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### Publication Date

2011

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

Narrative and (Meta)Physical Paradox in  
*Grande Sertão: Veredas* and *Pedro Páramo*

By

Caroline LeFeber Schneider

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Hispanic Language and Literatures

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Candace Slater, Chair

Professor Estelle Tarica

Professor Jeroen Dewulf

Fall 2011

Narrative and (Meta)Physical Paradox in  
*Grande Sertão: Veredas* and *Pedro Páramo*

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by

Caroline LeFeber Schneider

## Abstract

Narrative and (Meta)Physical Paradox in  
*Grande Sertão: Veredas* and *Pedro Páramo*

by

Caroline LeFeber Schneider

Doctor of Philosophy in Hispanic Languages and Literatures

University of California, Berkeley

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The canonical Latin American novels *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (João Guimarães Rosa, 1956) and *Pedro Páramo* (Juan Rulfo, 1955) mirror each other across their linguistic and other divides due to their uses of literary and regional spaces. Previous studies of both works often focus – as do many studies of the works individually – on a perceived dichotomy between local regional material, and innovative, even “universal” aesthetic technique. However, the relationship between setting and form in the works in fact has little to do with conflict. Rather, concurrent analysis of the novels shows that, in both, their archetypal regional landscapes are the detailed foundations for the narrative construction of complex (meta)physical spaces that are central to the works: spaces at once spiritual and placed. The true paradox of the novels, their apparent dichotomy which is nonetheless unity, lies in the confluence of physical and metaphysical realms in both the *sertão* of Riobaldo’s journeys and the Jalisco of Juan Preciado’s terrible heritage: one a land and paths (*sertão* and *veredas*) in which God and the devil may reside, and one a town in which wrought evil and spiritual corruption have resulted in a land-bound and interactive purgatory.

The complexity of these (meta)physical realms is executed through the innovative narrative techniques of the works, in both the protagonists’ communicated concerns and experiences, and in the forging of paradox, uncertainty, and textual *lacunae* in the narratives themselves. In many ways, the spaces are their narratives: the *sertão* and Riobaldo’s paths through it are as the *redemoinho* of his refrain, a whirlwind of narrative; and the Comala of Juan Preciado’s experience, and in consequence the reader’s own, is a woven quilt like that of the sown and abandoned fields, their harvest the voices of the unredeemed dead. The works’ textures, their forged openness, plus their further narrative bridges to the reader, create spaces of participation, even integration: *literary* spaces of a reader/author co-construction of *telluric* spaces of (meta)physical landscape.

Setting and form are not at odds: it is due to the works’ complex and creative narrative techniques that the *sertão* and Comala are built, in collaboration with the reader, into powerfully internalized geographies of both material and immaterial origin – (meta)physical geographies to explore the works’ concerns about identity, violence, redemption, and human relationship to land.

## Resumo

A Narrativa e o Paradoxo (Meta)Físico em  
*Grande Sertão: Veredas* e *Pedro Páramo*

Caroline LeFeber Schneider

Os romances canônicos latino-americanos *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (João Guimarães Rosa, 1956) e *Pedro Páramo* (Juan Rulfo, 1955) refletem-se através das suas fronteiras lingüísticas e outras devido a seus usos de espaços literários e regionais. Estudos prévios de ambos os trabalhos freqüentemente concentram-se – como muitos estudos dos trabalhos individualmente – em uma dicotomia percebida entre o material local e regional, e a técnica estética inovadora, até “universal.” No entanto, a relação entre o cenário e a forma nos trabalhos tem pouco a ver com conflito. Antes, a análise simultânea das obras demonstra que, em ambas, as paisagens regionais arquetípicas são a fundação detalhada para a construção narrativa de espaços (meta)físicos complexos que são centrais às obras: espaços ao mesmo tempo espirituais e localizados. O verdadeiro paradoxo dos romances, a sua dicotomia aparente que é ao mesmo tempo unidade, fica na confluência dos reinos físicos e metafísicos em tanto o sertão dos percursos de Riobaldo como o Jalisco da herança terrível de Juan Preciado: para um, a terra e caminho (sertão e veredas) no qual talvez residam Deus e o Diabo, e para o outro, um povoado no qual a maldade feita e a corrupção espiritual resultaram num purgatório interativo e amarrado à terra.

A complexidade destes reinos (meta)físicos é executada pelas técnicas inovadoras da narrativa nas obras, tanto nas preocupações e experiências comunicadas pelos protagonistas, como no forjamento de paradoxo, incerteza, e *lacunae* textuais nas narrativas em si mesmas. Em muitos aspectos, os espaços são as suas narrativas: o sertão e os caminhos de Riobaldo nele são como o “redemoinho” do refrão dele, um redemoinho narrativo, e o Comala da experiência de Juan Preciado, e em consequência do leitor/da leitora mesmo/a, é uma colcha tecida como isso dos campos semeados e abandonados, sua colheita as vozes dos mortos sem redenção. As texturas dos trabalhos, as aberturas forjadas neles, mais os seus pontes narrativos ao/à leitor/a, criam espaços de participação, até de integração: espaços *literários* da co-construção de leitor/autor de espaços *telúricos* de paisagem (meta)física.

O cenário e a forma não estão em conflito: é devido às técnicas narrativas complexas e criativas que o sertão e Comala se transformam, em colaboração com o/a leitor/a, em geografias poderosamente internalizadas de origem tanto material como imaterial – geografias (meta)físicas para explorarem as preocupações das obras acerca da identidade, a violência, a redenção, e a relação humana com a terra.

## Resumen

La narrativa y el paradojo (meta)físico en  
*Grande Sertão: Veredas* y *Pedro Páramo*

Caroline LeFeber Schneider

Las novelas canónicas *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (João Guimarães Rosa, 1956) y *Pedro Páramo* (Juan Rulfo, 1955) se reflejan a través de sus líneas divisorias, lingüísticas y otras, debido a sus usos de espacios literarios y regionales. Estudios anteriores de ambos trabajos frecuentemente se concentran – como hacen muchos estudios de los trabajos individualmente – en una dicotomía percibida entre material local y regional, y técnica estética innovadora, hasta “universal.” Sin embargo, la relación entre el marco escénico y la forma de las obras tiene poco que ver con conflicto. Más bien, el análisis concurrente de las novelas demuestra que, en ambas, sus paisajes arquetípicos regionales son las fundaciones detalladas para la construcción narrativa de espacios (meta)físicos complejos que son centrales a las obras: espacios que son al mismo tiempo espirituales y localizados. La verdadera paradoja de las novelas, su dicotomía aparente que es sin embargo unidad, está en la confluencia de reinos físicos y metafísicos en tanto el *sertão* de los viajes de Riobaldo, como en el Jalisco de la herencia terrible de Juan Preciado: para uno la tierra y senderos (*sertão* y *veredas*) en los que Dios y el diablo pueden residir, y para el otro el pueblo en que la maldad hecha y la corrupción espiritual han tenido como resultado un purgatorio interactivo y atado a la tierra.

La complejidad de estos reinos (meta)físicos es ejecutado a través de las técnicas narrativas innovadoras de las obras, tanto en las preocupaciones y experiencias comunicadas por los protagonistas, como en el forjamiento de paradoja, incertidumbre, y *lacunae* textuales en las narrativas en sí mismas. De muchas formas, los espacios son sus narrativas: el *sertão* y los caminos de Riobaldo en él son como el *redemoinho* de su refrán, un torbellino de narrativa; y la Comala de la experiencia de Juan Preciado, y por consecuencia del/la lector/a mismo/a, es una colcha tejida como aquella de los campos sembrados y abandonados, su cosecha las voces de los muertos sin redención. Las texturas de las obras, las aberturas forjadas en ellas, más sus puentes narrativos al/la lector/a, crean espacios de participación, hasta de integración: espacios *literarios* de una co-construcción de lector/autor de espacios *telúricos* de paisaje (meta)físico.

El marco escénico y la forma no están en estado de conflicto: es debido a las técnicas narrativas complejas y creativas que el *sertão* y Comala se transforman, en colaboración con el/la lector/a, en geografías poderosamente internalizadas y de origen tanto material como inmaterial – geografías (meta)físicas para explorar las preocupaciones de las obras acerca de la identidad, la violencia, la redención, y la relación humana con la tierra.

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## INTRODUCTION

### 1. INTRODUCTION and THESIS:

Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* (1955) and João Guimarães Rosa's *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (1956) have often been analyzed as works that participate in regionalist genre and discourse,<sup>1</sup> and yet are nonetheless innovative or modernist, often even “universally” so, in text and technique.<sup>2</sup> The novels are both often viewed as important literary firsts due to their combination of these elements: Latin American novels on the verge of the New Novel, both of them at once regionalist and yet also, paradoxically, stylistically innovative – literary bridges, looking back in context but forward in text, revolutionizing their regionalist genres.<sup>3</sup> However, the relationship between the works’ “context” and “text” may have little to do with conflict. In fact, these elements function harmoniously in the creation of the true “paradox”<sup>4</sup> of both works, which lies in the nature of the works’ landscapes themselves, the confluence of their physical and metaphysical realms – (meta)physical<sup>5</sup>, at once opposite, and yet also one. It is due to the works’ complex and creative narrative techniques that these paradoxical landscapes are built, in collaboration with the reader, into powerfully internalized geographies for the exploration of the protagonists’ concerns about identity, violence, the source of evil, and the possibility of redemption.

#### 1.1 COLLABORATIVE, BOUNDARY-DEFYING NARRATION:

This dissertation seeks to prove that the two novels, in the pursuit of their themes, work with narrative and space in parallel fashions, specifically with regards to the paradoxical multiplicity of the works’ regional spaces and the collaborative and boundary-defying narrative construction of that space within the literary space of the works. The novels both create what is at once a physical and metaphysical use of land, one that enables the works to interact symbolically with largely ineffable concepts involving violence and redemption. In both works, this paradoxical and constructive space is created through collaboration with the reader: a collaboration that is constructed through narrative devices that both invite the reader into the work, and undo

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<sup>1</sup> Regionalism as genre has often been seen, especially during the time of the novels’ reception, as traditional in context and setting, and limited in form. See (all in Works Cited for Parts I, II, III): Paz (2000, originally 1967), Fuentes (1969), Vargas Llosa (1973, originally 1969), Aub (1985), Borges (2007, orig. 1951); Machado de Assis (1873), *Cândido* (1964), Bosi (1970), Lourenço (1999), Lins (1946), Casais Monteiro (1958), etc.

