

Myth and Language in a Play by Carlos Fuentes

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In the words of Carlos Fuentes, *Todos los gatos son pardos* "es a la vez una memoria personal e histórica."¹ But memory, whether personal or historic, on being transformed into dramatic text, must be subjected to the norms of an artistic language whose structure is considerably removed from those mental images which each individual bears fantasmagorically within him. Undoubtedly, the structure of an aesthetic message is also a condensation, in the sense that Freud gave the term, of this universe of phantoms in which individual and collective unconsciousness floats. Support that this phenomenon exists is given in the profound thought of Lévi-Strauss, who believes that the signs of a language—the words, in a less rigorous sense—do not have meaning merely by the ordering which the logic of social contexts imparts to them; they have meaning, as well, through the ordering which the logic of the unconscious imposes on them.² But it seems to me more convenient to put aside, for the time being, those elements of the unconscious logic which infiltrate the written play, in order to focus my attention on a few components embedded in mythical traditions. I agree with Gaston Bachelard that science and its objective logic are formed by dreams and not exclusively by the observation of experience, and that "une oeuvre poétique ne peut guère recevoir son unité que d'un complexe. Si le complexe manque, l'oeuvre, sevrée de ses racines, ne communique plus avec l'inconscient."³

Theatrical language is characterized, in principle, by its heterogeneity, that is, by the conjunction of various and differing semiotic systems, such as the linguistic, the architectonic, the costumes, the gestures and many others. This quality permits those signs arising from various semiotic systems within the theatrical message, seen as performance, to become integrated and thus form an opaque texture with increased informative possibilities. Consequently, the signification network depends, as Tadeus Kowzan accurately noted, on the manifestation of "un acte sémantique extrêmement dense" represented by the combination of three basic components: the fable, the dramatic text and the ludic mechanism underlying the performance.⁴ From this perspective, the relationships of interdepend-

ency of the three components establish, on the fantastic world of the stage, the language of a ritual whose special characteristics reach the spectator in the form of aesthetic values.⁵

Thus, in the theoretical construct here set forth, the targets of my analysis are located in the area defined by the grid of meanings arising from the interrelationships of the content of the fable with that of the dramatic text. By focusing on this point I hope to, on the one hand, direct my interpretive efforts towards this imaginary ritualistic planet on which Carlos Fuentes has fixed the mythical roots of his discourse; and, on the other hand, considering that my attention will be directed to those mythological components which are of Aztec origin, examine the expressive modalities which seem most relevant to the question of localizing the literary language of the play within the tradition forged by the so-called Latin American *indigenismo*.⁶

The fable of *Todos los gatos son pardos* is composed, in structural terms,⁷ of a set of actions whose functional concatenation establishes a fictional narrative, ordered according to principles of verisimilitude determined by the historic-legendary context used by the dramatist in his task of developing the characters in an atmosphere of mystic-prophetic tensions. As a result, the motives of the fable possess,⁸ clearly, a conservative mettle, a means of perpetuation in which the dramatist is able to remain at the same time both faithful to the theme and to the techniques of distancing dictated by the epic theatre. But, whatever the tradition in which the play is rooted may be, the motives of *Todos los gatos son pardos* erect a game of conflicts regulated by principles of opposition whose formula is furnished by Marina when she declares: "No es sino la historia de dos hombres: uno lo tenía todo y su nombre era Moctezuma Xocoyotzin, Gran Tlatoani de México; el otro nada tenía y su nombre era Fernando Cortés, pequeño capitán y pequeño hidalgo de España. Yo viví esta historia y puedo contarla" (p. 14).

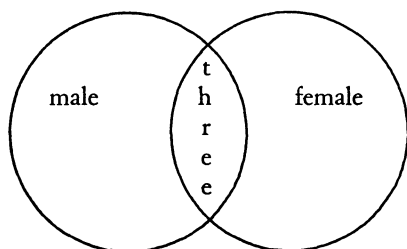
The formula of Marina, besides encapsulating the antagonisms which make for a narrative program, unites the resources which structure the relation of integration between the fable and the dramatic text: a process of opposition—*Gran Tlatoani versus pequeño hidalgo*—that of narration—"yo viví esta historia y puedo contarla." In this semiotic architecture, however, Marina does not live merely in function of overcoming distances between contraries; she is conceived, as well, in her role as translator, manipulator of language and, thereby, transforms herself into the subject, interfering in the representation of the dramatic statements. When she meets Cortés, he tells her: "Te he tomado para mí. Eres mi mujer." And she replies: "No, señor. Yo sólo soy la lengua" (p. 64). In the sphere of the characters, as conceptualized by Propp,⁹ Marina acts, as well, as principal helper of the hero and, considering her performance in relation to *function 14* (the hero acquires the use of the magical agents), she becomes owner of one of the most important magic agents: she has the power of translating a language unknown to the hero and the other helpers.¹⁰

