GUILLERMO CABRERA INFANTE:

LANGUAGE AND CREATIVITY

by

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INTRODUCTION

In the course of a lecture given at the University of Kansas in 1969, the Chilean playwright Jorge Díaz made the statement that for him and other contemporary Latin American writers words are never just means, but ends in themselves. It might be pointed out that this attitude has been characteristic of intellectuals throughout the ages, but there is more behind this declaration than satisfaction with a life's work consisting of words rather than action. In his critical work entitled La nueva novela hispanoamericana, Carlos Fuentes discusses Guillermo Cabrera Infante's Tres tristes tigres and then proceeds,

> La nueva novela hispanoamericana se presenta como una nueva fundación del lenguaje contra los prolongamientos calcificados de nuestra falsa y feudal fundación de origen y su lenguaje igualmente falso y anacrónico .... Nuestras obras deben ser de desorden: es decir, de un orden posible, contrario al actual .... Nuestra literatura es verdaderamente revolucionaria en cuanto le niega al orden establecido el léxico que éste quisiera y le opone el lenguaje de la alarma, la renovación, el desorden y el humor.[1]

Fuentes appears to imply that the primary phenomenon produced by any culture is its language, so that the state of being of that language is a profound expression of the standing of that culture. One of the characters in Tres tristes tigres says, "Dígame cómo hablo y les diré quién soy."[2]

There is more to what Fuentes is saying, however, than the conviction that language must express the breakdown of an established order and reflect the construction of a new one. When he says that the works of the new writers must be "de un orden posible" he indicates that the writer is beginning to conceive of himself as the creator of a new order. No longer does the writer view himself as the spectator who attempts to reproduce on paper what he has experienced. Wallace Fowlie states, "Every . . . artist who has felt . . . the anguish of the void, knows that the only way for him to bear such an experience, is the use and creation of the word. He knows that the power of the word is that of creation itself. The power of the word is that of calling into existence."[3] The new creation is his work of art as it exists on the printed page, perhaps in a chaotic state but always indicating a possible new order because of the creativity of the word.

The purpose of this study is to examine the place within this scheme of one of the most brilliant of the young Spanish American writers. Guillermo Cabrera Infante is one of a generation of talented and innovative Cuban writers who in spite of--or perhaps because of--the radical changes taking place within their society, have produced some of the finest prose fiction ever to come out of Spanish America. He pays homage to the writers whose influence he feels is expected to be visible in twentieth century works--Joyce, Kafka and Proust, for

example--but having done so he chooses his own mentors, ones he feels can set him on the course he intends to follow. These are Mark Twain, Lewis Carroll and Vladimir Nabokov especially. But Cabrera Infante is no more the product of a set of foreign influences than is any other truly creative writer. Having used these predecessors to get his bearings, he has set out on his own unique course.

We shall examine his creative techniques, first in his book of short stories and then in Tres tristes tigres, focusing particularly on his use of language. Certainly he reflects Fuentes' statement of the author's desire to produce disorder, to control it, and then to create a new order within it. His particular viewpoint, however, is that only the spoken word of Havana, that which he has been able to "catch on the wing," is worthy of consideration. Our purpose will be to examine the manner in which this oral language is employed by him to create the new thing which is a work of art. On the surface the writing consists largely of play and humor; for Cabrera Infante play can be humorous and frivolous at that level but highly creative at the same time, whether his narrator is aware of this fact or not. An important consideration will be the creation of myth by the point of view of the narrator as expressed in the spoken word.

Since the novel presents a chaotic, unstructured appearance, we shall deal with the question of whether or not there is an

underlying structure, one created not in the traditional manner but rather by the use of the word and myth. This consideration will lead into a discussion of the close relationship between the themes and narrative techniques of the novel. Language is used in such a manner in the book that it might be said that it is no longer the word, but the Word. The latter becomes much more than just the symbol of a meaning-bearing sound as it is itself the focal point of the attention of the author, the narrators and the reader. As it is perverted almost to the point of annihilation, it is ultimately personified and takes on the character of the prime instrument of re-creation.

With regard to the critical methods employed, it should be stated that no one method could conceivably be adequate in the approach to these works. For the most part we have employed what is generally termed the exponential approach, the search for key factors which allow the interpreter to enter into the meaning of the text. Cabrera Infante is fond of using symbols, so that in some cases these have been important in illuminating a section of the work at hand. In some cases the mythic and archetypal approach has been employed, but in view of the fact that this approach can often be sterile when used as an end in itself, we have attempted to employ it mainly to throw light on the fuller significance of the text. That is, we have avoided simply pointing out that something in what has been written is a certain type of symbol. At times the Freudian approach has

been used in order to support the main line of interpretation.

In our discussion of some of the short stories which appeared in Así en la paz como en la guerra in 1960 we shall attempt to reveal both the themes and techniques which were being developed and were to appear later in Tres tristes tigres, and the notable absence of certain features which were to be of great importance in the novel. Of the latter the most important are the stress on humor and the kaleidoscopic shifting of language and imagery which are so important in producing the total experience of the book. One of the current arguments for the existence of God declares that the possibility of the universe as we know it resulting by chance is about as great as the likelihood that Webster's Unabridged Dictionary could result from an explosion in a print shop. One is inclined to suspect that Cabrera Infante and the characters who appear in his novel would be intrigued by the possibility of a novel produced in this manner, and would be delighted if one were. It would be their kind of book.

I. THE DIALECTICS OF AGONY

It has been fairly typical of novelists to begin in prose fiction by writing short stories, and the new Spanish American novelists are no exception. Carlos Fuentes, Juan Rulfo and Gabriel García Márquez, for example, all began with books of stories before attempting the novels by which they were to become better known. It is generally assumed--at times by the authors themselves--that this is the pattern because it is logical to begin with the simpler form of the short story before moving on to the more complex form of the novel. But the majority of those who have attempted both genres hold firmly to the view that, because of the intensity inherent in the short story, it is a good deal more difficult to write a good one than to write a good novel.

Guillermo Cabrera Infante provides some good illustrations of these remarks. In 1960 he published a collection entitled Así en la paz como en la guerra, consisting of fourteen stories and fifteen "viñetas," all written between 1949 and the date of publication.[1] None of the stories is particularly memorable, despite the fact that it was only about three years before the publication of his excellent novel that he had the opportunity to put them in final form. All of them show the marks of immaturity which characterize the beginning writer, and in some

cases the technique which is being experimented with calls considerable attention to itself. Nevertheless, as is often the case with the first efforts of an author who is later to produce literature of genuine quality, some of the stories contain indications of considerable talent, and the ones chosen for consideration in this chapter are those which exhibit these qualities.

In some cases these stories reveal techniques and preoccupations which will later appear in Tres tristes tigres. The search for these could prove sterile if it were to content itself with pointing out that what occurs in the one book also occurs in the other, but in fact, in some cases the emergence of these features in the first book sheds light on what might otherwise be puzzling or only partially understood in the next.

The first story is entitled "Un rato de tenmeallá," and deals with the pressures which abject poverty places upon a fifteen-year-old girl to turn to prostitution. The story is entirely without punctuation and capitalization, except for one period, and consists of two long sentence fragments. In the place of punctuation the author has used the connective "y," and the total effect is one which recalls the cinema, in which there is an unbroken succession of scenes. The story begins, "y entonces el hombre dice que ellos dicen que le diga que no pueden esperar mas ... " (p.16), in the middle of both a sentence and a scene. It is as if the reader had happened upon the telling of a story after it had gone on for some time, and had had his attention

arrested by the excitement of the description. At the end there is no period, and the sentence may end there or it may not. Again, it is as if the reader had heard enough and were walking away, so that whether the story went on or not is immaterial. In addition to these effects, which produce a sense of having moved in for a moment on a world of misery, there is a distinctive appearance to the print on the page. There is an ingenuous simplicity to it which supports the stark descriptions of the world of the characters.

The author's choice of a narrator is a six-year-old girl, with the result that the reader must become a co-creator with the author. This narrator, limited by her age and lack of experience, can only present to the reader a simply stated version of what she has perceived from her point of view of reality. She is able to view certain acts within her field of vision but not to interpret them, while the reader, who possesses much more information, is able to interpret what the little girl cannot. In the preface the author says, "Si el personaje es una niña de seis años, es sólo para poder llegar a la espantable realidad por la distancia más larga: el balbuceo, la confusa visión, la comprensión borrosa" (p.10). There are two reactions to these events: that of the girl, who has moved from anxiety into happiness in her new-found relative prosperity, and that of the reader, who is horrified at what has gone on (only partly behind the scenes) to produce that prosperity. The author avoids the

direct creation of sentimentality; the pathos is produced in the tension between the viewpoints of the narrator and the reader.

A good deal of irony is produced in the process. When the older sister realizes the hopelessness of the family's position without the exploitation of their only remaining asset, her body, she offers herself to the foul creature who has previously propositioned her. The narrator's observation is, "debía tener mucho calor por que se desabotono la blusa" (p.23). Even more pathetic is the little girl's interpretation of what is going on in the room; she is certain that, since she has been told how dirty the old man is, her sister must have been called in to do the cleaning. The irony is underscored when the latter emerges "y parece que el polvo le ha hecho daño porque cuando sale tiene los ojos inritados y escupia a menudo y fue a la pila y se lavo la cara y la boca varias veces ... " (p.26).

Cabrera Infante experiments with imagery in this story. In addition to the already mentioned use of heat as a metaphor of sexual passion (which tends to be overworked in his fiction), the atmosphere is bolstered by certain metaphoric and symbolic acts. For example, the father's desperate concern for the family honor, especially with regard to the sexual life of his daughters, is reinforced by the fact that "papa dijo una vez que las niñas no debian montar a caballo" (P.22). It will be recognized that the horse is symbolic of the male. The breakdown in the marriage relationship is underscored by the selling

of the wife's wedding ring, which is considered to be the last object of value which the family possesses. The mother can barely get it off, and then throws it to the floor for the father to pick up and sell (p.21). There may be irony, too, in the phallic quality of the bananas which serve as the family's only food for the day. Also, after Mariantonieta's bath, while she is planning her next move as she dries her hair in the sun (the primary source of life), her mother comes between the sun and her daughter (p.22).

There is a curious play on circles and spheres in the story, and in view of the symbolism involved it is a brilliant stroke on the part of the author. The circle, according to Cirlot's Dictionary of Symbols, symbolizes the ultimate state of Oneness of a man, the man who has achieved inner unity or perfection, while the sphere is a symbol of the All.[2] In this story the family involved sells its wedding ring and the daughter, having been exposed to the sun, offers her breasts to a man. The result, for the narrator, is a few coins, also circles, which can buy her a balloon. The balloon, which represents psychic wholeness on what she calls her happiest day (p.27), is her version of the crimson world (p.24) which her mother has warned the girls not to accept from the old man even if he should offer it to them.

Another set of circles is the mud cakes made by the little girl. Her thought is that she may be able to help out in the

family financial situation by selling them, and significantly, she makes them by moistening the ground with her own urine. Thus her actions serve as a pale reflection of those of her older sister, since she too is offering for sale a part of herself. The net result is that the family is reduced to trading the circles which represent its integrity and wholeness for coins, the small circles which mean bare survival for them.

The story entitled "Las puertas se abren a las tres" is called by the author "un poema escrito por un adolescente enamorado de nadie, solo" (p.10). Its beginning could be taken as an incredibly late survival of the bad taste of some modernista writing if it were not for this, but the excessive use of synesthesia is that of the narrator, not the author. There is an attempt at perfect symmetry in the story, the structure of which represents a rise and a fall. The opening words are, "Arriba el sol era un hueco en el cielo por donde entraba el mediodía: el amarillo amarillo de los edificios ... esto yo no lo sentí ... " (pp.30,31). The paragraph is filled with colors, sounds and smells. Near the end of the story, when the narrator has been raised to the heights of adolescent infatuation and abruptly dropped, he says, "El sol era un hueco en el cielo por donde se iba la tarde" (p.39), and the narration is brought to a close with "Ya no pude distinguir más que los reflejos amarillos de las luces amarillas" (p.40). Between the two extremes the narrator hears a bolero on two different occasions. The

first time he hears, "A las tres es la cita/no te olvides de mí" and terms it "dulce y embriagador" (p.35), but after he has been abandoned by his new-found love it is entirely different; it becomes "A las seis es la cita," sung by a "voz gangosa y a veces rajada ... , alargando las vocales, distorcionando las palabras: noteoooolvidees deemii" (p.39). It is not likely that the quality of the music has changed to any significant degree; in fact the narrator's mind may be what changes "tres" into "seis;" it is his frame of mind which makes the difference.

Another example of the way in which point of view affects perception may be seen in the young man's description of the girl he has just met and with whom he is quite infatuated: "Continué contemplándola: baja y quizá un poco gorda y con las caderas amplias y los senos redondos y su cara hermosa y casi perfecta: sólo la frente demasiado ancha y masculina, rompiendo la línea de muchacha muchacha, y su boca que era a primera vista insolente, pero luego se revelaba amable y casi tímida, y la pequeña nariz y los brazos y las manos, finas y tiernas y suaves: su cuerpo perfecto" (p.36). Somehow the position of a smitten teenager has permitted him to view his friend as imperfect in a number of ways and still to describe her body as perfect. At this point his world in its totality is colored by his mental state: "Dos palomas volaron sobre el parque tomadas de las manos y una perra y un perro pasaron junto a mí, cogidos del brazo"

(p.37).

For the narrator, who has found his first love, it would appear that this is the first time since the world began that boy has met girl. His name is Silvestre and hers Virginia, and these are suggestive enough of primeval simplicity that he can convert his world into the Garden of Eden: "El parque estaba solitario y yo estaba solo. Adán, Adán, me dije, tienes todas tus costillas" (p.39). This rather remarkable image is suggestive of the fact that he has conceived his short-lived love affair as what Jung would call the search for the anima, and that the girl has failed to meet that sort of expectation.

There is a general play on life and death in the story, and the movement upward and then downward corresponds to another movement from death to life and back to death again. At the beginning the narrator views the outside world from the setting of a funeral, and it is when he is able to detach himself from it that he sees and meets the girl. He has seen her before, near her home, which is beyond the burial grounds of the poor. Now, however, she attempts to hide this fact from him and ascends the stairs to what she describes as her aunt's apartment, in another contribution to the ascent pattern. When he realizes where he first saw her, and that she belongs near the cemetery, the story is on the descent.

"Resaca," written in 1951, reveals a good deal with regard to Cabrera Infante's attitude towards the Cuban revolution and

the people against whom it was carried out. It is the story of two laborers who have set a sugar cane crop afire and are attempting to escape, one with a mortal wound in the leg. The author says of the story, "Tiene como lejano personaje central a Surí Castillo, venal secretario de la Federación Nacional de Trabajadores Azucareros de aquella época. Sólo así se entienden la amargura y la frustración de sus héroes: unos pobres, perseguidos, olvidados saboteadores" (p.11). The hope of the two men is in what the wounded one mistakenly calls the "Paraíso inalcanzable": "Cuando llegue la Revolución ... seremos los que gobiernen. Tú y yo, y Yeyo y Sánchez y Braulio Pérez y todos los obreros del central, los de Sao, los de toda Cuba: todos los obreros del mundo cogeremos el poder y gobernaremos y haremos leyes justas y habrá trabajo para todos, y dinero .... Viviremos en casas buenas, limpias, lindas casitas con luz y radio y todo" (p.65). Then there is a discussion with regard to refrigerators, television, and school for the children.

The irony enters later in the story when the narrator (not one of the saboteurs) describes the life of the Secretary General in Havana who has ordered the burning. He speaks of "su Cadillac con aire acondicionado. Del auto refrigerado al cuarto refrigerado, cómodamente tumbado en la cama con una botella del mejor coñac empezada, a un lado y una mujer sin comenzar al otro; con el pequeño y costoso radio a media voz, esperando las noticias, mientras una negra de voz pastosa cantaba unos boleros dulces y

pegajosos que daban ganas de llorar" (p.67). This man who has glibly given the order to burn the fields, and has not even taken the slightest precaution to protect the lives of the men who carry it out, has already attained the "Paraíso inalcanzable," and more. These men who are doing the actual work of the revolution can never aspire to owning an air conditioned Cadillac, nor to having his power over men's lives. In point of fact, while ostensibly working for the poor, he belongs to the exploiting class which must be brought down. The justice for all which constitutes a major theme of the men's discussion of the post-revolutionary world is not a part of the policy of the leader who ordered the revolutionary act for which they are to die. Perhaps there is irony too in the fact that the ideal for which the men are fighting is simply a continuation of this sort of bourgeois existence.

There is in the imagery a play on the concepts of heat, light and dryness as opposed to coolness, shade and water. It is based on the act of burning the cane fields and the subsequent flight across the arid, dusty, almost treeless savanna. For these two men the immediate goal is to reach the river in order to cool themselves and wash the wound which one of them has in his leg. The story is written in such a way as to suggest that since their leader has determined that their act should produce heat, insuperable heat will be their lot to the end of their lives. For the wounded man this is not long, for

he announces at the outset that he will not last until the evening (p.63).

There are many mentions of heat and of the dust which swirls around the two men as they escape across the savanna, "sin una nube o un árbol donde descansar" (p.64). It is as if the very heavens themselves were implacable in their pursuit of those who had handled the fire of the wrath of the gods. For the day when the Promethean deed was done was "una tarde en que el rojo de la puesta de sol se unió al rojo que subía desde las llamas de las cañas al quemarse. Hacía dos días y un atardecer que huían, perseguidos por incendiarios" (p.66). They have rivaled the sun and kindled the wrath of both heaven and earth.

Nor is the heat only external, for the dying man looks out on the desolate landscape "con ojos afiebrados" (p.66). While the man who in effect has condemned him to die enjoys his cognac and his women, the other longs for the simple pleasure of a cigarette and can have none, though there are matches: "Eso es lo que sobra" (p.67). The sun is setting, but the wounded man is thirsty and longs to wash his wound. In his fantasy he does so, in the last living act which the reader perceives, while his partner leaves to bring him the water he cannot reach (pp. 70-71). But when the partner arrives at the place where "esa agua debe estar fresca de verdad" (p.70), he is disappointed: "Cuando llegó no vio más que una zanja, llena de lodo, no de

fango, sino de un barro endurecido, seco y pajizo como el espartillo y como toda la sabana .... Ahora era una cañada seca, con el fondo cubierto de una tierra endurecida por el sol y el aire, más árida que toda la llanura" (p.71). He is spared the task of informing his comrade, however, for when he returns the latter is dead.

The story ends with these words:

> Por algún lado del cielo el sol se estaba poniendo y la tarde se colmó de la serenidad del crepúsculo. No muy lejos una torcaza arrulló y el ulular llegó hasta sus oídos.
>
> El aire vibró sobre las hojas del yarey y zumbó entre el tupido ramaje de los marabúes. La paloma volvió a cantar y a lo lejos otra respondió. ¿O era el eco? El repetido traqueteo del vuelo del ave se inició junto a la loma, quizá bajo el dagame, y cruzó por encima de él. No la vio pasar. El viento de nuevo silbó en la palma y levantó el polvo en torno al hombre tumbado y movió su pelo pajizo (p.72).

Even in death the man's body is characterized by a color suggestive of dryness. His companion has survived to see the merciful disappearance of the sun, but even he has little prospect of finding water before he dies of thirst, and he may well be captured and shot as soon as he enters the nearest town (p.64). He does not even sense the fact that the symbol of peace has flown over him.

This story stands as Cabrera Infante's homage to the men who initiated the revolution. The message is clear: some of them would die quickly for their acts, and others would never find rest in this life. They would only suffer the physical

and spiritual thirst which corresponded to the acts growing out of their convictions. Even when certain that relief was imminent they would find only more dryness. But the end result of their efforts would be near even though unperceived by them.

A very different kind of story is "Mar, mar, enemigo." It is written in a lyrical style and employs a great deal of imagery in order to create a mythic tone. The tone is set in the first paragraph, in which it is stated, "Y ella odiaba al mar, porque sabía que le era hostil. El mar debe ser una mujer, pensó" (p. 100). Here are some of the seeds of what is to become a preoccupation of the author in Tres tristes tigres, for there too the sea plays an important role, especially in the attitudes of the characters Silvestre and Arsenio Cué.

For the protagonist, whose lover has crossed the sea to an island on a dangerous mission, the sea represents many things. She feels that it must be a woman because only a woman could be so harsh with other women and so easy on men. She has, of course, caught on to the archetypal symbolism of the sea as mother, in both the negative and the positive sense. The sea represents the negative mother image, the "terrible mother," because it means death, but it also means the origin of life and therefore the possibility of rebirth. The fact is that this woman has lost her lover in the sea; it is clear that he has died there, since she has not heard from him for many years. But since she is still able to cling to the hope that one day the signal will come from

the sea, it still represents new life to her. It might also be pointed out that another archetype is involved, that of the hero who has gone away across the sea and is expected to return at any time. The main elements involved in the watch form a feminine totality: the woman, the sea, and a female servant named Anastasia (which means "resurrection"). Here we have the female side of life awaiting the saving return of the masculine, the animus which the hero represents.

The hero is "ese hombre, ese marino misterioso, envuelto en sombras, ocupado en raros trajines, que utilizaba el mar y la noche como cómplices" (p.101). It is worth noting that while many of the characters in these stories of Cabrera Infante's belong to the broad center of Cuban life, this one corresponds perfectly to the canons of what short story characters ought to be, as laid down by Frank O'Connor in his work The Lonely Voice. O'Connor speaks of the "outlawed figures wandering about on the fringes of society, superimposed sometimes on symbolic figures whom they caricature and echo--Christ, Socrates, Moses.[3] The latter three names, of course, are those of some of the men whose lives have best exemplified the ideal of the hero. O'Connor also speaks of the typical solitude of the short story's protagonist, and this quality too is characteristic of "Mar, mar, enemigo," in the case of the woman who awaits the hero's return. She too belongs to what O'Connor terms the "submerged population groups"[4]: "La mujer aunque ha

nacido en el país, ha vivido tanto tiempo en el extranjero que hay que considerarla una extranjera. Habla y viste como extranjera, no una extranjera de un lugar determinado, sino de cualquier parte, o mejor de ninguna parte" (pp.101-02).

In her years of watching for the lantern signal from the island the woman has come to view the stars in the sky above the sea as a symbol of the hope which she still nurtures: "la mujer pensó con agrado que el cielo era un espejo que reflejaba una ciudad lejana" (p.110), that is, the stars would appear to be the reflections of the lights of a city, which, in turn, would represent hope. The stars, then, as the only signal lights which she is able to perceive, signify her interiorization of the sign of life on which her hope is based. It is for this reason that when her unconscious is finally able to communicate to her by way of a dream that she must end her vigil, the message comes to her in terms of her early training in a Roman Catholic school. She recalls a lecture in which her instructor taught that "el día del Juicio Final, lo ha dicho el Apóstol San Juan en su Apocalipsis, todas las estrellas se han de apagar" (p.110). Later, as she dreams,

> Una lluvia de estrellas cae sobre el mar. Todas las estrellas se desprenden y caen, una a una, y bajan flotando sin prisa, luminosas como bengalas, y luego quedan ardiendo sobre el mar, soltando un humo blanco y espeso, y permanecen como puntos de luz, como señales acordadas. Una se disparó hacia arriba como el cohete de auxilio de un buque que se hunde. Del cielo siguieron cayendo las estrellas, hasta que la concha de arriba quedó a oscuras y la comba de abajo se

> sumió en una oscuridad aún mayor, después que la última señal se apagó (p.113).

When she relates the dream to her companion she says of the stars, "El cielo se quedó sin ninguna y luego una de ellas quiso regresar al lugar de donde había venido" (p.115). This is the Day of Judgment for her, the last day of life worthy of the name. She has experienced the apocalypse on a personal level as the stars, which have stood for so long as the external representation of the hope still alive within her, have all fallen into that odious representation of death, the sea. Yet the one which has attempted to return to its place indicates that even now there is within her an attempt to keep the hope alive.

Cabrera Infante often uses animals and their experiences to parallel the lives of his characters, and a particularly good example of this appears in this story. The protagonist is terrified when a sinister-looking spider bites her on the hand and lands on her shawl. The Indian servant kills the spider, and when her mistress remarks that they are repugnant creatures, she replies, "Tienen que vivir niña. Son como los cristianos, niña, que pa vivir unos tienen que matar a otros" (p.109). The protagonist then has to go outside for fresh air because she is choking, presumably because she has perceived the parallel between the spider and her lover, who as an outlaw also has to kill to live, and who in all probability has been killed in the process, as was the spider.

"En el gran Ecbó" is a story which deals with the theme of

the spiritual pilgrimage of modern man. There are two protagonists, and it is likely that in any short story this situation is undesirable. In contrast to the novel, the scope of which is sufficiently ample to include the development of any number of characters, the short story depends largely upon unity of presentation and upon intensity for its effect. In this story the reader is forced to divide his attention between the real issue--the inner struggle of the woman--and the words, actions and even thoughts of her companion. Beyond this fact, he is too strong an individual to serve as simply the one whose presence is necessary for the development of the principal line of the story.

Jung writes of modern man's having chosen a "scientific" world view, rejecting the concept of the supernatural. He points out that a life without a meaningful religious faith may be perfectly acceptable as long as all is going smoothly, but that when a crisis emerges it is necessary that one have a strong controlling purpose at the center of his life. The woman in this story (whose name is never given), is at that point of crisis. She is an actress who has been living with the rather sophisticated and cynical owner of an English sports car. Having attained some status and a degree of security, she has been able to reject Roman Catholicism, which she describes as "ajeno y remoto" (p.141). At the beginning of the story the nature of the crisis is presented, along with both the rejection of and

the need for a religious faith. The man is refused meat at a restaurant and thinks, "Estos católicos. Gente de almanaque y prohibiciones" (p.131). But she describes herself as having "ojos de cristiana en una cara judía" (p.131), indicating that it is not all that simple to ignore one's religious background. There are increasingly clear hints to the effect that she has become bored by their relationship and now feels guilty about it, though the question concerning which feeling came first is not resolved. She remarks to her lover, "No es bueno hacer todo lo que a uno le gusta" (p.133), and later she says of their relationship, "No hay placer .... Ahora vivimos en pecado" (p. 136). His attempt to deal with her problem consists of giving her a book and pointing out a chapter entitled "Neurosis y sentimiento de la culpabilidad," and this is rejected by her (p. 136).

Their destination is the entertainment offered by a ñáñigo fiesta en Guanabacoa. It is said of the man, "Cuando entró, sintió que había penetrado en un mundo mágico" (p.137); this statement is followed by a section set off from the text by indentation, which is completely free of punctuation. It is as if the author wished to indicate by this means that they had entered another world. The psychological movement of the woman from this point on is well carried out. As an actress she is first impressed by the theatricality of the spectacle and takes note of the costumes ("Ese tiene más de cien botones en la camisa," p.139). Then those same costumes become an image of her

own spiritual condition. The black dancers are dressed entirely in white, because they are in the service of Obbatalá, "el dios de lo inmaculado y puro" (p.139). She jokes to her companion that she could never serve that god, and remarks that she is too light-skinned to dress in white. It would appear that, just as the dancers are black within their white costumes, she is black with sin and guilt within her white skin.

The rhythm becomes frenetic and she asks whether she, like the mulatto, could be possessed by the "santo." "Y antes de decirle que sí, que a ella también podía ocurrirle aquella embriaguez con el sonido, temió que ella se lanzase a bailar ... " (p.141). But it is clear that, in her state of mind, she is susceptible to such influences anyway. To the man's comment that no one who has read Ibsen, Chekhov and Tennessee Williams could have this happen, she replies, "Creen. Creen en algo en que ni tú ni yo podemos creer y se dejan guiar por ello y viven de acuerdo con sus reglas y mueren por ello y después les cantan a sus muertos de acuerdo con sus cantos. Me parece maravilloso" (p.141).

The final stage occurs when she is approached by an old black woman, who speaks to her in such a way that eventually she lowers her head in shame. The old woman has seen her, sensed her situation, and now faced her with it: "Simplemente me ha mirado a los ojos y con la voz más dulce, más profunda y más enérgicamente convincente que he oído en mi vida, me ha dicho:

'Hija, cesa de vivir en pecado.' Eso es todo" (p.143).

The man has not changed and is not affected by the advice, as he indicates by his racist thoughts as they leave (p.144), so that he is unable to comprehend what has happened to her. She breaks their relationship by returning to him two portraits, "el de la mujer con una sonrisa y los ojos serios, y el del niño, tomado en un estudio, con los ojos enormes y serios, sin sonreir ... " (p.145). Portraits often represent the dead past, but it is likely that in this case they represent what might in a certain sense be revived. As she hands him the portraits she says, "Están mejor contigo" (p.145), and it is as if she were asking him to remind himself of the time when he was less conceited and insensitive and the time when she, though fundamentally serious, was happy. This act is made more significant by the appearance, early in the story, of the following statement with regard to the man: "Le gustaba recordar. Recordar era lo mejor de todo. A veces creía que no le interesaban las cosas más que para recordarlas luego" (p.134). Now, ironically, his memory is all he will have left of their relationship.

