' words and not just a generalized summary by the interviewer, they represent a further evolution, and a most effective one for a horror story as we would follow the friend through the streets of Mexico City and view his astonishment at finding in a store window a statue of a Chac Mool with a face resembling Filiberto's. Perhaps, though, Fuentes is only suggesting one possible line of action, which an imaginative reader might further develop.

One almost immediate descendent of "Chac Mool" is another story found between the same covers of *Los días enmascarados*. This is "Por boca de los dioses," and since no earlier published version of the piece exists, it seems likely that it was composed after "Chac Mool," perhaps in the fall of 1954, since Fuentes recalls writing frantically to finish the manuscript and have the book ready for the November-December book

fair.<sup>14</sup> From the very beginning the critics have recognized the similarity in theme and plot between the two pieces; but they are also unanimous over the inferiority of "Por boca de los dioses." It has yet to be included in any anthology, including a recent volume in Spain done in 1972 combining stories from *Los días enmascarados* and *Cantar de ciegos* (1964).<sup>15</sup>

In "Por boca de los dioses" Oliverio, the predestined victim, creates his own problems by capriciously defacing a painting by Rulfino Tamayo hanging in the Palacio de Bellas Artes. It represents a portrait of an Indian, and Oliverio takes such a liking to it that he cuts off the lips from the painting and after killing an observant guard, makes good his escape. The lips come to life and converse with him as the two begin an odyssey through the streets of Mexico City fleeing from a band of avenging gods. Oliverio discovers an ancient pantheon of gods in the basement of his hotel: Tepoyollotl vomiting fire, Tezcatlipoca, the smoking mirror, Izapaplotl with her court of butterflies and the serpentine Quetzalcóatl. After barely escaping to his room, our anti-hero is lured into opening his door to an Aztec goddess who depreciates his "machismo." He is stabbed in the heart with an obsidian stone knife, a death which while far removed from the Aztecs in time is but a repetition of the human sacrifices performed on top of the pyramids.

"Por boca de los dioses" has its bright moments—especially in its satire of the modern Mexican society—but sins in its overuse of the metaphor and its complicated structure. As in the earlier stories, Fuentes reexamines the persistence of old traditions that have not yet completely disappeared. Filiberto as a lover of antiquities does not seem to deserve his fate, while Oliverio in damaging a work of art is a worthy recipient of Indian justice.

The avenging past, although a more immediate one, surfaces in a final story in *Los días enmascarados* that we will cite in passing, "Tlactocazine, del jardín de flandes." Nineteenth-century Mexico in the form of the phantom of Empress Carlota comes back to lure a modern inhabitant of Mexico City to his death. Some years later Fuentes will successfully rework this vein again in his classic gothic novelette, *Aura* (1962).

Mexico's Indian heritage also returns with a vengeance in Carlos Fuentes' first novel *La región más transparente* (1958). The four years separating the publication of the novel and *Los días enmascarados* can be deceptive. In reality, *La región . . .* probably dates from 1954 and 1955 in its composition since fragments of the novel were published during those years.<sup>16</sup> Two characters in the novel are in the tradition of the avenging Indians of the short stories: they are the mysterious Teódula Moctezuma and her so-called son, Ixca Cienfuegos. As the high priestess of an ancient religion, Teódula pleads with Ixca to provide her with a human sacrifice. Her goals are accomplished when the wife of a famous banker is burned to death while the chanting Teódula tosses jewelry into the blaze. Upon the completion of his mission Ixca, whose face is described as that of an "eloquent idol," begins to age rapidly. It recalls the ending of "Chac Mool" where the rain god, falling prey to human temptations, has wrinkles appear on his face. Ixca Cienfuegos debates with Mexican

philosophers and businessmen who look to the country's present and future. He, however, sees Mexico's only salvation in a return to the past.