At this level of the narrative, Marina still acts as provider and, consequently, it can be understood that, in the dramatic text, one of the most complex meanings of this character derives from the frequent use that Marina makes of the meta-linguistic function: she explains the significance of her three names (p. 13);

explains the values of the signs, such as that of the pyramid (p. 97); clarifies repeatedly the meaning of the words used in the translation of the indigenous message (pp. 63, 76, 99, 113); and gives a clear dimension to the words which, in the monologue on pages 173-175, she directs to her son—son of Malintzin, of Malinche, of Marina.¹¹

One can say, from the point of view of the mechanism in which the integrating relations find support, that, on the one hand, the ideological antagonisms of the fable reappear in the dramatic text through the stylistic resources moulded by the technique of counterpoint—Moctezuma discusses with Cihuacóatl, Cortés discusses with Olmedo; Moctezuma lives without ever leaving his palace, Cortés lives to travel through Mexico; Moctezuma believes that Cortés is a god and Cortés believes in his condition as man; and, on the other hand, the intercessor work carried out by Marina in the development of the fable arises in the dramatic text through the configuration of meaning attached to the metalinguistic function, a characteristic which reveals, in this dramatic character, participation in the production of the discourse.¹²

Counterpoint, to use a structuralist term,¹³ is useful for our understanding, since it offers a scheme composed by the intersection of two sets. Thusly, when Cortés is dressed by his captains (p. 70), and Moctezuma, in turn, by the maidens (p. 39), the counterpoint established by the two scenes can be approached, as to their meaningful aspects, by means of the intersection that arises from taking as a common denominator the number *three*: three maidens dress Moctezuma and three captains dress Cortés. Or, seen schematically:



Such an intersection, however, appears strange to us at first view for it gives the impression of having been constituted on a base of heterogeneous facts, in a confusing mixture of quality and quantity. But placing the intersection in symbolic dimensions, that is, in the semantic space of the myth, the impression of “strangeness” disappears.

In *Canto, música y danza precortesianos*,¹⁴ Manuel Martí states that by association with the Aztec *tenamazili* or with the Mayan *K'oben* (the three stones on the ground serving as an oven), the number three was the sacred number of women. Given the special qualities of these associated elements, the sacred number reserved by the Aztecs for women assumes, in symbolic perspective, a definite relation to mystic roots of fire and even with that primordial opposition which Lévi-Strauss used in the title of one of his most celebrated works: *Le cru et le cuit*. On the other hand, we learn from Bachelard (*Psychanalyse du feu*) that underlying the principal motives offered to explain the origin of fire are metaphoric mechanisms built around the act of scraping, of the meeting of two bodies

regulated by norms which are not part of the principles of a merely rational logic. Nevertheless, what interests us here is to call attention to the fact that the mythic contents of the number three are something quite separate from the quantitative. And as a result, we find, in certain places within the semantic space created by the intersection, implicit metaphors which deserve further study.

The authors of *Rhétorique Générale*¹⁵ view the metaphoric process as the identity of two sets achieved by the expansion of the component terms of a nucleus of expansion. In the case of the intersecting area given as an example of the structural scheme of counterpoint, the mythical dimension underlying the semantic values attributed to the number three is insistently repeated in the dramatic text: Marina has three names, the symbolic conflict is composed of three characters, number three appears in repetitions like "Moctezuma, Moctezuma, Moctezuma, qué harás con tu poder?" (p. 27), the lighted circles are three, and the colors determining the mythic behavior experienced by the central characters in the final episode of the work are, again, three in number (pp. 160-186). To all appearances, the counterpoint in *Todos los gatos son pardos* is constructed on the foundation of a metaphoric structure. In *Discurso, Texto e Significação*, Edward Lopes, referring to the peculiarities of semantic mechanisms, affirms that the myth "behaves exactly like the metaphor: all metaphors are condensed myths, all myths are expanded metaphors."¹⁶ I do not believe that a better scheme could be found for ordering the premises on which I base my own reading of the play by Carlos Fuentes, since in it the motives of the fable and the stage directions figure as condensed myths whose nuclei of meaning are amplified by the metaphors of the dramatic text.

That is why, to give an example, when Marina and Cortés meet for the first time, the stage directions paint the following picture:

Oscuridad total. Rumor de la escoba que barre. Es vencido, paulatinamente, por los de la noche tropical. A este rumor se superpone, a su vez, el de un jadeo erótico. Iluminación baja: sobre unas mantas, un hombre y una mujer desnudos hacen el amor. Son Marina y Cortés (p. 60).

The directions relative to the lighting require a setting in a dimly-lit space, a shady corner where a faint ray of light falls upon the characters as if it had discovered in the romantic swaying of the bodies an opening through which to flee from the darkness of the nightly rituals. This itinerary of the lighting is in contrast with what has gone before, in the first appearance of Moctezuma:

Se apaga la cruda luz. Asciende la del escenario, pero es siempre parda, baja, crepuscular. Un hombre, desnudo salvo por un taparrabos, barre lentamente: es Moctezuma (p. 19).