A significant point of this story is that Cabrera Infante has followed the lead of Carpentier's Los pasos perdidos and certain stories of Lino Novás Calvo by introducing the theme of the return to origins, which was later to become a major preoccupation of the new Spanish American novelists. The actress, unable to return to her "civilized" childhood faith, in her need

for something to believe, is led into a primitive, animistic religion, and the process is carried out largely by means of sound and rhythm, which were to play a significant role in Tres tristes tigres. All five of the major characters in the latter book are in some manner deeply concerned with pure, primitive sound, and in some cases their attitude might be characterized by the term "embriaguez con el sonido," as is that of the dancers in this story.

Interspersed with the fourteen stories in Así en la paz como en la guerra are fifteen brief vignettes, all of which deal with violent incidents in the dictator Batista's repression of the people whom he governed. Cabrera Infante indicates in his preface to the first edition that some of them stick rather closely to the details of actual incidents with which he is familiar. They form a striking contrast with all but two of the stories, "Resaca" and "Balada de plomo y yerro." The first of these deals with the violence of the early days of the revolution, and "Balada de plomo y yerro" has as its subject a sort of gangster vendetta reminiscent of the Mafia's activities. The rest of the stories are as free of violence as the vignettes are full of it. The purpose of this arrangement, apparently, is to create a play of opposites and give a dialectical structure to the book.[5] In this manner the work neither focuses on the more mundane aspects of life in Cuba to the exclusion of the violence and torture which were also making history, nor pre-

tends that the latter was all that was going on while ignoring what Unamuno called the "infrahistoria" of a people. The result is that life goes on, with its ironies and its insuperable problems, "así en la paz como en la guerra." An interesting sidelight appears in the last paragraph of the book, in which Cabrera Infante is speaking of the significance of the revolutionary signs scribbled on the walls of Cuba. He says, "Si hubiera más luz se podrían leer los demás mensajes. Pero los que hay bastan. Ellos son la verdadera literatura revolucionaria" (p.201).

Evidently he considered his use of vignettes to be successful, since he chose to use them in Tres tristes tigres as well, although there they are far from the savage scenes of violence that appeared in the first book. They are, instead, snatches of what he considers one of the best forms of confession, that in which various Cubans entrust to their psychiatrists their innermost thoughts. Their significance will be discussed in the chapter on structure.

Beyond the use of these vignettes, there are many points in Así en la paz como en la guerra which anticipate both the themes and the techniques of Tres tristes tigres. For example, some of the ideas which characterize the thinking of the Silvestre of Tres tristes tigres are already present in the book of short stories, although no important one appears in a story in which a Silvestre appears.[6] In the novel Silvestre is noted for his love of memory, and expresses himself with regard to it in al-

most exactly the same terms used of the actress's lover in "En el gran Ecbó." Silvestre's opinion of the sea, too, is anticipated by that of the protagonist of "Mar, mar, enemigo," who personifies it as a woman and views it as an image of death and rebirth. There is a total contrast in their attitudes, however, since the woman's is one of antipathy and Silvestre's is one of deep appreciation.

Certain personality traits of Arsenio Cué also appear in these same two stories. One is the preoccupation with the eyes which is evident in "En el gran Ecbó," and another is the apocalyptic vision within which a character experiences his own personal apocalypse. The latter is the basis of Cué's entire personality as it appears in the novel.

There are other points of anticipation as well, such as the tendency to allow the effect of a story to hinge upon the point of view of the narrator, and a love for symmetry in structure, which will be discussed later. The most obvious point of contrast between the two works, however, lies in the fact that, while Tres tristes tigres is one of the most humorous novels ever written, there is virtually no humor in Así en la paz como en la guerra. It is interesting to note that Joseph Campbell has stated, "Humor is the touchstone of the truly mythological . . . mood,"[7] so that in large measure the difference may lie in the fact that myth plays such a major part in the novel. This may go a long way towards explaining why the mythically-oriented

Cien años de soledad of Gabriel García Márquez presents the reader with such a delightful form of humor, and why the rather sober early work of Carlos Fuentes has given way to more humor as he has entered more deeply into the mythic. This is also the case with Cabrera Infante, whose short stories of 1960 are generally quite conventional as he tries his wings, but whose entry into the mainstream of the Spanish American novel has involved a great increase in the quality of his fiction as well as a substantial change in his style.

II. SETTING THE STAGE: THE PROLOGUE

The prologue to Tres tristes tigres is intended to lead the reader into the experience of the novel in the same way in which the chatter of an emcee leads his audience into the experience of what is to take place on stage. An effective emcee "warms up his audience" by involving it in what is taking place on stage and whetting its appetite for what is to come. He may also set the tone of the evening's entertainment. All of this and more is done by the gentleman who, without introduction, opens this book. What is said by him could ostensibly be what was said on a given night at the Tropicana in the year 1958, but the intention of the author goes far beyond that of the emcee himself, and the reader soon learns that this is the case with all the many narrators of the book.

For example, the emcee's intention is to introduce the show which will take place on his stage in a few moments, but following his call of "Curtains up!" the reader finds not a description of what was presented on the Tropicana stage that night, but a sampling of what occurred on the larger stage of Havana at roughly the same time. The performers are not the ones under contract to that night club, but some of the customers who are present and introduced by the emcee, plus many

of their friends. These are the members of a different kind of "night club," a closely-knit in-group, the members of which interact to provide the action which substitutes for a traditional plot in this novel. These are the performers who, as the emcee states, "will take you to the wonderful world . . . of the tropics" (p.15).

The tone of irony is established immediately, although the reader may not be aware of it until some time later, when he is well into the novel. The emcee is a highly unreliable narrator, and his inaccuracies set the precedent for others which are to follow. The fact is that unreliability is an unavoidable by-product of the manner of composition of this book, whose author points out that his only intention has been to "atrapar la voz humana al vuelo" (p.9). As in real life, one must listen to all the voices and take his chances on the truthfulness of what they are saying. Moreover, inaccuracy may be intentional or due simply to a lack of information, and both varieties are to be found in the novel.

One of the "performers" from whom the reader is to hear is William Campbell, who is introduced as "the notorious soup-fortune heir" (p.17). Later, in the section entitled "Los visitantes," it is stated that Mr. Campbell is a professional writer, and finally, near the end of the book, that he teaches at a university in New Orleans. The elegant sounding name of Arabella Longoria de Suárez Dámera is presented to the

audience, and the fine lady is said to be the wife of "coronel Cipriano Suárez Dámera" (p.18). The reader will learn in the course of the novel that this is in reality the rather uncultivated Beba Longoria, who is simply living with the colonel and who prowls the streets at night with another girl with whom she has a questionable relationship. He will also learn what it is that she and her paramour are celebrating. The charming child Vivian Smith Corona Alvarez del Real, celebrating her fifteenth birthday with her parents, turns out to be a sophisticated young lady who has precipitated a good deal of anxiety on the part of several men in her life.

There is irony too in the way in which Havana in general and the Tropicana in particular are described. It is apparent on the surface in such phrases as "este emporio del amor y la vida risueña" (p.16), in that love and happiness are here treated as commodities to be bought in the market place. The Tropicana is described as a "coliseo del placer y de la alegría y la felicidad" (p.15), and there are suspicious indications that this may not be the case, for there is some ambiguity in certain descriptions. It is stated that Minerva Eros, the poetess, "engalanará ... el último show en cada noche de Tropicana" (pp.18-19), and of course the wider reference is clear: erotic love is what is expected to end each night in the tropics. But on closer examination it becomes evident that her first name is not consistent with this image;

Minerva is the Latin form of the name Athena, and that goddess represented not only wisdom but virginity, for she was called Parthenos, "the Virgin," by the Greeks, who dedicated the Parthenon to her. Early in the text it becomes clear that this ambiguity in man-woman relationships has become a significant part of the world of these narrators. The irony is carried to the end of the prologue, at which point the emcee states four times that the show will be carried out without words, "but with music and happiness and joy" (p.19). The fact is that the reader is confronted with nothing but words, and with a situation producing very little "music and happiness and joy."

As he introduces the distinguished members of the audience the narrator repeatedly calls for light. Light is used to reveal the elegance of the people on whom it is focused; it is so used both with regard to those performers on stage and with regard to those in the audience who are to play a part on the larger stage which is the setting of the novel. But light has a treacherous aspect as well: it can go beyond the glamor which is on the surface and show one up for what he really is. It is a revealer of artificiality, and a major thrust of this work is the unmasking of the artificial. The entire section entitled "La casa de los espejos" is dedicated to this task.

The very fact that the novel is presented within a theatrical framework is significant with respect to the development of the theme of artificiality, since the theatre attempts to

create the illusion of life within the framework of the stage. The character Arsenio Cué is in fact a television actor, and his narration is occasionally presented in terms of stage directions. At one point he says, "Golpe de gong, por favor, sonidista de la noche" (p.375), and at another, "Y se acabó. Fin de acto. Telón rápido" (p.433). But even Eribó, who is in show business, though as a drummer and not an actor, sees the departure of a group of friends in these terms: "Salieron por la sala de juego roja y verde y bien alumbrada y la cortina cayó sobre, detrás de ellos ... " (p.99). The characters see themselves as actors. More significant, perhaps, is the influence of the cinema on their way of thinking. Cué is the most susceptible to this on account of his connection with television, because while on the stage real people perform in person to create the illusion of life situations, television is able to go beyond this to create the illusion of the presence of those real people, who then create an artificial, illusionary situation. The final step, especially as represented by Silvestre, is the building of one's world around the illusions of the cinema, in which the actors cannot even appear "live and in color," but are presented to the audience by way of the projection of light through a strip of plastic. Thus the audience is removed yet one more step from reality. To a degree virtually all the characters live within this world of total illusiveness and rarely penetrate beyond it to reality.

It is a world of phenomena.

The characters and their environment are involved in a continual kaleidoscopic shifting of illusory images, and the language which has been "captured on the wing" to create them is a perfect match for them--far from the steady, controlled language of the traditional omniscient narrator, calculated to reveal to the reader the world whose reality is set in the mind of the author who created it, it is as haphazard as that which anyone might hear in the course of a day's activities, strictly by chance. The reader accepts a given statement at his own risk and is continually exposed to the possibility that he may later run across another statement which contradicts it, and which in turn must be accepted or rejected. The total effect is a complete uncertainty as to what is to be accepted as reality and what as illusion. Where one places the line between the two is his own choice.

Those who participate in the acts which are later viewed as the turning points of history are rarely aware of their transcendent importance at the time. Nor is the emcee of the prologue aware of the mythic implications of what he is saying; not only is he setting the stage for a far more extensive performance than that which is to take place on the stage of the Tropicana, but he is also engaged in the creative act which brings the world of the narrators and their subjects into existence. It is only later that he is referred to as "el animador

del Tropicana" (p.120), but in his confused prattle there are suggestions that he is engaged in the process of creation by the word, in a parallel to the creation account of Genesis 1 and 2. A careful reading of the prologue will reveal that there are many allusions to the primordial state with which the biblical Creator worked, when "the earth was formless and empty, and darkness lay upon the face of the deep."[1] The emcee reveals that it is raining outside, that it is cold inside, and it is clear that the audience finds itself in semi-darkness. All of these are characteristic of the primordial state of the earth, shortly after the initial creative act. It is the task of this "animador," then, to impose some semblance of order upon the primeval chaos, and to do so on the basis of the word. It must be admitted that a sizable portion of the chaos is created by his own particular use of the word, but eventually he does get around to modifying and making sense of the existing situation. He promises a number of times that once the show begins there will be an abundance of heat, and his repeated call for light recalls the "Let there be light" of Genesis 1. In real life this man reportedly bears the name Miguel Angel Blanco,[2] the logical choice of a man to be transformed by the author into something of a supernatural being. The result of his activity is that he is able to refer to the Tropicana and all Cuba as something of a paradise bringing to mind the Garden of Eden. There is still another parallel to the Bible, one which will be important to

the further consideration of the work. It is the fact that while the emcee symbolically brings the world into being by means of the spoken creative word, just as God creates the world by his word, the character Bustrófedon, like Christ, is to be revealed later in the book as the very incarnation of that word.

The reader should be prepared in all cases to encounter multiple levels of possible interpretation. What appears at first glance to be simply an example of the type of inane prattle heard in a certain night club in a particular era may turn out to be much more than simply a piece included for the sake of demonstrating one aspect of Havana night life. It creates the setting for the entire novel, establishes its tone and introduces its characters, and sets a precedent for the nebulosity of the narration which follows. Beyond this, it is seen to possess a mythic layer, one which is created by the skillful use of language on the part of the author. In this sense too the prologue introduces the technique which is general throughout the entire work, a technique which produces a metaphysical substructure that tends to universalize the otherwise rather mundane experiences of the narrators. In all cases it is the language which they employ, often unconsciously on their part but consciously on the part of the author, which extracts the events from the realm of daily life and makes them part of the cosmic processes which are going on around them.

III. THE WORD AND THE WORLD

Reference has already been made to Cabrera Infante's characterization of his writing as nothing more than an attempt to capture the human voice on the wing. Although this is a typical understatement by an author concerning the scope of his work, it does underscore the fact that it is fundamentally--though not exclusively--an expression of the spoken word as it lived in Havana in 1958. There are written sections, such as the letter from Delia Doce to her friend Estelvina (pp.28-33) and the "Los visitantes" story (pp.171-203), but even the letter is clearly written in the colloquial speech of Havana and the second version of the story is humorous because of its translation into a Havana version of Spanish contaminated by English.

In his work on Mallarmé, Wallace Fowlie states that "poetry is . . . the strange labour of converting impression into expression."[1] This is closely related to C. G. Jung's concept of the work of the literary artist as the transformation of the phenomena of sense impressions by the "visionary creation" of the author.[2] In Tres tristes tigres the author evidently considers the spoken word to be the primary phenomenon of the world he has known, and the re-creation of that world for him had to take place through the spoken word.

It would be well to note that for Bustrófedon and his followers "la literatura no tiene más importancia que la conversación" (p.257). The section of the book entitled "La muerte de Trotsky referida por varios escritores cubanos, años después--o antes" consists of the transcription of a tape recording made by Bustrófedon to parody certain famous Cuban authors. This is not literature in the normally accepted sense of the word, but even so the tape has to be spirited away by Códac, since both Bustrófedon and Arsenio Cué want to destroy it. Evidently the thought of the former is that only the spoken word is fresh and spontaneous, so that any attempt whatever at preservation involves its desecration. (Cué, on the other hand, appears to resent the erosion of the images of Cuba's literary heroes.) Bustrófedon's attitude would appear to be related to the concern of some of today's sculptors that their art be so tied to the present that it should not be designed to last. Examples of this would be exhibits such as a room full of dirt or an acre of ground covered with objects which the artist gradually removes. These are only a memory once the show is over. This stands in stark contrast to a monument such as Mt. Rushmore, whose creator wanted only time and the forces of nature to wear it away. In effect, here are revealed two radically different attitudes towards human creation, one the desire of the artist to perpetuate his name in his lasting work, the other the feeling that only the present

is worthy of consideration.

The latter outlook is clearly related to the general current of existentialism, with its emphasis upon decision and action in the present. Specifically it may be related in this book to the existentialist metaphysics of man, which, according to Hans Meyerhoff, is based on the irreversibility of the movement of time towards death.[3] In Tres tristes tigres the attitudes of certain characters especially are based on this opinion. This is the reason for Silvestre's frequent statements to the effect that his desire is always to go back, and for Cué's furious resistance to the movement of time in all its implications. Near the end of the novel their feeling is verbalized in a series of statements: "La psiquiatría conduce a lo peor"; "La psiquiatría, la aritmética, la literatura conducen a lo peor"; "Todo conduce a lo peor"; "La vida conduce inevitablemente a lo peor" (pp.400-01). If there is an inevitable downward trend there is no point in aiming at permanence. There is also an awareness of the fact that anything changes with time, so that the very concept of permanence is regarded as false. The realization that this is the case is the unsettling factor in Arsenio Cué's life.

Yet there is more than this to the stress on spoken language. The preoccupation of the writers of the "new Latin American novel" with language is well known, but never before has the spoken aspect of it been stressed to this degree. In

my opinion there are two closely related reasons for this phenomenon. The first is that there is a general feeling among artists that the world is at the end of an age, going back to its origins in many ways. In painting this feeling is given expression at times in the production of works which resemble the chaotic subatomic structure of matter, even though the artist may not be aware of such a resemblance.[4] It is my feeling that the literary equivalent of this is expressed in a return to the most fundamental aspect of literature, which is the word. And, since the written word is only a symbol of the spoken word, Cabrera Infante has chosen to create his work by stressing the best possible approximation to the latter, rather than base it on what tends to be called "literary language," which is more formal. The feeling gained by the reader is that the "grass-roots" speech of Havana is as chaotic in its realm as the movement of subatomic particles, and can be as significant within the structure of its world. This is true both of the crude, ungrammatical speech of the lower classes and of the jargon of the "in-group" whose narration forms the bulk of the novel.

The second reason for Cabrera Infante's decision to make language the central consideration of his novel, I believe, is his apparent conviction that it is the primary phenomenon of the world whose reality he desires to transform and express. Far from accepting Robbe-Grillet's theory that the significance

of literary characters lies solely in their mere presence on the scene, Cabrera Infante appears to feel that their presence, thoughts, feelings and actions are of no interest without the verbalized interpretation of them by several narrators, each of whom presents to the reader his private view of the situation in which they are living.[5] Often, in fact, the reader gains knowledge about a character or situation only by piecing together fragments from several narrators, none of whom can be trusted to be completely reliable. One result is that we learn in much the same manner as in real life, by "putting two and two together."

The experience for the reader is similar to that which Marshall McLuhan describes as that of the television viewer, though on a different level. McLuhan is fond of pointing out that the television picture, rather than being a single unit, is composed of hundreds of thousands of fragments of a picture which the viewer's unconscious must piece together into something meaningful.[6] In much the same way the reader of Tres tristes tigres must receive words from the mouths of several narrators and form them into his own private total experience of the work--private because he will accept and reject, stress and ignore according to his own personality. This is not necessarily the experience which the author has intended to give him; in reality there is no such intention, as there could be in the realistic novels of the past, for example.

The reader is co-creator with the author, and it is difficult to say whose role is the more important one.

As in much realistic painting which aimed at the most faithful reproduction of external reality, the realistic novel attempted to reproduce, by means of words, the segment of the world with which the author was dealing, and to do so in correspondence with some sort of objective reality. For Cabrera Infante the task is no longer reproduction; now it is re-creation, for the work of art as it exists is a new thing, the result of genetic rather than mimetic processes. The world which it presents makes no claim to being the faithful and objective mirror of the world whose phenomena the author has observed, but a world filtered through the author's "visionary experience" and presented by way of a number of fictional narrators, each verbalizing his own experience.

The movement of the material, then, is via the spoken word into the visionary experience of the author and then, again by way of the spoken word, into his new creation, the novel. In the process it has been transformed from an objectively existing, though individually perceived, reality, into a totally fictional world, a new creation which stands whether the other world continues in existence or not. Cabrera Infante insists on this; he maintains, for example, that the authors parodied in the section on the death of Trotsky should not be offended, because they have become fictional in the

narrative and are not to be taken as their real selves in it.[7] One might add that the parody is even carried out by a totally fictional character (Bustrófedon), so that it no more reflects the author's own views than the writing of Lolita proves Vladimir Nabokov to be a dangerous pedophile.

The attempt of certain groups of writers, notably the romantics and the surrealists, to "incarnate the word" by living lives consistent with the tone of their works is well known. In Tres tristes tigres there is a different sort of incarnation of the word: a character who represents language and therefore stands as hero of the work.[8] Bustrófedon is presented (largely by Códac) in terms which indicate that he is to be taken as a sort of messiah of language. That is, his story contains many parallels to the story of Christ in the gospels. The section of the book which centers on his work and his death occupies the center of the novel, as the story of Christ is central to, though not centrally located in, the biblical narrative. The section opens with a brief introduction, which is placed, significantly, directly after the hopeless mutilation of the Spanish language in Rine Leal's translation of William Campbell's story. It then moves into an account of the last week of Bustrófedon's life, a parallel to Holy Week. The first event narrated is his version of the Last Supper, a restaurant meal with Códac and Rine Leal at which he expounds his ideas on metaphysical affairs and par-

ticularly the question of attaining immortality.

The name Bustrófedon has its source in a Greek rhetorical device, the procedure of writing one line in one direction and the next in the opposite direction. It is similar to the manner of plowing of an ox, to which the word is related etymologically. At the opening of the "Rompecabezas" section Códac sets the tone of Bustrófedon's role in the novel. After asking, "¿Quién fue quien será quien es Bustrófedon? ¿B?," probably an allusion to the description of Christ in Hebrews 13:8,[9] he states, "Pensar en él es como pensar en la gallina de los huevos de oro, en una adivinanza sin respuesta, en la espiral" (p.207). Bustrófedon, then, is the producer of a priceless, endless treasure, a mind-boggling problem and a hypnotic effect.

The next sentence, in italics, is "El era Bustrófedon para todos y todo para Bustrófedon era él," an example of boustrophedon as Códac conceives of it. There is an example of true boustrophedon on p.270, in a wildly fragmented ending to the portion of the book centering on this character. The point is that he is reversible; he can go either way. This means that he can operate "on either side of the mirror," this side or the other side of death. It also means that he, like Christ, represents the union of the physical and metaphysical realms, both of which he appears to be attempting to carry to the absolute. He is able to grovel in the coarsest lust, but

also attempts to deal with the most esoteric philosophical questions. Even when he returns after death in Silvestre's imagination, having achieved immortality there at least, he is joking and making obscene gestures (p.345). He is of a frightful appearance: "él era un tipo largo y flaco y con muy mala cara y esta malacara picada por el acné juvenil o por la viruela adulta o por el tiempo y el salitre o por los buitres que se adelantaban ... "(p.209), which may well be an allusion to the prophet Isaiah's description of the messianic Suffering Servant ("His appearance was . . . disfigured . . . ," Isaiah 52:15), and his voice is described in terms of a "ronquera fría" (p.139).

Even his eyes point in different directions; the way in which this is explained is significant in that it illustrates the combination of physical and metaphysical forces in him: "un ojo para el ser y ... otro para la nalga ... o para la nada" (p.219). His favorite haunt, we learn, is around Calle 0 (p.139), from which, of course, one is able to go in either direction.

Joseph Campbell, in The Hero with a Thousand Faces, states that the truly great hero is one who can pass freely between the physical and metaphysical realms,[10] and this is Bustrófedon's goal. His quest is fundamentally linguistic and usually takes the form of word play. Related to the process of boustrophedon is the palindrome, which is one of his

favorite types of play. He considers palindromes--which, roughly speaking, look the same from either side of the mirror--to be perfect words, just as certain numbers, such as 101, are perfect. The implication is that they hold the secret of being unchanged after death, that is, immortal.

However, he is also fascinated by words which change their meanings when seen in the mirror: "mano/onam, azar/raza ... " (p.216). Here apparently the thought is that there might be a possibility of survival on the other side, in a transformed but still meaningful state.

Bustrófedon's most complex word play comes about at a meeting of friends during his last week, when he invents a sort of linguistic mandala, a magic circle made up of twelve interlocking words (p.214). It is worth noting that, according to Cirlot's Dictionary of Symbols, the number twelve is symbolic of such concepts as cosmic order and salvation, and the circle has references to eternity and heaven.[11]

Bustrófedon's circle ties him unequivocally to the biblical messianic theme. It is announced as containing twelve letters which form the twelve words, and twelve is traditionally the number of the elect of God. There are twelve patriarchs and twelve tribes in the Old Testament and twelve disciples in the New Testament. One of the words is "David," and an important quality of the Messiah was that he was to be born of King David's line. Two more are "dádiva" and "vida,"

certainly attributes of a messianic figure.

Part of the complexity centers in the fact that the word wheel is related to La Estrella: Códac says that the anagram "bien podía usarse con La Estrella porque ... era una estrella" (p.214). He describes her as "nuestro tema eterno entonces" and calls the wheel "una rueda de la in-fortuna" (p.213). In order to understand these references we must recognize first that Bustrófedon is in fact a kind of messiah in reverse, an anti-Christ in the etymological sense of anti as "in place of." He is the one who ushers in, not the messianic age of blessing, but the apocalypse, the death of an age. Hence everything concerning him is likely to be reversed.

It is in this context that the character of La Estrella begins to take shape. She is the black star, the negative image of the Star of Bethlehem, and as the latter announced the birth of Christ, her ascent announces the death of Bustrófedon. This takes place in Códac's apartment at a party which he gives to bring La Estrella to the attention of those who can make her famous. She ascends that night, both literally (up the stairs) and metaphorically, into her big opportunity, and while there she loses her balance and grabs Bustrófedon by the shirt, causing him to perform a double somersault (p.124). Not long afterward Códac receives the news that Bustrófedon is dead (p.220).

In view of this it is curious that there are hints to the

effect that, on the mythic level, Bustrófedon is La Estrella's son. On the level of "everyday life" he has normal parents, but neither his existence nor that of the other major characters is limited to that level. When Códac takes La Estrella home in his car she has a boy's shoes along in a package; she explains, "Tú sabes, yo tengo un hijo ... Tú sabes, El bobo ... "(p.70). Later Alex Bayer tells Códac that she has no son, "ni morón ni prodigio" (p.83). Then one night, after Bustrófedon's death and while she is drunk, she loudly laments the death of her son (p.275). Again, on the literal level this is fantasy, but on the mythic level it points to their relationship.

The key to this problem lies in the fact that Estrella appears to represent pure, primitive sound. It is stressed that she is nothing to look at, but her pure, deep baritone voice, always "sin música" when she has her way, exercises a sort of mystical power over her public, and over Códac in particular. This is the reason, too, that she is almost more real when heard by way of a juke box than in person (p.115); her physical appearance is only a necessary prop for her true essence, which is primordial sound: "La Estrella es su voz" (p.115).

Bustrófedon, on the other hand, "quería ser el lenguaje" (p.318), and indications are that he has attained his goal, at least in the thinking of the narrators, which is what raises

these characters and events to the mythic level. For example, Silvestre is described as his disciple (pp.108,223), and it is likely that today's writer will be a disciple of language. By the same token it is logical that language should be born of pure sound.

All of this points up what was said at the beginning of the discussion of Bustrófedon: that as a character in the novel he is to be taken as an incarnation of the word, "the Word made flesh."[12] And as the Word which is Christ is creative ("Through him God made all things," John 1:3), Bustrófedon acts as the creative word in the flesh. As has been mentioned, while the emcee of the prologue symbolically brings the world into being by means of the spoken creative word, Bustrófedon is the incarnation of that word, who, like Christ, is to be revealed later. Everything he does relates to his mission, a kind of re-creation of the world through language. This, as I have indicated, is what the author is doing by writing the book.

Johan Huizinga states in Homo Ludens that "language allows [man] to distinguish, to establish, to state things; in short, to name them and by naming them to raise them into the domain of the spirit."[13] It is said of Bustrófedon that he began to change the names of things (p.220); that is, if Adam was given the commission of naming things, the one who could re-name them would be a second Adam; this too is an

attribute of Christ, as developed in Romans 5. One expression of this process is Bustrófedon's habit of attaching his name to things: "Bustrofrijoles dijo Bustrófedon dijo él mismo Con arroz blanco traté de decir yo pero él dijo Bustrofilete dijo Bustrophedón-té dijo Bustrófedon dijo Bustrofricasé dijo Bustrofabio ... " (p.212). Related to this phenomenon, which appears to be an attempt to renew the world by placing his personal stamp on it, is his play on names. Códac says that the favorite game among his group was to find all the possible variations of the names of all their friends (p.211), which is a kind of movement towards the absolute, related to their general quest for the same.

Bustrófedon himself does at least two additional things to the names of his friends. Códac says that he "encubrió mi nombre prosaico, habanero con la poesía universal y gráfica" (p.221). That is to say that he universalized the name and with it the character, which is clearly one of the aims of Cabrera Infante. The drummer Ribot is "más conocido como Eribó gracias al B." (p.220). In his case the change is from a name which suggests the French expression <u>être en ribote</u>, "to be drunk, to be on the spree,"[14] to an identification with the "entidad abstracta" who is "la máxima divinidad venerada por los ñáñigos."[15] This movement from drunkard to deity suggests the "new birth" brought about by Christ's ministry for the elect (John 3:3-5).

Bustrófedon's other modification of the names of his friends is the attachment of his own name to them. By this means he is able to signify his friendship by way of the connection of a part of himself to a part of them, and to restore the original function of a name, which is to describe the character of its bearer. Bustrófedon, however, modifies the concept by the use of names even to describe moods:

> Recuerdo que un día fuimos a comer juntos él, Bustrofedonte (que era el nombre esa semana para Rine, a quien llamaba no solamente el más leal amigo del hombre, sino Rinoceronte, Rinodocente, Rinedecente, Rinecente, como luego hubo un Rinocimiento seguido del Rinesimiento, Rinesemento, Rinefermento, Rinefermoso, Rineferonte, Rinoferante, Bonoferviente, Buonofarniente, Busnofedante, Bustopedante, Bustofedonte: variantes que marcaban las variaciones de la amistad: palabras como un termómetro) y yo ... (p.207).