La salvación del mundo depende de este pueblo anónimo que es el centro, ombligo del astro. El pueblo de México, que es el único contemporáneo del mundo, el único pueblo que aún vive con los dientes pegados a la ubre original . . . o se salvan los mexicanos o no se salva un solo hombre de la creación.<sup>17</sup>

Although it is possible to discover reminiscences of the past in later novels, particularly in *Cambio de piel* (1967) and *Terra Nostra* (1975), it is perhaps even more enlightening to pass on to the possible influence of "Chac Mool" in other important writers from Mexico and Latin America. Although Argentine, Julio Cortázar was living in Mexico in the mid fifties and with the help of Juan José Arreola would publish a volume of short stories titled *Final del juego* in the Los Presentes series, the same series what had done *Los días enmascarados* two years earlier. Cortázar would soon set up residence in Paris, but would remain in close contact with Mexico and his friend Fuentes.<sup>18</sup> The Mexican influence and in particular the Indian avenging past are especially evident in one of Cortázar's most famous tales, "La noche boca arriba," in which an injured motorcyclist swings back and forth between two realities. The first is a modern metropolitan hospital while the other is the marshland surrounding ancient Mexico City. While recovering from a serious injury the feverish man dreads his frequent nightmares that always picture his running from Aztec warriors intent on capturing him. The time switches occur with growing regularity until he realizes to his terror that the correct reality is pre-Hispanic Mexico, and he is about to be sacrificed on the pyramid's altar.

Exactly one decade after *Los días enmascarados*, Elena Garro, then wife of Fuentes' good friend, Octavio Paz, would publish an important collection of short stories, *La semana de colores* (1964). Included within its pages was a piece that was quickly recognized as a modern masterpiece, "La culpa es de los Tlaxcaltecas." In it the female protagonist is also stalked by Mexico's Indian past. But in contrast to previous works where the pursuit brought destruction, here the power of love extends its influence across the centuries. Her husband from a previous existence is an Aztec warrior involved in the final defense of Tenochtitlán. In spite of the tragedy and bloodshed that await her, the woman recognizes her true place and goes back with him.

A more recent literary descendent of "Chac Mool" can be detected in the writings of young Mexican novelist, poet, short story writer and critic, José Emilio Pacheco. Pacheco, although a decade younger than Fuentes, has long been his enthusiastic admirer. In later years the two worked together on several publications, and Pacheco has often been included in the so-called Mexican literary mafia ostensibly captained by Paz and Fuentes. Pacheco's *El principio del placer* appeared in 1972 and contained

six short stories most of which can be classified as fantasy. "Tenga para que se entretenga" recalls Fuentes' "Tlactocazine . . .," but instead of the empress Carlota returning to lure the modern Mexican to his doom, in this case it is the Hapsburg emperor himself, Maximilian. Even more striking in its resemblance to Fuentes' early stories is "La fiesta brava." This artful piece, certainly one of the finest short stories produced in Mexico in recent years, is structured as a story within a story. It begins with a short newspaper notice requesting information regarding Andrés Quintana, a missing person. Next follow twelve pages of typescript titled "La fiesta brava" written by the above-mentioned Quintana. "Fiesta . . ." is a mediocre and melodramatic tale of avenging Aztec gods who in the subway of Mexico City capture an American tourist who had once fought in Vietnam.

The third and final section of the story follows a day in the life of Quintana, a struggling translator who was once a Mexican writer of promise. A friend from the past now working for a prestigious publishing house asks Quintana for a story to launch their new magazine and "La fiesta brava" is the result. The manuscript is rejected and while returning home late at night Quintana sees the hero of his story riding in the same subway car. Before he can warn the North American they are both abducted by Aztec warriors.

In the friend's rejection of the story Pacheco places in one character's mouth some interesting observations on Fuentes' works: "Tu anécdota es irreal en el peor sentido, muy *bookish* ¿no es cierto? Además, esto del 'sustrato prehispánico enterrado pero vivo' como que ya no. Fuentes hizo cosas muy padres con ello y al hacerlo también agotó el tema."<sup>19</sup> The friend goes on to cite Cortázar's "La noche boca arriba" and Rubén Darío's "Huitilopochtli" as possible precursors of the same theme. What makes Pacheco's story so unusual is that he has given us an analysis of an obviously second rate piece and at the same time "borrowed" a plot from his former mentor, taking it one step further in its development.

In reviewing a continuing motif running throughout more than two decades of Fuentes' writing, we have been able to observe the various manifestations that it has taken both within his own creations and in the literary pieces of several close acquaintances.<sup>20</sup> "Chac Mool" deserves its ranking as a modern classic but has never received the recognition or distribution of Fuentes' novels. It is significant that a decade after the publication of *Los días enmascarados*, such illustrious critics in South America as Emir Rodríguez Monegal and Mario Benedetti had still not seen the book. Another significant conclusion is that in spite of Pacheco's fictional critic believing that the theme had been used up, such is definitely not so. Three cases in point are the masterpieces: "A noche boca arriba," "La culpa es de los Tlaxcaltecas" and "La fiesta brava."