Another example occurs in relation to the sounds: the *jadeo erótico* imposes itself on the noises of the tropical night and presents, lost in the distance, the "bramido de una bestia feroz, el charreo de un ave, una hacha cortando leña, un coro de buhos, el croar de ranas, los chillidos de las ratas" (p. 19), which lugubriously involve the figure of Moctezuma. Consequently, both the lighting and the sound, in this context, represent, without any doubt, metaphoric condensations.

With regard to the fable, the scene under discussion, even without going into

details, reveals the function in which the sender furnishes the hero with a magic means: Marina, besides yielding to Cortés, offers to serve as interpreter. The narrative units, as Roland Barthes correctly established, constitute forms of the content, the reduced and invariable motives of Propp's functional system. But in a work completed after *Morphology of the Folktale*,¹⁷ the celebrated Russian anthropologist places the functions in the chain of historic time and, analyzing them in the framework of the dialectic of cultural evolution, concludes by proving that the functions are reduced forms of the complex semantic universe of rituals. In the case of literary texts, highly elaborate cultural objects, these properties of the narrative functions are subtly employed in the constructions of the figurative constellations of the so-called connotative systems.

In the dramatic text, properly speaking, the aforementioned condensations expand through constant metaphoric activity. On the one hand, the condensed metaphor in the lighting effects develops by the rhythms of a ritual celebrated with the hope of a world of light: Marina relives the stages of Quetzalcóatl's trip to the underworld of the dead and of his resurrection, transformed into a morning star. The Cortés she imagines recalls the impressive figure of Xólotl, as he was reconstructed by Laurette Sejourne in *El universo de Quetzalcóatl*.¹⁸ On the other hand, the reduction of the narrative function breaks into an explosion of metaphors whose meanings overflow in their signifying extension, transcending the frontiers of the cultural context, historically part of the myth of Quetzalcóatl; it is sufficient to comment upon some of these metaphors, even superficially, to be convinced of this: 1) while Cortés sleeps (pp. 96-97), Marina fills the atmosphere with tragic silence—the sound as metaphor of death—which envelops the body of her lover with words whose signifiers nervously step on each other in the search for the threads of the illusion with which one weaves the fabric of hope (p. 97); 2) when Cortés awakens—metaphor of the existential condition—Marina brings to light (Cortés had had a dream in which everything took place in words, p. 98) the meanings which she infers, saying: “No, señor: eres dios porque así estaba escrito en los cielos que nuestros augures saben leer . . .” (p. 99).¹⁹

As writing, the dramatic text is also the result of the *act* of writing, that is, of “una incesante interrogación que los signos hacen a un signo: el hombre; y la que ese signo hace a los signos: el lenguaje.”²⁰ Those factors which have led me to draw the conclusions I have up until now, in my attempt to question the language of *Todos los gatos son pardos* share a certain partiality: I refer to the fact that I have based my reading upon merely the outlines of the content plane. With the purpose of overcoming this fault I should like to complement my argument, or at least call attention to a characteristic of verbal expression in which the figurative meaning appears. To accomplish this, I center my attention on the passage in which Marina, after the erotic movement around the body of the sleeping Cortés, soliloquizes:

Demasiado cerca del recuerdo del cataclismo violento del origen y de la violenta desnudez ante los animales, el hambre y el silencio. Demasiado cerca de las tinieblas del principio. Nos sentimos desamparados, señor; hay fuerzas más poderosas que nosotros; no sabemos dominarlas más que convirtiéndonos en lo que tenemos y en lo que necesitamos. Suéñame, señor:

soy aire; tócame, señor: soy fuego; bebeme, señor: soy lluvia; conquístame, señor: soy tierra. (pp. 97-98)

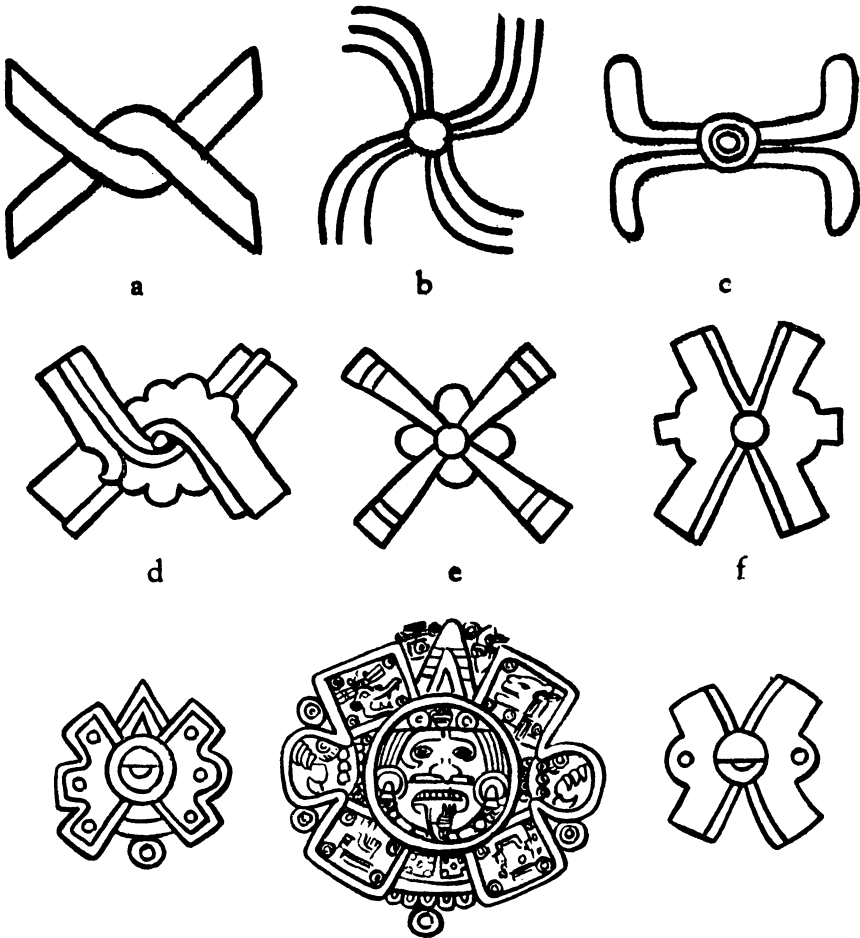
The arrangement of the linguistic signs of the quoted passage submits the syntactic space of the last three lines to a configuration by means of which a well-known geometric figure is subtly delineated. They are four basic syntagmas:

suéñame, señor: soy aire
tócame, señor: soy fuego
bebeme, señor: soy lluvia
conquístame, señor: soy tierra

having identical phrasal structure: the reiteration of the noun *señor* establishes a center point, while the verbs which initiate the sentences point toward extremities occupied by verbal signs which refer to the four basic elements—air, fire, water and earth. Thus it can be said that, at this place in the text, the arrangement of the linguistic signs defines the extension of meaning of a syntactic sign shaped by the suggestion of certain plastic traits.

In the Aztec language, the pictorial configuration of the sign *Ollin* (movement) is accomplished through the arrangement of the components so as to form a quadrangular figure in whose internal space it is possible to establish a center. Such an arrangement comprises the expressive scheme of this sign complex called *quincunce*, as can be seen in the stylistic variations shown on the next page. The expressive plane of the *quincunce* forms, therefore, the signifier in which the complex semantic structure of the myth of Quetzalcóatl appears. The plastic arrangement of the sign is, doubtlessly, an iconic representation of the ordering of the earthly space in four cosmic directions, but its “iconicity” goes beyond this; it is enough to observe with attention, for example, the imprint of the *Codex Borgia* in which, according to Seller, *El tiempo de la invisibilidad del Planeta Venus, después de su aparición como estrella de la mañana* is represented, in order to be convinced of the involved iconicity of the signic structure of the *quincunce*: the four corners are occupied by the gods of death, Tezcatlipoca white, black, red and blue, which in turn encircle an infernal rectangle from which Quetzalcóatl escapes to rise to the heavenly sunset. In other imprints we see the same sign surrounding the figure of Quetzalcóatl still held in the “*casa nocturna del ayuno*,” only later to fall in this itinerary through the inner world of darkness, passing through a tortuous route which Seller calls *camino oscuro*. The examples are many, but it is not my purpose here to examine in detail the semiotic complexity of the *quincunce*, since what interests me is, specifically, to prove the concatenation that exists (with respect to the structure of meaning) between the syntactic structure erected by Fuentes and the all-important sign of the Aztec culture; for I see in it the ideogrammatic expression of the mythic meanings in which the rituals lived by Marina are constructed.²¹

As a consequence of this, the language of *Todos los gatos son pardos* is not metaphoric simply because of the figurative constellations which, in the content plane, expand the mythic meanings of the fable. It is metaphoric as much with regard to the expressive plane as with the process of enunciation: in the expressive plane, the verbal signs, besides having an appropriate spelling also serve as substitutes for a plastic spelling which is alien to them; in the enunciative



plane, the metalinguistic function exercised by Marina hides, as well, a substitutive mechanism, since it occurs in the place of the speaking subject.²² This double metaphorization constitutes a means of exploiting the ties that exist between myth and language, a way of establishing relations which create in the spirit of the reader the sensation that language is lived from within, in an incessant creative activity, like that described by Laurette Sejourne when she interprets the values of the plastic signs expressing the myth of Quetzalcóatl: "Una actividad que tiene por meta exclusiva la de dotar al individuo de la visibilidad interna que le permita resolver en armonía la tensión entre el ser y el parecer, de reencontrar la unidad del espíritu en la multiplicidad de la materia."²³

The literary tradition to which I refer belongs exactly to this line of evolution which the indigenist theme suffered in the hands of writers like José María Arguedas, Miguel Angel Asturias and Carlos Fuentes himself. I exclude from this trajectory its initial moments, that is, the *indigenismo* of writers like Jorge Icaza, whose *Huasi pungo*, for example, is no more than a colonial vision of the