In the previous paragraph Códac says, "Lo único que sé es que yo me llamaba muchas veces Bustrófoton o Bustrófotomatón o Busnéforoniepce, depende, dependiendo y Silvestre era Bustrófenix o Bustrofeliz o Bustrófitzgerald, y Florentino Cazalis fue Bustrófloren ... " (P.207). In this case too something fairly complex is taking place, and again it is related to Bustrófedon's messianic nature. In Rev. 3:12 Christ says of the one who is victorious in following him, "I will also write on him my new name." The name Bustrófedon is a new one, which he discovered in a dictionary (p.212), and it is what he attaches to his friends.

In its correspondence to the biblical messianic pattern, Bustrófedon's appearance is also related to the archetypal myth of the hero. The hero always appears when his people are in the stage of a crisis, and in Tres tristes tigres the framework is clearly apocalyptic. As Joseph Campbell points out in The Hero with a Thousand Faces, "In apocalyptic vision the physical and spiritual life of the whole earth can be represented as fallen, or on the point of falling, into ruin."[16]

The author, fitting literary technique to theme, relates the apocalyptic return to origins by stressing the prima materia of literature, which is language and which is best represented by Bustrófedon. The significance of this is that if the crisis is to be met within the framework of the novel it will be met by language; this is why Bustrófedon takes on the proportions of the archetypal hero.

Breaking the hero pattern down to its simplest terms, we may say that the hero must descend into Hades, or death, and return to save his people in their crisis. Campbell says, "The return and reintegration with society . . . is indispensable to the continuous circulation of spiritual energy into the world" (p.36). It is not only cosmic energy which the hero releases; he also brings back the knowledge which is necessary in order for his people to survive their crisis. The message of Christ, for example, led to everlasting life, or life after death, which is a major concern of Bustrófedon and his people.

Therefore we would expect his story to include his death and some sort of resurrection, and in effect we see him dying for his cause and later returning in a unique manner.

Bustrófedon has been the victim of violent headaches, so that after his death an autopsy is performed which reveals that he has had a brain injury. This, it is decided, is what caused his obsession with word play and his death. The implication on the part of the author is that there was something special about him which made him the champion of the cause of the renewal of language, just as Christ's miraculous birth and life set him apart as the Redeemer of the world. Furthermore, just as Christ had to die for that cause, Bustrófedon has now had to die for his; that which moved him to become a messiah has also resulted in his death.

There is no bodily resurrection of Bustrófedon in the narrative, but the essence of the hero's return is accomplished nevertheless. Campbell states that "the effect of the successful adventure of the hero is the unlocking and release again of the flow of life into the body of the world."[17] Bustrófedon is language, and language remains, in a continual process of renewal, in Bustrófedon's world, and particularly in his disciple, the writer Silvestre. It is in his imagination that an event reflecting the Second Coming of Christ takes place:

Y más acá, mucho más acá, casi de este lado del

> límite, ¿a quién veo? No es un avión no es un pájaro de sombras es Superbustrófedon, que viaja con luz propia y me dice, al oído, a mi oído telescópico, Ven ven, cuándo vas a venir y hace sus malas señas y susurra con voz ultrasónica, Hay tanto que ver, es mejor que el aleph, casi mejor que el cine ... (p.345).

This redeemer figure is so alive for Silvestre that Cué begs him to bury Bustrófedon (p.402). On the last page of his narration Silvestre has a vision of him "corriéndose hacia el rojo" (p.445), that is, moving through space towards infinity.

However, despite Silvestre's ideas, the reader finds himself wondering if Bustrófedon has in fact achieved immortality. Cué, who has had his doubts concerning Bustrófedon's ideas from the beginning, presents the problem with his announcement that, among all his palindromes, he has missed "el mejor, el más difícil, el más fácil ... , el temible ... Yo soy" (p.358). The whole presentation seems to say that, having accomplished his mission for the world, Bustrófedon may have missed his personal goal of immortality. The text is ambiguous: Does the survival of a dynamic language mean that Bustrófedon does in fact still live, or does Cabrera Infante intend for us to understand that it--and he--died along with the rest of the world of his characters at the end of 1958?

There is in the work a general movement from sight to sound, expressed primarily in the experiences of the several characters. In certain cases this even takes on the aspect

of a change of emphasis from the printed word to the spoken word, a process which again echoes the intent of the author in producing a novel which will stand not as a monument to the skillful use of "literary," written language but as a record of the words which might have been spoken under certain conditions in a given time and place.

At times the movement is expressed by the use of some rather subtle imagery. It is symbolized, for example, in the relationship between Gloria Pérez/Cuba Venegas and La Estrella. Both are singers who at the time of writing have risen to fame. Códac expresses the difference between them: "A mí me gusta Cuba por otras razones que no son su voz que no son su voz que no son su voz precisamente, que se pueden tocar y se pueden oler y se pueden mirar, cosa que no se puede hacer con una voz, con la voz de La Estrella, que es la voz que la naturaleza, en broma, conserva en la excrecencia de su estuche de carne y grasa y agua" (p.274). Once again La Estrella is presented in terms of pure sound, in this case the voice of nature, while Cuba appeals primarily to the other senses.

The occasion for this commentary by Códac is a chance meeting of the two women in the night club Las Vegas, which Códac has described as his own private mandala: "Mi vida era un caos nocturno con un solo centro que era Las Vegas y en el centro del centro un vaso con ron y agua ... " (p.272). When Cuba appears he says, "Cuba tú eres el centro de mi caos" (p.273). His love

scene with her is described in terms of submersion in an aquarium, and suddenly La Estrella appears at their table, nearly sinking it to the surface, as he expresses it (p.273). Then he says, "Ni ella ni Cuba cambiaron una sola palabra porque no se hablaban, supongo que sea que una cantante que canta sin música jamás le habla a otra que su canto es toda música o más música que canto ... " (p.274). Then, without Códac's or the reader's realizing it, both Cuba and La Estrella are gone and Códac finds himself dancing with the diminutive blonde Irenita. It is as if the silent clash between sight and sound had shrunk Cuba into Irenita.

It is characteristic of Cabrera Infante in this novel to employ metaphors which use the concept of altitude. These metaphors, as applied to Cuba and La Estrella, reinforce his expression of the sight-to-sound movement. Both of these singers begin as non-entities and ascend rapidly, but Cuba has her debut at the Sierra (p.90), indicating immediate movement to the heights of a mountain range. Later La Estrella gains her big opportunity, in Las Vegas, which metaphorically represents a much lower status. However, as the work progresses we meet Cuba in a basement cabaret (pp.277-78). Códac discovers her there shortly after the clash between her and La Estrella, when he hears "que sale una canción de los latones de basura" and finds that it is coming from what might be "la chimenea del círculo musical del infierno," out of which "salía el aire

caliente que el aire refrigerado botaba del Mil Novecientos" (p.277). In order to understand the imagery we must again turn to the Bible, to Revelation 9:1,2: "Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet. I saw a star which had fallen from the sky to earth; it was given the key to the abyss. The star opened the abyss, and smoke poured out of it . . . ." Just as the star's appearance results in smoke from hell, the advent of this black star produces a situation in which music ascends from the depths into the midst of trash cans.

La Estrella herself ascends to her "apogee" (p.281) of success in Havana and Puerto Rico, and then, in another appearance of the altitude metaphor, moves to the heights of Mexico City. There is an ironic double meaning when the doctor tells her before she decides to go there that "la altura sería de efectos desastrosos para su corazón" (p.286). There is also a pun in the use of the word "desastrosos," since its etymology refers to the undoing of a star. Between the altitude and her gorging herself with food she manages to die in Mexico City. However, since, as Códac indicates, nature only placed her sound in that sort of body as a joke, her essence has been preserved on records. Códac describes La Estrella's effect on her public as he characterizes them "mirando nada más que su voz luminosa porque de su boca profesional salía el canto de las sirenas y nosotros, cada uno de su público, éramos Ulises amarrado al mástil de la barra, arrebatados con esta voz que no se comerán los

gusanos porque está ahí en el disco sonando ahora, en un facsímil perfecto y ectoplásmico y sin dimensión como un espectro .... Esa es la voz original y a unas cuadras es solamente su réplica, porque La Estrella es su voz ... " (p.115).

Códac, when he has been through the clash between Cuba and La Estrella, and has Irenita in his arms, says, "Me olvidé de Cuba, total completa absolutamente" (p.275).

It is significant that it should be Códac who narrates the bulk of the material concerning both La Estrella and Bustrófedon. Cabrera Infante's idea, apparently, is to have an outsider's viewpoint, in this case that of a photographer, whose preoccupation is with visual imagery and not with words. Silvestre has been preoccupied with the visual in the form of the cinema, but at the point of writing has already become a professional writer for whom words are supreme.

Códac thinks in terms of the visual, even while in the process of being won over by his contact with La Estrella and Bustrófedon to centering his life in sound. When he describes an irate Bustrófedon rising from his seat during the "Last Supper" scene, to confront a very small restauranteur, "se dobló, se triplicó, se telescopió hacia arriba agigantándose en cada movimiento hasta llegar al cielo raso, puntal o techo" (p.209), after which the owner fades into the distance, the scene being described by the use of a change to smaller type and increasingly shorter lines until he disappears in

un hoyo que

empezaba

con

o

(p.209).

The hole is not only given its shape by the use of the final "o," but also indicates a zero. In this case the imagery is suggestive of Alice in Wonderland, in which Alice often grows larger or smaller, and serves to reinforce the presentation of Bustrófedon as a cosmic messianic figure. In fact, at least three of the characters represent traits of the personality of Lewis Carroll: Silvestre his love for word play, Arsenio Cué his play with numbers, and Códac his love for photography. In addition, Silvestre flatly states that he loves little girls and despises boys (p.353), which is another well-known characteristic of Carroll.

From his standpoint as a photographer Códac is able to describe in a unique manner what is really taking place in the lives of the novel's characters, including a general breakdown of the traditional patterns of Havana life. In a section running from p.75 to p.79 he first has a lesbian in his car and then drives around with a male homosexual. The curious part is the transition between the two experiences, in which he meets a friend named Rolando: "Rolando se veía muy bien, muy cantante,

muy cubano, muy muy habanero allí con su traje de dril 100 blanco y su sombrero de paja, chiquito, puesto como solamente se lo saben poner los negros ... (p77; italics mine). If we grant that the normal experience of a more or less sophisticated man of the world such as Códac is the sight of a white man in a dark suit we perceive that we are in the midst of a reversal: Rolando is like a photographic negative and stands as the point of transition between a female and a male, both of which represent the negative of the normally acceptable sexual pattern.

Códac, as well as Silvestre, is strongly influenced by the cinema, and his narrative technique often makes good use of cinematic devices. The section beginning on p.272 and running to p.278 is a series of cabaret scenes in which movie-style fade-outs are frequently employed. At one point the transition is made by means of light:

> Estaba en el Club 21 comiendo un bisté y yo tengo cuando como esta costumbre de levantar la mano derecha de un tirón para que la manga de la camisa se suelte de la manga del saco y caiga para atrás y cuando levanté el brazo un reflector me dejó ciego y oí que decían un nombre y yo me paraba y la gente me aplaudía, mucha gente y la luz se apagó de mi cara y fue a caer unas mesas más allá y dijeron otro nombre y el bisté era el mismo pero no el cabaré porque estaba en Tropicana ... (p.277).

The occasion, of course, is when the emcee of the prologue introduces him (p.18).

Códac is the character whose conversion from sight to sound

is the easiest to perceive, since the reader watches the process itself and not merely its results, as in Silvestre's case. The crisis point of the conversion is described in terms of light and shadow, the photographer's stock in trade. In a night club he meets Irenita, whom he describes as a miniature version of Marilyn Monroe. Her appearance comes about when Víctor Perla "sacó a Irena por un brazo como si la pescara del mar de la oscuridad" (p.62). There follows a passionate love scene in which, in contrast to the later scene with Cuba, already described, he is "in orbit" rather than under water. At this point he obtains his first glimpse of La Estrella (appropriately while in orbit), a huge black woman who appears in the light on stage (p.63) as a total contrast to the small, light complexioned Irenita, who materializes out of the darkness.

Códac has perceived the whole experience as a photographer, within the categories of light and shadow, positive and negative, but the experience itself is to lead him to an obsession with La Estrella and Bustrófedon, that is, with sound and language. He says, "Y si hablo como Bustrófedon y para siempre no lo siento sino que lo hago a conciencia y a ciencia y lo único que lamento es no poder hablar de verdad y natural y siempre (siempre también para atrás, no sólo para adelante) así y olvidarme de la luz y de las sombras y de los claroscuros, de las fotos, porque una de sus palabras vale por mil imágenes ... " (p.219).

Eribó too is won over to sound, though in his case it is a

matter of being won back from the visual to his original status. He is talented as a bongosero but has illusions of becoming a great artist and ends up as a hack illustrator. It is then that he is unable to resist the urge to return to the world of sound, rhythm and show business (p.90).

Silvestre, at the time of the writing of the book, is an unproductive writer completely devoted to the spoken word. That it was not always so for him is illustrated by the fact that in his first narration he speaks of the method which he and his brother developed in order to be able to go to the movies, consisting of selling the family library at ridiculously low prices (p.37). The point is one which Marshall McLuhan might be proud to have made so graphically: the printed word becomes of little or no value and is traded for the visual, which in Silvestre's narration becomes a new Holy Faith; of the walk to the theatre he says, "Cogíamos el camino de Santa Fé" (p.36) and he continues this motif throughout the section: "Santa Fé, ustedes deben haberlo adivinado, era Arcadia, la gloria, la panacea de todos los dolores de la adolescencia: el cine" (p.38). His description of the "etapas del camino" (p.40) is reminiscient of the stations of the cross (pp.39-40). Though it is not stated directly, it would appear obvious that it is his contact with Bustrófedon which has changed his way of thinking. When we meet him as an adult he still loves the cinema and tends to speak in terms drawn from that medium; Códac says, "Silvestre ... siempre habla en términos de cine" (p.165) and gives some notable

examples, such as "Yo ... veo en big-closeup su mano" (p.166), but in a meaningful bit of imagery, his incipient blindness is alluded to a number of times and Cué seals the imagery with his statement, "Pronto no verás más películas que el recuerdo" (p.353). One reason for Silvestre's not having written for a while may be that, since "la literatura no tiene más importancia que la conversación" (p.257), he must concentrate on the latter (as Cabrera Infante certainly must have done to produce this example of the former).

In the process of the movement of the four principal characters from sight to sound, Arsenio Cué appears as something of a maverick. He refuses to place his trust in anything so transitory as words and prefers to base his life on numbers, which presumably do not change. If Bustrófedon's last week is to be taken as a parallel to Holy Week, as has been proposed, then Cué plays the part of Judas (who left the Last Supper to betray Christ), because when Bustrófedon engages in his "complicaciones numéricas" (p.214), Cué pointedly leaves the gathering, apparently because he cannot tolerate anyone's playing with numbers. Bustrófedon has tampered with the very foundation of his life. Yet in the last third of the book--the "Bachata" section--Cué tells Silvestre that he objects to Bustrófedon's having treated words as if they were always written, and says, "Yo me ocupo de los sonidos. Al menos, ese es el único oficio que aprendí de veras" (p.359). In this section, while he makes it clear that

he does not believe in words (p.312, for example), he is so taken up by word play that when he has an opportunity to seduce Beba Longoria in his car he inexplicably finds himself playing games with language which leave her cold (pp.376-378).

In his perception of his environment, Cabrera Infante has been most aware of the phenomenon of language, and this has become his preoccupation in the process of re-creation. Not only is the word the only raw material which he as an author has to deal with, it serves as the central concern of most of the characters and appears by sheer force of will to have become alive and taken on flesh in Bustrófedon. This epoch-making event is heralded by the appearance of a cosmic phenomenon that appears to be sound, and the consequent disruption of the way of life of a group of people oriented to the visual provides much of the material with which the novel concerns itself.

IV. Denizens of the Night: Characterization in the Novel

In one of his interviews Cabrera Infante stresses the fact that for him his characters are "voces," that their very existence is dependent upon the spoken word rather than upon the skillful description of an omniscient narrator or some such technique.[1] This is only another way of pointing out that the word in this novel is to be taken as an end in itself. The plot, in the traditional sense, is non-existent, and characterization as such is no longer a central consideration either. The characters exist on the printed page, but only as the bearers of the oral language which constitutes the true essence of the novel.

It is curious to note that in practice this means that the author feels free to switch the identities of his characters between editions. He points out that the section which appears in Tres tristes tigres as Eribó's first narration formed part of Cué's biography (or rather, autobiography) in the earlier edition, called Vista del amanecer en el trópico. His comment is, "Las voces no tienen biografía."[2] The same switch occurs when he simply changes the name "Minerva Eros" to "Cuba Venegas" between editions (p.31).[3] The end result is that the completed work of art can be made into a very different thing by the change of only a name and perhaps a phrase here and there. It

soon becomes evident that the methodical placement of material within the text to serve as a basis for the analysis of characters is patently not one of the author's intentions. The story of Arsenio Cué especially is extremely difficult to reconstruct, and the reader is left with enough knowledge to baffle and exasperate him, about as much knowledge as could be gained by the gathering of chance comments in life.

All characters are totally fictional, and this statement, when applied to Tres tristes tigres, is not as simple as it may appear. The fact is that certain characters mentioned exist in real life under the same names (Rine Leal, Juan Blanco and Jesse Fernández, for example), others reflect one or more living individuals to a greater or lesser degree (Silvestre, Cué and Códac as aspects of Lewis Carroll, Marcel Proust, etc.), and still others are totally invented or even represent abstract concepts; Cabrera Infante states that Bustrófedon is literature.[4] Even the real ones, however, are transformed into fiction by what I have described as the author's creative imagination. They are "voices" in that, in this collection of first person narrations, they are made known to the reader exclusively by way of their own statements and by the descriptions of other narrators, all of whom, incidentally, must be suspected of being wrong or biased--or both--at least part of the time. As a result of the book's form the reader is constantly at the mercy of the various points of view of its narrators. An illustration

of what this means in practice is seen in the fact that La Estrella is presented almost exclusively by Cédac, and the point of view of the myth-seeking photographer is strongly evident in the image which the reader receives from the page.

The case of the famous Cuban authors parodied in their supposed treatment of the theme of Trotsky's death also illustrates this point. Cabrera Infante says, "Por otra parte, observe que Alejo Carpentier o Lezama Lima, escritores más o menos reales, son convertidos por el libro en pura ficción. Mientras que Lino Novás Calvo--un pretexto por el jugo [sic] verbal--se tomó a sí mismo, a las referencias literarias que hice de él pero más que eso a su persona, por el villano del libro."[5] One wonders whether Cabrera Infante is taking "persona" in the etymological sense of a mask, and that what he does to the mask, that is, to his own viewpoint on the man's image, must not be construed as an attack on the man himself. Beyond this there is the fact, unmentioned by Cabrera Infante and apparently unnoticed by Novás Calvo, that the parody is done by Bustrófedon, himself a fictional character, and therefore is yet another step removed from life.

What Cabrera Infante does with himself in the work should be noted, since, although it is not new, it is significant. Miguel de Unamuno fictionalized himself by entering into Niebla, and Cabrera Infante has done something similar, although he does not appear in person. If the reader is reasonably familiar with

the author he must note in how many particulars the character Silvestre reflects him: he is a writer, rather heavy, wears glasses, loves the movies and is from Oriente. But at about the point at which one is assuming that Silvestre really represents the author, in roman à clef style, Silvestre is the one who pulls from his pocket a note signed simply "GCI," thereby doubling up the reader's image of him (p.439). Cabrera Infante had done much the same thing in his Un oficio del siglo XX, a collection of articles previously written by him under the pseudonym "G. Caín."[6] In his role as editor, Cabrera Infante treats "Caín" throughout as a fictional character and continually reiterates that he is dead--which, as a secondary creator, he is. That is, even though he will live for the reader each time the book is opened, he will write no more in the place of Cabrera Infante.

The author considered for a time the possibility of entitling the book Las confesiones de agosto, since the first person narration reflects what he describes as a strong penchant among Cubans for confession: "Los cubanos nos confesamos todos los días: no en la iglesia, sino ante cada prójimo .... Como diversión técnica el libro ensaya todas las formas posibles de la confesión ... y, por último pero no último, un sueño, que considero la forma más íntima, veraz y escabrosa de las confesiones ...."[7] The dream takes on this kind of importance, no doubt, because it is the work of the unconscious and therefore cannot be falsified. Cabrera Infante says, "Tememos más al

psiquiatra, al que contamos nuestros sueños, que al cura, al que solamente confesamos nuestros pecados."[8]

Sins, that is, are only external acts, which, being influenced or even precipitated on the spur of the moment by external forces, might reveal little about the person who has committed them. Dreams, on the other hand, reveal the inward reality of the personality, and may uncover aspects of a man's life which he has no intention of revealing. The total effect of the first person narration throughout the book is to assure that each narrator will reveal himself. In this aspect the novel is well summarized by Silvestre when he says, "Todo se reduce, en definitiva, a un problema de puntos de vista" (p.410), which means that each narrator's inner reality must determine the way in which he perceives and expresses exterior reality, and that expression in turn--being a confession--reveals a part of his inner reality.

In point of fact, the supposed exterior world which the narrators attempt to describe is so transformed by them that it is difficult for the reader to reconstruct for himself "what it was really like." This effect stands in contrast to that produced by the realistic novel, in which the aim of the author was to reproduce an objective world so accurately that the reader would feel he had lived in it. In Tres tristes tigres the reader is deliberately tossed about by a playful author until he is hopelessly confused as to what is to be accepted as

In any work of fiction the reader must place himself in a framework called "the willing suspension of disbelief," so that while he is reading the work he accepts anything the author presents within that framework as a part of its particular form of reality. A brillant example of the exploitation of such a concept to manipulate the reader is found in Diderot's Jacques le Fataliste. In it Diderot engages in such activities as portraying an armed mob descending upon his heroes and then stating, a few sentences on, that there really was no such mob after all.[9] The result for the reader is a jolting experience in which he must accept as untrue what he had previously accepted as vividly real.

Cabrera Infante does something similar, though far more complex. In the section known as "Los visitantes" the reader is first made to accept a fictional reality in the form of a better-than-average short story purportedly written by a certain William Campbell. Following his story are corrections by his wife, who indicates that Mr. Campbell, who is a professional writer, has falsified some details in order to make it a better story. If, then, the real events to which she refers are in fact fictional (that is, invented by Cabrera Infante), the reader is already faced with two levels of fictional reality: Campbell has fictionalized fiction.

Near the end of the book Silvestre reads his note from

"GCI," which contains a biographical sketch of William Campbell, indicating that he is (in 1958, presumably) a professor of Spanish Literature at a university in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Certain publications of his are listed, including an article for the magazine Sports Illustrated (pp.438-39). The author of the note states that the story had been submitted to Carteles, another magazine which actually existed, after its translation by Rine Leal, who is a living person and a friend of Cabrera Infante. Thus the reader is tempted to accept the idea that William Campbell is a living person, not a fictional creation of the author's. It might be, then, that the latter included the story, written by a person as real as himself, along with the horrible translation by Rine, simply to indicate what happened when it was submitted to Carteles. Yet there is even more erosion of what has been accepted by the reader on the basis of Mrs. Campbell's modifications of the original story. The biography presents him as a bachelor, a teetotaler, and not yet 40, and all of this contradicts what has been said previously. At this point it appears that the living person William Campbell may have invented himself a wife, a set of characteristics and a story.

The problem lies in the fact that the note is presented to the reader by a fictional narrator, Silvestre, and it is he who interacts with the real person GCI. However, "GCI" has become a fictional person (by his own definition) by entering into the

framework of the novel. Furthermore, the fact is that this William Campbell does not exist; there is no such article in Sports Illustrated, and no one by that name ever taught at either of the colleges in Baton Rouge.[10]

The result is that the reader who expects to be presented with clear-cut concepts and characters will be disappointed. It is not the author's intention to construct a fictional world with definite boundaries; he is interested rather in presenting, by way of the spoken word, a number of views of reality. An example of this can be seen in an interview in which Cabrera Infante states, "Hay dos grandes ironistas en TTT, el fotógrafo Códac y el bongosero Eribó--dos hipócritas, patéticamente hipócritas, hipócritas inocentes."[11] In Códac's case this means that a careful reading of the book will reveal that on p.125 he ridicules Eribó's theory on rhythm, while on p.213 he attempts to put it into practice. More significantly, however, he states on p.163 that Silvestre has told him that he heard Bustrófedon's maid use the latter's real name, while on p.207 he says he doesn't know if he even had one. Eribó is a hypocrite in that he narrates an entire section of the book (pp.46-52) in which he attempts to convince his boss that his wife is going to have a baby and that he needs a raise for that reason. He has previously received one on the basis of having been married. The reader is led to accept all of this along with the boss. Later in the book it becomes evident that there will be no baby; in fact there is no

wife.

The end result is that two of the narrators cannot be trusted even to attempt to tell the truth, yet Códac is the one through whom nearly all the pertinent information concerning both La Estrella and Bustrófedon is received. The reader, in effect, is left as unsure of what to accept--on any level--as he is when reading the news in a paper which is strongly slanted towards one ideological viewpoint.

Some of the characters give the impression that they could be quite believable as conventional novelistic creations. They could exist in real life, as in fact some of them did, if it were not for the fact that as phenomena they are filtered through the creative imagination of the various narrators and thereby transformed. This process can be examined to good effect in Códac's presentation of the three women, Estrella, Cuba Venegas and Irenita. All three are believable types as they exist, Cuba the superficial pop singer and sex kitten, Estrella the novelty singer, and Irenita the giddy show girl. But in the fertile imagination of Códac they become a triad consisting of two extremes and a middle. As mentioned previously, Estrella's huge and dark appearance is contrasted with that of the tiny, blonde Irenita as they emerge out of the darkness. Códac's choice of words causes the scene to take on the character of a magic show: "Me dijo, Te voy a presentar a Irena y no sé de dónde sacó una rubita chiquitica, preciosa ... " (p.62). The

transition between this vision and the one in which La Estrella suddenly appears on stage is accomplished by the mention of Cuba Venegas' rendition of a song concerning "la penumbra vaga" (p.63), the halfway point between the two images of light and darkness.

What Códac does at this point is something which might be called the verbal version of an impressionistic painting. After describing Irenita as looking the way Marilyn Monroe would if the Jíbaro Indians had shrunk her whole body, for some reason he focuses his attention on her teeth: "La rubita se rió con ganas levantando los labios y enseñando los dientes como si se levantara el vestido y enseñara los muslos y tenía los dientes más bonitos que yo he visto en la oscuridad ... " (p.62). In the first place it is clear that what began as a smaller-than-average pretty girl has been transformed for the reader by the verbal expression of the point of view of a photographer created by the author; the reader sees, not some supposedly objective image of a person, but one man's experience as presented by way of the use of creative language.

Secondly, there is more to the description than meets the eye, for it appears to have been born of Cabrera Infante's fascination with Lewis Carroll. As a result of Códac's words the reader is left with an image of a perfect set of teeth shining in the darkness, which recalls Carroll's Cheshire Cat, who periodically disappears, leaving only his smile.

Irenita is never described as simply walking in, or as being somewhere when the narrator arrives; she always appears as if secreted like an ectoplasm of the night. On p.274 Códac inexplicably finds himself dancing with her. Later she appears as Silvestre and Cué are about to enter a night club after contemplating a spouting statue; in this case she appears to be a live version of it. At this point we receive the Bustrófedon-influenced point of view of both the men. Silvestre says, "Del sombrero de copa que es la noche saltó un conejo. Una curiel. Cueriel. Era igualita a la ninfa hidrófila" (p.412). Then Cué introduces her as "Irenita Atineri," a palindrome. It is of little importance whether he makes up this name on the spot or not, as he does "Silvestre Noche Desán"; it is language which makes her another in-and-out character, the rabbit out of the hat (perhaps a combination of the March Hare and the Mad Hatter this time) who is the same on either side of the looking glass because her name is equally reversible.

Of all the characters Códac is probably the most sensitive to the mythic, and in his search for the absolute, archetypal Woman he attempts to gather in the extremes of beauty and ugliness, smallness and monstrous size, sight and sound. It is for this reason that La Estrella makes such a profound impression on him when he is with her opposite, Irenita. In his mythic imagination these two, plus Cuba, the mulata, form a triad. There are many scenes in which La Estrella appears without the

other two in Códac's narration, but whenever one of the others is present there is a predictable reaction between what appear to be opposing forces. Perhaps this is a mythic expression of the fact that when pure, primitive, unembellished sound is in the ascendancy that which depends upon illusion and visual and tactile stimulation is doomed. La Estrella and the others repel each other the way two magnets with opposing charges are driven apart. When Códac is engaged in erotic play with Cuba La Estrella nearly "sinks the table to the surface" (p.273), and it is here that he finds himself dancing with Irenita, as if Cuba had been shrunk and bleached by the appearance of the black star. On another occasion he takes Irenita to the Capri and La Estrella appears on stage; later she refuses to allow Irenita in her dressing room (pp.284-85).