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## NOTES

1. Carlos Fuentes, *Obras completas* I. Mexico: Aguilar, 1974, p. 70.
2. Fuentes, "Pastel rancio," *Mañana*, 36, 326 (26 noviembre 1949), pp. 226-227. See also my analysis in "El primer cuento de Carlos Fuentes: 'Pastel rancio,'" in *Hispanía*, 4/5 diciembre 1973, pp. 65-69.
3. Alí Chumacero, "Las letras mexicanas en 1954," *Revista de la Universidad de México*, IX, 5-6 (enero-febrero 1955), p. 9.
4. Fuentes, "Pantera en jazz," *Ideas de México*, 1,3 (enero-febrero 1954), pp. 119-124.
5. Many interviews quote Fuentes' thoughts on the Spanish language. Perhaps the most accessible is the chapter "Un nuevo lenguaje" in *La nueva novela hispanoamericana*. Mexico: Joaquín Mortiz, 1969, pp. 30-35.
6. Fuentes offers us a different view of the life of a young Mexican in Switzerland in his short story "Un alma pura."
7. Fuentes, *Los días enmascarados*. Mexico: Los Presentes, 1954, p. 10.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
11. Emmanuel Carballo, *El cuento mexicano del Siglo XX*. Mexico: Empresas Editoriales, 1964, p. 74.
12. Carballo, "Conversación con Carlos Fuentes," "La Cultura en México" in *Siempre*, Num. 465 (23 mayo 1962), p. V.
13. Luis Harss, "Carlos Fuentes. Mexico's Metropolitan Eye," *New Mexico Quarterly*, XXXVI, 1 (spring 1966) p. 34. This interview later appears in the volume *Into the Mainstream*.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
15. Fuentes, *Cuerpos y ofrendas*. Madrid: Alianza, 1972.
16. See my annotated bibliography on Fuentes in the October 1970 number of *Hispania* for a detailed listing of the novel fragments.
17. Fuentes, *La región más transparente*. Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1958, pp. 367-368.
18. See for example his letter to Fuentes on the publication of *La región . . .* which is included in the above-mentioned *Obras completas*.
19. José Emilio Pacheco, *El principio del placer*. Mexico: Joaquín Mortiz, 1972, pp. 107-108.
20. We hesitate to use the word "friends" here. Elena Garro was acquainted with Fuentes through her husband Paz. But her devastating review of *La región . . .* quickly earned her the nickname of "la garra" among Fuentes' circle.

## A Note on an Early Published Fragment of *Terra Nostra*

Late in 1968, seven years before its publication in the novel, the first chapter, or section, of Carlos Fuentes' *Terra Nostra* was published in the *Revista de la Universidad* (UNAM) with the title "Carne, esferas, ojos grises junto al Sena." In January of 1979, the same section was published in Spain in the *Revista de Occidente*.<sup>1</sup> Considering the amount of intervening time, one must be surprised by the degree to which Fuentes' ideas, form, and language had coalesced in this early fragment. Though the similarities are much greater than the differences, a comparison of this fragment with the same pages of the novel offers the student of literary history a glimpse into a process of literary creation.

The changes Fuentes made between the first and final versions tend to fall into three general categories: clarification or amplification (or, rarely, the opposite face of the coin, simplification) which may be only a phrase but often consists of several lines, even a page of additional text; second, a much more narrow focus on individual words, a kind of copy-editing for purposes of sharpening an image or a description; and, third, more meaningful and substantive additions or alterations that resulted from a decisive change in the shape or concept of the novel, from new characters or events, and new interpretations of them, that for purposes of fictional integrity needed to be incorporated into the opening section.

At times, such amplifications/clarifications/modifications serve to intensify a sense of place or culture, as seen in additions like "Hoy ni las coles y beterragas (del vecino mercado de Saint-Germain), ni el humo de Gauloises (y de Gitanes), ni el vino derramado sobre [la] paja y madera" (TN 15, RU 2).<sup>2</sup> Usually, however, this kind of modification is an elaboration of an idea or description sketched more tentatively in the early fragment; one example will illustrate:

. . . sino la simple imagen de su única mano adelantada, devorada por el humo. Invisible. Desaparecida. Mutilada por el aire. (Sólo tengo una. Sólo me queda una.) Se tocó los testículos con la mano recuperada (para asegurarse de la prevalencia de su ser físico). Su cabeza, allá arriba, (lejos de la mano y el sexo,) giraba en otra órbita . . . (TN 20, RU 4).