<sup>2</sup> See: Lins (1946), Mendes (1946), *Cândido* (1946, 1964), Coutinho Viegas (1995), Assis Brasil (1957), Casais Monteiro (1958), Filho (1969); Aub (1985), Fares (1994), O’Neill (1974), Wilson (2005), Durán (1985), Garrido (2004), Paz (2000, originally 1967).

<sup>3</sup> See: Brasil, Casais Monteiro, Filho; Aub, Fares, O’Neill, Wilson, Durán, Garrido, Paz; and in relation to both novels at once, Casanova (2004), King (2005), Harss and Dohmann (1967), Brower (1985), da-Luz-Moreira (2008), Fantini (2006), Gollnick (2005), Rama (1986), Torres (2009).

<sup>4</sup> Using OED definition 2.a.: “An apparently absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition, or a strongly counter-intuitive one, which investigation, analysis, or explanation may nevertheless prove to be well-founded or true.” (paradox, n. and adj. Third edition, April 2010; online version November 2010. < <http://oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/137353>>; accessed 17 February 2011.)

<sup>5</sup> I put “meta” in parentheses to create two terms in one – physical, and metaphysical – in order to illustrate the united nature of the concepts.

boundaries within the work in support of their (meta)physical landscapes. Both works create powerfully internally accessible literary spaces due to narrative techniques that are conducive to constructive collaboration and reader internalization; those techniques are not in conflict with traditional setting, but collaborate in bringing those settings to life in a way separate from documentary regionalisms.

The works are both innovative in language, as is often remarked, and in a way in which the prose reflects the larger form of the work: sparse in the concise work narrated by the dead, and excessively verdant in the epic work narrated by the living. And beyond the linguistic aspect, the narrative aspects of the works in general share many elements that function to create a reader-narrative collaboration that is constructive of a shared space. The narrative styles of *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (*GSV*) and *Pedro Páramo* (*PP*) not only create space for the participation of the reader, but they *create space* within the works.

The two novels share in a deep ambiguity and unreliability in narrative voice which, in leaving *lacunae*,<sup>6</sup> function to force attentive and active reading. In *GSV*, Riobaldo is never formally introduced, and his interlocutor never introduced at all. The work is narrated by an old man, but takes into account the mentality and understanding of his youthful self; Riobaldo narrator, vs. Riobaldo narrated. Further, the narrator admits to his own infidelity in the narration, further complicating the work's trajectory and interpretation. The work is told in non-linear fashion, layering, labyrinthine; it "ends" on p. 325 of 624 (Editora Nova Fronteira, 2001 edition), but nonetheless continues, a "*redemoinho*" (whirlwind) of human confusion much like the one that the devil rides in, the very one he fears. In *Pedro Páramo*, too, many of the voices are never named, and it takes great concentration to discern the origin and timing of the fragments of text that make up the novel. The central narrator of the first half, Juan Preciado, is not known to be dead until halfway through the work; his interlocutor, thought to be the reader, turns out to have been his grave-mate, Dorotea – and *we* are become the eavesdroppers on the murmurs of the dead. The multiplicity and uncertainty of narrative angles force the reader to participate fully in creating and experiencing the narrative space of the work. Also, in both works, the direct oral nature of the narratives draws the reader into the space of the narrative as interlocutor to the tale, even while that narrative becomes a snare.

Further, both narrators share in being double – attached to the world they narrate, and to the one they left, thus forming even more of a bridge to the reader – one of identification, as well as one of active participation. Juan Preciado grows up away from his mother's town, and returns as an outsider, a role (outsider) with which the reader empathizes. He appears to be our ambassador, speaking to us; we travel with him, even unto death. Likewise, Riobaldo lives the life of a *jagunço*, but is aware always of his difference, his literacy, the fact that he has chosen that life and must examine it; again, his difference and introspection become a bridge between the space of the *sertão*, Brazil's interior landscape, and the reader.

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<sup>6</sup> Traditionally used to refer to a "hiatus, blank, missing portion" in a text\*, the term is often associated in literary criticism with the work of Wolfgang Iser, who used the term "*Leerstellen*" – translated as " 'blanks', 'gaps' or 'lacunae'" – to refer to spaces in the text that "have to be filled in or 'concretized' by the reader in order to interpret the text." (Cuddon and Preston 726). \*(lacuna, n. Second edition, 1989; online version March 2011. < <http://oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/104956>>; accessed 08 April 2011.) The "lacunae" mentioned here are aligned with such a use as they encourage reader composition of a work.

The works' techniques of fragmentary and labyrinthine narrative, multiple and ambiguous narrators, innovative language reflective of the space narrated, plus the remarkable effect of the narrators' dual natures, and the illusion of being their interlocutor, all of these techniques function together to draw the reader into the space of narration in forced participation. We find ourselves drawn in through empathy to this speaking protagonist, but then in the growing complexity, the undermined certainty of the works, we must discern, must attempt to unravel the works' strands. This is how the *telling* of the works leads to a collaboration with the reader. The reader is drawn into the literary space of the work, and from there, into the space of the *sertão* and of Comala as created there.

## 1.2 WHAT PLACE(S) or REALM(S)?

The literary space of a work can be many things: it can refer to its place in reference to other literary works, for instance, or to the construction of a recognizable geography as a setting in a work of literature, or to a more abstract "space" of ideas. "Literary space" has also been defined as the opposite of "literary time," correlating the one with setting and description and the other with plot in a dialectic of conflict. Some critics who engage with this dialectic find literature to be a naturally temporal art, going back to Aristotle's view of poetry as distinguished by "plot, the arrangement of incidents in time" (Mitchell 91);<sup>7</sup> many, however, find literary space to be much more than a static stage for a temporal art. For instance, for Phillip Wegner (2002), literary space is both a "production" and a "force," both produced and producing in the act of reading (181); and Cary Nelson (1973) finds that literary space is "shared, or enacted, between writer and reader," and claims that in fact it is only due to the "temporal succession of words" that spatiality is unable to be fully achieved in literary works as the aspired-to "self-protected and self-generative space that transcends or escapes historical time" (4). Joseph Frank (1963) wrote of Joyce, Proust and other "contemporary" writers that in their use of non-sequential narrative they "intend the reader to apprehend their work spatially, in a moment of time, rather than as a sequence" (9); they create simultaneity in time in order to "transcend" it. Like Joyce and Proust in Frank's estimation, the novels *GSV* and *PP* also work to reinforce the *spatiality* of their literary space through the use of *time*; the narrative complexity explained above is in fact largely a temporal tool, even as it is also a spatial one; in undoing the linearity of plot, unhinging the works from an easy insertion into an internalized linear world history, the novels' spaces become eternal and internal. As readers, then, we can, and do, take them with us as more than historical anecdote – we are given much more of a role in their creation.

Literary space can also be, as defined by Mary Jacobsen (1982), "the relationship readers form with literary texts... the ways people become absorbed in literature" (21). She uses D.W. Winnicott's<sup>8</sup> term "Potential space" to describe "the psychological 'place' people inhabit when involved with works of art" (21). This "potential space" combines "inner" and "outer," "created" and "found," and "reader" and "text," such that one cannot "split reader from text or ...

<sup>7</sup> See: W.J.T. Mitchell (1989); Mitchell cites Lessing (*Laocoon*, 1766) and Genette (*Figures of Literary Discourse*, 1982). Joseph A. Kestner (1978) makes room for "spatiality", but as "secondary" to the "primary illusion" of "time" (Kestner 9).

<sup>8</sup> Winnicott, D. W. *Playing and reality*. N.Y.: Basic Books, 1971. Print.

conceive of the world of the work as somehow located ‘in’... a text” (36-37). “Literary space” is, beyond setting, the environment and surroundings that are experienced geographically and conceptually by a reader who is fully engaged with the text – therefore, it is a combination of the reader’s own conceptual history, and of the text’s own references, given fruition as a type of psychically inhabitable “space” that is *experienced* and *constructed*, more than visualized, and has potential always.

*GSV* and *PP* bring a lot to their spatial equations as works of literature, including the “space” and “place” associations of the “real-world” counterparts to their settings/protagonists, Comala and the *sertão*, with all of their attendant complexity. As the geographers and other critics and philosophers engaged in defining “space” and/or “place”<sup>9</sup> tell us, land and location generally take on many more meanings than that of their purely scientific, physical makeup. Places and spaces can be “home,” or represent an idea, a feeling, an identity, and many other aspects of human life; they can also be literary, and, too, metaphysical. Writers such as Lefebvre (1991; first edition 1974), Relph (1976), Tuan (1977, 1990), Carter (1993), Barker (2000), and Said (2000) have written about the symbolic, felt, experienced, constructed, and psychical aspects of geography;<sup>10</sup> Heidegger in “Art and Space” (1997, first published 1969) has discussed what it means to “dwell” in a place, and how that “dwelling” affects the place itself. Lived experience and attachment define the multiplicity of the *perception* aspect of place, space, land; and so do mediated conceptual discourses, such as those constructed in literature. Whatever the origin, those perceived geographical overlays are perhaps more important to our experience of the world than the physical geography itself. Both works carefully construct a deep connection between their people and their lands, explicitly and implicitly. People and land reflect one another in vitality and in dread; land is homeland, a macrocosm of the soul.

These geographers’ and philosophers’ conceptualizations of “place” open up to multiplicity the regions described in these works: they are immanent – contained in the specificity of maps, defined by the criteria of arability, etc. But, they also transcend that in containing, for those who experience them physically or conceptually, immaterial and even ineffable qualities as well. Those qualities might be, in fact, of a “metaphysical” quality: the spiritual “beyond,” and yet also present – paradoxically – in land and place and space.

The term “paradox” is often used to speak of the “self-contradictory, absurd, or intrinsically unreasonable” in which an “apparent” paradox is one that has been “proved after all to be true.”<sup>11</sup> Here, however, I am more interested in definition 2.a.: “An apparently absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition, or a strongly counter-intuitive one, which investigation, analysis, or explanation may nevertheless prove to be well-founded or true.” Such is the “paradox” between the “physical” and the “metaphysical.” They appear to be terms in conflict, since the addition of “meta-” in itself generally implies that the second term goes “beyond” the

<sup>9</sup> Many of these writers engage in a semantics in which “place” refers to specific, definable aspects of space, imbued with narratives and history, whereas “space” is a more open concept.