That Códac is in search of the mythic Woman is illustrated in the dream which he narrates on pp.160-61. It is certainly one of those dreams which Cabrera Infante loves, which confess what a man truly is in the depths of his soul. Perhaps it reveals first of all the narrator's love for the novels of Ernest Hemingway (which Cabrera Infante shares), since the dream is a personal reworking of The Old Man and the Sea, complete with references to the fact that the boy (Silvestre in this case) is not allowed to go fishing with him because he is "salao" (Hemingway's term). Like the old man, Códac eventually hooks a fish: "De entre las aguas azules, violetas, ultravioletas, venía un

pez fosforecente que era largo y se parecía a Cuba y después se achicaba y era Irenita y se volvió prieto, negruzco, negro y era Magalena y cuando lo cogí, que picó, comenzó a crecer y a crecer y se hizo tan grande como el bote ... " (p.160). As it turns out, the fish is La Estrella, who we learn is in bed with him and is smothering him. The fish of the quest has moved through the forms of the women in whom he has an interest and has culminated in her. Furthermore, the sea image relates to the archetypal symbol of the feminine.

Characterization is a distinctive process in the work of this author whose aim is to capture the human voice on the wing. Whatever the reader might imagine the real or fictional characters to be like in real life, he is still dependent upon the voices which he hears from the novel for his information. That information, moreover, comes not in the form of hard, objective facts, but as the private interpretations of all the narrators who deal with a given subject. Each of them provides a certain amount of information concerning certain third parties, but usually reveals more than he intends concerning himself, for this is all confession. The reader must take what he can get, serving as co-creator with the author and ending up with his own personal point of view with regard to these denizens of the night.

V. THE NOVEL AS HEILSGESCHICHTE

It has been assumed by several critics that in Tres tristes tigres Cabrera Infante has abandoned all structure and presented the reader with a haphazard, rather chaotic collection of more or less disparate elements, since little or no attempt has been made to tie the sections together for the reader.

The assumption appears to be that the book is a collage whose unity lies in the fact that the material deals mainly with a circle of friends in Havana in 1958. Luis Gregorich feels that it should be considered an open novel in part because of its "trama estructural que consiste en códigos o formas que, lejos de ser de tipo unívoco, pueden organizarse de diversas maneras ...." He goes on to say that the last part of the novel, called "Bachata," is comparable to Rayuela's "capítulos prescindibles."[1]

This discussion brings to mind the comment of Alain Robbe-Grillet, who, when accused of writing novels lacking in structure, stated, "A new form will always seem more or less an absence of any form at all, since it is unconsciously judged by reference to the consecrated forms."[2] Raymond D. Souza has pointed out that Tres tristes tigres is a work which is characterized by a "complete emphasis on language," and that "the freedom of its language has radically altered the importance of

structure to the degree that the novel has no plot."[3] The point to note is that the absence of plot and explicit order does not necessarily imply the absence of structure. It is my contention that in this novel the structure is created by the use of language, and that the linguistic process is so determinative of form that a major portion of the impact of the book would be lost by the rearrangement of its parts.

The view of Octavio Paz that for modern man art may be a replacement for religion is well known. Arsenio Cué appears to reflect this view when he says, "El arte (como la religión o como la ciencia o como la filosofía) es otro intento de imponer la luz del orden a la tinieblas del caos. Feliz tú, Silvestre, que puedes o crees que puedes hacerlo por el verbo" (p.334). The implication is that since history is viewed as "un caos concéntrico" (p.364) the re-creation of a part of it may necessarily be chaotic as well, but some of the characters are engaged in an attempt to impose order on the chaotic situation through the very words which create it.

The fact is that the structure of the book reflects that of the Bible, and as such reveals the work to be a sort of Heilsgeschichte, that is, the history of salvation or the quest for it. The parallel of its structure to that of the Bible is seen not so much in the arrangement of its parts as in the linguistic setting of scenes at various points. In other words, even though the biblical pattern reflects the fact that the

author conceives of his work as the record of the creation, development, redemption (through Bustrófedon) and apocalypse of this particular world, he does not allow any such linear pattern to determine the form of the work. Rather, he employs allusions to biblical events and the use of language to identify his characters and their everyday actions with the events of transcendent importance recorded in the Bible.

At times it is only the choice of words by the narrator--presumably unconscious on his part--which tends to cause the jump from the mundane to the mythic. This is the case with the prologue, in which, as I have mentioned, the references by the emcee, the "animador del Tropicana" (p.120), to cold, rain and paradise and his call for light, together with his own creation of a chaotic world by means of the word, indicate that this may be the author's version of Genesis 1 and 2. In short, it is the choice of words by the author which transforms a rather forgettable and superficial speech into the proclamation of the advent of a new world. It is not even necessary for the author to have invented these words for him, since the emcee may have used many significant words unwittingly.

It is the johannine literature of the New Testament which most often serves as Cabrera Infante's point of reference, although many references are to other portions of the Bible. As a writer whose preoccupation is largely with language as such, Cabrera Infante might well be expected to take special note of

a chapter such as John 1:

> Before the world was created, the Word already existed . . . . Through him God made all things; not one thing in all creation was made without him. The Word had life in himself and this life brought light to men . . . . The Word became a human being and lived among us (Selected from John 1:1-14).

We have already discussed the incarnation of the Word in Bustrófedon. The section dealing with him as the word incarnate is in the center of the book, as the gospels, which deal with Christ's life and ministry, are central to Bible history. Following Bustrófedon we note an increasing number of references to the apocalypse, allusions to the other major johannine book, the Apocalypse or Revelation of St. John.

It would be well to note the way in which the biblical structure is indicated by periodic allusions. After the creative act of the prologue we would expect to find something of the history of the book of Genesis. It is in fact present, although, as stated previously, it does not materially affect the content of the narration but exists in the form of undertones created by fine linguistic keys. The allusions are not even necessarily in chronological order, though they generally follow the biblical progression of events.

Beyond the emcee's implication that the Tropicana is Paradise there is Silvestre's reference to the movies as "Arcadia, la gloria, la panacea de todos los dolores de la adolescencia" (p.38), and to his section of the theatre, the "primera fila del

gallinero (llamada también el paraíso)" (p.39). These could be construed as a child's version of heaven, but they are also well taken as the unspoiled paradise of childhood. At one point on his "Camino de Santa Fé" (another double reference, to the western movie and to a kind of religious pilgrimage along the stations of the cross), the foods on display provide for him "ese olor a todas las frutas posibles del árbol de la ciencia del bien y del mal, con el aroma de los jardines de Babilonia" (p.40).

But we must turn back to the previous section in order to perceive a vague reference to the Fall. In the passage immediately following the prologue the female narrator states, "Yo no sabía ya qué cosa era verdad y qué cosa era mentira" (p.24), a portrait of primordial innocence. The Fall occurs in the erotic escapades of Petra Cabrera and her boy friend, which are detected and announced around town by the young girls, with the result that "Ciana Cabrera se mudó con Petra su hija para Pueblo Nuevo" (p.24), a parallel to the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. The very name Cabrera may be an allusion to the pastoral Arcadia.

The Tower of Babel incident is alluded to more clearly, although in this case as well the reader must be prepared to piece together certain linguistic clues, not all of them in this part of the novel. Beba Longoria, whom the emcee wrongly assumes is the wife of Colonel Cipriano Suárez Démera (p.18), engages in a telephone conversation with Livia Roz in which she describes

how she and her paramour the colonel have used political pressure in order to gain membership in an exclusive club (pp.43-45). The language she uses is comical in its peasant crudity, but she does manage to throw in a couple of English expressions ("Senkiu," p.44; "Solón," p.45).

On the level of everyday life there is no further significance. It is a conversation which could very well have taken place in Havana during the summer of 1958. But on p.376 Arsenio Cué calls Beba "Babel," and on p.401 Silvestre uses the phrase, "Babel, en su lengua confundida ...." It is then that one may recognize that, shortly after the creative act of the prologue, Babel has ascended like her namesake the tower, and accompanying this phenomenon is the confusion of tongues.

It is to be expected that the advent of a messiah will usher in a messianic age, with all that implies. In the view of the writers of the New Testament the coming of the Messiah meant entrance into an age of dynamic evangelistic work, to convert a whole world to allegiance to the Christ. It also meant the beginning of the apocalypse (See Matthew 24). True to form, Bustrófedon's disciples and adherents view their world in much the same way, for in a world which is now characterized by ever-increasing manifestations of the apocalypse they are out to emulate Bustrófedon, to proclaim his gospel of the renewal of language. Silvestre's and Cué's experience with Magalena and Beba illustrates this, in that the former attempt not to

seduce the latter sexually, but to overwhelm them with words. In this case the attempt ends in failure, because the two girls are too oriented to the visual and tactual. Lewis Carroll-style word play loses them, while a fat man clumsily avoiding being hit by their car leaves them helpless with laughter. But later on, in the encounter with Irenita, when word play is engaged in, it is said of her, "Se rió. Estaba en otro círculo que Magalena y Beba" (p.412).

It may well be that the two girls are intended as apocalyptic figures, and as such are part and parcel of what Silvestre and Cué sense is happening to their world. Cué does identify Beba with Babel, which is simply the Hebrew word for Babylon, and that city is called "the great prostitute" in Rev. 19:2.[4] The name Magalena, of course, is an allusion to the woman in the gospels whose name has become synonymous with prostitution (though she is redeemed). Perhaps this imagery constitutes one reason for the men's unconsciously veering from the course which would have led them to involvement with such ominous characters.

The apocalyptic theme is a highly important one for many contemporary writers. Writing in the Saturday Review, Marcia Cavell says:

> The temper of the times is apocalyptic. Many of the young--and they are not alone--feel that the West is all but finished. Some of them are anxious to hurry it along. Others simply prepare to get out from under. They are convinced that what society needs

> is not piecemeal changes, a little more or a little less compromise, some adjustments within the human condition, but a new heaven and a new earth, and that these will come only when the old order has passed away.[5]

This is no passing fad; it appears to be the bedrock reality within the unconscious of some of the most sensitive artists of our day. Aniela Jaffé, in her discussion of the relationships between art and psychology in Jung's Man and His Symbols, says of the painter Jackson Pollock, "Pollock's pictures . . . are charged with boundless emotional vehemence. In their lack of structure they are almost chaotic . . . . They may be regarded as a parallel to what the alchemists called the massa confusa, the prima materia, or chaos--all ways of defining the precious prime matter of the alchemical process, the starting point of the quest for the essence of being."[6]

The apocalypse, then, is a return to the most basic origins. It should be pointed out that within the Christian scheme it means not a recycling of the order of being, the archetypal eternal return, but a final return to the paradise on earth and in the heavens which prevailed before the Fall. While Cabrera Infante draws nearly all his apocalyptic imagery from the Christian Apocalypse, the viewpoint of his narrators is hardly one of expectation of the return to paradise; they have simply had too much fun in the old world. What they perceive is the coming of a revolution, not only in what occurred under Castro, but on every level of life. Castro's revolution

is only one manifestation in Cuba of the universal re-ordering of things.

In this regard as well as others in Tres tristes tigres, Arsenio Cué's position is not only different from that of anyone else in the book but difficult to pin down. One gains the impression that the author has intended him--with his raincoat and dark glasses--to be a deliberate enigma, a character not to be revealed to the reader but hidden from him. In fact, the first reference to him in the book is as "Harsenio Qué" by Delia Doce (p.30), pointing up his problematical nature. Cué resists the apocalypse, even while others such as Silvestre maintain an ambivalent attitude towards it. That is, Silvestre gladly embraces the revolution of language brought about by Bustrófedon, but he is unsettled by the fact that things appear to be coming apart and not functioning according to the rules, even in his own thinking and behavior. Códac is captivated first by La Estrella and then by Bustrófedon, and likes the changes, but is disturbed by the fact that love affairs don't work out for him any more.

Cué, on the other hand, runs. He senses the apocalyptic nature of the age more than anyone else, apparently because he has already been through a private one which has destroyed his old world of anonymity and poverty and brought about a new one of moderate wealth and fame. In one of the two sections narrated by him he tells the story of going to see a certain

influential but eccentric individual who may be able to get him a job as a writer. In the apartment he meets Beba, talks with the impresario, and is apparently shot by the latter, at which point the section ends (pp.53-60). The entire scene is replete with imagery drawn from the book of Revelation. One less obvious example is the presence of Beba, who, as has been pointed out, is later identified with Babylon. However, she also appears to take on the aspect of the beast of the sea (Rev. 13:1) as she emerges from the swimming pool (p.55). Cué sees an angel made of porcelain, which is intended to represent the scene in Rev. 10:2-10. There the angel places one foot on land and the other on the sea (to demonstrate that the message to come is for the whole earth). He has a scroll containing the secret divine plan. John is ordered to eat it and told, "It will turn sour in your stomach, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey" (Rev. 10:9). Cué, when he sees the statue, says, "Sentí tal hambre ... que me habría comido el librito si el ángel me lo hubiera ofrecido. Decidí olvidarlo" (p.55). A little later, "Miré al ángel cara a cara. Parecía ofrecerme su libro abierto. Luego lo miré a él y creí ver que sonreía. ¿El hambre beatifica?" (p.58). In the process it is revealed that the other man's name is Gabriel (p.55).

As it turns out, the bitter experience of thinking he has been murdered is transformed into the sweetness of learning that he has a job and is on his way up, though not as a writer.

The reader, however, is left wondering until very near the end of the book, although if he has noticed the name Arsenio in the narration (p.59) he will surmise that he did not actually die. Near the end of the book, but no longer in direct narration, is the end of the story, in Silvestre's report of what Cué has related to him. Cué begins by referring to "otro ángel fuerte, envuelto en una nube, que habló con voz de trueno" (p.423; the reference is to Rev. 14:2). Then the images of Gabriel and the angel merge, as do the book and the pistol. Gabriel says, "Vamos. Arriba" (p.424), an allusion to St. John's being called to heaven in Rev. 4:1. In his last paragraph Cué says, "Me sacudí ese polvo siempre imaginario de los que caen y se levantan, el gesto de Lázaro, y salí" (p.424). In other words, this has been a symbolic death and resurrection for him, his personal version of the death and rebirth of the whole universe which is the apocalypse.

Approximately the last third of the book is occupied by the section entitled "Bachata," which consists, in terms of the action, of one long night spent by Silvestre and Cué in and around Havana, engaged in various kinds of activity appropriate to the setting. The movement is from a vision of the world which reflects the dawn of a new creation to "el silencio de la última noche" (p.444). At this point both La Estrella and Bustrófedon have died, and the apocalypse has been set in motion. In his first paragraph Silvestre employs a number of

stylistic devices in order to universalize the narration and place it again in the realm of myth. In a jumble of tenses, the tendency of which is to remove the scene from time, he brings in Bustrófedon, their ubiquitous companion (as he does on the last page of his narration): "Será una lástima que Bustrófedon no vino con nosotros .... Era una lástima que Bustrófedon no vendrá con nosotros .... Es una lástima que Bustrófedon no viene con nosotros ..." (p.293). Having removed it from time (and perhaps placed it in the realm of language), he removes it from space by referring to the Almendares as "ese Ganges del indio occidental." Then he refers to "la cicatriz de la división de las aguas," an allusion to the creation story of Genesis, and seemingly not content to unfold the scene only within the framework of Judeo-Christian tradition, brings in archetypal myth as well with "al fondo el mar siempre y por sobre todo, el cielo embellecedor, que es otro domo veteado: el huevo del roc del universo, un infinito jabón azul" (p.293), a reference to the myth of the universal egg. Nor does he stop there, for he then draws upon contemporary apocalyptic imagery as he describes the clouds as forming "una natural nube atómica" (p.293).

Within this framework Silvestre and Cué engage in a journey which is deliberately related to the archetypal hero's quest, although perhaps its object is not so clear. At one point there is confusion between the words "Laodicea" and "La

Odisea." The former is a key element in the book of Revelation, being the location of the church which is criticized by Christ for its lukewarmness; later in Tres tristes tigres Cué makes the same accusation of Havana. The latter, in contrast, is perhaps the best known of the world's hero stories. At other points their escapades are described in terms of "las aventuras de Robinson Cuésoe y su Silviernes en la isla de Lesbos" (p.368), or of the voyages of Columbus and Cortés, journeys of discovery and conquest, respectively (pp.371 and 401). The final third of the book might well be characterized by Silvestre's phrase as "el log de Gog y Magog" (p.365).[7]

The allusion to the Robinson Crusoe story points up the solitude of this night, a mood prevalent throughout the novel. Not only the story of the one night which occupies the entire "Bachata" section, but the rest of the work as well, is characterized by many attempts at seduction and virtually no results. The only actual success in lovemaking within the framework of the book's present time occurs in the last sentence of the second third of the novel, immediately preceding the "Bachata" section. There Códac says, "Encontramos a Irenita y una amiga sin nombre que salían del escondite de Hernando y las invitamos a ir a Las Vegas donde no había show ni Chowcito ni nada ya, solamente el tocadiscos y estuvimos allí como media hora tomando y hablando y riéndonos y oyendo discos y después, casi amaneciendo, nos las llevamos para un hotel de la playa" (p.288).

The laconic tone of this report underscores the sterility of the relationships involved, one with a nameless girl. The entertainment has ceased, and this is the "casual and meaningless sex" which Raymond D. Souza points out as characterizing the Havana of this era.[8]

The point is that man-woman relationships are not functioning properly, and this is an apocalyptic situation: the world order is in a state of revolution. Reference has been made to the ambiguity of the name of Minerva Eros, present at the creation as sort of a goddess presiding over amorous activities: "Minerva engalanará ... el último show en cada noche de Tropicana" (pp.18,19). This is not Venus, it is the goddess of chastity--or of sterility, depending upon the viewpoint. In the section dealing with what I have called the Fall and expulsion from the garden it is those engaged in normal heterosexual activities (though in an illicit manner) who are expelled and disgraced, while the two girls who are able to expose them on account of their own homosexual acts become minor celebrities.

There is an implication in the story of Cuba Venegas to the effect that her movement is towards lesbianism: Eribó states that she went out first with Códac "y después con Piloto y Vera (primero con Piloto y luego con Vera)" (p.91), but there are hints of it already in the letter which Delia Doce writes to Cuba's mother. In it she describes Cuba's coming with a photographer who, judging from Eribó's statement,

must be Códac, and later: "Bino aquí una tarde por la tarde con una amiga rubia y las dos traían ... pantalones ... y ... decían cosas que yo no entendía casi y se reían después ... y se desían constantemente mi hermana y mi amiga y mi amiguita y cosas así" (p.33).

In view of the fact that Cuba clearly appears to represent one aspect of the nation, this shift in her must be taken as significant (she is referred to as "Toda Cuba," p.116, and called "la Puta Nacional," p.368). Eribó, who says he discovered her and changed her name from Gloria Pérez, describes her as "una mulata alta, de pelo bueno, india" (p.91), and this combination of Cuba's three races, along with her new name and other comments throughout the book would tend to confirm that she represents the Cuban nation in its sellout to artificiality and superficiality. In any case it is Cuba--in either sense--which is rejecting the traditional ways and moving to homosexuality. It is out of this experience that Silvestre can refer to Cuba as "la isla de Lesbos."

In the "Bachata" section Cabrera Infante creates an apocalyptic atmosphere in part by almost continual references, often carefully veiled, to the book of Revelation. At certain points these become concentrated in Silvestre's narration. This is true of division X, which opens (p.318) with Silvestre's taking note of the smell of the sea, which he qualifies as "un sexo, otra vagina," that is, something with which one can enter into

union and expect renewal, a motif which occurs often in the works of other contemporary Spanish American authors such as Carlos Fuentes. Silvestre and Cué head for the bar called Laodicea, whose owner is named Juan (St. John, author of the Revelation, refers to Laodicea in ch.3, vv.14-22). They drive down "una avenida nueva" where they see "un edificio cuadrado" (p.319); these are probably references to the New Jerusalem (Rev.21).[9] When they arrive Cué says, "He aquí el amén" (p.320) and Silvestre misses the apocalyptic reference to Jesus' word to Laodicea: "This is the message from the Amen" (Rev.3:14), thinking that Cué means "el acmé." In the biblical passage in question Jesus also says, "If you have ears, then listen" (Rev. 3:22), and on entering the bar the two men hear a woman's voice say, "El que tenga oreja que oiga" (p.321). Immediately thereafter Cué greets the owner (Juan Laodicea): "Cué me explicó quién era, pero no oí, facinado como estaba mirando la pecera en que había una raya pequeña dando vueltas, eternamente. Era un obispo. Cué me dijo que siempre había uno y que siempre se moría y siempre lo cambiaban por otro, pero que él no podía distinguirlos, que éste podía ser el anterior o un sucedáneo" (p.321). Cué is the one who has already been through a kind of apocalypse, through a metaphor of death and rebirth; he is sensitive to the apocalyptic, and especially to the prospect of death. The ray in the tank reinforces what is already almost an obsession for the main characters, the concept that death is

inevitable for every individual and that immortality is only that of the species. In the process any given individual is forgotten. At this point Cué orders a daiquiri without sugar and with a lot of lemon, because he is "imitando al Gran Maestro" (p.321). The obscure reference may be to Christ's having been offered a bitter drink at the point of his death. Later, division XII has Silvestre so lost in his contemplation of the tank that the result is a Proustian recall of a number of old movies, specifically horror movies.

Another concentration of imagery from the Revelation occurs in division XIV, some of it more or less obvious and some extremely subtle. Silvestre says,

> En el muelle hay un niño que tira piedras chatas en el agua mansa y chascan, planean, saltan y pegan y botan dos, tres veces y finalmente rompen el espejo y desaparecen detrás, para siempre. En el embarcadero un pescador sin sombra en la luz que Leonardo llamaría universal, sacaba peces de una lancha. Sacó un pez enorme, feo, un monstruo marino (p.351).

There is nothing very unusual about this scene on the surface; one might expect to come across a fish of unusual size and ugliness brought in by a fisherman. Again it is what is done subsequently by the use of language which transforms it into a moving demonstration of the imminence of the apocalypse. First Cué looks carefully at the fish: "Es la bestia. Vamos a darle vuelta que debe tener el 666 del otro lado" (p.352). That is, this is the beast from the sea of Rev. 13:8, whose identity is revealed by the proper interpretation of the number 666 (Rev.

13:8). The beast of the Revelation appears to represent the false religions and philosophies of the age, but it is unlikely that Cué has this in mind; rather it is probable that he views it as another portent of cataclysm, similar to the mushroom-shaped clouds, the stars which frequently fall into the sea, the women who resemble "creatures from the black lagoon" (p.121), and other omens.

Shortly after this Silvestre experiences a vision of Havana which again recalls the New Jerusalem of Rev. 21: "La ciudad ... se veía iluminada por una luz que no era artificial ni la del sol, que parecía propia y La Habana era lumínica, un espejismo radiante, casi una promesa contra la noche que empezaba a rodearnos" (p.353).

It is at this point that Cué shows him a stone which the "little boy" (who turns out to be a little girl) has given him. This is an allusion to Jesus' statement in Rev. 2:17: "To those who have won the victory I will give . . . a white stone, on which a new name is written." Then, "alguien, en la oscuridad, la llamaba Angelita ven" (p.353), which is a reference to the repeated "Come" of Rev. 6 and identifies the child as still another angel with whom Cué is involved. This angel, on a mythic level, is related to the one of Rev. 18:21, who picks up a stone the size of a large millstone and throws it into the sea, but Angelita's function here is to present Cué with a token of his new being, the stone being an archetypal symbol of what

Jung calls the Self. The other stones which the little girl has handled are able to maintain themselves above the sea for a short while before disappearing into it forever, symbolizing, no doubt, man's ability to avoid death for only a brief lifetime before his disappearance. Cué's stone, in contrast, does not head out to sea.

Still, Cué is not satisfied. He senses very strongly that the old order of things which brought him to his comfortable position is changing, and that the change is irreversible. Concerning the day of his big opportunity he says, "Ese día de la gracia se detuvo el tiempo. Al menos, para mí" (p.426). Yet it is clear that he is not sure he can maintain that state of affairs. It is his aim never to change (even though he can adopt almost any role), and this is the reason for his embracing of numbers, which presumably do not change, and for his instinctive distrust of language as a means of imposing order on chaos, especially the chameleon-like language represented by Bustrófedon. Livia Roz, who is so artificial that she is constantly changing, says three times that Arsenio never changes (pp.140, 152,156). This occurs in the earlier portion of the novel.

In "Bachata," however, the situation is different. Silvestre says, "Cué tenía esa obsesión del tiempo" (p.296), and in one discussion Cué confides that he feels that time is far more culpable than Hitler or any other mass murderer of the century, because it kills everyone: "Hay que hacer una campaña,

en la ONU, dondequiera, para declarar genocida al tiempo" (p. 326). Apparently the idea that time has ceased for him is only wishful thinking; change is in the air. Of the sea, an image of change and renewal, and therefore related to time, he says, "Ni a mí ni a mi subconsciente ni a mis miedos atávicos nos gusta el mar" (p.314).

The same is true of numbers; sturdy though they seem, Cué is no longer certain at this point that even they are changeless. When Silvestre asks him whether he really believes in them he replies, "Es casi en lo único que creo. Dos y dos serán siempre cuatro y el día que sean cinco es hora de echarse a correr" (p.312). On the next page he relates an apocalyptic dream (we recall Cabrera Infante's statement with regard to dreams as the purest form of confession) in which everything begins to burn, and he says, "Echo a correr." Silvestre definitely senses this tension in him. He says, "Doblamos a la izquierda, yendo paralelos al mar, como los canales de esta Venecia del rico, donde los felices propietarios podrán guardar su automóvil en el cart-port [sic] y su lancha en el yacht-port, flanqueados por todas las posibilidades de la fuga. Comprendía que este era el paraíso de los Cué" (p.320). Cué refers to his car as a time machine (pp.298,361), a machine for the escape from time.

Not only is life different for them in that the normal relations between the sexes appear not to work out any more:

other more mundane details of their daily lives have been altered. In Silvestre's case it is by choice, since he announces that he has plans to marry Laura Díaz (p.434). She too has had an apocalyptic dream, which Silvestre relates to Cué (pp.420-421). In it she hears a countdown, reaches the light switch at zero, hears an explosion as the light goes on, and sees that "toda La Habana, que es como decir todo el mundo, arde." She knows that there has been an "estallido apocalíptico." Then a white woman on a grey horse appears, her unconscious' version of the Savior on the white horse (Rev. 19:11-16); it turns out to be Marilyn Monroe, and the dream ends with the "savior" smiling at Laura. The meaning, evidently, is that Laura and her house (a house is often symbolic of the person inhabiting it) have been saved by her ideal, represented by Marilyn Monroe, from the revolutionary changes taking place in Havana and the rest of the world.

First it should be noted that Silvestre compares the dream to one which Lydia Cabrera had just before Batista came into power (pp.421-422), and Cabrera Infante is clearly telling us in this way that his characters have premonitions of the success of Castro's revolution. Jung insists that dreams are often predictive, and this would then indicate that subconsciously Havana knows when an age has come to an end.

This woman, for whom superficial glamor is salvation in an apocalyptic age, is the one whom Silvestre intends to marry. Cué knows her better than Silvestre does, and he fails to react

positively to the engagement, as Silvestre obviously would like him to do (pp.434-436). Cué has visited the apartment of Laura and her friend Livia and seen how a glamor girl is built. He says, "Livia, con una rara habilidad, convirtió a Laura del patito feo de la provincia: demasiado alta, demasiado flaca, demasiado blanca para Santiago, en un cisne de Avon Inc ... " (pp.148-149). It would appear that from his position of relative stability Cué is in a better position to see what Silvestre is really getting than is Silvestre himself, with his commitment to change. Silvestre, in any event, has a tendency to prefer what he can preserve in the way of images of reality to the reality itself, and it may be for this reason that artificial beauty is as good as--or better than--the real item:

> Silvestre miraba el show (más bien las bailarinas del show todas llenas de piernas y de muslos y de senos) como si lo viera por primera vez en la vida. La fruta del mercado ajeno. (De nuevo B.) Olvidaba esta real belleza de al lado por el espejismo de la belleza en el escenario (p.94).

Both Silvestre and Cué have experienced another change in their situations. Silvestre states that he has not written for some time (p.404), and it is stressed repeatedly that Cué has had a quarrel with the management at the television station where he has been an actor, so that he is out of work at the moment (pp.120,124,142). Nor are they the only ones in their circle who have experienced such changes of fortune. Bustrófedon and La Estrella, of course, are dead, and Cóciac, who

loves every minute of his beat as a photographer on the night club circuit, has been taken off it and assigned to the political scene, though he, like Silvestre, desires to stay out of politics (p.281). Eribó too has been drawn out of the channel which he felt would lead to his becoming a recognized artist and is again a lowly bongo drummer (pp.90-91). And Cuba Venegas, as has already been mentioned, has ended up in a cellar night club, singing "La noche de amor terminó," which could well stand for the situation of the entire circle of friends.

The political aspect of the apocalypse--the coming revolution--is vaguely perceived as one facet of the general transition from one age to another. The characters are aware of what is happening in the mountains, but in general they appear to be attempting to ignore it, or to pass it off as a joke. One of Bustrófedon's nonsense verses reads as follows:

> Váyala fiña de Viña
> deifel Fader fidel fiasco
> falla mimú psicocastro
> alfú mar sefú más phinas
> (p.210).

It is Bustrófedon also who, when he desires to parody a number of Cuban authors, chooses the incident of the murder of Leon Trotsky as a subject for their consideration, and it is precisely this examination of a Marxist theoretician and his death which occupies the exact center of the novel.