Examples of omission are much less frequent and, with the exception of one significant deletion concerning identification of a character, do not affect meaning.

Fuentes seems to have had an unusually clear vision of the specifics of this section years before its completion, but there are examples of editing for purposes of sharpening an individual image—a "camisa color de rosa" (RU 2) becomes a "camisa color fresa" (TN 16)—or, occasionally, for

"honing" an entire passage. An example of this clustering is found in the main paragraph on page sixteen of *Terra Nostra*: "improbable correspondencia" was formerly "posible"; "escasas" has been added to "cartas"; these letters, which are in the novel "separadas," were in the earlier version "clasificadas" and found "sobre la mesa" rather than "junto al espejo"; originally Polo "pasó el umbral," while in the revision he "cruzó el umbral"; "novedad espiritual" is modified to "novedad del espíritu" (an interesting subtlety); and "Pero el ruido no" is changed to "No así el ruido." It is apparent that here no substantive changes are implemented, though the addition within the first parenthesis of "ella vivía en casa de cristal" and the movement of the letters to "beside the mirror" were probably inspired by the many mentions of glass and mirrors in this scene, substantiating my own belief that the mirror is the unifying symbol of the novel.<sup>3</sup>

By far the most interesting changes are those resulting from the evolving process of creation, insights into how the author's ideas about his work were modified as the novel progressed. Such meaningful changes will be noted as nearly as possible in the order of their appearance in the text.

The fragment published in the Mexican and Spanish journals bore dedications to Geraldine Chaplin and Carlos Saura that in the novel are shifted to the list of acknowledgments. Fuentes also included two epigrams:

En la Ciudad de París, fuente de toda sabiduría y manatíal de las escrituras divinas, el persuasivo Demonio inculcó una perversa inteligencia en algunos hombres sabios.

CAESARIUS VON HEISTERBACH  
*Dialogus Miraculorum*, s. XIII

I have sung women in three cities  
 But it is all one.  
 I will sing the sun.  
 . . . eh? . . . they mostly had grey eyes.  
 But it is all one. I will sing of the sun.

EZRA POUND  
 Cino, s. XX

In the novel these epigrams have been incorporated into the narrative. The first, the allusion to the *Dialogue on Miracles* of Caesarius of Heisterbach, is included in a letter addressed to Polo and signed by Ludovico and Celestina (TN 18). This letter is a significant change, as it links Polo to other incarnations in other times. When Polo later meets Celestina, she again mentions the letter (TN 32). Ludovico is not named in the fragment, though he is given the same description in both versions: "Polo se dijo que la carne de este hombre, más que morena, era una delgada inflamación tumefacta, verdosa" ("azul" in the first version, TN 25, RU 6). Celestina appears in both versions as the girl with the tattooed lips Polo sees on the Pont des Arts; like Ludovico, she is not identified by name.

One may tentatively deduce from these changes that the frame of the millenium in Paris was formulated in Fuentes' mind before the details of the more-elaborated historical segments of the novel; how the many worlds of *Terra Nostra* would meld together had not yet been definitively determined.

The second epigram lends an interesting insight into the creative process. Quoted in English in the fragment, it appears in Spanish translation in the novel (TN 27) without direct mention of its author. That identification comes in a later amplification:

. . . dónde estará ese libro de poemas?, ¿dónde dice que yo me llamo Polo?, ¿escrito por un viejo loco que confundió todos los síntomas con todas las causas?, ¿el poeta Libra, un fantasma veneciano, Libra, exhibido dentro de una jaula, recluso de un manicomio americano?, ¿ojos grises, eh? (TN 34)

Fuentes had decided in the intervening time to leave to the reader the connection between his character Polo Febo and Polo's model, Pound's Pollo Phoibee, a conclusion further borne out by the fact that Polo appears as Polo Phoibee in the fragment, a hybridization of the Spanish and English versions. By changing Phoibee to Febo, Fuentes both obscures and reveals the origins of his character. The reader who knows Pound in the English may take slightly longer to hear the phonetic resonance of the Spanish version and, at the same time, the Spanish reader receives a more direct allusion to the original model Phoebus (Febo), or the sun god *Apollo*. I cannot resist calling attention to Fuentes' play on "many moons" as a time reference, as he writes that "Pasarán muchos *soles* antes de que Polo Febo condescienda a analizar las impresions que . . . le provocaron" (TN 16, RU 3).