Ecuadorian Indian, although his characters shout and actually fight for their independence. These fights, however, are canalized by ideologies which have no relation whatsoever with indigenous culture, properly speaking, as can be observed in the behavior of Andrés Chilingua, hero of the cited novel. And for this reason, in a character of this type, memory possesses merely a value patterned by a determined political ideology and, consequently, its power is not sufficient, literarily speaking, to reach the deeper layers of the indigenous American past. To make the goal more concrete it would be necessary to have literary language overreach the barriers of the merely political commitment in order to take up the direction of another modality of commitment: that of commitment to language. It is precisely this task, accomplished by writers like Asturias, who upon liberating literary expression from exclusiveness determined by political vision, creates new resources for the language of fiction in Latin America. Carlos Fuentes himself recognizes this when he affirms:

Yo creo que Asturias es uno de los grandes renovadores de la novela hispanoamericana; para mí ha habido dos grandes renovadores: Borges y Asturias, por extraña que aparezca esta aproximación. Asturias deja de tratar al indio, a lo que se llama el hombre telúrico (horrenda expresión), de manera documental, para penetrar la raíz mágica, la raíz mítica, a través del lenguaje que hablan estos seres.²⁴

There exists, thus, in the literary use of *indigenismo*, a reconciliatory act on the part of the Latin American writer with this other American being that manifests itself through the attempt to recuperate through artistic means the indigenous cultural dimensions which imperializing Western humanism buried for many centuries. Through novels like *Los ríos profundos* by José María Arguedas, *Hombres de maíz* and *Mulata de tal* by Miguel Angel Asturias, literary expression defines on the one hand a Romanesque writing whose stylistic resources impart original modes in the field of fiction, and on the other a democratic humanism whose inspirational source, to use the words of Lévi-Strauss, is to be found amid this cultural space of humble civilizations which were underestimated by classical humanism. In this way, the literary *indigenismo* cultivated by these three novelists flails the pack animal which connects our memory, be it individual or historic, to the language of the magic and mythic world.

And by taking this direction, literature decentralizes the themes constantly developed by novelists like Rómulo Gallegos, Agustín Yáñez and Ricardo Güiraldes, not to mention others. Such decentralization, however, would not be sufficient since literature, at least with respect to what the Russian formalists call literariness, is not characterized by theme, but rather by the capacity to submit language to the representational game. In this case, decentralization does not find its defining principle solely in theme; on the contrary, decentralization arises as the possibility of adjusting the expressive plane of natural languages to the structure of other sign systems with the intention of representing them and, as a consequence, situating them, dialectically, in historic time. A work like *Hombres de maíz* is original not merely because the most representative Latin American writers of our century have viewed the history of Latin America as a confluence of three basic cultures, the European, the African, and the Amerindian, a phe-

nomenon that Carlos Fuentes knew how to synthesize ironically in these words: "La diferencia es que nosotros, además de Aristóteles, hemos leído el *Popol-Vuh*."²⁵ The justification must be sought in the treatment given by the writer of the Spanish language in order to prepare it adequately for the expression of those more meaningful values of other sign systems.

Mario Vargas Llosa, studying some formal processes in the work of José María Arguedas, observes that traditional syntax is broken to give way to the organization of words in the sentence which does not follow a logical order, but rather an emotional and intuitive one. Arguedas himself was fully aware of this when in *La novela y el problema de la expresión literaria en el Perú*²⁶ he admits to having created a Spanish language especially suited to bringing to present history some of the more authentic dimensions of indigenous culture. I believe, nevertheless, that *indigenismo* reaches its greatest moments of expressiveness in the work of Miguel Angel Asturias since he knew how to employ masterfully those stylistic resources which could generate those forms in which one could express with originality the contents of the centuries-old memory of the Central American peoples. One example will make clear to the reader aspects of the resources to which I refer.

In the episode of "María Tecún," in the novel *Hombres de maíz*, there is a scene in which Goyo Yic laments the disappearance of his lover, shouting words which resonate in the solitude of the mountains. To express this situation, Asturias used the graphic reiteration of several vowels:

—No siás ruin, María TecúúúÚÚÚn! No te escondás, es con vos, María TecúúúÚÚÚn! Qué se saca de eso, mucháááÁÁÁ? Mucha-óóóÓÓÓ! Mucha-mis-híííííííjos! . . . !²⁷

In this redundancy of vowels, some critics see only the vestiges of certain surrealist modes which, according to them, the author had already employed in his most celebrated novel, *El Señor Presidente*. Bellini, for example, states that the graphic sign in this passage unifies an expressive value of explicit effect, especially if one thinks of the explicit references of the novelist himself when he describes the form of the T as a mountain and that of the U as a gully.²⁸ Thus, considering the atmosphere in which the scene takes place, the reiteration of the vowels would serve to insinuate the aural effect of an echo, and, thereby, would create a kind of speculative representation defined by onomatopoeic values. Such an interpretation is curious especially if we compare it with the reading which Alicia Chibán gives to the same passage when searching for an interpretation based on the myth of Oedipus, since Goyo Yic is blind.²⁹ In any case, none of these interpretations touches upon one of the more significant properties of Asturias' literary *indigenismo*, since both Alicia Chibán and Giuseppe Bellini never refer to the representation that Asturias makes with the Spanish language of the representation expressed in Mayan signs. It does not appear to me important to consider that the graphic reiteration of vowels would be a way of visually expressing the sonorous effect of the echo, for such synesthesia denotes a curious property: only the vowels are repeated. And more: the representation always takes place in the same way, that is, repeating the vowel *three* times in its lower case form, and this same vowel in its upper case form. But, in the Mayan culture, the