Bustrófedon has a theory to the effect that the Russian language may be nothing but Spanish in reverse: "El alfabeto

cirílico (como decía él: cyrilic/cilyric) es el alfabeto latino al revés, [y] se puede leer ruso en un espejo" (p.361). Since he feels that language is the most important expression of a culture, his theory would be important in that then the political apocalypse would be seen as a reversal of the present cultural values of Cuba in favor of Russian values, as expressed in the Russian language. In short, the Spanish language and the culture which it expresses are about to move through the mirror to become their opposites. In addition to this, the trip through the looking glass in Tres tristes tigres usually is connected with death, and in this case it is the death of a culture. Códac says that "Bus viajó al otro mundo, a su viceversa, al negativo, a la sombra, del otro lado del espejo" (p.264), and immediately thereupon includes a page which is the mirror image of the one in which he made the statement, a page which at first glance does look strangely as if it were printed in Russian. Códac indicates that Bustrófedon can now read the page the way he wanted to. In this regard it is curious to note that Silvestre refers to his readers as "ustedes los del otro lado de la página" (p.344), indicating perhaps that at the time of writing the book's characters have passed through the mirror and become literature.

One of the more significant statements with regard to what is happening politically appears when Silvestre and Cué are watching a number of storms developing on the horizon. Silvestre

says, "Es la onda del Este" (p.405) and explains that it is "un meteoro que viene desde oriente por toda la costa y se pierde en la corriente o en el golfo" (p.406). Then there is the following exchange:

> "¿Qué te parece?"
> "Que viene de dónde nosotros."
> "¿Del Johnny's Dream?"
> "De Oriente, coño."
> (p.406).

This playful combination of four lines links the storm to both the book of Revelation (which is "John's Dream") and to the province of Oriente, which is Fidel Castro's native province and the area in which he began his revolutionary activities. Later, when they are in a restaurant, Silvestre comments, "Dice Chesterton que el té, como todo lo que viene de Oriente, es veneno cuando se hace fuerte" (P.425), a brilliant line with at least a triple reference, to the products of the Orient, including communism, to those two dictators who were from Oriente province, Batista and Castro, and finally to Silvestre and Cué themselves, both from Oriente: "¿Se refería a nuestra provincia?, le pregunté" (p.425). At one point Cué appears overcome with melancholy and says he is going to the mountains: "Que me uno a Fiel, a Fidel." Silvestre's reply is, "Estás borracho, hermano" (p.347).

In the midst of a sort of interior monologue Silvestre comments that "la histeria es un caos concéntrico. La historia, perdón" (p.364). The effect of the usual kaleidoscopic language

in this case is to confound the two concepts of history and hysteria. The implication is that the hysteria which characterizes one's life is his own history, and that the chaos which he experiences goes out from him in successive waves. The idea is apparently one of the group's topics of discussion, because some time before this mention of it by Silvestre it is expressed in a slightly different form by Códac: "¿La vida es un caos concéntrico? No sé, y solamente sé que mi vida era un caos nocturno con un solo centro que era Las Vegas y en el centro del centro un vaso con ron y agua o ron y hielo o ron y soda ...." (p.272). The concept of the mandala, or magic circle, can be seen clearly here, and it is of course ironic that this symbol of wholeness and safety would be so ingenuously construed as having a glass of rum at its center. But this is the section which immediately precedes the apocalyptic "Bachata" section, and it in turn ends with Códac's symbolic "descent into hell" (p.278) and prepares for Silvestre's vision of the destruction of the old order and the new creation. It is likely that the glass is only a substitute for Códac's real first love, which is women, with whom he has been failing miserably. The rum glass is of a shape which could be vaguely perceived as a feminine psychological symbol. In the absence of what he really wants he will settle for drowning his sorrows.

This is all part of a generally pessimistic tone in the work, which is expressed in the statement, "Todo conduce a lo

peor" (p.400). As we have already mentioned, the concept may stem from existentialist metaphysics, since the existentialist philosophers based their metaphysics of man on the irreversibility of the movement of time towards death. Cué's attitude towards time as the greatest murderer of the century has already been dealt with as well, and his solution to it, along with that of Silvestre, will be discussed further, but in general terms the latter says, "Me voy para casa a dormir, recogido, hecho un ovillo: regreso al útero, viajo al seno materno. Es más cómodo y más seguro y mejor. Es bueno siempre ir atrás" (p.403).

The implication of all this is that for these characters the apocalypse, though expressed in terms drawn from the early Christian literature of hope, holds no prospect of a better life; whatever new world is coming when this one is finished does not impress them as representing any return to paradise:

> Caminamos por entre las palmas y le mostré La Habana, luminosa, promisoria en el horizonte urbano, con rascacielos de cal que eran torres de marfil. San Cristóbal la blanca. Debía llamarse Casablanca ella y no la ciudad marroquí ni el pueblito pesquero al otro lado del puerto. Lo señalé a Arsenio.
>
> "Son sepulcros blanqueados, Silvestre. No es la Nueva Jerusalén, mi viejito, es Somorra. O si prefieres, Godoma."
>
> No lo creo.
>
> "Pero yo la amo. Es una sabrosa bella durmiente blanca ciudad."
>
> "No la amas. Es tu ciudad ahora. Pero no es blanca ni roja, sino rosada. Es una ciudad tibia, la ciudad de los tibios" (p.354).

The image of lukewarmness has its source in Rev. 3:15,16, in

which the church at Laodicea is called that by Christ. Just as he states that he would prefer the church to be either cold or hot, Cué implies that Havana would be better off if it were either white, signifying purity, or red, representing true passion, while in fact the sunset makes it a combination and therefore ambiguous. It is possible as well that there is an allusion to the fact that the city is in between two positions politically, the light indicating that Havana is not quite red yet.

Another highly important aspect of Cué's comment is his reference to whitewashed sepulchres (the biblical reference is Matthew 23:27), which indicates a more or less pleasing outward appearance with a rather shabby reality underneath. This leads to one of the themes of the book which was mentioned in our discussion of the prologue--the fact that the emcee's repeated call for light might be ironic in that light is likely to reveal the artificiality which might otherwise go unnoticed in the darkness.

There are two aspects to the apocalypse. The one with which we have been dealing to this point is that which has to do with the destruction of the universe and the establishment of "new heavens and a new earth." But the word "apocalypse" itself means "unveiling," and an apocalyptic book in religious literature is one which portends to reveal God's plan for his people. Yet there is more to the unveiling than this, for Jesus makes the statement that "whatever is covered up will be un-

covered, and every secret will be made known" (Matthew 10:26). If we are living in an apocalyptic age in this novel, then we must expect that any number of hidden affairs will be exposed for what they really are. And this proves to be the case.

Arsenio Cué is the character who is the most sensitive to artificiality in the book, since he is totally committed to remaining exactly as he is as a result of his private apocalypse, and to keeping his world and surroundings the same as well. That which is not solid and genuine at its center does not appeal to him. It is precisely in the section in which Livia remarks to him three times that he never changes that he recognizes the artificial nature of many of the beauties who populate his world. The setting is that of a metaphysical revelation in that, as in the Revelation St. John is called up to heaven to gain its perspective on the tribulations of earth (Rev. 4:1), Cué ascends the "escalones metafísicos" (p.145) to receive a new perspective on reality. The ascent of a ladder or stairs is often symbolic of movement into another realm for the purpose of enlightenment.[10]

> Empecé a subir la escalera y sentí un vértigo invertido (¿es que esa sensación existe?): si hay algo que detesto más que bajar una escalera oscura, es subir una escalera oscura .... Contaba estos escalones metafísicos con la zuela del zapato .... Recordé un sueño de otra puerta, otras puertas y otra respuesta al llamado (p.145).

The final reference is to his ascent to the apartment of the man who precipitated his metaphysical death and resurrection, another

revelation. As he ascends the staircase he anticipates the revelation which he is about to receive, wondering whether the name Livia Roz is genuine, or whether in fact it might be Lilia Rodríguez (p.145). Evidently he has reason for doubt about her genuineness, since he had assumed that her hair was naturally black and then learned that it was not so (p.146).

Nevertheless, not all his first impressions are bad. When he enters the apartment he is introduced to Laura Díaz, and is immediately struck by her apparent genuineness: "Arsenio Cué/ Laura Díaz. Confieso que me chocó aquel simple Díaz entre tantos nombres sonoros y exóticos y recordables, pero me gustó, como me gusta que lo use todavía hoy que es famosa .... Había una belleza simple, provinciana, abierta" (p.148). Yet it is not all that simple. It is here that he relates how Livia has taken Laura and converted her from the "patito feo de la provincia" (which he nevertheless likes) into "un cisne de Avon Inc" (p.149).

Later Livia spreads out on the bed a number of large photos of herself in the nude, the ultimate expression of artificiality to a man who has come in expecting to see the woman herself in that position (p.152). Later, however, Cué does achieve his goal of seeing Livia in the nude (which, more than erotic desire, represents his wish to see her with absolutely nothing to hide any defects which she might have). He also sees a girl called Mirtila in the nude and notes that her breasts, like Livia's, "ahora

eran flácidos, largos y terminados en una punta oscura, morada y ancha: no me gustaban" (p.154). At this point he also notices other aspects of their appearance which are quite different when covered by makeup of various sorts, and notes that "ella, como Livia, no salía ya más que de noche" (p.154), a telling comment in view of the emcee's ringing call for light. He observes as well that "todo lo que usa Livia es de calidad pero de una calidad mediocre, falsa"; still, when she is done, "está muy bien: es otra mujer" (p.155). His final comment to Livia and then to her friends is, "No, en serio estás bellísima. Están bellísimas" (p.156), and the difference at this point between the two verbs "ser" and "estar" is the perfect expression of the difference between these women and what he wants in a woman. For him she must not just look beautiful, but be beautiful. Later he has realized that for him "es mejor perder el paraíso por una manzana roja y engañosa que por el fruto del saber seco, cierto" (p.154). Yet Cué is not one to go on deceiving himself.

Cué's narration of this experience constitutes one element of the three which make up the section of the book called "La casa de los espejos." (The third is one of the short vignettes in the psychiatrist's office.) Cué's story deals, appropriately, with illusion. The other main division of the section is a narration of Códac's in which he opens with the relation of a dream in which, like Hemingway's old man, he draws from the sea

the "fish" that he wants, a fish which becomes in turn Cuba Venegas, Irenita, Magalena, and finally La Estrella, who in reality is in bed beside him (pp.160-161). He has progressed in his search for the archetypal woman from the most artificial to the one who, being pure, unadulterated sound, is absolutely genuine. The end of the section is occupied by Códac's retelling of Silvestre's story regarding his near seduction of the girl the group calls Ingrid Bérgamo. The name is a false one, and Silvestre's narration through Códac comes out in his usual style: "Silvestre ... siempre habla en términos de cine" (p. 165). These two facts, plus Códac's being one more character who by profession deals with illusion, add to the artificial nature of the entire scene.

Silvestre relates his attempt to seduce Ingrid in her apartment, and his success at calming her down but not at achieving his aims. They do sleep together, and when he awakens, he says,

> Miro para mi adorada y veo que mi co-star ha cambiado con la noche, que el sueño la ha transformado y junto con el viejo Kafka llamo a esto una metamorfosis y aunque no tengo al lado a Gregorio Samsa sí tengo a otra mujer: la noche y los besos y el sueño le han quitado no solamente la pintura de labios, sino todo el maquillaje, todo: cejas perfectas, las pestañas largas y gruesas y negras, el color forforescente y ... allí, a mi lado, entre ella y yo como un abismo de falsedad, hay un objeto amarillo ... ¡una peluca! (p.167).

When Ingrid awakens and discovers that she has lost her wig she is horrified, but Silvestre pretends to be asleep and she enters

the bathroom to place things in order once more. When she emerges and Silvestre sees the change he makes the same comment that Cué has made in his narration: "Cuando sale es otra mujer" (p.167).

The coincidence of the two comments points up the fact that there is a near-perfect symmetry in "La casa de los espejos." In fact it is likely that the author conceives of Silvestre's and Cué's experiences as mirror images of one another. Cué has watched how an artificial beauty is built up, while Silvestre has seen how one can come apart. The transition between the two consists of one of the vignettes, in which a skeleton is discovered in the bathtub of an elegant family, another case of disillusionment.

The use of mirrors in the book is complex and varied, and no doubt stems from the author's great love of the life and works of Lewis Carroll. The creation of illusion is only one aspect of the meaning of mirrors for Cabrera Infante. As I have stated, he uses the concept of "the other side of the mirror" to represent another world, the reverse of this one, usually meaning death. Both of these uses are apocalyptic as employed here, as is still another highly important use of them. Jung states that mirrors can symbolize a man's getting a look at himself to see something that he may never have seen before.[11] This is precisely what happens to Cué just before his symbolic death and resurrection:

> Vi frente a mí un hombre joven (cuando entré estaba a mi lado, pero me volví) de aspecto cansado, pelo revuelto y ojos opacos. Estaba mal vestido, con la

> camisa sucia y la corbata que no anudaba bien separada del cuello sin abrochar sin botón. Le hacía falta afeitarse y por los lados de la boca le bajaba un bigote lacio y mal cuidado. Levanté la mano para dársela, al tiempo que inclinaba un poco la cabeza y él hizo lo mismo. Vi que sonreía y sentí que yo también sonreía: los dos comprendimos al mismo tiempo: era un espejo (p.54).

In the "Bachata" section it is mentioned that Cué "se miraba al espejo .... Se reconocía" (p.428). Silvestre says that Cué often looks in mirrors, and at first feels that it is simple narcissism (p.348). Then Cué quotes Socrates to the effect that one should look in mirrors, so that if all is well he will know it and if not there is still time to do something about it. He comments, "No me miro para ver si estoy bien o mal, sino solamente para saber si soy" (p.349). But he considers that he has traveled through the mirror: "Soy mi imagen del espejo. Eucoinesra. Arsenio Cué en el idioma del espejo" (p.400). This, of course, is a complete rebirth experience, something totally different from becoming a different person by putting on cosmetics as do his girl friends.

This remark of his is brought on by an accusation by Silvestre that he is not Cué at all, but only his Doppelgänger or a robot of himself, perhaps from Mars, and precipitates a discussion on the topic of the double, alter ego or Doppelgänger. This discussion recurs frequently throughout the section. The whole concept of the double came into prominent use in the nineteenth century, having been given impetus by Dostoyevsky's second

novel, The Double. Perhaps it came to him from Hoffman and Poe. In any event it has certainly gained through Freud's interest in the divided personality and through the works of Kafka, among others; in Kafka's The Metamorphosis, alluded to by Silvestre on p.167, a character named Gregor Samsa finds himself transformed into a giant insect, and the Cuban Virgilio Piñera picked up the theme in a short story in which a man lives among cockroaches so long that in death he appears to have been transformed into one.[12] In his introduction to a recent edition of The Double, Mark Spilka states, "As Kafka must have seen, the insect is the double in a different guise."[13]

In my opinion, however, the significance of the double in this novel lies not so much in the pathological aspects of the divided personality as in another phenomenon common in recent Spanish American poetry, the vision of man as a creature somehow standing outside himself in order to gain a new vision of the meaning of his existence. This is particularly well illustrated in one of the prose poems of Octavio Paz in his book ¿Aguila o sol?:

> Entro en mí por mi oreja izquierda. Mis pasos retumban en el abandono de mi cráneo, alumbrado sólo por una constelación granate. Recorro a tientas el enorme salón desmantelado. Puertas tapiadas, ventanas ciegas. Penosamente, a rastras, salgo por mi oreja derecha a la luz engañosa de las cuatro de la mañana.[14]

This example is perhaps even more striking than Paz' justly famous poem "Aquí" in its vision of modern man's desperate search

for identity, in which he must somehow get outside his own skin to gain an objective view, rather than a subjective one, of his existence in interaction with his total environment. Once more it is a question of point of view.

This is all highly appropriate in an apocalyptic age, in which everything, including man, is returning to origins and is emerging as a new creation. Man is seen as a new Adam, viewing himself and his surroundings for the first time and attempting to find meaning in and give names to all he sees. The world is new, man is new, language is new, and it is suspected that even numbers are changed. Arsenio Cué, who bases his faith on the unchangeability of numbers and declares that the day when two and two no longer equal four it is time to run, runs often and fast in this novel. Nor is Cabrera Infante the only one to conceive of the revolution of reality in such radical terms. In his Ultimo Round Julio Cortázar presents a graffito allegedly from the "Facultad de Letras, París": "Estamos tranquilos: 2 más 2 ya no son 4."[15]

Another popular concept in contemporary Spanish American writing which is found in Tres tristes tigres is that of the union of opposites. In Octavio Paz this takes the form of man's entering into the fundamental rhythm of the universe--which he conceives of as moved by such a union of opposites--by uniting with his own opposite. For this purpose woman is often viewed by Paz as symbolic of the world.[16] At this point, however, Cu-

ban writers such as José Lezama Lima and Cabrera Infante diverge and experiment with a homosexual version of the same idea. In Paradiso, Lezama Lima appears to expound the concept that man in union with man views his own mirror image and thereby attempts to attain wholeness within himself. In Tres tristes tigres too there appear to be no creative relationships between men and women. Their attempts to enter into normal relationships either end in failure or are dreary, meaningless affairs.

Twice in the book Cabrera Infante employs a technique reminiscent of that of William Golding in his uniting of the twins Sam and Eric into "Samneric" in Lord of the Flies. Cué says of his two friends, "Acabaron por ser una pareja: Laura y Livia/ Livia y Laura/Laurilivia: una sola cosa" (p.149). Eribó refers to Silvestre and Cué as "el dúo" (p.107) and calls them "Silvestre Ycué" (p.222). Not only do both of these verbal consecrations of vital union refer to pairs within a single sex, but the latter is even made to fit the traditional male-female pattern of the tao:

> Tú. Silvestre the First, el que llegó primero, yo-lo-dije-antes-que-Adán, el descubridor que vio a Cuba (Venegas) antes que Cristóforibot, el primer hombre en la luna, el que lo enseña todo aun antes de aprenderlo, el Singular, Top Banana, el uno de Plotino, Adán, Nonpareil, el Antiguo, Ichi-ban, Número Uno, Unamuno. Salve. Yo, el Dos, el Yang de tu Yin, Eng de tu Chan, el Gran Paso, el Discípulo, el Plural, Number Two, Second Banana, Dos Passos, el 2, te saludo, ya que voy a morir. Pero no quiero morir solo. Sigamos siendo, como dijo el iluminado Códac, los gemelos, los Jimaguas ñáñigos de Eribó, dos amigos y ven conmigo (pp.404-405.

What this means in part is that in practice they represent two parallel aspects of the character of Lewis Carroll, his love of numbers and his love of words, along with the tendency to engage in creative play with both. As such each of them represents a part of Cabrera Infante's own self-image.

In their discussion of what it means to be a contradictorio, Silvestre says, "Lo cierto es que ni tú ni yo somos contradictorios. Somos idénticos, como dijo tu amiga Irenita." To which Cué replies, "¿La misma persona? Una binidad. Dos personas y una sola contradicción verdadera" (p.419). Apparently what is happening is that in returning to the origins man has returned to a stage prior to the distinction between the sexes, to the time before the creation of Eve, and yet he is in need of some sort of participation in the primordial rhythmic union of opposites which is essential in any creation. The first two chapters of Genesis are full of pairs of opposites--darkness and light, sun and moon, land and waters, day and night, chaos and order--and it is only at the end of the initial creative act that Adam and Eve are created as opposites. Even then she is made, not of the dust of the ground as he is, but from his rib, indicating that ultimately she is a part of him. This idea is perpetuated in the myth of the hermaphrodite. In my opinion the artist creating Tres tristes tigres is implying that if this is possible it is also possible for man to externalize a part of himself which is his opposite in some sense other than sex.

The development of this in the case of Silvestre and Cué takes the form of play, and specifically humorous word play. This is their version of the creative act which takes place in the union of opposites, as distinguished from the type of creativity which results from the union of man and woman. Word play would appear to be out of character for Cué, who strongly states his aversion to searching for wholeness in language, which is constantly changing, and even takes the part of Judas by leaving the gathering of friends dominated by Bustrófedon during his last week (pp.214-215). But the fact is that Cué, especially in the last third of the book, finds himself unable to maintain his unchangeable position, because, as has been stated, two and two no longer equal four, and, while he resists it, he is more and more captivated by Bustrófedon and his methods.

Robert Ardrey, in The Social Contract, quotes J.M. Burghers to the effect that "play is a game with the environment, linking the organism with the future, in which decision-making is exercised without too great a penalty for deciding wrong."[17] This is obvious in the case of young animals, which play at hunting and fighting, and in stone-age children, who make their weapons and also play at hunting, but what does it mean for sophisticated adults in an apocalyptic age? I submit that, even though it may be as unconscious and instinctive as pouncing on one another is to lion cubs, Cabrera Infante's characters are engaged

in what is in the final analysis a deadly serious "game with the environment," in which they too are attempting to prepare themselves for an uncertain future. When the destruction and renewal of the apocalypse are in progress all men stand in a new relationship to a new environment, just as does the young of any species at birth; he must learn to cope with it. This in essence is the meaning of Toffler's Future Shock--that modern man is under pressure to adapt himself quickly enough to the changes taking place in his world.

Play typically is carried on within certain limits and certain rules agreed upon by the participants, but it is also notoriously creative. Eric Hoffer is fond of pointing out that some of man's greatest inventions were toys before they became items of practical usefulness. What happens in Tres tristes tigres is that the reader and the characters are aware of the rules but find that creativity continually transcends them, often to the bafflement of both. This is apocalyptic play, for rather than honing the skills of the participants in certain set procedures which will be employed within the rules in later life, it aims at exhausting all possibilities in all directions, since reality is not stable and the future is an enigma.

The best example of this is seen in Silvestre's and Cué's experience with Magalena and Beba. The unspoken rules of the situation are rigidly followed at first; that is, the girls walk down the street and are spotted by the men in their convertible.

Cué stops and induces them to get into the car. The car too is a zone marked off for a certain type of play, given the presence there of two couples in the Havana night, and for some time it does take place. But something which neither Silvestre nor Cué fully understands begins to cause them to break the unspoken rules, as the two of them appear to be more interested in making the girls laugh than in seducing them. When Cué, actor that he is, does appear to become serious about it, the entire effort becomes a shambles. There are the romantic commonplaces which he certainly can handle with ease, but they are mixed with humor: "Beba de mi alma, te llevaré aquí, en el pecho, siempre, junto a mi cartera .... A Beba ... mi poema, hecho de corazón y otras entrañas" (p.375). Before he narrates the poem Silvestre calls its recital "the Greatest Show in Hearse" (p.375). This comment, taken together with the one immediately following the poem--"El Mercury se transformó en Pegaso" (p.379)--is significant. Their original attempt at an erotic adventure is dead. Mercury is the god who delivers the souls of the dead to Charon, who ferries them across the river, while Pegasus is the horse of the muses.

Cué's poem, far from being calculated to lay hold of the romantic propensities of the girls, is a collection of linguistic tricks, employing at least eight different languages. The girls are incapable of speaking even one very well, and needless to say, they are left cold. Immediately there are hints of lesbianism: Cué refers to Beba as Lesbia several times in the

poem (pp.376-377), and Silvestre shortly afterward says, "Muchos de mis mejores amigos son mujeres" (p.380). Later the two men agree that Beba is a lesbian (p.399), but the question remains as to whether she appears that way only because of their approach to her.

In any event their course is set. Silvestre says, "Pero ya no había quien nos detuviera" (p.384), and admits that their efforts to impress the girls are a total failure. He then remarks: "Sin embargo, seguíamos haciéndoles cosquillas, ligando bromas de Falopio, hilarando un chiste-tras-otro. ¿Por qué? Quizá porque Arsenio y yo estábamos divertidos. Posiblemente quedara algo todavía de alcohol estilístico en nuestras venas humorísticas. O estábamos alegres por la facilidad ... " (pp.386-387).

Up to this point they have simply been swept along with the current, without thinking through what they are doing, but later, after a particularly dull reaction on the part of the girls, Silvestre says, "Creo que fue entonces cuando nos preguntamos, tácitamente (a la manera de Tácito decía siempre Bustrófedon), por qué hacerlas reir. ¿Qué éramos? ¿Clowns, el primero y el segundo, enterradores entre risas o seres humanos, personas corrientes y molidas, gente? ¿No era más fácil enamorarlas? Era, sin duda, lo que esperaban" (p.391). All the elements of what has really been going on are in this statement. The spiritual presence of Bustrófedon in the car, their semi-deliberate role as clowns--that is, those who make a serious profession of

play--rather than common, ordinary people, and their penchant for breaking the unspoken rules of the game, rules which doubtless existed in the mind of the girls.

Later Silvestre and Cué enter into a discussion regarding the so-called contradictorios, who "siempre hacían lo contrario de lo que se esperaba de ellos" (p.407). In an article entitled "Centenario en el espejo," Cabrera Infante speaks about the contradictorios and adds to what we can glean from the novel concerning them. He remarks that the sociologist Pitirim Sorokin discovered them, and that, among other things, "eran dados a hacer chistes, bromas ligeras y pesadas, farsas, tomaduras de pelo." After remarking that they spent whole days without speaking or went on speaking for days without stopping, he presents Lewis Carroll (whom he prefers to call by his real name, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson) as a magnificent example. As one instance of this type of behavior he speaks of "las memorias de una joven actriz de quince años, que pasó una vez una temporada con Dodgson en la playa. 'Se pasaba las noches enseñándome silogismos y juegos de lógica,' escribe ella no sin malicia, 'mientras afuera sonaba una orquesta en la glorieta y la luna brillaba en el mar'."[18] This incident clearly is the source for the antics of Silvestre and Cué, both of whom, as I have remarked, embody some characteristics of Lewis Carroll, and form "una sola contradicción verdadera" (p.419).

In Silvestre and Cué there is even an attempt to attain

pure play, the apotheosis of the means to the exclusion of the end. In a paraphrase of an old Abbot and Costello joke, which appears on p.392, Silvestre includes in his narration the following exchange:

> "Estamos hablando de literatura, ¿no?"
> . . . . .
> "Jugando con la literatura."
> "¿Y qué tiene de malo eso?"
> "La literatura, por supuesto" (p.416).

The movement in the dialogue is from the assumption that the content--the presumably serious subject of literature--is the focal point of what is basically an equally serious discussion, to the affirmation that the content is only a necessary evil, and that play itself is what ultimately matters. This calls to mind the earlier statement that "la literatura no tiene más importancia que la conversación" (p.257); that conversation, in turn, is seen as kaleidoscopic play, a dazzling though often zany display of inventiveness in language which, though not of a very deep philosophical import, nevertheless tries everything on for size.

We have examined the apocalypse in terms of its dual thrust of revelation and cataclysm. The two are in fact closely related; I have indicated that the play in Tres tristes tigres has to do with fitting its characters for their role in a new world, while part of the destruction of the old one involves the unmasking of its various illusions. The fact is that the root of "illusion" is "ludere," "to play," and it would appear that the reason for

the scarcity of solidly rational content is that the characters are in reality engaged in creating, not something free from illusion, but a new reality based on new illusions. Marcia Cavell, in her aforementioned article in Saturday Review, states, "The liberation that the spokesmen for the New Left and for the new theology speak about will celebrate illusion--defined as all that which our culture leaves out--feeling, fantasy, and dream--as the true reality."[19] While this refers most specifically to the culture of the United States, it certainly has application as well to the one in which Cabrera Infante's characters are involved.

This novel, then, opens with the creation of a somewhat illusionary world, moves through its development (the "Tower of Babel," Cué's rebirth experience, Silvestre's childhood story, etc.) into the "messianic age," and ends after a lengthy development of the apocalypse, in "el silencio de la última noche" (p. 444).[20] It falls naturally into three main divisions. The development stage runs from p.21 to p.134 and takes in "Los debutantes" and "Seseribó." The middle third goes from p.135 to p.290 and includes "La casa de los espejos," "Los visitantes," "Rompecabeza," "La muerte de Trotsky" and "Algunas revelaciones." The final section, running from p.291 to p.447, is entitled "Bachata." Each of these divisions ends with someone's going to bed. At the end of the first section it is Códac lying down on the edge of the bed occupied by La Estrella (p.132). The second section has Códac and Rine taking the girls to a

beach hotel (p.288), and the third concludes with Silvestre's thoughts as he ends his long night with Cué. This scheme is further supported by the fact that the refrain, "en silencio," which Silvestre employs near the end of the novel, is also seen in Códac's narration near the end of the first division. In view of the fact that the author is clearly following a pattern of what we might term Heilsgeschichte, it is natural that he should divide such history in terms of the biblical division into the messianic age and the periods preceding and following it. Secondly, given the author's great interest in the number three, one might expect to find such a division.

Beyond this, my reason for including the "Los visitantes" section with the one centering in Bustrófedon is that it sets the stage for what the latter is attempting to do with language. Códac refers to Bustrófedon's theory that "al revés de lo que pasó en la Edad Media, que de un solo idioma, como el latín o el germano o el eslavo salieron siete idiomas diferentes cada vez, en el futuro estos veintiún idiomas ... se convertirían en uno solo, imitándo o aglutinándose o guiados por el inglés" (p.221). "Los visitantes" is supposed to consist of two translations of a short story written by William Campbell, the first an excellent one done by Silvestre and the second a hilarious series of blunders ostensibly by Rine Leal (pp.438-440). The point is that Rine's translation is in a Spanish which is to all intents and purposes destroyed by the English which it purports

to translate, and therefore leads perfectly into Bustrófedon and his theory.