<sup>10</sup> Bibliographical data for these authors’ works is in Works Cited for Part I

<sup>11</sup> Oxford English Dictionary definition 2.b. (paradox, n. and adj. Third edition, April 2010; online version November 2010. < <http://oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/137353>>; accessed 17 February 2011.)

first. However, “meta-”<sup>12</sup> as prefix also has multiple meanings, as does “paradox”; it can refer to a concept that goes “beyond” the noun it modifies, “dealing with second-order questions,” or it can in fact be *comprehensive* of that noun, *encompassing* it, even as it transcends it, or goes behind or beyond it. The physical, then, refers to tangible reality: “III.6. Of or relating to natural phenomena perceived through the senses (as opposed to the mind); of or relating to matter or the material world; natural; tangible, concrete.”<sup>13</sup> However, as we have seen, the “physical” in human perception contains experience as well as material form; it is open to being more than an object. Therefore, the metaphysical need not *exclude* that tangible reality; the two may in fact be integrated, may be one. The OED explains that a platypus used to be known as a “paradox” (meaning 6): an animal that appears to belong to two separate categories of creature – mammal and bird – and to both the land and the water, and yet exists not just as integrated elements but also as one being. The (meta)physical in these works is a platypus-paradox, a paradox of the harmonious confluence of perceived opposites.

In *Pedro Páramo*, the place of the town and its surrounding countryside is a part of Jalisco and history, worked agricultural land in a context. And yet the land is, too, the paths upon it, and the occurrences that took place in contact with it. Comala is a place of experience, value, and symbolic association: it is lives, loves, and losses, a place of belonging and also of massacres, murders, suicides, and other tragedies. It is farmland, birthplace, community, and cemetery; it is sacred and symbolic land. It is earth, as opposed to water and air; and Earth, as opposed to Heavens, in a Catholic framework. The ground is where the dead are buried, and in it they aren’t gone but are *of* it, “dust to dust.” More than all of this, it is *both* the realm of the living, *and* that of the dead: its restive souls are still there and their suffocating histories with them, buried but never gone. It is a (meta)physical space, even if that purgatory is manmade.

In the *sertão*, the multiplicity is there as well; it is a definable space, sometimes inhabitable but mostly inhospitable, with named rivers, valleys, and towns; it is space to roam in, or soil to nourish. But it is also both graceful and terrifying, variable, adaptive, infinite, contrastive. It is understood only from “above”; and yet, Riobaldo finds both divinity and evil in its very minerals. It is associated with banditry and religion, a space considered by many to be at once primordial and representative of Brazil as a whole, and so many more conceptual overlays. It is the paths upon it; and it is personified and deified, more than reified: a wilderness other than tangible. Riobaldo’s journey through a “real” *sertão* is also his narrative through his perceptions of that *sertão*, and its inherent connections with his possibilities of salvation and pardon. He sees it as, in turns or at once, God and the devil, and it is also he himself, as well as being soil. It is an immanent metaphysics: the paths of the *veredas*<sup>14</sup> are his own construction of his place in

<sup>12</sup> “meta-, prefix”. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Third edition, August 2010; online version November 2010. <<http://oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/117150>> Web. 17. Feb. 2011.

“meta-, prefix. *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*. 2010. < <http://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/meta?show=1&t=1298682696>> Web. 20. Dec. 2010.

<sup>13</sup> “physical, adj.” *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Third edition, March 2006; online version June 2011. < <http://oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/143120>>; accessed 16 August 2011.

<sup>14</sup> “*Veredas*” translates as “paths” in a common dictionary, but it also means more than that, even though Riobaldo follows them through the *sertão* like a path. Riobaldo explains to *o senhor* that the rivers are like the São Francisco, the Chico, but “*O resto pequeno é vereda*,” “The rest, small, is *vereda*” (90), implying that the *veredas* are in fact, more than marshes, *waterways*, paths of moist and fertile earth running in a labyrinth through the *sertão*. Nilce Sant’Anna Martins (2001) quotes him as telling Bizzarri in their correspondence the following: “*Mas, por entre as*

Heaven or Hell, his decisions in the land his decisions to define himself on a moral scale. He uses the metaphor of the waterfall to illustrate the co-dependency of what appear to be multiple factors:

O senhor vê: existe cachoeira; e pois? Mas cachoeira é barranco de chão, e água se caindo por ele, retombando; o senhor consome essa água, ou desfaz o barranco, sobra cachoeira alguma?<sup>15</sup> (26)

*GSV's sertão* is a place that is land, and *is* God and the devil, just as it *is* Riobaldo's tumultuous tale of violence, temptation and regret.

In both novels, the land is *both* the physical substance of a setting, *and* the stuff of an alternate realm, *no less present*. Both works paint portraits of lands that have been described many times before in their national regional literatures, complete with archetypes and local mythologies, familiar since the first writings that sought a Latin American identity in specific and local rural landscapes/peoples. And yet, great pains are taken to tie this land to the narrators, and them to the land; and to tie the reader to both narrator and land. The regional space is become literary space, and also "homeland," a human space; and, too, it is sacred space, (meta)physical.

The works also both deal with spaces that are on the verge of change. Their internal moment and moments of writing are times of transition, in which modernization and mechanization threaten the traditions and even the existence of those rural spaces. In the 1950s, communication systems

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*chapadas, separando-as (ou, às vezes, mesmo no alto, em depressões no meio das chapadas) há veredas. São vales de chão argiloso ou turfo-argiloso, onde aflora a água absorvida. Nas veredas há sempre o buriti. De longe, a gente avista os buritis, e já sabe: lá se encontra água. A vereda é um oásis. Em relação às chapadas, elas são, as veredas, de belo verde-claro, agradável, macio. O capim é verdinho, claro, bom. As veredas são férteis. Cheias de animais, de pássaros"* (520-521). ("But, between the plateaus, separating them (or, sometimes, even up high, in depressions in the middle of the plateaus) there are *veredas*. They are valleys of clayish or peaty-clayish ground, where the absorbed water emerges. In the *veredas* there is always the *buriti* palm. From far away, we sight the *buritis*, and already know: there, water is found. The *vereda* is an oasis. In relation to the plateaus, they are, the *veredas*, of beautiful light-green, pleasant, soft. The grass is green, clear, good. The *veredas* are fertile. Full of animals, of birds.")

<sup>15</sup> "You see: waterfalls exists; and therefore? But a waterfall is a groove of earth, and water falling through it, rumbling; if you consume this water, or undo the groove, is there any waterfall left?" (*My translation throughout unless otherwise indicated*).

I have done the translations of *GSV* (and of *PP*, for consistency) in order to concentrate on the possibilities of meaning of every word in its Brazilian context, which differs from the purposes of the available English translation. As Armstrong explains in reference to *The Devil to Pay in the Backlands*, translated by Harriet de Onís, (New York, Knopf, 1963), "Critics hostile to the North American version, which was executed by highly qualified professionals, should understand that its nature was due to a strategy and not simply to incompetence. The strategy was to minimize foreignness and culturally transpose the material into a context recognizable and familiar to the reader in the target culture" (74). Further, Armstrong cites Guimarães Rosa himself responding to the book. He responded to de Onís with pragmatism in a May 7, 1963 letter, saying that what was lost (inevitably) is compensated for by "*maior fluidez, fluência, transparência e velocidade*" ("higher fluidity, fluency, transparency, and velocity") (Armstrong 69). However, in a June 17, 1963 letter to Meyer-Clason, his German translator – with whom he claims to have an affinity in spirituality (as expressed in an Oct. 14, 1963 letter (Armstrong 69), and in Camacho 47 (see p. 45, footnote 144)) – he writes: "*O livro americano está cheio dessas falhas, e ainda mais fundas alterações, enfraquecimentos, omissões, cortes. Basta compará-lo com o original, em qualquer página*" ("The American book is full of these flaws, and even deeper alterations, weaknesses, omissions, cuts. It's enough to compare it to the original, on any page") (Armstrong 69).



and roads were overtaking the backlands; Brasília was being envisioned in the middle of the *sertão*, and townspeople in Mexico were abandoning their homes and traveling to cities. Much of regional literature over the years has been written to, in a sense, embalm the region, to save the vestiges of tradition for a later generation, and to destroy them in the saving.<sup>16</sup> However, these works don't appear to participate in that gesture, and certainly not primarily. They may be said to be nostalgic, or perhaps more rightly, a mix – for these erudite rural men – of nostalgia and “solastalgia,”<sup>17</sup> defined by Albrecht et al. (2007) as nostalgia for a home that is changing around one, “the feeling of the violation of connections to place” (S96). However, works are not about nostalgia/solastalgia for something irretrievably long ago. The underlying temporal ambiguities of the works change their relationship to time: past and present events coexist in the telling of both novels, in the ghosts of one, and in the many “Brazils” represented in the other with its mix of archaic and neologism-rich vocabulary, and archaic and modern archetypes and forms, all *concurrent*, all at once. They are not studies meant to pin archetypes to boards in a lepidopterist's dusty lab; instead, they function to invigorate the reader's connection to the land through our construction of internal spaces in conjunction with the works... spaces where the dead speak to the living in a history that can never be buried (Comala), and where the land is a source and reflection of the human soul, and contains and adapts to past, present, and future, transition its only constant (the *sertão*). In our collaboration as readers we are there, in that literary space... buried in an endless Comala, tricked into hearing Juan Preciado's own *murmillos*, and wandering the endless *sertão* that begins inside of us even as it is of the earth.

The works break down more than just the boundary between reader and narration in their creation of a reader-shared space; they break down thematic and spatial boundaries as well,

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<sup>16</sup> See Michel de Certeau's affirmations about “popular culture” in “La beauté du mort,” or “The beauty of the dead,” using the academic study of street literature as an example of his premise: “ ‘Popular culture’ presupposes an unavowed operation. Before being studied, it had to be censored. Only after its danger had been eliminated did it become an object of interest. ... Therefore it is not at all surprising that street literature is judged by these groups [scholars and amateurs] to be ‘disappearing,’ that they then go about preserving ruins, or that they see in it the tranquility of something preceding history, the horizon of nature, or paradise lost” (Certeau, trans. Massumi, 119-120). (“La « culture populaire » suppose une opération qui ne s'avoue pas. Il a fallu qu'elle fût censurée pour être étudiée. Elle est devenue alors un objet d'intérêt parce que son danger était éliminé. ... Aussi n'est-il pas surprenant qu'ils la jugent « en voie de disparition », qu'ils s'attachent maintenant à préserver des ruines, ou qu'ils y voient le calme d'un en-deçà de l'histoire, l'horizon d'une nature ou d'un paradis perdu” (Certeau 49-50).)