Polo Febo is a man with one arm. This physical characteristic is essential in linking Polo with other one-armed reincarnations of the same character, including the historical antecedent Cervantes. But twice in this section the number of hands creates problems. In Spanish journal, after Polo has delivered Madame Zaharia's infant, "se lavó la mano" (Roza), the correct procedure for a man with only one arm. Inexplicably, in the novel, as well as in the Mexican publication, the missing hand is temporarily restored: "se lavó las manos" (TN 18, RU 4). We can be sure that this strange effect resulted from some stage of the editing, for I was authorized in the subsequent English translation to restore "Pollo" to his normal, if handicapped, state: "He rinsed his hand" (English TN, 14). The confusion in reverse occurs toward the end of the section. In the novel we read that "Polo se cubrió la oreja con la mano (TN 26), a correction of the version in the fragments: "Se tapó las orejas con las manos" (RU 7). (The translation maintains the handicap: "He clamped his hand over one ear, English TN, 21.)

A series of meaningful changes are linked with the scenes of the Monk who is the focus for the pandemonium reigning in the streets of Paris in 1999. It is evident from "Carne . . ." that Fuentes originally conceived of

the Monk as a reincarnation of Felipe II. This intent is twice illustrated in a specific description—deleted in the novel—that cannot be confused with that of any other character: “. . . como si el monje respirarse por esa boca abierta y fuese incapaz de cerrarla jamás; tal era el peso de la mandíbula prognata que emergía audazmente del capuchón para recibir una blanca mancha de luz” (RU 6); on a second occasion, the monk is described more briefly as having “una inmensa quijada” (RU 9). These references to Felipe’s prognathism are inescapable, and their removal are the only instances when *deletion* is equivalent to a substantive change.

The chant of the pilgrims has also been amended, from

Piedad, Piedad.  
Paz, Paz.  
Piedad, Piedad. (RU 5)

to

El lugar es aquí,  
El tiempo es ahora,  
Ahora y aquí,  
Aquí y ahora. (TN 22)

Though both examples have the ring of litany, the later version emphasizes the coming together of all times and all places into one apocalyptic final scene in Paris, an effect further illustrated by the addition of one phrase on the same page: “mientras el tiempo se colaba hacia París como hacia un drenaje turbulento” (TN 22).

Some of the additions to this section evidence a sense of play not often attributed to Fuentes. One insertion involves a kind of Keystone Cops chase through streets otherwise dominated by death and annihilation as Jean Valjean and Inspector Javert pop in and out of the sewers of Paris, along with a burlesque of other characters of nineteenth century French novels, captives in a time warp, revived almost a century and a half after their literary conception to find themselves threatened with extinction in the final apocalypse.

A similar ludic note evolves from a semantic game. In the scene in which Polo and his Patron witness the bizarre phenomenon of pilgrims willingly divesting themselves of their clothing in order to flagellate and be flagellated by their fellow penitents, Polo observes in the reaction of the pilgrims to the food he has just delivered a kind of instinctual appreciation of the *act of eating* that the communicants seem to wish to “inscribe” in the DNA of the future. Observing himself observe, he addresses himself with conscious self-denigration as “Polo Antropólogo” (TN 23). Fuentes picks up this game in at least six additional instances: Polo Catequista (24), Cartesiano (26), Mutilado (27), Trivia (28), Puber (28), and Cinemateca (29). One cannot know whether Fuentes added the game of the burlesque of literary characters and an auto-critical Polo from an *innate* sense of play, or as an objective decision to lighten the mood of the opening pages of the novel.

Also added to *Terra Nostra* was an object not included in "Carne . . .," a cohesive symbol in the novel, the feather mask first mentioned when Polo Febo sights it in an antique-shop window, "una tela o una máscara de plumas con un centro de arañas muertas" (TN 27). This mask appears in all sections of the novel with the exception of the Roman world. It serves as a map that facilitates passage through the New World, and as a magnet that draws together lovers separated by time and space. The last two people in the world don the mask before they can join in the copulation that results in a single androgynous survivor. The inclusion of the mask is a significant change between the maquette and the final version. The mask also motivates a change in a later scene in which Fuentes emphasizes through repetition the configuration—metaphoric and real—of this mysterious feathered object. In both versions Polo first sees Celestina sitting in the middle of the Pont des Arts, a girl, like so many other students, drawing with chalk familiar paintings or original designs for the few coins thrown by passersby. In "Carne . . ." Celestina was executing the drawing of "un arbol desnudo en el medio de un huerto invernal; pero un arbol cuya copa semejaba una horca" (RU 8). This figure is certainly in keeping with the aura of death pervading the city, but Fuentes chose in the novel to reinforce a recurring rather than an immediate image: "dibujaba a partir de un círculo negro, irradiando de él zonas de diversos colores, azul, granate, verde, amarillo . . ." (TN 31). Even without the allusion to the feather mask, this emblem seems somehow more appropriate for Celestina, perhaps because it suggests the many-colored sinuous patterns on her tattooed lips.