It is apparent that Tres tristes tigres consists of a prologue, an epilogue and a main body which falls naturally into three parts and is punctuated by eleven vignettes dealing with someone's confessions to a psychiatrist. In several cases the headings which appear on an otherwise blank page do not indicate the limits of a section, though in some cases they do. The title "La muerte de Trotsky ... ," for example, serves only to introduce a portion of what is in reality all within "Rompecabeza," as does "Algunas revelaciones." In the former case Códac narrates the way in which the parodies came to be recorded and places them after the full-page heading. Then the parody breaks down into taped conversation and finally into a resumption of the narration of other matters. The same is true of the latter, in which the page serves as a heading, perhaps to give more importance to what Códac has already introduced, and when the "revelations," consisting of several blank pages, are ended, narration is resumed without another title page. By the same token, Códac's narration of the story of La Estrella, the divisions of which are indicated in each case by the title "Ella cantaba boleros" at the top of the page, are scattered throughout what I have called the first two main divisions.

It will be seen, then, that far from lacking a structure, the book is rather carefully laid out, both in terms of the

linear progression of content and with respect to symmetry, so that those who feel that the book is so formless that its parts may be rearranged in any order, or those who feel that the final third corresponds to the "capítulos prescindibles" of Julio Cortázar's Rayuela, have missed the underlying order, which is created largely through the skillful handling of language. The error may lie in the assumption that where there is apparent chaos it is fruitless to look for order, but one need look no further than the biblical book of Revelation to learn that this is not necessarily true. It is a series of difficult-to-interpret visions reflecting the situation in a world which is coming apart, but the point which St. John is attempting to make is that the divine plan is an orderly pattern behind the chaos. The hidden structure reflects this conviction, for the book, when examined carefully, falls naturally into seven divisions.

In a new journal published by Cuban exiles and entitled El alacrán azul, there appears a story by Cabrera Infante entitled "Meta-final," which purports to give the true story of La Estrella's "burial." In his introduction the author explains that he had intended to include it in Tres tristes tigres but that it would have disturbed the symmetry of the book.[21] This statement alone would be sufficient to disprove the idea that there is no structure. In my opinion Cabrera Infante is not referring to the length of the book, nor to the length of the

third main division, but to the fact that in his final plan the story of La Estrella is concluded before "Bachata" begins, that is, before the apocalyptic play can get underway.

In addition, there is symmetry in that several stories begun in the opening third of the book are concluded in the last third, among them that of Cué's "death and resurrection," the question of Vivian's virginity, and the relationship between Beba and Magalena. There are also two versions of what happened to Silvestre on his way to the movies as a child, one in each of these sections.

Having examined the careful manner in which the book is structured, we can see how applicable is the statement by Alain Robbe-Grillet which was quoted at the beginning of this chapter, to the effect that a work is often judged formless if it fails to correspond to the currently accepted concepts of what form should be. Tres tristes tigres is a novel which could not be consistent with its physical and spiritual setting if it possessed what is generally considered to be an orderly structure. It reflects a world which is disintegrating, and must therefore reflect this chaotic situation in its composition. However, it is equally important to realize that this world, and Cabrera Infante's characters within it, are searching for a way in which some sort of order may be imposed upon the situation. Fundamentally, their search takes on a mythic character, and this in turn is what provides the novel's underlying structure.

VI. QUEST IN THE NIGHT

If behind the apparently chaotic presentation of the narration there is order, there is order as well behind the apparently aimless activities of the characters. There appears to be little substance to the lives of any of the major characters, although from their standpoint they might appear to be nearly ideal. Silvestre is a writer who has not written for some time, and Cué is an actor who is out of work. Their activity appears to consist largely of searching for girls, getting drunk and, especially near the end of the book, engaging in word play and light philosophizing. Códac and Eribó both work throughout the novel, but their real interests appear to lie in the realm of hedonism. Yet, speaking of Cué's maniacal love of speed, Silvestre says,

> No quería devorar los kilómetros como se dice ... , sino que estaba recorriendo la palabra kilómetro y pensé que su intención era pareja a mi pretensión de recordarlo todo o a la tentación de Códac deseando que todas las mujeres tuvieran una sola vagina ... o de Eribó erigiéndose en el sonido que camina o el difunto Bustrófedon que quiso ser el lenguaje. Éramos totalitarios: queríamos la sabiduría total, la felicidad, ser inmortales al unir el fin con el principio (pp.317-318).

The search for immortality is what moves them, in the midst of the realization that it is not only an age which is dying, but they themselves as well. When Códac hears of Bustrófedon's death and exclaims, "Carajo todo el mundo se muere" (p.221) it

has a wider reference than the concept "Everyone (I know) is dying." It means also that "everyone dies" and that "the whole world"(in the sense of the present world order) "is dying." The particular aspect of death which bothers the characters most is the loss of identity which is involved. When Silvestre and Cué are examining the great fish Cué remarks that both fish and people change names when they die: "pez" becomes "pescado" and "Silvestre" becomes "cadáver" (p.351). The identity is gone, and if Robert Ardrey's theory is true that man's most basic need is not security but identity,[1] then it can easily be seen how this becomes a central preoccupation. Códac says that he hates nothing so much as being forgotten (p.287), and, significantly, Cabrera Infante makes the comment that "nadie muere realmente mientras no está olvidado" (Un oficio del siglo XX, p.522). Silvestre says, "Eso tiene la muerte, que hace de todos los muertos una sola sombra larga. Eso se llama eternidad. Mientras la vida nos separa, nos divide, nos individualiza, la muerte nos reúne en un solo muerto grande" (p.403). In fact, life is to be viewed as only a parenthesis opened within eternity (p.334).

At one point Silvestre queries "si avanzamos hasta Sardis o regresamos al mar" (p.361); that is, whether he and Cué are on the road to rebirth or are simply moving inexorably towards death, since Sardis is the church which Christ describes as being dead while it thought itself alive (Rev. 3:1). The central question of all the discussion in this third main division of

the book is whether or not it is possible by some means to avoid the one-way trip which ends in annihilation, not only of one's existence but of his very name.

The fear is that there may be no way out, that life cannot be recycled. Three times Silvestre and Cué refer to sonnets of Quevedo in which he presents life as ending in dust. The first reference is by Silvestre as he expresses one of his impressions of the sea: "El mar nos rodea, el mar nos envuelve y finalmente el mar nos lava los bordes y nos aplana y nos gasta como a los guijarros de la costa y nos sobrevive, indiferente, como el resto del cosmos, cuando somos arena, polvo de Quevedo" (p.307). Later Cué quotes the last lines of one of the sonnets: "Tú y yo juntamente en tierra, en humo, en polvo, en sombra, en nada" (p.333). Again, Silvestre refers to "el polvo sideral y enamorado de Quevedo" (p.345). The reference in this case is to a sonnet, the tercets of which read as follows:

> Alma a quien todo un Dios prisión ha sido,
> venas que humor a tanto fuego han dado,
> medulas que han gloriosamente ardido,
> su cuerpo dejarán, no su cuidado;
> serán ceniza, mas tendrán sentido,
> Polvo serán, mas polvo enamorado.[2]

Cué chooses Quevedo's more pessimistic poem, the one which has man ending in nothingness, while Silvestre stays with the one which views the force of the will in love as able to survive even the destruction of the body. Survival through love, however, does not appear to be the solution for Silvestre (although near the end of the novel he announces his plans to marry); he

states, however jokingly, that no woman is worth the trouble any more; only the sea is worth it (p.310). And, in effect, the sea takes on much more importance than women in the "Bachata" division.

However, the sea is only Silvestre's way of arriving at what he calls "uniting the end with the beginning." Each of the five main characters (if we include Bustrófedon as a character) has his own version of the quest, the fundamental goal of which is the personalization of the myth of the eternal return;[3] personalization because for them it is not enough to know that nature and history run in cycles if they are to be gone and forgotten. It is curious that the latest novelists in Latin America are often found dealing with such issues, while apparently the philosophers as such have abandoned metaphysics as a legitimate field of inquiry.[4] Although novelists such as Carlos Fuentes and Cabrera Infante at times ridicule the superficiality of the tone of their own characters' discussions, the fact remains that their discussions do tend to wrestle with the fundamental questions that deal with reality, and the attainment of immortality through constant renewal.

A great deal has been said in recent years concerning the concept of the artist as prophet. The prophetic role is a dual one, consisting both of forth-telling, or the proclamation of a message critical of a society, and of foretelling, or prediction of what is to come. Both are present in the new Spanish American novel, and it would appear that the trend towards metaphysical

concerns represents the firm reaction of the artist against an age which is so technologically oriented that it has forgotten that man has a soul. It is significant too that this move should appear in what is often called the Third World, while the capitalist world and the communist world are still locked in various races involving technology. It is as if the prophets of the developing nations are expressing the heart cry of modern man while the developed countries are too involved in competition to pause and consider their needs to as great a degree.

The metaphysical preoccupations of these authors tend to support the findings of both Freud and Jung concerning factors which are held in the unconscious and at last are able to express themselves. Jung feels that dream symbolism is the language of the unconscious, by which that aspect of the mind communicates with the conscious in an attempt to make up for a deficiency and maintain a balance. Freud, on the other hand, stressed the fact that verbal slips often reveal what has been suppressed by the individual making them. Taken together, these two conceptions go a long way toward explaining both the mythic qualities and the use of language in these recent Spanish American works, including Tres tristes tigres. It would appear that the spiritual longings of an entire generation were tumbling out in the speech of these characters, characters who are more mythic than realistic and therefore are able to serve as

projections of the unconscious mind of their age.

In view of Bustrófedon's exalted position in Tres tristes tigres, we might expect his particular version of the quest for immortality to be the focal point of a good deal of the discussion, and this is the case, especially for the two characters whose own version occupies more than one-third of the book. Silvestre is described as Bustrófedon's disciple (pp.214,223) and serves as the chief proponent of his theories, while Cué resists those ideas. After he has sketched the nature of the quest for each of the five characters, Silvestre says, "Todos nos equivocamos, todos menos, quizás, Bustrófedon que ahora podía ser inmortal" (p.318).

Bustrófedon's philosophy has already been discussed to some degree. Basically it is an attempt to cope with the implications of death, which he conceives as a journey through the looking glass. He feels that personal immortality may be achieved by making oneself able to pass freely from one side of it to the other--that is, to unite death with some form of life. This opinion represents his personal theory of what it means to unite the end with the beginning in search of the absolute. The union of the opposites of life and death must lead to a synthesis, which is conscious survival beyond the grave, but without the body. Silvestre has visions of Bustrófedon moving through space at near the speed of light, at which point all is infinite in any event, and perhaps here it is that immortality is found.

Nevertheless, his quest is a linguistic one; Silvestre says that Bustrófedon "quiso ser el lenguaje" (p.318); on the mythic level I believe that he has achieved his goal. If he can become language, he feels, he will exist as long as the human race does, or at least as long as communication by the word goes on within it. The idea is to be perfect language, however, and this is accomplished, he feels by means of the search for, and some sort of union with, palindromes.

As we have already noted, Silvestre feels that Bustrófedon may well have attained his objective. Cué disagrees:

> "¿Tú te acuerdas de los juegos de letras de Bustrófedon?"
> "¿Los palíndromos? No los olvido, no quiero olvidarlos."
> "¿No te parece significativo que no acertara con el mejor, el más difícil y más fácil, con el temible? Yo soy."
> Deletreé, leí de atrás adelante yos oY, antes de decirle:
> "No especialmente. ¿Por qué?"
> "A mí sí," me dijo (p.358).

What Cué is saying is that in his search for immortality in palindromes Bustrófedon has hit many significant ones and missed the only one which really matters, the only palindrome which conceivably, even on Bustrófedon's own terms, could mean permanent existence. This is the most basic affirmation of existence, "Yo soy."

Still, Silvestre is not convinced. He feels that Bustrófedon is language, so that he lives in the work of the writer whenever the latter employs words. Silvestre sees him as the

hero or redeemer whose return is desirable: "Que venga, que debe El venir para que haga bromas con el bromuro. ¿Habrá un limbo de los chistosos? ¿O estará en el Bustrofierno? Si no ¿dónde está? ¿En el cielo?" (p.343). There follows a fairly extensive interior monologue concerning Bustrófedon's present state, but Silvestre feels that whatever it is, he somehow continues to exist.

Shortly thereafter, while he is still lost in thought, Silvestre sees a small bubble form in the windshield of Cué's automobile, and it becomes a stimulus for the thought that in such collections of vapor might be the essence of the great people of history, "y más acá, mucho más acá, casi de este lado del límite, ¿a quién veo? No es un avión no es un pájaro de sombras es Superbustrófedon, que viaja con luz propia y me dice, al oído, a mi oído telescópico, ven ven, cuándo vas a venir y hace sus malas señas y susurra con voz ultrasónica, Hay tanto que ver, es mejor que el aleph, casi mejor que el cine ... " (p.345). At the end of the "Bachata" section Silvestre is still wishing Bustrófedon could be with them so that there would be three persons (p.442). The fact is, of course, that he is with them as they converse, and especially when they employ language as he did. On the last page of his narration Silvestre is still wondering "si Bustrófedon estaría ... en expansión con las señales de su espectro corriéndose hacia el rojo" (p.445). (The reference, of course, is to the so-called Doppler effect, in

which the light coming from a star which is moving away shifts to the red side of the spectrum.)

The effect of Silvestre's opinion of Bustrófedon is to make the latter very much alive in his imagination if nowhere else, so much so that at one point Cué says to him, "¿Por qué no entierras a Bustrófedon? Comienza a apestar" (p.402). Although Silvestre may be thought of as Bustrófedon's disciple, he still holds to his own theories with regard to the use of the word. Cué says, "Hay quienes ven la vida lógica y ordenada, otros la sabemos absurda y confusa. El arte (como la religión o como la ciencia o como la filosofía) es otro intento de imponer la luz del orden a la tinieblas del caos. Feliz tú, Silvestre, que puedes o crees que puedes hacerlo por el verbo" (p.334). It is this conviction on Silvestre's part which makes him say that he doesn't want to forget Bustrófedon's palindromes (p.358). Of nearly equal importance with the word for him is the concept of memory and its ability to return him to the beginning. He, more than the others, is aware of the doctrine of the eternal return. The first good example of this appears on the first page of the "Bachata" section, in which there is a vision of "all things new" (p.293), a return to the primordial state. Before long there is his summary of the ideas of Cué, who he says speaks of buildings as if they were human beings: "Las casas se construyen con una gran esperanza, en la novedad, una Navidad y luego crecen con la gente que las habita y decaen y finalmente son

olvidadas o derruidas o se caen de viejas y en su lugar se levanta otro edificio que recomienza el ciclo. ¿Linda, verdad, esa saga arquitectónica?" (p.302). Although this concept may appeal to him in its abstract form, as a principle applied to human beings it bothers him, since he, like Unamuno, has no use for any sort of immortality which fails to leave his own personality and consciousness intact. This is why he is disturbed by the rays in the aquarium, each of which lives only a short time and is immediately replaced by another one indistinguishable from the first; no given ray has any permanent identity, any more than the fish which becomes simply "fish" or the man with a name who becomes "a corpse." For him there may be places in space where "ya no hay estrellas porque las estrellas perdieron el nombre" (pp.445-45). But it is within the succession of images provoked by the sight of the ray that he gains his vision of the return of Bustrófedon, who could be immortal.

Silvestre does not like San Lázaro Street in Havana, "una calle falsa," which at first looks like a street in one of the elegant European capitals but turns out to be "una de las avenidas más desoladas y feas de la Habana" (p.309). What he is getting at, no doubt, is that for him the doctrine associated with the biblical Lazarus--the resurrection of the body--is the greatest promise possible for him but cannot be believed; for him it is false. Nevertheless, if one looks to his right at just the proper moment he can catch a glimpse of the sea in the

distance. Still, there is the ever-present possibility that the public works officials may become capricious and raise the wall of the Malecón. In that case one would still be able to perceive the sea, but only in the sky, which is its mirror (p.309). Here too the imagery is fairly clear: even in the ruins of Christian doctrine one may contemplate the archetypal symbol of rebirth, in spite of the fact that the insensitive technology of the modern world may obscure one's direct vision of it. It is significant, too, that from the point of view of practicality it might be good to raise the Malecón wall, since at certain times the waves wash over it and drench the automobiles on the street in sea water, so that the use of San Lázaro Street is essential to avoid damage. The point is that for Silvestre the entrance of the sea into Havana is desirable in symbolic terms, so that any attempt to keep it out represents resistance to rebirth.

Even the sea is not an absolute hope for him. As we have seen, it can be an image of "la única cosa eterna," which wears away the land which it surrounds, and does the same to man as it envelops him (p.307). Perhaps this is why it must be associated with memory and the word: "Pensé mirando al puerto que hay alguna relación sin duda entre el mar y el recuerdo. No solamente que es vasto y profundo y eterno, sino que viene en olas sucesivas, idénticas y también incesantes" (p.304). A bit farther on he says, "Pensé que yo era el Malecón del recuerdo"

(p.304). Then within the next few pages he records the following comments: "El mar es otro tiempo o el tiempo visible" (p. 308); "El mar, chico, siempre recomenzando" (p.310); "Arsenio Cué siempre previsible y siempre sorprendente y renovado. Como el mar" (p.317); "Pensé, como Códac, que el mar es un sexo, otra vagina" (p.318).

The predominant connotations of the sea are its symbolism of death and rebirth and its similarity to memory in that it continually returns in successive waves. For Silvestre the writer, whose task is to preserve memories by means of the word, the two concepts are inseparable. If he can be like the sea in his memory and continually return to the origins, then he can attain the immortality symbolized by the sea: "Regreso al útero, viajo al seno materno. Es más cómodo y más seguro y mejor. Es bueno siempre ir atrás .... A mí recordar me gusta más que el mantecado" (pp.403-04).

Going back, however, is ambiguous, since in memory one simply retraces the course of life until he reaches the beginning, or the womb. In union with the sea, however, one must move forward to death before he can recommence the cycle in rebirth. This conflict is not resolved for us by Silvestre; his only concern appears to be the perpetual renewal of this life. It may be that Silvestre has modified the traditional general symbolism of the sea as death and rebirth and has focused his attention specifically on the movement of the waves, which come in to die

and then recede to begin the process again.

It is perhaps inevitable that in stressing memory as a means of salvation Silvestre should be identified to a degree with Marcel Proust, and in fact he is, both explicitly and implicitly. Silvestre is presented as a character with a tendency to prefer illusion to reality at times (perhaps because he is a creative writer); we have already mentioned the scene in which he prefers the artificial beauties on stage to the real ones at his side, and the fact that he is to marry Laura Díaz, the Avon Swan. He states, "Me gusta acordarme de las cosas más que vivirlas .... Puedo vivirlas de nuevo al recordarlas" (p.297). When he and Cué have been discussing whether it is possible to recall the features of a girl with whom one has really been in love, he finds that the moment which he is pursuing will not return:

> Y eso es exactamente lo que hacen preciosos momento y recuerdo. Esta imagen me asalta ahora con violencia, casi sin provocación y pienso que mejor que la memoria involuntaria para atrapar el tiempo perdido, es la memoria violenta, incoercible, que no necesita ni madelenitas en el té ni fragancias del pasado ni un tropezón idéntico a sí mismo, sino que viene abrupta, alevosa y nocturna y nos fractura la ventana del presente con un recuerdo ladrón. No deja de ser singular que este recuerdo dé vértigo: esa sensación de caída inminente, ese viaje brusco, inseguro, lenta ... permite saber que el tiempo, como el espacio, tiene su ley de gravedad. Quiero casar a Proust con Isaac Newton (p.306).

Still, there are several instances in which Silvestre experiences memory stimulation by something which for some reason affects him deeply. The sight of the ray in the tank leads him to reflect about a number of old horror movies, beginning with

Dracula and ending with a frightening recall of La Cosa del Otro Mundo (pp.336-38).

More closely related to Proust's famous "Petite Madeleine" experience is the passage in which Silvestre watches a waiter spreading sawdust in front of the door and finds himself recalling the same type of scene in his childhood, when he witnessed a murder and saw sawdust spread over the blood (pp. 437-38). Oddly, at a point in the book almost exactly as far from the beginning as this story is from the end, he narrates another story in which he is present as a murder takes place. In the early story he is with his brother on the way to the movies and watches the scene in the street, while in the later one he is with his father and watches it in a restaurant. In the first case he remarks, "No puedo recordar por más que quiero el nombre de la película que íbamos a ver, que seguimos a ver y que vimos" (p.42), but in the second it is reversed:

> Seguimos. Llegamos al cine, mi padre pesaroso, yo excitado. Vimos una vieja película de Ken Maynard que entonces era estreno. La serie de El crótalo. La moraleja estética de esta fábula sangrienta es que Maynard de negro, audaz y certero, El crótalo misterioso, malvado, y la muchacha bella y pálida y virtuosa son reales, están vivos. En cambio Cholo y su rival, que eran amigos de mi padre, la sangre en el suelo, el duelo espectacular y torpe pertenecen a las nieblas del sueño y del recuerdo (pp.436-37).

The key to what has happened is found in his next statement: "Algún día escribiré este cuento." It is likely that the one which appears near the beginning of the book is the result of

the contact between his memory and his creative imagination; it is what a writer does with an experience which he recalls, in order to make it a better story for the reader. From the incident which took place when he was with his father he has chosen those aspects which would be interesting to his prospective readers and transformed the rest, in the process reversing what has happened in his memory. This is similar to what takes place in the "Los visitantes" section, in which William Campbell, also invented by Cabrera Infante, invents for himself a wife and a set of characteristics which do not belong to him in "real life." These in turn are different from those others invented for him by the emcee. The end result is the very evident "total fictionality" of the novel and, on the part of the author, a deliberate vagueness as to where the reader can come down with his "willing suspension of disbelief."

There is a curious play of reality and illusion in Silvestre's handling of the story. His "literary" version of it, near the beginning of the novel, is largely invented and therefore is characterized largely by illusion, yet it states that the real events which the child saw remained in his mind while the illusion of the cinema had vanished. The more candid version told to Cué, which presumably reflects more accurately what actually occurred, reveals Silvestre as the lover of illusion which we know him to be, for the movie is more real in his memory than the striking events of real life.

There are hints to the effect that Silvestre is losing his sight, and at one point Cué says to him, "Estás quedándote ciego, coño. Pronto no verás más películas que el recuerdo" (p.353). This is, of course, characteristic of those who go blind; their only visual stimulation comes by way of their memory's re-creation of scenes which they have viewed in the past. The transition from the movies to memory as the most important feature of his life could hardly be made more forcefully. It also represents a movement from light to darkness, which is the movement of the book as a whole. The image apparently has a basis in the situation of the author. On the back jacket of his book Un oficio del siglo XX there is a picture of "Caín"; the name is the pseudonym which Cabrera Infante employed when writing movie reviews for Carteles, and the author states that he has put on dark glasses "para disimular su miopía .... Ahora no parece miope: parece ciego." In the text itself there is a note from Caín to Cabrera Infante which mentions the time "cuando mi vida terminará como la de Edipo: en la ceguera, pero también en la felicidad: ya no tendré más que el recuerdo" (p.277). The significant point is that Oedipus' life ended in self-inflicted blindness, and the only way in which he could be seen as happy is in the fact that he achieved union with his mother. This recalls the statement of Silvestre to the effect that he would go back to his mother's womb. Silvestre is willing to leave women alone, as a waste of time, in order to concentrate on that great

symbol of the mother and, for him, of memory, the sea. There he can return and perhaps recommence the cycle of life, uniting the end with the beginning. In view of this it is puzzling to note that he plans to be married. This would tend to contradict his whimsical philosophizing. The reader is not told which tendency he ultimately follows.

Arsenio Cué, on the other hand, feels that he has already united the end and the beginning, in that his old life ended with the gunshots and the new one began as he entered into his new career as a television star. But now that he is in a period of strained relations with the people at the studio and senses other changes taking place in his life and that of Havana, he is uneasy.

It would be well at this juncture to consider the difference between the concept of the apocalypse, which is characteristic of the Judeo-Christian linear view of time, and the myth of the eternal return, with its possibilities of cataclysm as recycling takes place. Often the two visions are confounded, but, as indicated, one is fundamentally a linear conception and the other fundamentally circular. It is possible to construe the Judeo-Christian doctrine as circular, since it begins and ends with a new, unspoiled earth, but even in this it must be kept in mind that there is only one cycle, not an infinite series of cycles. In many cases the term "apocalyptic" is erroneously used to designate anything simply ominous or cataclysmic, while the true apocalypse involves time's having run its full course from the point of

creation to the point of the "Day of the Lord," after which the universe is released from time and enters eternity again. In contrast, the eternal return implies in its very terminology that time is cyclic and remains so indefinitely. Arsenio Cué in particular holds to the true apocalyptic pattern (though without its theistic implications). From his birth as a poor child he has moved to his symbolic death and into a new dimension which resembles eternity, in that he says, "Ese día de la gracia se detuvo el tiempo. Al menos, para mí" (p.426). Silvestre says of him, "El budismo-zen hablaba de eternidad y él hablaba de momento ... " (p.299).

It is just because he has already moved through the looking glass that Cué is the most cryptic character in the book, even more so than Bustrófedon. As we attempt to analyze it, we must keep in mind that it appears that the author has deliberately kept the data on him obscure in order to keep the reader guessing. The effect, again, is similar to one in every day life in which we gain a few tantalizing bits of information concerning a particularly fascinating person from snatches of conversation, but are unable either to piece together what we have into a meaningful whole or to gain whatever further information would be essential in order to do so. It is also worthy of note that Cabrera Infante mentions the fact that one story which appears in the 1964 edition as narrated by Eribó originally formed one part of Cué's story. In this he is using the word

"story" in the sense of the tale which he is telling, not in the sense of a biography, since "las voces no tienen biografía."[5]

The things which Cué hates are one key to his character. Time, of course, is "lo que más odia Cué" (p.321), but neither does he like memory (p.297), the sea ("Ni a mí ni a mi subconsciente ni a mis miedos atávicos nos gusta el mar," p.314), or Proust (p.326), all of which represent something to do with the movement of time.

What he likes, as discussed previously, are numbers. They presumably remain the same despite the movement of time and whatever happens to the world, and this is his goal for his own life. Silvestre says that "Arsenio Cué estaba tan enamorado de los números como de sí mismo--o viceversa" (p.328), which indicates the close identification between the two--he loves numbers as he loves himself. "El 3 era el Gran Número, casi el Número Uno, porque era el primer número primo, los que no se dejan dividir más que por sí mismos y por la unidad. (Cué dijo la Unidad.)"(p.328). He then discusses what can be done with the number three; it can be squared to make nine, and nine can be added to itself to make eighteen, which is the mirror image of the square of nine, which is eighty-one, "el número en el espejo" (p.328). In other words, he is doing with numbers almost exactly what Bustrófedon has done with words in his palindromes. He speaks of the particular qualities of several other numbers and proceeds to use all the numbers from one to nine in a square

in which the numbers add up to 15 in any direction, including diagonally. He says, "Ahí lo tienes. El cuadrado mágico. Vale tanto como un círculo" (pp.329-30). The statement relates it to Bustrófedon's magic circle as a substitute, making it a sort of square mandala.

Concerning the number fifteen he points out that its digits, when added together, equal six, "el número final," and when one is subtracted from five the total is four, "el primer número del cuadrado" (p.330); that is, the number in the upper left-hand corner of his square (and the number which, as a symbol, indicates squareness). The interesting point to note is that, according to Cirlot's Dictionary of Symbols, "fifteen is markedly erotic and is associated with the devil."[6] As we shall see, this may be one more clue to what has happened to him in his relationship to Vivian Smith-Corona. That Cué's "cuadrado de la vida" (p.330) should add up in any direction to a number associated with the devil is natural, since he stands generally in opposition to the book's messiah, Bustrófedon.

Why six should be viewed as "el número final" is not explained, but it must certainly be related to the fact that Silvestre's title for Cué's discussion of numbers is "La carga de los 666" (p.327). This, of course, is the number of the Beast of Revelation and refers to the final phase of history, so perhaps six, in its three-fold repetition, is for this reason seen as the final number.

Three is a special number, not only for Cué but for the book as a whole. Cué indicates that it is the truly perfect number; he points out to Silvestre that on most typewriters the number sign (#) is above the three (p.329). Cirlot, referring to the findings of Ludwig Paneth, says, "The dynamism and symbolic richness of the number 3 is so exceptional that it cannot be overemphasized."[7] Ultimately this may derive from the fact that anything in the universe which possesses mass must necessarily exist in three dimensions, plus time's existing (in most cultures) as past, present and future, and the doctrine of the Trinity.