<sup>17</sup> Glenn Albrecht et al. created this term in 2007 to refer to “the pain or distress caused by the loss of, or inability to derive, solace connected to the negatively perceived state of one's home environment” (S96). It is, like nostalgia, a “psychoterratic illness,” an “earth-related mental illness where people's mental wellbeing (psyche) is threatened by the severing of ‘healthy’ links between them- selves and their home/territory” (S95). However, unlike in situations of nostalgia, sufferers of solastalgia are not separated from their homeland; rather, they are still there, but their homeland is changing around them: “The people of concern are still ‘at home’, but experience a ‘homesickness’ similar to that caused by nostalgia. What these people lack is solace or comfort derived from their present relationship to ‘home’, and so, a new form of psychoterratic illness needs to be defined” (S96). Although Albrecht et al. use the term primarily to speak of changes due to pollution and climate change – today's threats to our connection to land – it is equally applicable to the changes due to modernization in Latin America in the 1950s. Both Rulfo and Guimarães Rosa were born and raised in rural environments. However, they both had, as children and adults, the privilege of access to literacy and travel, separating them from the rural characters and landscapes they depict, even as those apparently continue to resonate for them. Therefore, as writers both of and not of their rural interior homelands, they may have been expressing “nostalgia” for the lost or changing national landscape, one with a childhood connection, or for the belonging they lost or never had; and “solastalgia” for the land they might still consider their home.

including that between the immanent and the transcendent. In *GSV*'s *sertão*, there are no boundaries, contradiction is natural, certainties are fleeting, “*toda firmeza se dissolve*”<sup>18</sup> – mankind is connected to the earth, and the earth is God and the devil; every path taken is both physical and metaphysical in nature. As will be explored, the author was steeped in readings about the place of the divine within the physicality of nature; thus it is that the *sertão* of this work allows for Riobaldo to struggle *there*, in his paths through the land and his interaction with its plants, creatures, waters, and winds... to struggle *there*, just as in his heart he struggles between the magnificence of a God that he thinks he knows to exist, and the dark influence in his life of an evil that he may have invented, and may be inventing still. That is the (meta)physical *sertão*, and the reader is invited to stay there. In *PP*, even more so than in *GSV*, the palpability of the real is no longer a functional distinction; such bifurcated concepts as sound and silence, life and death, are no longer different but can slide into one another. The town of Comala exists in multiple realms, and yet they are one realm only, with barely a veil between them: the abandoned town that Juan Preciado sees as he crests the hill, a town connected by roads to more vibrant places – and the town in which there is no air but only the voices and earthy bodies of the dead, the Comala that would have been across a river in Greek mythology, but here coexists with its resting place.

It is in these paradoxically (meta)physical realms that the issues of violence and redemption come into play. The works are both about violence and its costs, the origins of evil, and the possibilities of redemption, and the (meta)physical spaces of the novels allow for the elucidation and exploration of those issues. In *GSV*, Riobaldo follows Diadorim into a world of murderous warfare. He loses himself in his passions, seeking vengeance on Hermógenes for the death of Diadorim's father, the *jagunço* leader whose noble bearing first captivated his imagination; his desire for revenge leads him to make a pact at a crossroads with a devil that may or may not exist, and then to lead all of the *jagunços* of the backlands into a final bloody battle. Diadorim is lost in that place; and it may have been Riobaldo's fault, and may have to do with the cost of his pact. It isn't until the end of the work that the source of Riobaldo's dread and regret are made (somewhat) clear, and it becomes apparent that the telling of the tale, more than the tale itself, was done to grapple with those questions: Does the devil exist, or God, in the *sertão*? Or, is the devil of mankind's own making? Was it my (Riobaldo's) fault that Diadorim died? Violence, the (human?) source of evil, and the possibility of redemption are at the heart of the work.

*PP* is also built upon a foundation of violence, individual and systemic. Don Pedro steals and murders in order to gain complete control over the town of Comala and all of its land and wealth. Many people suffer at his hands and the hands of his enforcers; the town is broken during his reign. He admits to amassing property in order to have enough to give to his beloved Susana; and it is also in her memory that he destroys Comala after her death, taking his vengeance on those who dared to laugh on her funeral day. This violence, no matter its muse, left a mark on the town; but it isn't alone that he creates of Comala what it eventually becomes. It is the priest Padre Rentería who, although it tortures him, allows redemption to be bought by the rich and denied to the poor. When Juan Preciado, don Pedro's one legitimate son, returns for his inheritance, he finds it: a manmade purgatory of lost souls, some aware that they are dead but most in denial, reliving the terrors and injustices of their lives, and in their grief and desire for

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<sup>18</sup> “all firmness dissolves”

absolution, bringing the young man into death to join them. Violence, the (human?) source of evil, and the possibility of redemption, at the heart of this work too.

In both works, the process of exploring the humanity of evil and the consequences of violence begins with a fortification and illustration of the connection of mankind to the physical land: Riobaldo's feelings and actions influence and are influenced by the *sertão*, as is true for the inhabitants of Comala, their *cacique* Pedro, and his returning son. This land then becomes two-fold, in a sense truly folded: two realms in one, but tied to one another. In *GSV*, Riobaldo's wanderings take him through the "*reino*" and the "*reino-reino*," "real," and "realm-realm," as expressed by the poet Carlos Drummond de Andrade in "Um chamado João."<sup>19</sup> The "realm" of dirt, sand, and water, and the "realm-realm" in which God and the devil are present to Riobaldo through his experience of the land. Riobaldo finds that his geographical and life journey was a metaphysical journey, and that the devil is of his own construction, not that of some larger force: his *redemoinho* of wandering paths, and wandering thoughts, gave life to an evil that was inside of him, and the violence created itself. In *PP*, the human connection to land is creative of a dual space as well: on the one hand, a town with geography, history, and agriculture, and on the other, a realm in which the dead linger as ghosts and even as mud and soil, tied to the place of their suffering in a purgatory that is caused and maintained by mankind's own evil.

Both works, then, look at evil and redemption, and use the human connection to land to begin the construction of a (meta)physical space connected to that human concern. The land, as will be shown, is to us as much human as it is physical; it exists in our perception, and perhaps in reality, as a combination of material and experiential/symbolic components, including our experience and perception of the sacred. The *sertão* and Comala partake of our complex perceptions of them: material/experiential in origin, and physical/metaphysical in experience. Thematically, both novels use these complex human geographies to explore the evil in the landscape, the blood in the soil... and its origin in us, ourselves.

The works necessarily have differences in their approaches to these issues, and in the answers suggested in their pages. Though they both have metaphysical aspects to their physical lands, those of *PP* are much more directly experienced than those of *GSV*, which are largely felt and symbolic. And, too, in uncovering the source of evil as manmade, Riobaldo makes a concerted and introspective effort to come to terms with evil – and the devil – as existing in a *redemoinho* of humanity's own confusion and acts. In *PP*, however, no such narrative effort is made; rather, it is left to the reader to interpret the work, coming to understand the state of the town as the result of a combination of belief and human cruelty or corruption. In the question of what makes up the "meta-" in their (meta)physical literary realms, there are subtle and more apparent differences, such as that of the presence of God; so, too, there are differences in their use of narrative and many other aspects of the texts, as mentioned above.

Beyond these differences, in fact, there are many more. *Pedro Páramo* and *Grande Sertão: Veredas* are at first glance quite different works. *Pedro Páramo* is a short novel written in Mexico in 1955 about a young man returning to his mother's hometown after her death to meet his father and claim an inheritance. This place, Comala, is a small rural town in which the

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<sup>19</sup> Published in *Correio da Manhã* three days after the death of Guimarães Rosa in 1967 and reprinted in facsimile in the 19<sup>th</sup> edition of *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (2001, 11-14).

inhabitants are dead but still wander and speak. They trap the narrator into death with their history of violence, *caciquismo*, incest, greed, lust, and religious anguish. The tone is dark, and the language is simple, though not the telling; the narrative voices are numerous, and at times even unidentifiable, submerging the reader in scraps of testimony as they do the protagonist. Many characters appear to be archetypal, and there is an underlying vein of social criticism and a pervading sense of loss and confusion. *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (Brazil, 1956), on the other hand, is an epic story of unattainable love, and a violent, labyrinthine quest through an interior region traditionally wrought into poetry/prose as a space of extremes and autochthonous legend. The protagonist's quest is for self-knowledge, though he may not understand that himself, and it is told by this complex character in immense detail of thought and deed, introspective and yet unreliable, and in an extravagantly expressive prose rich with neologism and local lexicon, reflective of the *sertão* as constructed by the work. In fact, the *sertão* itself figures in a way as protagonist, with its regional character and characters, its wild diversity, and its immense glory; as, too, does the devil, subject of the narrator's personal dread.

Given these descriptions, one could assume that a comparison of the works must be based purely on their shared moment of publishing, or their vague geographical proximity; and indeed many who look at the two novels align them with broad and general strokes, as two Latin American novels from the 1950s that preceded the Boom and were yet extraordinary; or, perhaps, more specifically, as two works that combined 1) traditional themes and settings of their local regionalist literary heritages, with 2) the waves of modernist technique making their way into Latin America from abroad, creating of the novels a similar type of hybrid – context American, text “universal” – or, perhaps, as explored by Ángel Rama in *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina* (2007, first published 1982), context traditional, text innovative but an autochthonous revolution. These and similar points involving such a text/context dialectic have dominated much of the criticism surrounding the works, both separately and together, both specifically and as case studies for a grander scheme, and from their initial reception to today. However, the works need not be viewed as case studies, nor must their comparison be defended due to their many differences. Without their differences, they would be the same work; what is fascinating about them is that they are not, but they nonetheless share deeply in narrative, thematic, and especially spatial gestures, and in the confluence of these.

The “context” of documentary specificity of the works is not, then, as some have claimed, mere window dressing; nor is it the point of the works; and neither is it in conflict with the works' other more “innovative” elements, its narrative techniques. What it is, for both novels, is key to their creation of a literary space relevant to their concerns, and both physical and yet also more than (not “other than”) physical in nature. Poetics, space, and story are become one harmonious fabric: the authors have, separately, created realistic spaces, founded on one that matters to them; and they have formed of it complex spaces, (meta)physical ones with the function of interacting with the works' concerns. And it is *through* that literary technique which some would see as “universal” in nature that they have created *literary proximity* to that space, and invited the reader to enter it, to give it life from the blueprints. The two works are spatial in nature, formal in integration, collaborative in construction; and, although it might appear paradoxical, lands are neither simple context nor simple setting, but are aligned with character, narrative, and themes, and are, furthermore, (meta)physical, immanent/transcendent, realms overlaid in dirt... realms which help the reader to collaborate in narrating what cannot be simply told.

*GSV* and *PP* work, then, with the multiplicity of those regions – their physical, social, economic, historical, symbolic, and also metaphysical realms – *within* literary space – constructed and maintained through collaboration with the reader, a collaboration created with the literary techniques mentioned above. The complex narratives invite the reader to participate in the construction of an internal/external literary space – a space that contains within it the paradoxical multiplicity of the regions that largely make up that space: region is setting, and is the very symbolic cores of the works, just as region is physicality and (meta)physicality, very much connected to human experience and identity. It is in collaborating in the construction of a literary and psychical geography of those multiple realms that the reader is able to participate fully in Riobaldo's *redemoinho*, and Comala's *murmillos*. It is in the multidimensionality of that literary/regional space, its physicality and (meta)physicality, that the space becomes open for exploration of profound questions.