number three was the sacred number of woman. Admitting that this sign manifests itself in the vowel repetitions of Asturias' text, we would have to admit that in the representation space created by linguistic signs one finds another representation, that which refers to the Mayan sign. By this means, considering the scheme marked out by linguistic theory to plot the components of a sign, I am able to schematize the resource employed by Asturias in the following way:

Literary expression	linguistic units their meanings	linguistic sign
	vowels repeated three times feminine sacredness	Mayan singing
Literary content	solitude mythical and existential solitude	

The functionality of such a process opens the Spanish language to new possibilities of stylistic expression.³⁰ I cannot at this point turn my attention to resources of this type to characterize the literary *indigenismo* of Asturias; I limit myself to saying that in all his works, and principally in *Leyendas de Guatemala*, *El Señor Presidente*, *Hombres de maíz*, *Los ojos de los enterrados*, *Mulata de tal* and *El espejo de Lida Sal*, resources of this kind are frequently used.³¹ I believe, therefore, that the phenomenon is not casual, and that Asturias had full awareness of this process, because in *Trois des quatre soleils*, as if just the fiction were not sufficient, the Guatemalan novelist makes it perfectly clear that he is attracted by the plastic values of the Mayan signs, be they pictographic or ideogramatic.

For James Stais,³² Carlos Fuentes, in *Todos los gatos son pardos*, achieved a unique work both with respect to technique and theme, for though Fuentes follows the dramaturgical paths of Valle-Inclán and Brecht, he accomplishes the destruction of language in order to liberate once and for all the power of Mexican vocabulary. Without doubt, Fuentes seeks in this work the signposts that can take him to the identity of Mexican man, just as he did in novels like *La región más transparente* and in *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*. It happens, however, that this identity does not express itself by the destruction of language, as the cited critic declares, but rather by the reformulation of the linguistic system and the other semiotic systems which influence the formation of the language of the dramatic text, properly speaking.

In conclusion, *Todos los gatos son pardos* is located within this same tradition that began with the literary *indigenismo* developed by Asturias. The relations observed between the play of Fuentes and the fiction of Asturias up to this point are, at first view, merely thematic. If it were not for other values, it would be sufficient to contrast the drama of Fuentes with predominating tendencies of earlier dramatists, principally the founders and creators of the Mexican theatre. *Todos los gatos son pardos*, besides its theme, is not only related to the thought of Octavio Paz on Mexican identity, as formulated in works like *El laberinto de la soledad* and *Posdata*, but as well shows in the semiotic space of verbal lan-

guage resources which reveal processes of representation similar to those used by Asturias. [Translated by Fredric M. Litto.]