It is here that we should consider Silvestre's views of the number three. He expounds the idea that a hexagon is only a cube which has lost its third dimension, so that "cuando el Hexágono encontrara su dimensión perdida y supiéramos cómo lo hizo, podríamos nosotros encontrar la cuarta y la quinta y las demás dimensiones y pasear libremente entre ellas" (p.218). One suspects that it is the fourth which most concerns him, since it is time, and if one could control time he would also have control over life and death. The point of his argument appears to be that without its third dimension the cube is only an abstract figure and has no real existence in the sense of concrete mass. Man's problem, in contrast, is not that he has two dimensions and needs control over the third, but that he has three and needs control over the fourth.

The title of the novel mentions three sad tigers (part of a tongue-twister) and contains three words, all of which begin with "T." As I have indicated, the novel can be broken down into three main divisions, within which there are nine title pages. At Bustrófedon's "Last Supper" scene there are three persons present, and on p.213 alone, when Bustrófedon is at the height of his word play, the word "tres" is used four times and "tercero" once. There are many more significant sets of three in the book, for example the triad of La Estrella, Cuba Venegas and Irenita. At one point Códac says, "Cuento las cosas desagradables que me han pasado esta noche y veo que son tres" (p. 131).

Cué's name even contains three letters, and when something significant happens to him it is often perceived in terms of the sets of three which it contains. He states that "everything happens in threes" (p.155). When speaking of erotic themes he sometimes employs a quick threefold repetition, as in "Nunca la vi más hermosa ... --excepto desnuda excepto desnuda excepto desnuda" (p.150).

Cirlot reproduces the following from the work of Ludwig Paneth with regard to the psychological symbolism of numbers: "When in myths and legends there are three brothers or sisters, three suitors, three trials, three wishes, and so on, the first and second elements correspond broadly to what is already possessed, and the third element represents the magic or miraculous

solution desired and sought after; but this third element may . . . also be negative."[8] This calls to mind the fact that in the last third of Tres tristes tigres there are in reality three characters involved. Two of them--Silvestre and Cué--represent what is already possessed, what is alive and on stage, and the third is Bustrófedon or kaleidoscopic language. For Silvestre Bustrófedon indeed stands for the "magic or miraculous solution desired and sought after," as he often wishes he could return in the flesh to be with them "para ser tres" (p.442). It may well be that the period of time since Bustrófedon's death (that period of time in which for Silvestre the word has not taken on flesh) corresponds to the period of time in which Silvestre has not written. In that case Silvestre's literary contributions to the novel would stand as proof that Bustrófedon has returned. As for Cué, however, his attitude is better expressed by the last phrase of Cirlot's remark, since he sees all too clearly that Bustrófedon, this third element, "may . . . also be negative."

As might be expected, Cué's very name is related to the mystical use of numbers. Silvestre says, "Cué evitó la calle Diecisiete no por superstición, sino porque tenía querencia a Veintiuno, por motivos puramente numéricos y personales ... " (p.368). The thought that someone might desire to avoid Diecisiete on account of superstition is no doubt based on the fact that its digits, one and seven, add up to eight, which, as Cué tells us, means "dead" in Cuban charades (p.328). "Arsenio"

contains seven letters, and "Cué" three. According to Cirlot, seven is "symbolic of perfect order, a complete period or cycle. It comprises the union of the ternary and the quaternary, and hence it is endowed with exceptional value."[9] Since the ternary often symbolizes heaven and the quaternary earth, seven should represent the union of heaven and earth, which in a sense is what has happened to Cué in his experience with the "angels." His rebirth experience has certainly led him through a complete cycle and into perfect order.

According to Paneth, three must be the richest of the numbers in terms of symbolic value.[10] Basically it refers to "spiritual synthesis" and represents "the solution of the conflict posed by dualism . . . . It is the harmonic product of the action of unity upon duality. It is the number concerned with basic principles, and expresses sufficiency, or the growth of unity within itself."[11] When multiplied by seven it produces twenty-one, which Cirlot says "expresses the reduction of a conflict--two--to its solution--unity."[12] The sum of the addition of the two digits of twenty-one is three again; one would be tempted to consider such notions as being far-fetched were it not for the fact that on pages 328-30 of Tres tristes tigres this is precisely the way in which Cué handles numbers.

It is curious to note that Bustrófedon's name contains eleven letters; of this number Cirlot says that it is "symbolic of transition, excess and peril and of conflict and martyrdom.

According to Schneider there is an infernal character about it: since it is in excess of the number of perfection--ten--it therefore stands for incontinence."[13] It may be that it is infernal (and Silvestre wonders if Bustrófedon could be in "el Bustrofierno") because it looks the same not only in the mirror but when inverted, like 101, of which Bustrófedon says, "La eternidad no lo cambia y como quiera que uno lo mira es siempre él mismo" (p.214). It might also be noted that Cué makes a good deal of the fact that his birthday is on the 22nd of the month and that his full name (which is never given) adds up to twenty-two, the double of eleven (p.312).

From the foregoing may be seen the complexity of the use of numbers in the novel and an explanation of Arsenio Cué's obsession with them. It is as if he were attempting to gain immortality through them. His great desire to remain the same in the present is tied closely to his total change in the past, which, as related by him, is full of sets of three. He knocks three times at the door (p.53), has not eaten for three days (p.54), and hears three gunshots, which he associates with the three knocks by which St. Anthony warns his followers of their impending death (p.60). Then, in his conclusion to the story he tells of looking up to heaven (which, as mentioned, is associated with the number three) and seeing three lamps, which turn out to be only one (p.423). After this, even Silvestre's questions come in sets of three (p.425).

Nevertheless, even though Cué can still say of numbers that they are "casi en lo único que creo" on one page (p.312), on the next page he runs, presumably because he has been warned in his apocalyptic dream that two and two no longer equal four.[14] At the end of his relation of the dream he says, "Sigo corriendo" (p.314), which has reference not only to the dream, which by virtue of this concluding statement is open-ended, but to his life in general. As he and Silvestre are driving around the latter makes his remark, already quoted, concerning the rich, surrounded by all possible means of escape, "el paraíso de los Cué" (p.320). He also remarks that "Cué tenía esa obsesión del tiempo. Quiero decir que buscaba el tiempo en el espacio y no otra cosa que una búsqueda era nuestros viajes continuos, interminables, un solo viaje infinito por el Malecón" (p.296). It is in this that Silvestre's identification of the two of them with famous explorers, discoverers and conquerors takes on meaning. In their case, however, it is a quest for the infinite and the quest itself therefore becomes endless.

The nature of the project for Cué is complex. He has rejected "the word" as a means of imposing order on chaos and says, "Yo me ocupo de los sonidos" (p.359), thereby placing himself closer to La Estrella than to Bustrófedon. The section dealing with the quest is entitled "Bachata," which is a Cuban expression for a game or joke, but has reference as well to the fact that at the beginning of the section there is a discussion

of Bach and other composers. It appears that Cué is attempting to take sound along with him by means of the radio in his car (which is a "máquina del tiempo"), and by means of speed to convert time (which he hates) into space; he says, "Lo que tiene de embriagador la velocidad es que convierte un acto físico en experiencia metafísica: la velocidad transforma el tiempo en espacio" (p.324). And Silvestre remarks that "él, Cué, era la velocidad" (p.299).

In today's apocalyptic literature of Spanish America there is sometimes visible an effort to achieve a new beginning by the recovery of the primordial rhythm of the universe in the union of opposites. It would appear that Cabrera Infante has laid hold of the principle of modern physics that at infinity certain concepts are unified. Silvestre says of Cué, "Decía que había veces en que el carro y la carretera y él mismo desaparecían y los tres eran una sola cosa, la carrera, el espacio y el objeto del viaje" (p.299). That is, he must have reached--at least psychologically--the point of infinity, for it is there that mass becomes infinite, and one would suspect that therefore all matter would be one. Silvestre describes the ride as follows: "Dejábamos el camino de Santa Fe, el oeste, a sesenta, a ochenta, a cien y el pie de Cué, ávido, buscaba hacer de la ruta un abismo por la velocidad, que era ya una aceleración, caída libre. Seguía corriendo, viajando en su precipicio horizontal" (p.355), and then he remarks, "Sabes que quieres

continuar la carrera hasta encontrar no La Habana, sino la cuarta dimensión," to which Cué replies by referring to Moebius, the character in Greek mythology who placed a belt around the earth (pp.355-56). However, several times Cué's quest is halted by traffic signals, which by this act become metaphysical phenomena: "Nos detuvo una luz (el tiempo convencional que interrumpe la natural solución de continuidad del espacio)" (p.372).

Cué is another example of the fact that characterization and structure in this novel are very closely related to the skillfully handled language. Beyond representing Lewis Carroll's love of play with numbers, Cué is an astoundingly complex collage of characters drawn from other novels, and it is only occasional innocent-appearing allusions to them which serve as clues. The reader must take the connections, go back to the characters in question, and piece together from them a part of what Cué really is.

Perhaps the most nearly obvious of these sources is Menegildo Cué, the protagonist of Alejo Carpentier's Ecué-Yamba O. Menegildo's father is Usebio Cué, and the plot involves the son's process of growing up, finding an identity in Afro-Cuban religious rites, uniting with the woman he loves, and his violent and unexpected death. The young man moves from the country to the big city, as does Arsenio Cué. Carpentier clearly intends to relate his Usebio Cué to the deity Ekué, and Cabrera Infante does the same with his character Arsenio (p.349).

Although it would appear that Arsenio Cué always attempts to avoid any connection with his humble origins, Silvestre narrates an incident which is revealing in that it demonstrates what lies hidden beneath the rather polished surface of his life:

> Fui un día a su casa, al cuarto del solar donde vivía, con Jesse Fernández, a retratarlo, y me tiró los caracoles en una ceremonia secreta, a oscuras, en su cuarto en penumbras al mediodía con una velita alumbrando los cauris en una versión afrocubana de un ritual órfico y recuerdo las leyendas, los secretos de la tribu decía él, africanas, cubanas ya, que me contó. Tres (p.339).

It is also worthy of note that Eribó says that one time he met him coming down the street and speaks of his "difícil paso zambo" (p.100), which indicates that even his mannerisms reveal his ethnic origins. In the incident related by Silvestre, he does say, "En la única magia en que cree es la brujería de los números" (p.339), but the background is there, and it would appear that this snatch of memory on Silvestre's part represents a deliberate attempt on the part of Cabrera Infante to relate Cué to Carpentier's character.

Another probable literary source for Cué is found in Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita. Cabrera Infante, judging from his interviews, is a great admirer of Nabokov's writing, and, incongruous though it may seem, he apparently found another source for the name Cué in the latter's character Clare Quimby, who is repeatedly called "Cue" by Humbert Humbert in the course of the narration. Cue is a playwright by profession, but also an

actor, like Cué; he has written The Enchanted Hunters, the title of which becomes an important motif in the novel. He is also the one who entices the young Lolita away from Humbert and is murdered for his trouble. Considering the fact that there are too many correspondences between Quimby and Cué to be considered coincidental, it would appear that we must consider the fact that Cué's character is based not only on that of Menegildo Cué, with his ties to Afro-Cuban religion, but also to this rather redoubtable personage in Lolita. Also, this is the third novel connected in some way with Cué in which a major character obtains the girl he wants and dies soon afterward. Viewed in the light of his great fear of death this becomes significant; in fact, it turns out to be one key to the more puzzling aspects of his behavior.

The question arises as to whether there is a girl who represents this kind of danger to Cué. It is answered in part by reference again to Lolita, who becomes Humbert Humbert's obsession. She is near the age of fifteen when lost to Quimby, and this is the age of Vivian Smith Corona at the time of the narration (p.17; but Eribó says she is about sixteen, p.93). Vivian may even be connected by way of her name to the "enchanted hunters" theme, in that Vivian is the name of the legendary enchantress who placed a spell on Merlin. It should be noted that her age corresponds to the sum of the numbers in any direction on Cué's magic square.

It is at this juncture that we may examine the meaning of the libretto-like story which precedes Eribó's rather lengthy narration concerning his relationships with various women, and especially with Vivian. The story, little over a page long, is said to have its source in the "Rito de Sikán y Ekué (de la magia afrocubana)" (p.90). It deals with an overly-curious girl named Sikán, who breaks her tribal tabu by both hearing and seeing the river god Ekué. When others refuse to believe her, she brings him home in a jar, with the result that he dies, probably of mortification. Her crime is punished by death, and the skins of the two of them are used to construct the seseribó. Since Cué, as mentioned, is linguistically related to Ekué, and Eribó is called "Sese Eribó" (pp.307 and 410), it is natural to consider that both of them are alluded to in the use of the story, and this is confirmed by the fact that both play a part in the long narration which follows. It also becomes clear that Vivian takes the part of Sikán (and some of the letters of "Vivian Smith-Corona" can easily be taken as an acronym to form "Sikán" if we allow the "C" to become a "K," as it does when "Ekué" becomes "Cué.")

The problem arises when one attempts to assign the other part, that of Ekué, who, with Sikán, becomes seseribó. We appear to be starting with one of the novel's characters and ending with another. The answer is that, on the mythic level--that is, insofar as their stories parallel that of the Afro-Cuban

rite--the two form one dual personality, and in the Jungian sense it would appear that Eribó may serve as Cué's shadow, in that he acts out the tendencies in Cué which the latter considers dangerous and represses. As to what are those dangerous tendencies, it should be noted that in the two novels which we have considered as probable sources for Cué the protagonists obtain the women they want and then die shortly thereafter. While it is true that the same pattern occurs in any number of novels in world literature, it would appear to be significant here, especially when we consider that it also forms a major part of the impact of what may be Cué's favorite novel. This is Hemingway's Across the River and Into the Trees, which Cué calls "esta novela conmovedora y triste y alegre que es uno de los pocos libros de veras sobre el amor que se han escrito en el siglo" (p.147). By this statement he may be indicating that in his opinion love is associated with death, for in Hemingway's novel the protagonist, Colonel Cantwell, knows from the beginning that he has little time left.

If this is the case, then it must be that Cué fears too close an attachment to Vivian because he fears death, and he allows Eribó to take his place in actively pursuing her. His attitude towards women is illustrated in his statement to Silvestre: "Sabes mejor que nadie que no fui novio de Sibila, que nunca soy novio de nadie, que detesto la palabra como odio la relación" (p.433).

But before pursuing this specific question further let us establish the relationship between the two characters Cué and Eribó. The author makes the interesting statement that the story dealing with Eribó's visit to his boss to ask for a raise originally formed a part of Cué's story. This in itself would tend to indicate that the two characters have some sort of close connection in the author's mind. The story puts a good deal of stress on the ascent of the stairs leading to the exalted realm of the boss. As we have seen, the ascent of staircases plays a large part in Cué's life, since one ascent results in his death and rebirth and another in his special revelation of the artificiality of his girl friends.

It is clear that the concept of ascent is important to both Cué and Eribó, and in fact plays a major part in the whole "Seseribó" narration. When Vivian initiates the relationship between herself and Eribó she does so by saying, "Sube a buscarme" (p.94). Later he attempts to make a date with Cuba Venegas; he meets her in her dressing room at the Sierra and asks her to go with him to Las Vegas (p.104). Even though he is the one who discovered her as Gloria Pérez and started her on her rise, now that she is at the heights (represented linguistically by the Sierra) she can no longer afford to be seen with him, that is, to descend to Las Vegas, the plains where this mulatto bongo drummer dwells. This metaphor of altitude is used throughout the entire "Seseribó" section to support the general theme of

Eribó's futile effort to raise himself. The altitude theme is supported by other imagery indicative of the class barriers with which he has to deal. He himself says, "No te olvides que soy un bongosero" (p.105), and ironically, no one does. Códac states that on some days he is "un mulatico arrepentido" (p.120). When Vivian calls him he says, "Ella estaba del otro lado, de la parte afuera y había un cristal por el medio" (p.93), and after this reference to an invisible barrier, he remarks, "Entre Vivian y yo había más de una calle a atravesar" (p.106). Cuba speaks to him through the mirror, and when he puts his hands on her shoulders, which are covered with a dressing gown, he says, "No me quitó las manos, sino que se desvistió de mí" (p.104).

Both Cué and Eribó are from poor backgrounds and have Negro blood; the difference is that the former has been successful in his attempt to ascend the ladder of success and the latter has not. And while Cué must search for infinity and thereby an escape from change by attempting to become speed itself, Eribó must content himself with searching for his "high" in music and rhythm: "Tocar el bongó ... era ... como volar ... , viendo el paisaje aplastado, en una sola dimensión abajo ... , estar entre el cielo y la tierra, suspendido, sin dimensión ... " (pp. 111-12). Having lost the desirable women in his life, he must content himself with substituting sound and rhythm for them. Flying is an archetypal symbol of the sex act, and when he finds himself "erigiéndose en el sonido que camina" (p.318), it is as

near as he can come to what he really desires. Silvestre calls him "el Saint Exupery del son" (p.410), and this too relates him to Cué, who also deals with music and sounds rather than words.

There are other subtle connections between the two. In the following quotation Eribó speaks of his attempt to be an actor like Arsenio: "'Dímelo, por favor,' dije yo, tratando de ser tan atento y tan comprensivo y tan desinteresado que parecía el actor más malo del mundo tratando de parecer desinteresado y comprensivo y atento y a la vez hablando a un público que no lo oía. Otro Arsenio Cué" (p.117). Since he is in show business as is Cué, Eribó also tends to perceive reality in terms related to his profession: "Salieron por la sala de juego roja y verde y bien alumbrada y la cortina cayó sobre, detrás de ellos ... " (p.99).

Silvestre notes at one point that "la bebida devolvía a Cué a los orígenes" (p.342), and what happens to him when he is drunk is another key to what has happened to him behind the scenes of the book. When sober he is the epitome of poise; Eribó says of him, "Fino el hombre, teatralmente así" (p.94). But it is not long afterward that he is weeping and generally making a fool of himself. Later he tells Silvestre that when he slept with Vivian they were both drunk (p.432), and it appears that the only way that Silvestre is able even to bring him to the point of confession is by taking advantage of the fact that they have been drinking all evening. In fact, there

is evidence to the effect that drunkenness may be a large part of the reason that Cué, who opposes Bustrófedon, is led to imitate him rather than reacting normally before the girls in his car. Drink reduces Cué's ability to maintain himself above the world, with its phenomena of time and change; it returns him to his origins, and that is precisely what he does not want.

The way in which Cué uses Eribó as his shadow may be seen in the latter's account of Cué's taking him along to the Focsa, where Vivian lives. His reason for going is ambiguous; he says it is just to take a walk around the pool (p.100), and Vivian tells Eribó that he has come to be seen by his admirers (p.101). Later Cué tells Eribó that they might as well go, since Sibila apparently is not going to show up (p.102). Beyond the fact that "Sibila" spelled backward is "alibis," and that the comment is made for Vivian's benefit, there is evidence that he did not really come to see Sibila. He indicates to Silvestre later that he really has little interest in her (p.433).

A possible interpretation, in my opinion, lies in the story of Ulysses and the sirens. Ulysses is anxious to hear their call, but without succumbing to their deadly enticements, so he has himself tied to the mast. It would appear that Cué goes to the pool because, despite his fear of the inseparability of women and death, he is unable entirely to resist Vivian's charms. When he and Eribó arrive, she greets them, like a siren, from the pool (p.100), but Cué is prepared. Despite the fact that

it is a hot day and there is no rain in sight he has his raincoat on. He then uses Eribó in a sense to shield him from Vivian, while he goes and talks to his "húmedas fanáticas" (p. 101), a group of wet girls who themselves might serve as sirens, but who evidently pose much less of a threat to him.

Even the closing act of the scene, which on the surface might be simply an actor's reaction to the mockery of an impertinent youngster, takes on a special significance. It is Sibila's brother Tony who does the mocking, a thrice-repeated "Arsenio Cuacuacua." Cué indicates that Tony is a duck and punishes him by stepping on his fingers. This should be all there is to it, but for the fact that as they leave Cué "sudaba y se quitó los espejuelos y se secó el sudor que corría por su cara." Then he says, "¿Viste?" (p.103). What has happened is that Cué has been forced to remember something, and memory is something which he hates, because it moves him in time, in this case backward. "Tony" is a nickname for "Anthony," and St. Anthony played a significant part in his apocalyptic scene. He is also alluded to in Cué's own three knocks, in his being called St. Anthony by the impresario, and in the association of the three gunshots. Since St. Anthony's three knocks announce one's death, Tony's three quacks remind Cué not only of how close he is to it at this point, in his opinion, but of the similarity of his situation to the one in which he "died." At that point too there was a girl who emerged from a swimming pool to entice

him, so that in this way as well wet girls are associated with death and the return to origins for him. Furthermore, his being associated with a duck must seem ironic to him, since a duck is waterproof.[15]

There is one more case in which Cué is haunted by the appearance of a wet girl. It comes about when he and Silvestre find themselves contemplating the statue in a fountain. There Cué characterizes her as "demasiado limpia para mi gusto" (p.412), perhaps meaning that she is too wet, and a bit later he realizes something and slaps his forehead with his hand (p.413). On p. 425 he explains that the "ninfa mojada" has brought him to the discovery that the Magalena with whom he has been in the car is the same girl who was present at his death and resurrection scene. This, of course, forms part of the apocalyptic character of this portion of the novel, in that Cué too is being returned to his origins, the origins of his new, prosperous life. It is interesting to note, then, this additional light on just why it is that, while he is attracted enough by Magalena to stop and lure her and Beba into the car, he appears instinctively to veer away from serious seduction.

Cué continually wears dark glasses, and at times they appear as a significant bit of imagery.[16] Vivian is very aware of them; she asks Eribó,

> "Pero, ¿tú lo has visto sin espejuelos?"
> "La noche que te conocí"--¿me delataba?--"que los conocí a ustedes."
> "Yo digo de día."

"No recuerdo."

Era verdad. Creo que una o dos veces lo vi trabajando en televisión. Pero no me fijé en sus ojos. Se lo dije a Vivian.

"No digo en televisión. Allí está actuando y es otro. Digo en la calle. Míralo bien la próxima vez que se quite los espejuelos."

. . . . . .

"Jamás me enamoraría de un hombre con esos ojos" (p.102).

Later Silvestre asks Cué, "¿Y Vivian?," meaning, "What about her virginity?," and we read, "Sacó los espejuelos negros y se los puso" (p.426). This is just another way in which Cué attempts to be impenetrable, for he feels that if he can keep intruders from coming into his intimate life they will be unable to extricate him from his element. For him such an intrusion means leaving his own world of changelessness and entering the threatening world of change.

This is the situation of Ekué in the legend presented in in the "Seseribó" section of the novel. He is a god who lives apart from men, in the river. The crime of Sikán is that she not only hears Ekué's sacred sounds but pulls him out of his element causing him to die of humiliation. She has taken him from his privileged--and presumably immortal--position and placed him in the world of normal beings. It is clear from what Vivian tells Eribó about Cué's eyes that she has looked into them and what they symbolize; she has reached the very core of his being somehow, on the night that they spent together. This is what has mortally frightened Cué, so that, while he is still drawn to Vivian he must insulate himself against her. Ironically,

he tells Silvestre that she has used Eribó to make him jealous (p.433). It is ironic in that Cué too has used Eribó, to avoid getting too close to Vivian again himself.

The idea that in every actor there is hidden an actress, apparently a concept invented by someone in the in-group, is applied to Cué a number of times, and at one point Silvestre, who claims to know him well (p.433), repeats it and says, "Sabía que yo no lo acusaba de afeminado ni nada, sino que conocía en parte o todo su secreto" (p.308). The "actress" has to be Vivian. It may be recalled that Lolita too is an actress and it is through her part in his play that "Cue" becomes interested in her.

So Vivian is without Cué and confused. This is her version of the punishment of Sikán, whose skin was made into the silent, decorated drum called seseribó, dedicated to the deity Eribó. It is said of the silent female drum "Pero sobre su parche lleva la lengua del gallo en señal eterna de silencio. Nadie lo toca y solo no puede hablar" (p.90). For Vivian it is only slightly different: "Vivian Smith-Corona es una máquina de escribir. ¿Qué hay en un nombre? En ése está todo. Una exacta máquina de escribir. Pero de exhibición, de las que se ven en la vidriera con un letrero al lado que dice no tocar. No se vende, nadie las compra, nadie las usa. Son para bonito" (p.109).

But Eribó's fate is tied to hers. He cannot touch her (on the mundane, as opposed to the mythic, level, simply because of

race and class barriers), and he cannot "talk" alone either. Since the talking of the bongo is a sexual matter for him anyway, this no doubt is the meaning. His last statement in the "Seseribó" section is "Seré una tumba" (p.119), a double reference to the tomb and to the silent drum seseribó.

There may be a joke on the part of the author in Vivian's existence as a typewriter, since Silvestre, the writer, discovers to his chagrin that he too may be in love with her and is unable to touch her (recall that he hasn't written for a while). He even asks himself, "¿Estaría yo celoso? ¿Era ella mi puzzle de recuerdos que el amor completó?" (p.433). In other words, it is possible that for Silvestre the attempt to "recordarlo todo" may be only the means to an end, and that he has found the ultimate goal in this girl, who, ironically, is a display typewriter. For an author desirous of recording his memories this would be doubly disastrous.

It may be also that if Cué in part plays the role of Clare Quimby, Silvestre takes the part of Humbert Humbert and finds himself in pursuit of the same young girl. He does say, like Humbert (and also like Lewis Carroll), "No me gustan los niños, pero me encantan las niñas" (p.353), and later, when he realizes that he has been considering a girl of twenty-five too old, he says to himself, "Estás loco. Eres un anormal. Un loco sensual, sexual. Terminarás como empezó Humbert Humbert" (pp.369-70). And, as mentioned previously, he wonders if he is jealous of Cué,

who has been successful with Vivian.

Cŏdac's version of the quest for the absolute and immortality has already been discussed to some extent. He says, "La única cosa por que siento un odio mortal es el olvido" (p.287), and in some ill-defined manner his quest takes the form of the search for the archetypal female; Silvestre refers to "la tentación de Cŏdac deseando que todas las mujeres tuvieran una sola vagina" (p.318). It is this obsession which, as mentioned before, leads to the dream in which the images of his favorite girls fade into one another and finally end in La Estrella, with whom he finds himself in bed. But at this point the rather erotic sounding statement made by Silvestre concerning Cŏdac fails to ring true, for La Estrella, as he mentions a number of times, repels him as a prospective sexual partner, even while he forgets all other women and becomes obsessed with her.

It is, in fact, while he is totally lost in a kissing match with Irenita, whom he has just met, that he first sees La Estrella. His captivation is instantaneous, and so compelling that he forgets about Irenita entirely. It would appear that in part the very contrast between the two women has led to his powerful reaction; for a photographer a negative represents a small-size image of the object photographed, with the colors reversed, and this is precisely the relationship of Irenita to La Estrella in Cŏdac's view. Irenita is the small blonde who represents a visual and tactual stimulus, while La Estrella must be heard to

be appreciated, with her visual aspect preferably blacked out. In between the two stands Cuba Venegas, the mulata, neither as light as Irenita nor as dark as La Estrella, between them in size, who sings but not well. In these three Códac has carried Woman to the absolute, by running the gamut from one extreme to the other. It may be also that for him the possession of both the positive and the negative corresponds to Bustrófedon's concern with both sides of the mirror. If the unsubstantial and totally artificial Irenita may be taken as the end, the chthonic, telluric Estrella may be the beginning, and this would be the particular manner in which Códac unites the two. According to Silvestre's statement, then, all that is lacking to the completion of his quest is the ability to unite with all of them, plus all other women at the same time. It is his way of going back to the most basic origins.

It must be kept in mind that La Estrella is transformed from a mere mortal into a cosmic phenomenon, the myth of pure sound, by the words of Códac, and that those words represent his personal point of view. Having seen her in this way, he is totally captivated by her; he is a photographer for whom the visual is no longer the center of existence. It is this, no doubt, which makes it easier for him then to be equally captivated by Bustrófedon, whom I have characterized as language, and on the mythic level the son of La Estrella. It will be remembered that he is led to state: "Si hablo como Bustrófedon ya para siempre no lo

siento sino que lo hago a conciencia y a ciencia y lo único que lamento es no poder hablar de verdad y natural y siempre (siempre también para atrás, no sólo para adelante) así y olvidarme de la luz y de las sombras y de los claroscuros, de las fotos, porque una de sus palabras vale por mil imágenes" (p.219). With the death of Bustrófedon and then La Estrella, everything begins to disintegrate for Códac. In short order he "descends into hell" and hears Cuba singing "Luces, copas y besos, la noche de amor terminó, Adiós adiós adiós" (p.278), and is transferred from the "página de espectáculos" to political reporting. The revolution is now the biggest news story in Havana. For Códac it is revolutionary as well: "Hago guardia de nuevo pero es una guardia triste" (p.281). And perhaps it is parallel to an inner revolution for him, for he says that no woman--not even Cuba or Irenita--interests him any more (pp.278, 287-88).

None of the four characters with whose quests we have dealt appears very satisfied, and herein lies the meaning of Silvestre's statement to the effect that all of them were mistaken except perhaps Bustrófedon. Eribó gives the impression of having a poor substitute for what he really wants when he finds himself "erigiéndose en el sonido que camina" (p.318; see pp.111-12) and thereby sexualizing sound and rhythm rather than possessing the women he desires. Códac has lost La Estrella for good and finds no satisfaction in women (or Woman) any more. Cué's search for the infinite in speed is doomed to failure, according to Sil-

vestre, because "si el tiempo es irreversible, el espacio es irrecorrible y además, infinito" (p.318), and Silvestre himself apparently is dissatisfied with his attempts to "recordarlo todo" (p.317).