## 2. CONTEXTUALIZATION of COMPARISON:

As Brazilian critic Maria Virgínia Oliveira Maciel (2007) states in reference to current theories of comparative literature, comparison does not need to be “inherent” to objects, arising from equality, but rather can be just as rich when arising from the confrontation between objects with distinct natures.<sup>20</sup> Such a theory sets aside entirely any need to provide conventional framing defending the choice of two out of all global works for comparison. This study, however, did not choose two works at random to provide an arbitrary confrontation; the comparison arises out of perceived inherent similarity, textual and contextual, as well as difference. Therefore, the question of “why these works?” may easily arise.

### 2.1 GENERAL FRAMING: COLLABORATION:

One framing that can easily be discarded is that of a consciously shared derivation or historically documented collaboration. There is in fact little to no evidence to support friendship or literary influence between Juan Rulfo (1917-1986) and João Guimarães Rosa (1908-1967). A few records relate the two vaguely, as could certainly be done for any two authors who were contemporaries of each other within a continent with growing intellectual ties: for instance, there is a record of both authors having attended the second Conference of Latin American Writers in Mexico in 1967, the year of Guimarães Rosa’s death and a decade after the publication of the two novels.<sup>21</sup> There are also references to Juan Rulfo’s appreciation of Guimarães Rosa’s work. For instance, in an interview published in 1979, Rulfo tells Ernesto Gonzalez Bermejo that contemporary Brazilian literature is of the highest quality, and in his list he mentions Guimarães Rosa as one whose importance is well known, as an inventor of language; Bermejo makes the leap of comparison, calling Guimarães Rosa “a kind of Brazilian Rulfo.”<sup>22</sup> In an interview first published in 1980 in Mexico, Rulfo similarly tells Armando Ponce that he believes Brazilian

<sup>20</sup> “As atuais teorias a respeito da literatura comparada afirmam que a comparação, muitas vezes, não é inerente aos objetos. Não é necessário possuir dois objetos iguais para, então, compará-los. As ‘semelhanças’, ou os elementos comparativos, nascem justamente do choque e do confronto entre objetos de naturezas distintas” (“Juan Rulfo e João Guimarães Rosa: literaturas em contato” 1). (“The current theories with respect to comparative literature affirm that comparison, many times, is not inherent to the objects. It is not necessary to possess two equal objects to, then, compare them. The ‘similarities’, or the comparative elements, are born precisely from the collision or the confrontation between objects of distinct natures”) (*my translation throughout unless otherwise indicated*)

<sup>21</sup> Guimarães Rosa attended, as told in an April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1967 letter to his Hungarian friend, Professor Paulo Rónai: “Estou também chegando do México – aonde fui convidado para o II.º Congresso de Escritores Latino-Americanos” (“I am also arriving from Mexico – where I was invited for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress of Latin American Writers”) (Vilma Guimarães Rosa (VGR) 339-340). Juan Rulfo participated in the congress as well: “1967: Viaja por todos los países de América Latina invitando a los escritores a formar parte de la Comunidad Latinoamericana de Escritores. Se celebra en México el primer congreso de dicha Comunidad” (“1967: He travels through all the countries of Latin America inviting writers to form part of the Latin American Community of Writers. The first congress of said Community is celebrated in Mexico” (This congress is considered by some to be the first Congress, as the society was formed in the Genoa meeting)) (Ruffinelli 276, 278). Based on his role, Rulfo may have in fact invited Guimarães Rosa personally in his travels, but I have found no record of that.

<sup>22</sup> “[Rulfo] – En Brasil... dieron un giro completo y hoy tienen una literatura de primerísima calidad. / –¿A qué autores mencionaría? / –A Clarice Lispector, a Nélida Piñon, a Guinho do Rego, para no hablarle de Guimarães Rosa, cuya importancia la conocemos todos. / –Una especie de Rulfo brasileño. / –Guimarães inventó un lenguaje...” (468) (–In Brazil... they turned around completely and today they have a literature of absolutely first quality. / –Which authors would you mention? / –Clarice Lispector, ..., not to mention Guimarães Rosa, whose importance we all know. / –A kind of Brazilian Rulfo. / –Guimarães invented a language...”)

literature to be “the best literature,” and proceeds to mention Guimarães Rosa first in his list, and to mention as well that Minas Gerais produces the best of Brazilian writers.<sup>23</sup> These references are, however, past the publication dates of the two novels discussed in this work, and are in fact posthumous for Guimarães Rosa. There is, too, speculation about Guimarães Rosa’s story “Páramo,” published in *Estas Estórias* in 1969 (after the author’s death). As Paulo Moreira (2010) states, this was the only story (other than the author’s youthful, unpublished efforts) to take place outside of the *sertão*.<sup>24</sup> The story takes place in Bogotá, where Guimarães Rosa lived as a diplomat from 1942-1944 (442); however, the work, with its reference to the “*páramo*” and, too, to “*llanos*,” has for Moreira a “clear Rulfian evocation”<sup>25</sup> (444). Moreira finds this approximation in the narrative style,<sup>26</sup> and, too, in the stories themes – specifically, of death in life with blurred boundaries.<sup>27</sup> However, these interesting approximations in no way indicate that Guimarães Rosa was aware of Rulfo’s work at the time that his novel *GSV* was published more than a decade years earlier.

There is, then, a record of the two authors being in the same place at the same time, and a record of Rulfo’s appreciation of Guimarães Rosa as a writer, expressed many years after the latter’s

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<sup>23</sup> “–Usted acaba de estar en la Bienal del Libro, en Brasil. ¿Qué juicio le merece la literatura brasileña? / –Es la mejor literatura: Guimarães Rosa, Clarice Lispector, Dalton Trevison, Antonio Callado, Nélida Piñón, Eric Nepomuceno, Adonias Filho. Una gran cantidad de escritores. Los mejores son de la región de Minas Gerais” (53, also in Vital Díaz 187). (“–You were just in the Biennial of the Book, in Brazil. What judgment do you think the Brazilian literature deserves? / –It’s the best literature: Guimarães Rosa, Clarice Lispector, Dalton Trevison, Antonio Callado, Nélida Piñón, Eric Nepomuceno, Adonias Filho. A great quantity of writers. The best are from the region of Minas Gerais.”)

Rulfo’s continuing comments show he was quite aware of the literary happenings in Brazil: “...*La mayoría de ellos vive en Rio o en São Paulo; en la capital de Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, se publica un semanario donde aparecen nuevos cuentistas. Hay otros escritores: Aric Cuintela, Elio Pólvora, Carlos Drummond de Andrade. Hay editoriales muy grandes. En la época de Joao Goulart había mil librerías; después los militares dieron el golpe y ahora hay cuatrocientos.*” (53) (“The majority of them live in Rio or in São Paulo; in the capital of Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, is published a weekly (journal) where new short story writers appear. There are other writers: Aric Cuintela, Elio Pólvora, Carlos Drummond de Andrade. There are great publishers. In the era of João Goulart there were a thousand bookstores; then the militants gave the coup and now there are four hundred.”)

Paralizábal also writes in his 1984 work that during an undated interview, “*Juan Rulfo prosigue hablándonos entusiasmado de Joao Guimarães Rosa y la literatura brasileña*” (“Juan Rulfo continues speaking to us enthusiastic about João Guimarães Rosa and Brazilian literature”) (20). (The interview discussed by Paralizábal is undated, but occurs after the publication dates of the novels discussed here, given that Rulfo comments on his work *Pedro Páramo*, and the interview is also posthumous to Guimarães Rosa, as it mentions Vargas Llosa’s receipt of the Rómulo Gallegos prize in 1967 (Paralizábal 12))

<sup>24</sup> “*es el único (además de los tres primeros que el joven autor envió a la revista Cruzeiro en 1929 y nunca público) que no se desarrolla en el mítico Sertão Mineiro... ni siquiera ocurre en Brasil y tiene además un nombre de evocaciones inequívocas para oídos mexicanos...*” (440). (“is the only one (beyond the three first ones that the young author sent to the magazine *Cruzeiro* in 1929 and never published) that doesn’t take place in the mythical *Sertão Mineiro*... it doesn’t even occur in Brazil and, further, it has a name of unmistakable evocations for Mexican ears...”)

<sup>25</sup> “*clara evocación rulfiana*”

<sup>26</sup> He finds what he qualifies as a “*rulfiano caminar entre el lenguaje poético lapidario de tonos míticos y la observación atenta a la dura realidad*” (445) (“*rulfian path between the dogmatic poetic language of mythical tones and the attentive observation of harsh reality.*”)

<sup>27</sup> “*Guimarães Rosa se aproxima aún más a Rulfo, al tratar precisamente ese curioso tema de la muerte en vida, en el que los límites entre vida y muerte se borran.*” (446) (“Guimarães Rosa approaches Rulfo even more, in dealing precisely with that curious theme of death in life, in which the limits between life and death disappear.”)

death; but that is all that I have found to relate the two men in companionship or collaboration. Therefore, it is unrealistic to base a comparison on evidence of acquaintance, communication, mutual influence or collaboration. However, it is clear that the works nonetheless have various and immense overarching similarities, which create productive dialogue.

## 2.2 MEXICO and BRAZIL:

One of the more salient issues pertaining to a comparison of these two similar/dissimilar works arises from their origins – Mexico and Brazil, both in the mid-1950s. In framing a comparison of the works, then, it becomes necessary to explore a position on that issue, deciding 1) whether and to what extent they can be considered to be from the same general region, or whether they are contrastive in the nature of their contexts, 2) whether and to what extent they can be considered to be akin due to their moment of publishing, implying perhaps the existence of a universality of literary moments, and 3) how much to emphasize these issues as components of analysis of the works.

Many of the comparisons that have been made of the works frame them within a larger hypothesis concerning Brazil's place in Latin America. This study does not seek to do so explicitly; but neither should the question be ignored. In an exploration of the contexts of *PP* and *GSV*, it becomes clear that there are parallels in their literary historical inheritances as well as their local telluric contexts, even though one work was written in Brazil and one in Mexico. The lands and issues sketched in both point to shared contemporary concerns as well, especially as regarding the effect of modernism on rural areas, and the impact of warfare and violence. If such parallels are to be drawn, they must be drawn cautiously; Brazil has long been divided from Spanish America in literary critical approaches due to its many linguistic, historical, and literary-historical differences, and though the serious questioning of the validity of such a comparison is increasingly being laid to rest as many analyses are made across that boundary, it is, nonetheless, a boundary.