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Notes

1. Carlos Fuentes: "Prólogo del autor," in *Todos los gatos son pardos* (México: Siglo XXI, 1970), p. 6.
2. See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie Structurale* (Paris: Plon, 1958), pp. 224-225.
3. Gaston Bachelard, *La psychanalyse du feu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), p. 38.
4. See Tadeus Kowzan, *Littérature et Spectacle* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), pp. 174-175.
5. On the ritualistic aspect of the theatrical performance and the role of the spectator, see the suggestive essay "Un rôle secondaire: le spectateur," by Pavel Campeanu, in *Sémiologie de la représentation* (Bruxelles: Editions Complexe, 1975), pp. 96-111.
6. Such objectives do not by any means eliminate the usefulness that this approach offers for the staging of the play, for I believe that without a prior study of the mythic roots, any staging of the work runs the risk of missing, in some way, the possibilities of exploiting to the fullest, given the variable resources of the theatre, those expressive forms which are basic to the theatrical message properly speaking.
7. See Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* (Austin: University of Texas, 1970).
8. The motives employed in the first scenes are the same as those passed on by the "cronistas," taken up almost literally centuries later by students of the Aztec culture. To have an idea, it is sufficient to compare, for example, the omens of the Pastor and the cries of the feminine voice bewailing the loss of her children (pp. 17-18) with the passage describing this type of foreboding in authors like Vaillant—see George C. Vaillant, *Astecs of Mexico* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Co., Inc., 1941), pp. 241-242. Other motives have as their source of inspiration pictographic images: Marina "va vestida con la túnica o huipil blanco, de franjas bordadas, como la ilustran los códices . . ." (p. 13); the episode in which Moctezuma receives a dead bird (pp. 57-58) is traced from one of the paintings of the *Codex Florentino*. In some cases, the theme employs lesser known motives: in the memory of one of the soldiers (p. 73), there is fixed the recollection of a battle in which the Indian arrows become confused with little flying fishes, quite the same as we find in the episode narrated by the "cronistas" and retold by Fernando Benítez in his book *La ruta de Hernán Cortés* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1964), p. 69; in the entire complex ceremonial celebrated by the chorus of augurers, the sequence treating the confrontation between Quetzalcóatl and Tezcatlipoca (pp. 28-33) leaves the impression of having been prepared with the symbols of the legend in the *Anales de Cuauhtlan*, where it is related that Tezcatlipoca made Quetzalcóatl see his own body reflected in a mirror and, disturbed by the horror produced by this version, throws himself drunkenly into the loving arms of the beautiful Quetzalpetatl, only to end by disappearing, shamed by the act he committed; in the final scenes, when Cortés waits futilely to be received by the king (pp. 184-185), the dramatist places in the mouths of his characters a series of arguments and lamentations whose embryonic form has its roots in incidents of a fantastic nature, such as, for example, those mentioned in the *Diccionario Enciclopédico Hispano-Americano*, tomo VI, p. 1171.
9. In addition to the thirty-one functions, Propp locates seven "spheres of action," which involve the eight character roles of the fairy tale: (1) the villain, (2) the donor (provider), (3) the helper, (4) the princess (a sought-for person) and her father, (5) the dispatcher, (6) the hero (seeker or victim), (7) the false hero. "One character may play more than one of these roles in any given tale . . ." See Robert Scholes, *Structuralism in Literature—An Introduction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 65.
10. It is interesting to observe that, in the actantial plane of the Greimasian contractual function (" . . . a contract is normally an affair between the hero and a superior power, the hero thus acting as *destinataire* or Receiver and the other character [king, God, parent, priest] as *destinateur* or Giver"—see Scholes, p. 108), Cortés, in the interaction of antagonistic ideologies, has the privilege of being a sole receiver, for, on the one hand, he considers himself the authentic representative of the designs of the Christian God and, on the other hand, he receives the benefits of the indigenous religion, since for the Indians Cortés is a "teúl." It is true that, from a political viewpoint, the privileges given to the hero suffer setbacks provoked by the manipulation of the ideological antagonisms: Padre Olmedo accuses Cortés of being an ambitious deformer of divine purposes and of the principles of due respect to the king (pp. 101-110) and Cuauhtémoc, interrupting the mystical reasoning of Moctezuma, affirms with conviction that Cortés is a man, mere mortal, and thusly vincible (p. 133). No less curious is it

to note that the historic vision of Cortés and Cuauhtémoc coincides in many aspects, as can be seen in the passage in which Cortés says to Padre Olmedo: "Los imperios no han hecho más que pasar de unas manos a otras, desde Alejandro hasta Carlos," (p. 107) and the words of Cuauhtémoc to Moctezuma: "Los imperios no han hecho más que pasar de unas manos a otras. Recuerda, señor, que el reino de México-Tenochtitlan es muy reciente, que se fundó sobre la herencia de los pasados reinos de Tula y de Teotihuacán . . ." (p. 129).

11. Marina's monologue is based on lines of thought traced by Octavio Paz in *El laberinto de la soledad*, principally the chapter entitled "Los hijos de la Malinche." For the celebrated poet and critic, the literary work of Fuentes "no se presenta como realidad que hay que nombrarla, sino como palabra que debemos descifrar." In fact, the influence of Octavio Paz in the literary production of Fuentes is very great and has prompted critical attention, as is seen in studies like that of Joseph Sommers, *After the Storm: Landmarks of the Modern Mexican Novel* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1968) and that of Gary Brower, "Fuentes de Fuentes: Paz y las raíces de *Todos los gatos son pardos*," in *Latin American Theatre Review*, 5/1 (Fall 1971), 59-68 and even in the studies that Fuentes himself dedicates to the work of Octavio Paz (see, for example, the article, translated into French, appearing in *Opus International*, Nos. 19/20, "Le temps d'Octavio Paz," pp. 90-93).

12. Marina, seen through the prism of the following Greimasian scheme, is not only a subject of the discursive statements, but as well a producer of the discourse: "Le sujet du discours est donc cette instance que ne se contente pas, selon la conception saussurienne, d'assurer le passage de l'état virtuel à l'état actuel du langage: il apparaît comme l'endroit où se trouve monté l'ensemble des mécanismes de la *mise en discours de la langue*. Situé dans un lieu où *l'être du langage* se transforme en un *faire linguistique*, le sujet du discours peut être dit, sans que cela soit une mauvaise métaphore, producteur du discours." See A. J. Greimas, *Sémiotique et Sciences Sociales* (Paris: Seuil, 1976), p. 11.

13. I base this observation on the position of Jean Piaget with respect to knowledge processes, as set forth in *Biologie et Connaissance*.