The final three modifications, too, are related to Celestina. In the early fragment her greeting to Polo recounts both her amazement at changes in the city and the difficulty of her voyage. Referring to "yesterday," she describes the city as it had been when last they met: "El año pasado el puente era de madera" (RU 9). Further research proved that the Pont des Arts did not exist in the sixteenth century (taking the completion of the Escorial as a definable point in time), so in the novel version Celestina amends that error: "El puente no existía el año pasado; soñamos que debía haber un puente en este lugar, y ya lo ves, nuestro deseo se cumplió" (TN 32).<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the points of origin of her long pilgrimage have been changed. In "Carne . . ." she had set out from "Brujas," and she speaks of the spread of terror in "Flandes." These sites are related generally to the heretical sects originating in the Low Countries and specifically to the community of Beguines that Ludovico and the three stigmatized youths visit in their long trek after leaving the patronage of Valerio Camillo. But Celestina did not accompany them in that long travel. In the novel, then, she tells that her voyage was begun in Spain, and describes terror pervading the territory from Toledo to Orléans.

The need to adapt an early section in order to conform to the developing tale is illustrated in this example of place names; similarly, an adaptation to allow for what was to be a principal device, the green bottles containing the read and unread manuscripts that foretell the destinies of

the three youths. In the journals, as Polo is carried off his feet by the wind, his sandwich-board wings flapping as ineffectually as the waxen wings of Icarus, Celestina clasps the handrail of the bridge and strains for a glimpse of his disappearing figure: "La muchacha clavó las manos en el barandal de fierro del puente, trató de mirar las aguas ocultas por esa niebla casi inmóvil and colgó la cabeza" (RU 9). But as the novel developed, the bottles containing the stories of the lives of the three youths had become a major story line and Celestina's reaction was correspondingly changed: "La muchacha clavó una mano en el barandel de fierro del puente y con la otra arrojó al río la verde y sellada botella, rogó que la mano del muchacho se asiese al vidrio viejo, trató de mirar las aguas ocultas por esa niebla casi inmóvil y colgó la cabeza" (TN 35).

The last words of this chapter/section belong to Celestina. Some critics have found in them the basis for a thesis that Celestina may be the ultimate narrator of *Terra Nostra*. The words have an incantatory quality; they appear in normal order and then in mirror-image reverse, echoing the glinting reflections of all aspects of the novel, the reversals of role, the reversals of place, the reversals of time. In the journal the words are as follows: "Quiero que escuches una historia; airotsih anu sehucuse euq . . . oriug" (RU 9). The revised version is more felicitous in euphony, in cadence, and in its hint of an exotic tongue—an unknown but almost recognizable language: "Este es mi cuento. Deseo que oigas mi cuento. Oigas. Oigas. Sagio. Sagio. Otneuc im sagio equ oesed. Otneuc im se else" (TN 35).

No true analysis of the progressive changes of concept and style of *Terra Nostra* can be made until Fuentes' notebooks and worksheets are made public. But in a comparison between a fragment published seven years before the novel and the novel itself we are afforded at least a glimpse into the continuous process of revision, research, reconsideration, and refinement that went into shaping *Terra Nostra*.

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#### NOTES

1. *Revista de UNAM*, 23, 243 (October-November 1968), 1-9; *Revista de Occidente*, 70 (January 1969), 23-38.
2. Additions are contained within the parentheses; brackets indicate a deletion.
3. See my "Readers Guide to *Terra Nostra*," scheduled for *Review 30*.
4. There is some confusion about this appointment, however, for in one place in *Terra Nostra*, Celestina speaks as if she had never been in Paris: ". . . te doy cita, lejos de aquí, en otra ciudad, Ludovice me lo ha dicho, París, fuente de toda sabiduría . . ." (TN 646).

The standard Spanish and English versions have been used for all quotations:

*Terra Nostra*. México: Mortiz, 1975.

*Terra Nostra*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1976. Translated from the Spanish by Margaret Sayers Peden.