The identity/identities of Brazil and Spanish America have long been a topic for literary, intellectual, and critical discourse, both in and outside of the regions in question. Such discourses can mainly be broken into three areas, though there are certain to be more (see Appendix 1 for further specifics): 1) Brazil and Spanish America are not separate, but are a completely integrated Latin American identity/history/literature; this would imply that a comparison of a Mexican and a Brazilian work requires no explanation. Or, at the other extreme, 2) any apparent link between them is no more than the link between any separate regions in the world, and must not be seen as a sign of literary/historical/identity kinship; this would imply that the nations of origin of the works are irrelevant to their literary juxtaposition. In the middle ground, 3), Brazil and Spanish America are either mostly separate but providing of fruitful contrast, or are somewhat separate and yet deeply intertwined, providing fruitful comparison. Although, as Moreira claims, “the idea is still common that the Brazilian and Spanish American literatures follow completely independent paths”<sup>28</sup> (454), nonetheless the third road is increasingly common in contemporary criticism – that of a balance of affinity and difference,

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<sup>28</sup> “*es todavía corriente la idea de que las literaturas brasileña e hispanoamericana siguen caminos completamente independientes*”



falling on the side of relevance of comparison, of partial canonical integration, avoiding both zealous constructions of continental identities and zealous constructions of autonomous identities. This road is also the most complex. It must walk a line between artificially framing the texts as kin, and abandoning their shared contexts. Among those comparative literary critics proposing further analysis of the two canons in conjunction, Robert Patrick Newcomb states the place of Brazil in Latin America as “*necessarily problematic*” (his emphasis) – a phrase that may be interpreted to mean that it is both *problematic* and yet also *necessary* for a complete understanding of the region.<sup>29</sup> Such a stance implies that a juxtaposition of two works, one from Brazil and one from Spanish America, does not require any defense, but nonetheless may benefit from – or even focus on – their contextualization.

Indeed, Brazil has many commonalities with Spanish America, and yet also many points of difference, linguistically, historically, culturally, literarily, and so many more. However, the unit “Spanish America” has many different realms within it as well; Southern Cone, Andes, Central America, Caribbean, etc., and within these denominations, more differences too. Every region has its uniqueness, and many have points of relationship. Ángel Rama states, for instance, and specifically about the two works discussed in this dissertation:

...we can draw connections between Jalisco and Minas Gerais, in Mexico and Brazil respectively, just as we capture them in the literature of Juan Rulfo or Guimarães Rosa, we can find similar literary operations and common exercises of a certain kindred popular imaginary, but we could never strictly compare them. What is original of each culture is its own originality, the impossibility to reduce it to another, no matter how many common fundamentals they share.<sup>30</sup> (112)

In sum: the works’ origins have elements in common, but are not the same; and, indeed, no two cultures are the same. And yet, Rama’s book is about “Latin America,” a designation of category based on commonality, and there are “*relaciones*,” “connections,” between Jalisco and Minas Gerais.

The critical road of the “*necessarily problematic*” or the non-strict “*relaciones*,” may lay to rest the question of the relevance of a comparison at all, but although the fact of working with novels from across the “divide” may no longer be questioned, the act still brings with it a host of concerns and framing tendencies. Among those concerns and framing tendencies is the fact that, once one has come to terms with the affinity/difference of the contextual origins of two works of literature, there is still the question of *how to weigh the result in literary analysis*. How much does context matter – the context of Brazil, Latin America, New World, etc., or any other indicator of national/geographical origin? Some critics who compare the two novels or authors presented here do so explicitly within the framework of case studies for Brazil’s autonomous

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<sup>29</sup> See: [spanish.ucdavis.edu/people/cv/Newcomb\\_CV.pdf](http://spanish.ucdavis.edu/people/cv/Newcomb_CV.pdf); citation taken from his description of his forthcoming work *Nossa and Nuestra América: Inter-American Dialogues* (Fall 2011, Purdue University Press).

<sup>30</sup> “...podemos trazar relaciones entre Jalisco y Minas Gerais, en México y Brasil respectivamente, tal como los recogemos en la literatura de Juan Rulfo o de Guimarães Rosa, podemos encontrar similares operaciones literarias y ejercicios comunes de un cierto imaginario popular afín, pero jamás podríamos equipararlas estrictamente. Lo original de cualquier cultura es su misma originalidad, la imposibilidad de reducirla a otra, por más fundamentos comunes que compartan.”

belonging, or otherwise, to the Latin American whole; for instance, Maciel prefaces her 2007 conference article with the following statement:

The choice of a Mexican writer, in comparison with a Brazilian, has the object of attempting to show in what ways Brazil differs, without withdrawing itself, from the process of formation of Hispanic America. We understand the need for inserting ourselves into this block, knowing how to respect our peculiarities and those of the rest of the peoples who constitute this one and diverse group.<sup>31</sup> (1)

Although her article does not center on this issue, she nonetheless feels the need to include it; she indicates, in doing so, that although a comparison of a Brazilian and Mexican author need not be questioned, her work nonetheless must *represent* a larger reality, a larger idea about the relationship between the two nations.

### 2.3 TEXT and CONTEXT:

Once a balance has been chosen between the affinity and difference of the regions in question, or indeed any such contextual question, there is still the question of *text* and *context*. Must every work on these two authors acknowledge and explore the extent of continuity in the works' places of origin – or other context? Or must criticism look only at the works themselves – text? Or, something in between?

Pascale Casanova's book *The World Republic of Letters* (2004) seeks such a balance between the context of a work and its text, and is a useful tool for approaching the topic of *how* to analyze literature, especially those works steeped in contextual discussion. Her work is primarily written to explain and explore how the realm of literature is both attached to and detached from geopolitics; it has its own politics, its own economy, which though linked cannot be easily overlaid on a political map – such as that of the Americas. To this point, the reality of political or economic engagement, or of historical parallels between two nations or regions, is only part of the equation of the affinity between their literatures, and especially between the literary works of individual authors.

This point is reflective in some ways of the arguments of Gregory Rabassa, when in 1978 he wrote of *GSV*, *Cien Años de Soledad* and other novels that they had “coincidences” which reflected not a “common background” but a “common moment” (129-130). He wrote specifically to warn against assuming kinship between Brazil and Spanish America, claiming any “similarities are universal” (131), for “Brazilian and Spanish American literatures are not members of a continental subdivision, but, rather, of the whole universal body of literature.” (119). However, though Rabassa shares Casanova's vision of a separate realm of the literary, a separate plane from that of geopolitics, Casanova concentrates in great measure on how origin is *also* a part of literature, in complex balance with the expressly literary.

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<sup>31</sup> “A escolha de um escritor mexicano, em comparação com um brasileiro, tem a finalidade de tentar mostrar de que forma o Brasil se difere, sem se afastar, do processo de formação da América Hispânica. Pois entendemos a necessidade de nos inserirmos neste bloco, sabendo respeitar as nossas peculiaridades e dos demais povos que constituem este grupo uno e diverso.”

In exploring world literary space, Casanova's book conscientiously explores the balance between "internal (textual)" readings and interpretations, such as the close readings of French criticism, and the "external (historical)" interpretations favored by, for instance, postcolonial critics. She explains:

The ambition of the international literary criticism that I propose in the pages that follow is to provide a specifically literary, yet nonetheless historical, interpretation of texts; that is, to overcome the supposedly insuperable antinomy between internal criticism, which looks no further than texts themselves in searching for their meaning, and external criticism, which describes the historical conditions under which texts are produced, without, however, accounting for their literary quality and singularity. (4-5)

Each writer, she explains, is "heir" to – and "embodies and reactivates" – his/her particular membership in a "linguistic area and a national grouping" as well as the entire "national and international history" with which he/she interacts in life. However, each writer, too, "deals with this unavoidable inheritance" through "aesthetic, linguistic, and formal choices." Writers have their own balance of belongings and attributes and innovations; so they should be seen. The literary realm is, according to Casanova's assertions, made up of that balance between global literary trends and local identities, and as such has its own rules and attributes.

As has been shown here, with the aid of Casanova's explorations, a Mexican novel and a Brazilian one can be looked at as two novels, within a global literary realm that maintains a complex relationship to geopolitics and national/regional identities, histories, etc. They can be framed as both inheritors of their authors' historical/geographical context and of their literary context; and also as products of their unique authors as choosers and innovators – each with their own spectrum in production. The literary critic, then, is not tied to engaging the works from a primarily contextual or textual angle, but must acknowledge the complexity and then also make a choice – and, too, choose between considering text and context to be in conflict, or in confluence.

## 2.4 REGIONAL and UNIVERSAL:

*Pedro Páramo* and *Grande Sertão: Veredas* have traditionally been looked at as a combination of their (complex) Latin American context – especially in reference to regionalism – and their place in comparison to universal trends in narrative form. Sometimes they are studied as pure members of universal formal trends, shedding the limits of their home literatures – as text; sometimes as regional works, rooted and dependent on their forebears – as context; and, most commonly, as containing both elements, but in conflict.

As seen above, many of the critics of *PP* and *GSV* have chosen to concentrate on the works' positions – separately, or together – in a balance connected to that described by Casanova between text (what is internal to the work) and context (external), through separating in a dialectic of conflict the works' aesthetic innovation (text/internal) from their regional setting (context/external). In the case of these two works, these terms of analysis are often aligned with

the works' regional literary connections vs. their formal attributes, in which the setting and origin of the works define them as regional, but their formal attributes are often seen as being more "universal" – though some would complicate that distinction, such as Angel Rama.