14. Manuel Martí, *Canto, danza y música precortesianos* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1961).

15. For the authors of the cited volume, a metaphor takes place as a result of a process in which three elements enter into play: the starting term, the intermediary term and the arrival term. In this process, when a figurative message creates problems as to the reading, the term of arrival constitutes an unknown, that is, a factor that requires solution. Seen, then, as a semantic phenomenon, the metaphor establishes itself in the text by means of substituting the sememes belonging to the starting point with sememes relative to what would be the arrival point, an operation that becomes perceptible as a result of the intervention of the sememes of the intermediary term. The concept of sememe here used has as its metalinguistic value that which Greimas attributed to it in *Sémiotique Structurale*; or rather, the sememe, if we may try to define it, albeit recognizing a certain lack of preciseness, is a form of the content, a semantic microstructure achieved by the arrangement of sememes and classemes. Thusly, in the sphere of the characters formulated by Propp, to Marina, as has been said, is given the role, among others, of provider, which gives her a specific semantic value, a seme; but in the pictographic message of the Codex, Marina appears with accentuated frequency in a central position, that is, she in general holds an intermediary point between antagonistic characters. The value derived from this position furnishes a classeme. In any case, the substitution of one sememe for another is possible when between the two one can effect an intersection; in consequence, the metaphor can be described as "une identité réelle manifestée par l'intersection de deux termes pour affirmer l'identité des termes entiers." Cf. *Rhétorique Générale* (Paris: Larousse, 1970), p. 107.

16. See Edward Lopes, *Discurso, Texto e Significação* (São Paulo; Cultrix, 1978), p. 92.

17. See Vladimir Ja. Propp, *Le radici storiche dei racconti di fate*, Italian version by Clara Coisson (Torino: Editore Boringhieri, 1972).

18. See Laurette Sejourné, *El universo de Quetzalcóatl* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1962), especially p. 108.

19. The myth of Quetzalcóatl is related to cultural traditions that cannot be summarized in the Meso-american legends. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud shows the relations between myth and art, taking as his reference point the lamentations of the chorus of Greek tragedy, in their condition of being a structure in which the sadness of the group is revealed, which, in totemic ritual, represents the eating ceremony. There is, therefore, in the symbolism of the underworld trips an ancient nucleus of signification, having its roots in the metaphors related to swallowing. In studying the transformation processes underlying the semantic condensations verified in the functions, Propp states that "evoluzione è un prodotto di mutamenti nella vita economica e nel regime sociale. Venuto meno il rito, si perde il senso dell'atto dell'inghiottimento e dell'eruttazione, che viene sostituito da varie forme transitorie e quindi scompare del tutto. Il

centro di gravità dell'eroismo si trasferisce dall'inghiottimento all'uccisione dell'inghiottitore . . .," (*Le radice storiche dei racconti di fate*, p. 387). I believe that Cortés's dream and Marina's interpretation of it, although related, as I have said, to highly significant passages of the myth of Quetzalcóatl, penetrate in the most profound level of this myth by means of metaphoric configurations which are connected, semantically speaking, to the rites of swallowing.

20. Cf. Octavio Paz, "La máscara y la transparencia," in *Homenaje a Carlos Fuentes* (Madrid: Neografis S.L.), p. 18.

21. The arrangement of the components of these signs expresses a kind of reduplication of the quadrangular forms. It is curious to note that the arrangement of the four basic elements is accomplished through four signs which, in fact, are also the four signs in which the goddess of voluptuousness places her feet and hands in the imprint which Seller interprets as *Los dioses de la voluptuosidad y sus signos*: Tlazoltéotl positions herself erotically as a function of the signs *técpatl* (stone), *quiahuil* (rain), *xóchiitl* (flower) and *ollin* (movement).

22. It would be both useful and significant to study this question of substitutions through the model suggested by Patric Pavis to interpret the "ideologic codes of final connotation." See *Problèmes de Sémiologie Théâtrale* (Québec: Presses Universitaires de Québec, 1976), pp. 84-87.

23. Cf. Laurette Sejourné, *El lenguaje de las formas en Teotihuacán* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1966), p. 303.

24. Cf. *Mundo Nuevo*, No. 1, Paris, 1966.

25. Cf. *Mundo Nuevo*, No. 21, Paris, 1968.

26. See Mario Vargas Llosa, "Tres notas sobre Arguedas," in *Nueva Novela Latinoamericana*, I (Buenos Aires: Ed. Paidós, 1969).

27. Cf. Miguel Angel Asturias, *Hombres de maíz*, in *Obras escogidas*, V. 1 (Madrid: Aguilar, 1955), p. 657.

28. Many other references can be observed in the episode of "María Tecún," in *Hombres de maíz*, pp. 655-726.

29. See Alicia Chibán, "El símbolo y *Hombres de maíz*," in *Megañón*, T.1, nº 2, Buenos Aires.

30. I analyze these resources in my book *Duas Leituras Semióticas* (São Paulo; Editora Perspectiva, 1978).

31. See especially *Quincajú*, in *El espejo de Lida Sal*.

32. See James Stais, "*Todos los gatos son pardos*: un acto de rebelión en nueve escenas," in *Homenaje a Carlos Fuentes*, Helmy F. Giacomani, editor (New York: L.A. Publishing Company, Inc., 1971), pp. 465-471.