It is significant that in a novel concerning night life in pre-Castro Havana, there should be virtually no real sexual activity; that is, nothing is consummated in the foreground of the narration. Códac has moved from the sexual attraction of women to an obsession with one who represents sound, and then lost even her. Eribó has failed with all the women he wants and has only his bongos left. Cué deliberately shies away from an opportunity for seduction. And Silvestre, besides being the one who indicates that they might all be failures, states that there is no longer any woman who is worth the trouble. All of this is in the nature of things at this juncture: the night of love is over for Havana and an era of sterility has set in.

Of the five principal characters only Bustrófedon may have attained the goal of personal immortality. He is the only one who has died and therefore passed through the looking glass. This may represent death, but if he is correct in his deductions it may be that synthesis of death and life which means a continuing existence. If he has become language--or literature, which is its preservation--he will survive any number of individual human beings, including his four friends. Yet the question may now be whether he has not in fact conferred immortality

upon them by achieving their preservation on the pages of *Tres tristes tigres*.

VII. THE CONFESSIONS OF THE NIGHT

We have dealt to some degree with Cabrera Infante's attempt to provide multiple points of view with regard to the reality with which he is dealing in this novel. Perhaps this tendency, in him and other novelists, was given impetus by the work of the cubists and surrealists of the earlier part of this century. For the former it represented the desire to show several facets of reality simultaneously, and in the latter there was a desire to reveal interior as well as exterior reality, and the function of the unconscious as well as the conscious aspects of the mind. In our first chapter we stated that the vignettes employed by Cabrera Infante in Así en la paz como en la guerra served to create a dialetical structure, a play of opposites in the contrast between the generally domestic scenes of the stories and the violence of the scenes which stood between them. In Tres tristes tigres there is another play of opposites between the principal narrative line and the vignettes, but it is quite different, representing the alternation of the revelation of the conscious and unconscious aspects of the reality of this world. That is, while the main line of the narration deals almost exclusively with the conscious reactions of the narrators to the phenomena which make up their lives, the vignettes (eleven of them) are snatches of the material extracted

from the unconscious minds of Cuban women by their psychiatrists.

It would be well to clarify the nature of the play of opposites in this case. It must be recognized that verbal expression in conscious life is never entirely free of contamination from unconscious factors; Freud provided abundant evidence of this in his dealing with the significance of so-called slips of the tongue. Furthermore, several dreams appear in the general narration rather than in the vignettes. In the case of the book of short stories there was not a perfect alternation of violence and peace, and neither does the division of this book present a perfect conscious-unconscious dichotomy, nor would the latter be possible if desired.

Just as the violent scenes provided a vision of what was going on in the background of Cuban life in the epoch described in Así en la paz como en la guerra, these vignettes represent Cuba's revelation of her true psychic reality, hidden in part even from herself, beneath the rather artificial surface. In almost all cases it is clear that the narrator of the vignettes is a woman, and in the rest it may be assumed; for example, one of them consists solely of the naïve question, "Doctor, ¿usted escribe psiquiatra con p o sin p?" (p.169). In contrast, nearly all of the remainder of the book is presented by male narrators, and this pattern too may represent a psychological or mythic phenomenon, in that the male is associated with the conscious, rational aspect of life and the female with the unconscious.

It should, then, be the feminine side of Cuba which will probe the reality beneath the surface of consciousness.

One of the dreams revealed in this way appears in the vignette entitled "Segunda" (for "Segunda Viñeta"). It deals with a scene on the beach, and again the setting is apocalyptic, for the sun is shining fiercely and the grass has been burned. There is a fire in which a huge black dog is lying on his back, dead and burning. Several other dogs attempt to drag him out but only succeed in burning their muzzles. The dreamer goes into a house, and when she opens the door a huge, dirty grey dog with red eyes takes the opportunity to escape and goes to the dog in the fire. He bites off a mouthful of the other dog and then carries him back into the house (pp.80-81).

It would appear that the meaning of this dream lies in the fear of an abortive revolution in the political sense. The apocalyptic situation and the fire would indicate that the revolution is in progress (recall the metaphor of heat as used in "Resaca"), and the attempts of the normal dogs to extract the dead one from the fire could well be the struggle of revolutionary forces to assume the role of the defeated dictator. (This in fact did take place when Batista fled the country at the beginning of 1959.) The opening of the door, in that case, would represent an opportunity for a new and powerful individual (or government) to take control of the situation. This one is impermeable to the flames and easily assumes power, represented

by the acts of eating a part of the dead dog and entering the house with it. The doubts are indicated by the dreamer's unconscious in the fact that, rather than the replacement of a bad political situation by a good one, there is an intimate participation in the essence of the old one on the part of the new (which has "un aspecto terrible," p.81). The dead dog is not annihilated but still exists in the new state of affairs, indicating probably that some of the negative aspects of the Batista government would survive in whatever new one should assume power.

The placement of this dream may be significant. The "Ella cantaba boleros" section which precedes it ends with Códac's words to Alex Bayer, "Bueno, está bien empieza" (p.79), and immediately following the two-page vignette the conversation is continued. The preceding section is the one in which Códac finds everything moved to the negative side of life: he picks up a girl and finds that she is a lesbian, speaks to a black in a white suit, and then speaks to the homosexual Alex Bayer. Moreover, their topic of conversation is La Estrella, who, as has been indicated, represents the black star, herself a reversal of normal values. It is entirely appropriate, then, that this vignette, obviously designed at least in part to break up a long chapter, should also deal with some sort of revolution.

Another vignette which bears a similar relation to the narrative section preceding it is "Cuarta" (p.133). In it the

patient reveals that when she was a child she was given a box of chocolates when sick in bed. The scene represented on the top of the box "estaba tan tranquilo que daba gusto vivir allí, no en las lanchas sino en la orilla, en el borde de la caja de dulces .... " The joke is that this revelation immediately follows the scene related by Códac in which he has come home to bed, only to find La Estrella occupying it. He says, "Hago lo que usted y todo el mundo haría, Orval Faubus. Me acuesto en mi cama. En un borde" (p.132). The humor lies in the transformation of the bed full of La Estrella with Códac on the edge into a box of chocolates with the little girl on the edge.

One more example of a vignette designed to serve as an integral part of the structure of a section is "Quinta" (pp.157-59), to which reference has already been made in our consideration of "La casa de los espejos."[1] In this case it serves as a dividing line between the two major narrative portions of the section, dealing with the building up of an artificial beauty and the disintegration of another. Appropriately, the vignette itself deals with disillusionment. The movement of the tale is from the girl's ostentatious departure from her poor home, through her experiences at the elegant home of her boy friend, to her extremely quiet return. She feels self-conscious because of the contrast between her poor clothing and the richness of the other family, but when she inadvertently discovers a human body in the bathtub the fact is brought home to her that all is not elegance

here either.

The question must be raised as to whether or not all the vignettes are directly related to the preceding and following narrative sections as these are. This is improbable, if only because of the unlikelihood that such vignettes as the one-line item previously mentioned have any thematic resemblance to what precedes or follows them. It is more likely that Cabrera Infante simply included them whenever he felt that there was a need of breaking into the narration for the sake of variety, and that in certain cases he was able to write vignettes which fit in specifically with the surrounding material.

An example of a vignette which may or may not be related to the section which precedes it is "Décima." In it the patient relates an incident in which she watched a cow slaughtered in a particularly brutal way, along with her reaction to that incident, an inability to eat meat for some time afterward. But she adds, "¿Usted sabía, doctor, que cuando yo era señorita y salía con un muchacho tenía que ir con el estómago vacío, porque si no vomitaba?" (p.289). She has obviously related the slaughterhouse incident to the possibility of becoming a man's sexual victim, whether she realizes it or not. The possible relationship to the preceding material lies in the fact that the latter ends with Rine's and Códac's taking Irenita and her "amiga sin nombre" to a beach hotel (p.288). It is possible that the vignette reveals the unconscious female reaction to this sort of

impersonal treatment.

Not only are the vignettes related at times to their settings, but there are at least four which are related to each other. They are "Quinta," "Séptima," "Novena" and "Oncena," although they do not appear in chronological order. In "Séptima" the patient informs the doctor that she has told him a lie in the Thursday session, in that she had not really married the man she had indicated. "Novena" apparently is that Thursday session; it begins, "¿Yo no le dije que soy viuda? Me casé con Raúl, el muchacho que me invitó a la fiesta" (p.279). The party referred to is the one spoken of in "Quinta," in which she discovers the skeleton. If the reader notices this reversal of order when he arrives at "Novena," he will be disconcerted, knowing that he cannot accept it as true, since the one relating it has announced earlier that it is a lie. This serves as another contribution to the blurring of the line between reality and illusion in this novel.

"Primera" is one of the vignettes which deal with dreams, though it does so indirectly. The patient tells of a story written by her husband in which a psychiatrist made money by betting on the revelations in the dreams of his patients: "Que alguien le cuenta que soñó que veía una jicotea en un estanque, él va y llama a su apuntador y le dice, Pancho, $5 al 6. Que otra persona le cuenta que vio en sueños un caballo, él llama y dice Pancho $10 al 1" (p.71). It must be understood that the doctor

is using two bases for his system. One is the well-known Jungian principle that dreams can be predictive (see Jolande Jacobi's chapter in Jung's Man and His Symbols), and the other the animal-number symbolism of Cuban charades. The humor lies in the combination of scientific fact and peasant superstition in the mind of the psychiatrist of the story, plus the hint to the effect that here is still another way in which a psychiatrist may make money from the dreams of his patients.

The dreams which appear in the text apart from the vignettes are all apocalyptic in nature, indicating that, whether they admit it to themselves or not, the residents of Havana at this time know that their world is undergoing some radical changes. Códac's dream (pp.160-61) remains on a personal level. In a parody of The Old Man and the Sea,[2] he sees himself as being completely without luck as he fishes in the "golfo nocturno." When he finally catches a "fish," it moves through the forms of various women friends and ends as La Estrella, who is in bed with him as he dreams. Not only is she totally unattractive to him on a sexual level, but she is too much to handle and nearly suffocates him. Furthermore, she already is viewed by him as a cosmic phenomenon, a portent, a symbol of the fact that the world is out of order.

Códac's dream matches his personality, which is geared largely to the search for women. Other dreams, too, match the character of the dreamers. We have already dealt with the dream

of Laura Díaz (pp.420-21). In it there is total darkness and her arm is extended, to the sound of a countdown, until it reaches the light switch, at which point there is a blinding light, accompanying an "estallido apocalíptico." All Havana is in flames, and Marilyn Monroe appears, riding a grey horse and smiling at Laura. Cué, who relates the dream, says that at other times Laura herself is the rider, so that Marilyn Monroe must represent Laura's ideal, and her image is her alter ego. It is notable that, while the apocalypse means for Códac that his desirable women have been converted into an undesirable cosmic phenomenon, for Laura it means first of all an excess of light, the thing which an artificial beauty fears most. Yet she is the one who apparently precipitates the destruction of Havana, and this fact may identify her as artificiality personified, which would be the cause of the fall of this world in the view of her unconscious mind.

Directly after the discussion of this dream Silvestre and Cué recall one told them by Lydia Cabrera: "Había soñado con un sol que se levantaba rojo en el horizonte y todo el cielo y la tierra se bañaba en sangre y el sol tenía la cara de Batista y a los pocos días fue el golpe del Diez de Marzo." Then Silvestre remarks, "Eso me recuerda también este sueño, que puede ser premonitorio" (pp.421-22). "Este sueño," of course, refers to Laura's dream. The implication is clear: just as Lydia's dream foretold Batista's triumph, that of Laura might have foretold the

next change in governments. The fear, apparently, is that the image of artificiality and superficiality might be both cause and victor of the one which is imminent.

Reference has already been made to Arsenio Cué's dream in which he is seated facing away from the beach, accompanied by a woman dressed in black. In it he has to run for his life when the heat becomes intolerable, though the woman remains seated where she was, calmly burning. This dream too deals with the radical changes taking place, while being geared to the character of the dreamer. It consists largely of a collection of those things which Cué fears most: change, the sea, the heat of passion, and women characterized by the latter. The woman appears to be an ambiguous anima figure, in that while she is dressed in black, she represents no threat to him. He is content because he is separated from the sea (which also represents death for him) by the dryness of the sand, although he is still forced to see it even while facing in the other direction. That is, though he might try to put the thought of death out of his mind he must still be aware of its presence.

As it turns out, the sea itself (that is, natural death) is no immediate threat, since he is insulated against it by the new beach. Rather, the apocalyptic heat which suddenly appears causes him to run. He finds that the mushroom under which he hopes to find shade is the source of the heat and light; it is, in fact, another version of the atomic mushroom-shaped cloud.

Most important, however, is the fact that his companion becomes a negative anima figure as she begins burning. The meaning of this is that Cué is willing to accept the idea that a woman represents death for him, as long as he is able to maintain his distance. But when it becomes evident that she is characterized by a passion which could become contagious, he must escape. It is this involvement with women which spells death for him. When, in this dream, all his greatest fears are realized, he must assume that the very numerical structure of the universe is disintegrating; two and two no longer equal four, and he must run.

It is worth noting too that Silvestre's reaction to Cué's dream is "una interpretación del mito de Lot a la luz de las ciencias actuales" (p.314). It is Cué who later interprets Havana not as the New Jerusalem but as a combination of Lot's Sodom and Gomorra (p.354). If he and Silvestre are correct, Havana is doomed.

This novel is based largely on the play of opposites, which is often represented by the movement through the looking glass. As in the case of Bustrófedon, this can mean the movement between the physical and metaphysical realms or the movement between life and death. In the case of Irenita (with her palindrome name, "Irenita Atineri") it can mean the free play of reality and illusion. But another union of opposites which takes place within the pages of the book is that of the conscious with the unconscious. The integration of these is recognized as one of the

key problems of modern man, and the synthesis of the two realms into something resembling wholeness appears to be one of the aims of the novelist.[3]

VIII. CONCLUSION

In our day many of the makers of public opinion appear to be convinced that it is useless to search for a rational order of any sort underlying the facts of existence. Some historians feel that history has no meaning and no goal, and many theologians have given up the discussion of the existence of God, feeling that the concept is not even a legitimate matter for inquiry. The philosophers, who perhaps more than anyone else, reflect the general confusion of the times, have abandoned metaphysics and the search for ultimate, orderly meaning in man's world. It is no wonder that the message being received by many people is not a hopeful one, especially since they are often eager to acknowledge that their own lives fit into a pattern of meaninglessness. When the impression is that the search is being abandoned, what are we to make of a novel such as Tres tristes tigres, written during the most thorough upheaval of a Latin American nation in this half century, which portrays its characters in the midst of a search for order beyond chaos and some sort of ultimate reality, including personal immortality? It may be that these characters are the heralds of a profound change in modern man's mode of vision, away from a dependence upon natural science as the last hope for an orderly view of reality, and towards a new sort of metaphysical preoccupation.

It would not appear that the author and his narrators perceive an already existing order behind the apparent chaos; rather, they are engaged in an attempt once more to take hold of the prima materia of existence in order to create meaning for themselves, each in his own manner. That is, what the Creator did in the beginning, several human beings are now doing. While the process is parallel to the biblical account at many points, the flavor is quite different. While the biblical Creator worked with matter and imposed order upon it by the word, these creators tend to distrust the material world, preferring to concentrate upon the creative word itself. The word for them is not an instrument, but an end in itself. It is their version of "something out of nothing," for every utterance is creative, fresh and unique. If it is also chaotic, so was the original creation, and the quest is for a continuing creativity which can provide some sort of stability. What they have in hand may be a kind of creative chaos, the chaos which precedes a new order, as was the case in the first two chapters of Genesis. This would be different only in that it is an integral part not of the initial creative act but of an act of re-creation. The chaos and confusion in that case are not simply representative of the disintegration of an existing order but form an integral part of the creative act. This may easily be seen in the speech of Bustrófedon, who in his word play engages in the destruction of the old linguistic order and leaves the reader's mind fairly reeling with the dis-

orderly result. Nevertheless, the result is definitely creative as well as destructive, and out of the chaos comes a metaphysical viewpoint which, in the opinion of Silvestre at least, may have resulted in Bustrófedon's immortality.

The book is a tightly structured unit. The subject matter, linguistic technique and structure all reflect the chaotic situation with which the characters are dealing. The subject matter is a world in the process of disintegration, but it does not remain on the level of the cataclysmic changes taking place in Cuba; rather, it moves into the world as a whole with the far-reaching changes affecting the life of every man in the present day. The structure appears disorderly in that the parts seem to have been placed in the text almost at random, but it is within this framework that the characters are engaged in their quest for a new kind of order which might grow out of the chaos as the result of the creative act which is their speech. As we have seen, it is that speech which brings order to the arrangement of the novel's parts.

The new order might be only a linguistic one, not political or social, but this could be an ideal state of affairs for them, since concrete reality seems to offer no place for them to stand. Marcia Cavell's Saturday Review article, already cited, contains the statement, "The revolution that . . . visionaries are talking about is one that will turn inside out our very conception of reality," and later, "The liberation that the spokesmen for the

New Left and for the new theology speak about will celebrate illusion--defined as all that which the notion of rationality in our culture leaves out--feeling, fantasy, and dream--as the true reality."[1] This sounds a good deal like what is generally meant by myth, and there is a strong tendency in Tres tristes tigres to create myths out of what could otherwise be more or less real people and situations. Myths tend to grow out of needs in the human unconscious, and in an age such as the one reflected in the book such needs are pressing. In his book In Quest of Identity, Martin S. Stabb quotes José Carlos Mariátegui as saying, "Neither reason nor science can satisfy completely the need for the infinite that exists in man . . . . Only myth has the rare power of filling the depths of his being."[2]

It will be recalled that Arsenio Cué points out that art, religion, science and philosophy are all attempts to impose order on chaos, and mentions that Silvestre hopes to be able to do it by means of the word (p.334). The fact is that myth is created by the word, or, if it be seen as created in the unconscious part of the mind, it is at least communicated and made current by the word. This is in large measure the direction taken by the novel. It is a work of art (as opposed to religion, science or philosophy), and specifically of language art, in which the word is employed to create myth in order to impose order on the chaos which is characteristic of a world in the midst of the apocalypse. The language of the book ranges from the chaos of

the lower class Cuban dialect to the chaos of the pseudo-sophisticated word play of the in-group. In so doing it searches for new meanings within itself, a new means of expressing reality in a new world. As mentioned previously, the arrangement of the parts of the work reveals little meaningful structure on the surface, even as the creation of meaningful myth by the word creates a unified structure beneath that surface. It may be that a work of genius such as this reflects in its construction the process in nature by which the apparently random movement of subatomic particles ultimately results in an order so intricate that scientists may formulate absolute natural laws. Let us consider the following paragraph, from M.-L. von Franz' conclusion to Jung's Man and His Symbols, entitled "Science and the Unconscious":

> The unexpected parallelisms of ideas in psychology and physics suggest, as Jung pointed out, a possible ultimate one-ness of both fields of reality that physics and psychology study--i.e., a psychophysical one-ness of all life phenomena. Jung was even convinced that what he calls the unconscious somehow links up with the structure of inorganic matter . . . ."[3]

Man, having arrived at the end of an age and thereby returned to his origins in the most fundamental aspects of material creation, may be reflecting in his own creative works the manner in which apparent aimlessness results in a kind of order with which he can live.

The idea that this can be done by the word is an extremely ancient one. The second verse of the Bible, which certainly

represents an oral tradition of great antiquity, calls the earth "formless and empty," and upon this chaos is imposed the creative act of God, who needs only to speak a word in order that there be a perfect world. Of at least as great antiquity are ideas such as that of the "magic word" and that of incantations as possessing the power to move the elements and bring order to one's life. To bring the concept closer to the setting of the work at hand we may turn to a statement by Luis Harss and Barbara Dohmann in their work Into the Mainstream; concerning Miguel Angel Asturias they say,

> The whole sense of Asturias' work has been in his unremitting effort to find a voice to fit his vision. "In Hombres de Maíz," he says, "the Spanish we speak approaches an outer limit beyond which it becomes something else. There are moments when the language is not just a language but acquires what we might call a biological dimension." For Asturias, language lives a borrowed life. Words are echoes or shadows of living beings. The faith in the power of words, as Octavio Paz has pointed out in one of his essays, is reminiscent of an ancient belief that words are doubles of objects in the external world and are therefore an animated part of it.[4]

The way in which this concept applies to Tres tristes tigres is fairly obvious; in it the "biological dimension" is carried to the extreme of clothing the word in flesh in the character Bustrófedon, and it is his mystical presence after his death which impels the narrators to attempt to speak the word which will bring light to end the "tinieblas del caos" (p.334). The success of their attempt, however, is in doubt: not only does Silvestre intimate that Bustrófedon is the only one who even has a

chance of success in his quest, but the "Epílogo" with which the book ends is a totally fragmented, chaotic paragraph which indicates that the narrator is suffocating. Whoever or whatever that narrator is (it may be Cuba or the novel itself) is immaterial; total chaos and suffocation are the final word.

This is the kind of book Tres tristes tigres is: entertaining, humorous, mind-expanding, full of every variety of nonsense, in all of which there is a strong undercurrent of wonderment at the strange things taking place in its environs. The book, like the world which it has created within itself, is a primordial chaos in search of order.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

[1] (México: Joaquín Mortiz, 1969), p. 32.

[2] Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Tres tristes tigres, 2nd ed. (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1965), p. 326. All subsequent quotes will be from this edition and will be noted in the text.

[3] Mallarmé (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 85.

I. THE DIALECTICS OF AGONY

[1] (La Habana: Ediciones R, 1960). A more readily available edition has been published in Montevideo by Editorial Alfa (n.d.). Its usefulness is limited, however, by numerous errors.

[2] Juan Eduardo Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, trans. Jack Sage (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), pp. 45-46.

[3] (Cleveland: World, 1963), p. 19.

[4] P. 20.

[5] The dialectical structure is seen in Tres tristes tigres in the play of opposites. In part it may reflect an interest in Marxism on the part of Cabrera Infante and other writers who

employ it. I have reference especially to Carlos Fuentes and Octavio Paz.

[6] A character named Silvestre appears in several of the stories, but any attempt to relate him to the writer who appears in the novel is likely to prove inconclusive. In all of his appearances except one he is seen in experiences of childhood or adolescence, so that these could be viewed as forming part of the story of the same character who appears as an adult in Tres tristes tigres. Even here, however, there would be problems of correlation, since in the story "El día que terminó mi niñez" Silvestre, obviously quite young, has no father, while his father does appear in his recollections of his childhood in the novel. Furthermore, in Tres tristes tigres we see him as a high-living writer who is about to be married, while in "Un nido de gorriones en un toldo" he is a rather unsophisticated middle class married man. In all likelihood Cabrera Infante simply likes the name and employs it frequently. It appears to be intended to make the character who bears it some sort of image of the nation Cuba, since the full name of the character in the novel (stated only once) is Silvestre Isla (p.141). This fact, taken together with Silvestre's obvious identification with the author at many points, would tend to indicate that the latter wishes to maintain an intimate identification between himself and the island.

[7] The Hero with a Thousand Faces (Cleveland: World, 1956), p. 180.

II. SETTING THE STAGE: THE PROLOGUE

[1] Genesis 1:2, The Berkeley Version in Modern English (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959). All quotations from the Old Testament will be taken from this version.

[2] This information was gained in a conversation with Mrs. Celia Piñeiro, a personal friend of Mr. Blanco.

III. THE WORD AND THE WORLD

[1] P. 29.

[2] Modern Man in Search of a Soul (New York: Harcourt, 1933), pp. 158ff.

[3] Time in Literature (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1955), pp. 66-67.

[4] C. G. Jung et. al., Man and His Symbols (Garden City: Doubleday, 1964), pp. 264-65.

[5] For a New Novel (New York: Grove Press, 1965), p. 21.

[6] Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man, Signet Books (New York: The New American Library, 1964), pp. 272-73.

[7] "Cantando las 40," Supplement to Imagen, No. 42 (1/15

febrero 1969), n.pag.

[8] Cabrera Infante, however, says that he represents literature, in "Cantando las 40." There is no contradiction, as we shall see later.

[9] "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and for ever," Good News for Modern Man: The New Testament in Today's English Version (New York: American Bible Society, 1967). All New Testament quotations will be taken from this translation.

[10] P. 229.

[11] Pp. 45, 224.

[12] John 1:14.

[13] A Study of the Play-Element in Culture (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950), p. 4.

[14] The New Cassell's French Dictionary (New York: Funk, 1962), p. 654.

[15] Glossary to Alejo Carpentier, Ecué-Yamba O (Buenos Aires: Xanadú, 1968), p.224.

[16] P. 37.

[17] P. 40.

[1] "Cantando las 40."

[2] "Cantando las 40."

[3] Tres tristes tigres was awarded the Premio Biblioteca Breve by Editorial Seix-Barral under the title Vista del amanecer en el trópico in 1964. The first edition with the title Tres tristes tigres was published by Seix-Barral in 1967.

[4] "Cantando las 40."

[5] "Cantando las 40."

[6] (La Habana, Ediciones R, 1962).

[7] Corrales Egea, "Diálogo con Cabrera Infante," Casa de las Américas, 3, Nos. 17-18 (1963), p. 61.

[8] Corrales Egea, p. 61.

[9] (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1959), p. 25.

[10] I have corresponded with the academic deans of both schools with regard to this question.

[11] "Cantando las 40."

V. THE NOVEL AS HEILSGESCHICHTE

[1] "Tres tristes tigres, obra abierta," Nueva novela latinoamericana I, ed. Jorge Lafforgue (Buenos Aires: Paidós, n.d.), pp. 242, 251.

[2] For a New Novel, p. 17.

[3] "Language vs. Structure in the Contemporary Spanish American Novel," Hispania, 52 (1969), pp. 836, 838.

[4] Through the centuries Babylon (Babel) represented rebellion against Israel's God. This reputation begins with the tower story and is supported by the Babylonian captivity. It is natural that St. John should use Babylon as a symbol of the oppression of God's people of all ages.

[5] "Visions of a New Religion," Saturday Review, 19 Dec. 1970, p. 12.

[6] "Symbolism in the Visual Arts," pp. 308-09.

[7] Gog and Magog appear in Ezekiel 38-39 and in Rev. 20.

[8] P. 837.

[9] "The city was perfectly square, as long as it was wide" (Rev. 21:16).

[10] Cirlot, pp. 297-99.

[11] Man and His Symbols, p. 218.

[12] "Como viví y como morí," Cuentos (La Habana: Bolsilibros Unión, 1964).

[13] Trans. George Bird (Blocmington: Indiana U Press, 1966), p. 7.

[14] Trans. Eliot Weinberger (New York: October House, n.d.), p. 20.

[15] (México: Siglo Veintiuno, 1969), p. 59.

[16] Raymond D. Souza, "The World, Symbol and Synthesis in Octavio Paz," Hispania, 47 (1964), p. 63.

[17] (New York: Atheneum, 1970), p. 175.

[18] Mundo Nuevo, 13 (1967), pp. 62, 63.

[19] P. 13.

[20] Compare Rev. 21:25: "The gates of the city will stand open all day; there will be no night there." The last night, then, would be the night immediately preceding this state of affairs.

[21] 1 (1970), p. 18.

[1] The Social Contract, pp. 108-10.

[2] Francisco de Quevedo, Antología poética, 4th ed. (Madrid: Austral, 1943), p. 24.

[3] This concept is discussed in detail on p. 144ff.

[4] Time Essay, "What (If Anything) to Expect from Today's Philosophers," Time, 7 Jan. 1966, pp. 24-25.

[5] "Cantando las 40."

[6] P. 224.

[7] P. 226.

[8] P. 226.

[9] P. 223.

[10] P. 226.

[11] P. 222.

[12] P. 224.

[13] P. 224.

[14] The dream is discussed in more detail on p. 183-84.

[15] In addition to these considerations is the fact that in Havana to call a man a duck was to imply that he was homosexual, and according to my informant, this was common in referring to any actor who did not take great pains to show himself to be extremely masculine.

[16] Robert Ardrey remarks that in the preservation of personal space "dark glasses will do. By shielding one's eyes behind a transparent but darkened wall, one creates a space corresponding to McBride's field of social force" (The Social Contract, p. 258).

VII. THE CONFESSIONS OF THE NIGHT

[1] Pp. 107-11.

[2] This dream has been discussed on pp. 77-78.

[3] Joseph Campbell states, "The lines of communication between the conscious and the unconscious zones of the human psyche have all been cut, and we have been split in two. The hero-deed to be wrought is not today what it was in the century of Galileo. Where then there was darkness, now there is light; but also, where light was, there now is darkness. The modern hero-deed must be that of questing to bring to light again the lost Atlantis of the co-ordinated soul" (p. 388).

[1] P. 13.

[2] (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina Press, 1967), p. 114.

[3] P. 309.

[4] (New York: Harper, 1967), p. 81.

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To date few works of real value on the subject of Guillermo Cabrera Infante and his works have appeared. This fact and the nature of our investigation have made for the brevity of the bibliography which follows. We have included only those works which contributed substantially to the dissertation.

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