Both works (and authors in general) have frequently been analyzed within the critical framework of regional vs. universal literatures or other similar dialectics, beginning with their initial reception in the 1950s, in which much concern was placed on their belonging or not to regional genres. This was not merely a discussion about where to place the works on a syllabus; ascribing "regionalism" to a work was complicated, carrying with it all the weight of associated ideas. In fact, for many critics, "regional" literary genres were seen as inherently limited in banality and/or formal stagnation, while "universal" attributes were held to be those that transcend – or expand – regionalism into something improved, generally through creativity in aesthetics and/or plot and themes. This conceptualization of regional literature as being limited in creativity is found in such terminology as (in Spanish America<sup>32</sup>) "description"<sup>33</sup> vs. "image" (Paz, *Corriente Alterna*), "imitate" vs. "create" (Aub), literature that is "described" vs. "written," and "geography" vs. "literature" (Fuentes), and "primitive novel" vs. "novel of creation" (Vargas Llosa), in which the "primitive novel" is in "confusion between art and artisanship, between literature and folklore, between information and creation." In Brazil,<sup>34</sup> regionalism from its earliest incarnations through the mid-20th Century has been described as "reporting"<sup>35</sup>, "banal," "describers" (Bosi), "banally epic" (Lourenço), "scenes of nature and customs" and "photographic and servile reproduction" vs. "humanity" and an "aesthetic definition" (Machado de Assis), and, to Cândido, a "literary incarnation of the national spirit" that results in "prejudice or disorientation, under the aesthetic aspect." It has been "conventional literary regionalism" with its "photographic reproductions" and its "elementary caipirismo [pertaining to the rustic interior] of the picturesque exterior and of the simply descriptive" (Lins), and inherently limiting as a category, with "regionalist" a descriptor of an author that would "enclose him within the limits of his region, as little more than its memoirist" (Casais Monteiro). Much of the reception and continuing critical commentary of *GSV* relates it to Brazilian regionalism, and likewise with *PP* and the literature of the Mexican Revolution, the prevailing telluric tradition leading up to his time. As seen here, "regional" literature is often associated with a lack of aesthetic technique, and that technique is seen as more "universal." For many, the "regional" and "universal," the "contextual" and the "textual," are in conflict, and the two novels choose one over the other or maintain them in a balance of opposites. Indeed, for some, the works' universality, be it in conflict or balance with their regional origins, portends a global literary "moment" for Latin American letters – a textual determination within a contextual critical framework.

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<sup>32</sup> Bibliographical data for these authors' works may be found in Works Cited for Part II.

<sup>33</sup> "descripción," "imagen" ... "imitar," "crear" ... "descrita," "escrita" ... "geografía," "literatura" ... "novela primitiva," "novela de creación" ... "confusión entre arte y artesanía, entre literatura y folklore, entre información y creación"

<sup>34</sup> Bibliographical data for these authors' works may be found in Works Cited for Part I.

<sup>35</sup> "reportagem," "banal," "descritores" ... "banalmente épico" ... "quadros de natureza e de costumes," "quadros de natureza e de costumes" and "reprodução fotográfica e servil," "humanidade," "definição estética," ... "encarnação literária do espírito nacional," "prejuízo e desnorteio, sob o aspecto estético" ... "convencional regionalismo literário," "reproduções fotográficas," "elementar caipirismo do pitoresco exterior e do simplesmente descritivo" ... "fechá-lo nos limites da sua região, como pouco mais que seu memorialista"

However, *GSV* and *PP* are more than a strange, even unlikely, combination of regional setting and aesthetic or “human” innovation; and they share in more than being case studies or portents of a new age of universal aesthetics and thematic relevance for the Latin American novel, whether in spite of or in cohesion with regionalism. These two works both have many other and complex factors within them, but centrally, they share in how the many pieces of the works fit together cohesively – form, context, message – in their construction of literary and other space. As mentioned above, the regional and aesthetic elements of the works have been perceived as separate and even conflicting; however, I argue that the themes/messages, settings/context, and narrative techniques/form of the works are harmonious elements, and are, in fact, further, harmonious in much the same way in both novels. The specifics of the regions and their histories, the quite possibly “modernist” formal devices, and the issues of local and beyond-local significance are not in conflict, but in balance; and the remaining paradox of the works is their multidimensionality. Paradox: because the seemingly contradictory elements of the physical and the metaphysical are one, created in the *telling* of the works and their interaction with the reader. Setting and form are not at odds: it is due to the works’ complex and creative narrative techniques that the *sertão* and Comala are built, in collaboration with the reader, into powerfully internalized and multidimensional telluric/metaphysical/literary spaces for the exploration of the works’ concerns about identity, violence, and redemption.

In fact, as has been illustrated above, beyond the larger comparisons of the works’ shared historical moment of inception, shared text/context conflict in tradition and innovation, etc., there are parallels between the works that take their comparison out of the range of “case study” for continental factors, and into their individual literary contributions. Upon closer inspection, then, many of the differences between the works are more superficial than their parallels. They differ in national origin, in length, in prose style, and in many other respects, but there are nonetheless powerful parallels that travel deep within the works, leading to a rich dual reading. As seen above, there are deep and enduring parallels between the works’ uses of narrative technique and paradoxical region to explore similar concerns within similarly constructed literary space. Space in both of these works is multiple in meaning – physical, emotional, symbolic, even metaphysical – and is deeply connected to humanity through various gestures and symbols, thus creative of an enduring and productive concept of land that is also real. These are the key comparisons upon which this dissertation is based. There are, however, many more integral parallels as well, some of which are illustrated here: the works were published within a year of each other, both by authors with a vision for one novel and collections of short prose. The works are both narrated, at least in part, by young men on quests for identity and belonging, who begin their journeys as visitors but become a part of their sought space, losing sight of the road back out. They both contain frustrated and unconsummated lives and loves, such as Pedro’s love for Susana who is long gone to another place in her mind, embracing death as it comes, though he moved earth and killed her father to have her; and Riobaldo’s deep love for Diadorim that he cannot admit to himself or others, believing this Brazilian Joan of Arc to be a man, while she herself loves him but is bent on vengeance for her father’s death – and doomed to die also. The works also share in aspects of their visions of patriarchy and law. In *PP*, the *cacique* creates his own feudal law, respecting no paper; and, indeed, respecting no other law, since religious judgment is feared by the masses but flouted by don Pedro and corrupted, in cowardice, by the priest himself. In *GSV*, the *jagunços* create their own code of law as well, even while the possibilities of God and the devil hang over their actions. *Grande Sertão: Veredas* and *Pedro*

*Páramo* initially suggest a rich conversation based on an immediately apparent affinity on several fronts, and go on, through more careful consideration, to illuminate each other and certain literary gestures as a whole.

This work does not use the novels as a case study to analyze Mexico/Brazil literary relations, nor does it seek to artificially align their origins. It seeks to look at both text and context of the works, on all levels: as both connected to and independent from their authors and local histories, and as both setting and form. Further, this work does not seek to analyze the ways in which the works differ from the banality of regionalism through their textual innovations, but rather collapses that distinction to focus on region – and the local peoples' profound connection to it – as *central*, not incidental nor detrimental, to the formal and thematic functions of the texts.

The works' spaces are folded, double, and yet one – complex (meta)physical spaces formed in the works' narratives. And the connection of these (meta)physical spaces to human perception and experience is what makes of them tools for the exploration of themes that are, again, remarkably similar in the works, albeit only in their categorical framing and not in the particulars: the human source of evil, and its consequences. It is through the violence of don Pedro and the corruption of the priest that the purgatory in Comala comes about and remains in testimonial power; and it is through Riobaldo's journeys, real and narrated, through the physical/spiritual *sertão* that he comes to understand – albeit with hesitation – that the violence done was wrought by mankind, not by an external Evil, and that the *sertão*'s only supernatural entity is God. The documented physical and cultural landscapes are the basis for the (meta)physical spaces and their concerns, which in turn rely upon innovative narrative technique for their construction and their readerly maintenance. The exploration of the parallels between these two novels reveals a lot about the works themselves, and, too, about the relationship between narrative and space and many literary gestures in general.

### 3. PLAN of the WORK:

This work will approach both novels in parallel. First, (Part I: Chapter I, Part II: Chapters I/II), the extent of the multiplicity of land in the works will be explored, as they are both documentary historical/cultural spaces, and are also and at once much more than that in their developed human relevance and in their metaphysical elements. The second chapter of Part I will develop further the nature of telluric and other paradox in *GSV*, with reference to the author's interviews and commentary.

Following the development of the paradoxical (meta)physical spaces in the works, the next chapters (Chapter III in both sections) will look at the implementation of narrative techniques in the works in order to aid in the production of these paradoxical and thematically productive land-spaces, and in the opening of the work to reader collaboration, i.e. the creation of a collaborative literary space that brings that metaphysical space to life, with discussion of the spatial and temporal consequences of the narratives' interactions with progress and permanence.

Chapter IV (both sections) will then concentrate on the thematic consequences of these participatory (meta)physical spaces in the works' explorations of evil and redemption. In *GSV*, the demonic vs. human source of evil is close to the narrator's heart, and it appears that the whirlwind of his land-narrative may be both the source of the "devil" and its exorcism. In *PP*, the town's continued penance is reflective of, as well as narrative of, the cruelty and corruption of its human leaders in life. And in both works, the narrative techniques and spatial constructs bring these thematic questions into the reader's own psychical *sertão*, psychical Comala, deeply involving us in their outcomes.

Finally, in Part III both works will then be looked at again in the context of their reception and prior analysis, in order to further interact with the concept of the regional and formal elements of the works, and to further clarify the central position of this dissertation pertaining to the "paradox" in cohesion of text/context and, further, that of the physical/metaphysical space. The conclusion will bring the two novels together explicitly, reaffirming their shared qualities of narrative and (meta)physical realm.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deep gratitude to Professor Candace Slater, chair of my dissertation committee, for her help in guiding me through the writing of this dissertation. I will always appreciate her patient and insightful feedback on my many drafts and her consistent support of my work, both in this project and throughout my entire graduate career.

I would also like to warmly acknowledge Professor Estelle Tarica, whose perceptive advice on this project has been invaluable, and who has always inspired and challenged me to strive for further excellence.

I extend special thanks to Professor Jeroen Dewulf. I truly appreciate his patient and engaged readings of all phases of this project, which have consistently provided me with inspiration, with confidence, with new and exciting approaches to this material, and with elegance and precision in my prose.

I am deeply grateful, too, to my other Berkeley professors and colleagues with whom I have conversed about this dissertation, for their support and for their willing exchange of ideas, which has enriched and inspired it greatly. I also want to express to Verónica López my deep appreciation for her unwavering, sustaining support and generous, sincere guidance throughout all of my Berkeley years, and to Mari Mordecai my appreciation for her warm encouragement and her always genuine and helpful advice.

I dedicate this work to my husband, Elliott, whose patient and loving support has daily given me the strength to proudly achieve its completion; and to my wonderful parents, for their loving and thoughtful conversations and their unconditional support of my endeavors, through this time of challenge and enlightenment, and always. I also dedicate this dissertation to my wonderful friends, especially Natalie, Lisa, Anne, and Liz, and to my sister Sarah, for their patient dialogue and their warm, motivational support throughout my graduate years.



**PART I:**

**The PHYSICAL METAPHYSICS of *GRANDE SERTÃO: VEREDAS***

## INTRODUCTION to PART I

In the poem “Um chamado João,”<sup>36</sup> Carlos Drummond de Andrade wonders in a few well-chosen words about key aspects of João Guimarães Rosa’s life, work, and legacy. Guimarães Rosa’s legacy, as seen in the poem, is that he is not just “*fabulista*,” a storyteller, but “*fabuloso*,” fabulous, and “*fábula*,” a fable, fabrication, or legend himself, through his creation of the mystical *sertão* (“*sertão místico*”) in language and names (*GSV*: 2001, 11, 12). The poem asks first about how the author somehow had access to regional nature, intimately –

Tinha pastos, buritis plantados  
no apartamento?  
no peito?  
Vegetal ele era ou passarinho  
sob a robusta ossatura com pinta  
de boi risonho?  
...  
Guardava rios no bolso...?<sup>37</sup> (11, 12)

– and second, how he had access, also intimately, to the incomprehensible and the beyond, projecting “*na gravatinha*” (in his bowtie, a quotidian physical object) the “*quinta face das coisas*,” the “*inenarrável*,” and “*o que não ousamos compreender*”<sup>38</sup> ... the metaphysical, broadly speaking.

The duality/multiplicity of the work *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (*GSV*) is salient in criticism of the novel, but generally in relation to its regional traditions vs. linguistic novelty, region vs. modernity, or region vs. the “universal.” There is, however, another multiplicity in the work: region and metaphysics, as seen first in the oft-cited first paragraph of *GSV*, which explicitly mentions “*o sertão*” and its specifics, and also “*Deus*” and “*o demo*.” The work continues to mention some or all of these words (or variations of them) on almost every page. *GSV* exists in this duality: it is rich in regional detail of nature and culture, material, and yet the work focuses also, in large part, on its protagonist Riobaldo’s struggle with the question of whether his pact with the devil is in any way real.

There are in fact many levels or layers of the work’s themes and concerns; some of them follow here, ordered from what appear to be objective to what appear to be abstract elements:

- 1) The Setting: the *sertão*, Northeastern interior of Brazil, is described in minute and well-researched detail, along with agrarian or *jagunço* (bandit) cultural manifestations.

<sup>36</sup> Published in *Correio da Manhã* three days after the death of Guimarães Rosa in 1967 and reprinted in facsimile in the 19<sup>th</sup> edition of *Grande Sertão: Veredas*.

<sup>37</sup> “Did he have pastures, *buritis* [tall regional palms] planted / in his apartment? / in his chest? / Was he a plant or a little bird / beneath his robust frame with the appearance / of a cheerful ox? / ... / Did he keep rivers in his pocket...?” (my translation; all translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated).

<sup>38</sup> “The fifth side of things, ... the inenarrable, ... that which we don’t dare to understand”

- 2) The Basic Plot: a young man enters the *sertão* as secretary to a government force and, somewhat star-struck with a noble *chefe de jagunços*, joins a band of these sometimes-hired bandits, wherein he participates in war and vengeance, makes friends and enemies, and falls in love with several women, but especially one whom he thinks is his brother-in-arms. He then rises to a position of leadership, possibly makes a pact with the devil, wins (with great casualties) the war of vengeance for the death of the first leader, and in the process loses his beloved Diadorim, before leaving the backlands to marry and settle down at an inherited estate.
- 3) Diadorim: Riobaldo loves Diadorim but, until the truth of her female gender is known after her death, he feels that it is a forbidden love, and struggles with confusion. There is tragedy, and the classic leitmotif of the “warrior maiden” à la Jeanne d’Arc.
- 4) The Narrative (Riobaldo): Riobaldo suffers from identity crises and uncertainties. Too, the story is told in a circuitous and sometimes dubious fashion to an unknown interlocutor, by a narrator who now knows truths that his narrated self didn’t know, and who is never sure how much he belonged to the *jagunçagem* lifestyle, leading to a certain amount of mystery in relation to the story’s factuality, even within the realm of fiction.
- 5) The Pact Crisis: “*O demo*” (“the devil”) is discussed in large and frequent sections of text, from references to local superstitions and global religions, mostly within what appears to be a Catholic or at least Christian framework, to the specific quandary – vital to the narrator and his longing for redemption, as he thinks he may have undertaken a demonic pact – pertaining to whether “*o demo*” exists and whether the sale of one’s soul to such a being/non-being is possible.
- 6) The Mysticism Question: connections indicated in Riobaldo’s language and commentary and experiences, and in the nature of the telling – as well as, and especially, through the *sertão*, the wandering of it, and the questions of love, warfare, and the devil – point to larger questions about “meanings” behind, or permeating, material existence.

Though useful in organizing ideas, this hierarchy is in fact *completely false*. The *sertão* (1) is more than setting, it is in fact a vital part of the “Mysticism Question” (6), insofar as the connection between the material and the immaterial is strong and bilateral; and it is a vital part of the “Pact Crisis” (5) too, as it both hosts and then hides the place where the pact took place, and is a component of the creation of the devil through man’s own labyrinthine lives and thoughts, reflected also in “The Narrative” (4), which in many ways *is* the *sertão*, both ambiguous, both intimate and strange; and even Diadorim’s duality (3) is a reflection of the paradox in the rest of the work, as is Riobaldo himself. The *sertão* is land; the *sertão* is narrative; the *sertão* is mankind; the *sertão* is metaphysical.

The spiritual and religious aspects of the work have led generations of readers to conclude that *GSV* has thematic aspects of religion or the metaphysical alongside its evident regional themes – and, subsequently, that *GSV* is a different regionalism due to themes as well as forms, departing in significant ways from its literary antecedents because the metaphysical aspect makes of the work a more universally relevant piece. The nature of this metaphysics often remains vague in critical approaches, however, alluded to as “universality” or “spirituality,” “metaphysics” or “mysticism,” but generally without delving into its specific quandaries or quests beyond that of the narrator’s explicit concerns, or indeed delving into 1) how the prominent usage of the *land of the sertão* figures into the metaphysical project, and 2) how the structure and language of the

work participate in that message of dualism. Manoel Cavalcanti Proença (1958), for example, in the first book published about *Grande Sertão: Veredas*, saw already that the work was multiple, divided in his words between the “objective” and “subjective,” in which the “objective” includes “combats and wanderings – creative of the personality of the *jagunço* that ends up leader of the band,”<sup>39</sup> and the “subjective,” “marches and countermarches of a strangely mystical spirit, oscillating between God and the devil” (6). This division is useful, especially when taking the *sertão* and its archetypal plotlines as “object” and the interior struggles of the protagonist as “subject” – but it moves beyond the “subject” or “subjective” towards something that Proença himself mentions, though he doesn’t delve into it: the mystical, the transcendent, as a topic *related* to the land, its stories, and the characters and their struggles and “marches”: “In this world, fire and water, God and the devil, Guimarães Rosa lit stage lights for Riobaldo to pass”<sup>40</sup> (Proença 5). The concrete land and story exist in the work, and with excellence of research and depiction; and the mystical is there as well. And, further, they are one: the region serves as a multiple space for Riobaldo to find himself and his relationship to the transcendent or divine, in a participatory dichotomy (see Plato, Plotinus, Ruysbroeck) of material and immaterial questions. Beyond the concept of the “paradox” of oppositions in region and universal, context and text, the mystical landscape of the *sertão* in *GSV* is both real and spiritual without conflict.

This type of paradox, of existence being both one thing and another though they would appear contradictory, is in fact something that João Guimarães Rosa relished. In his 1965 conversation with Günter Lorenz, Lorenz expresses that the author’s experience as physician, rebel, and soldier, together with the author’s mentioned elements of diplomacy, working with horses and cattle, religion, and languages, form a “somewhat curious combination of motives.”<sup>41</sup> Guimarães Rosa’s response indicates his own attention to, and understanding of, the possibility of coexistence and relationship between such disparate elements in a person, or in a work of literature: “What isn’t curious in life? We shouldn’t examine life in the same way that a collector of insects contemplates his scarabs”<sup>42</sup> (Lorenz 67). This statement shows a perspective on life in which the simplest, most physical reality – the carapace of the insect – is only a first step to understanding the insect, whereas its “insectness” is something beyond the visible shell. Likewise, the author’s own regionalist style is not simply about growing up in a regional geography and mirroring what is around him, but is instead about seeking a deeper conceptualization of life. This quest is, however, still in communication with the “*escaravelho*” (“scarab”) that defines the world to our perception; it is still about the *sertão*, and productive of it. Lorenz and Guimarães Rosa then speak about the author’s interests and motivations, and when Guimarães Rosa places emphasis on the “cows and horses” more than on the erudition, altruism, and world travel in his life, Lorenz asks, “Pardon, but in relation to your biography doesn’t this seem a bit paradoxical?”<sup>43</sup> Guimarães Rosa responds:

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<sup>39</sup> “combates e andanças – criadoras de personalidade do jagunço que termina chefe do bando” ... “marchas e contramarchas de um espírito estranhamente místico, oscilando entre Deus e o Diabo”

<sup>40</sup> “Neste mundo, fogo e água, Deus e o Demo, Guimarães Rosa acendeu gambiarras para Riobaldo passar.”

<sup>41</sup> “combinação um tanto curiosa de motivos”

<sup>42</sup> “o que não é curioso na vida? Não devemos examinar a vida do mesmo modo que um colecionador de insetos contempla os seus escaravelhos.”

<sup>43</sup> “Desculpe, mas relacionado com sua biografia isto não parece um tanto paradoxal?”

And not just this, but everything: life, death, everything is, deep down, paradox. Paradoxes exist so that it is still possible to express something for which there don't exist words.<sup>44</sup> (Lorenz 67-68)

Guimarães Rosa shares fundamental aspects of his worldview in this conversation, which are explored further in his work and its regional, mystical, and other components – components that may appear to be in paradox, or to be “curious” in conjunction, but are in fact multiple layers of the same existence. *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (*GSV*) mirrors these philosophies: the *sertão*, in the work, is not merely a setting, nor an estranged, caricaturesque or maniquean protagonist, as such regions are characterized as having been in other regionalist literature of Latin America, but is instead a metaphysical and human space. It is personified, given life and power beyond its dirt – or, perhaps more likely, Riobaldo, and the reader, are “*sertão*-ified,” included inside of its conceptual and symbolic arena. Beyond a regionalist tale, this is a story of love, despair, and a quest for grace and redemption; and the *sertão*, in its role as place of parable, innovation, and constant evolution and connection, is never limited to a concrete place or moment. It becomes a place of imaginary and possibility in the reading of the work, and in fact contains the story, its themes, and its narrative.

It is through this rapprochement of *sertão* and spirituality, body and soul – as illustrated by the mystics that the author mentioned as his own preferred or as the most relevant to his work, Plotinus and Ruysbroeck among others – that the other levels of the work become clearer, and the other topics are explored. Diadorim is a rapprochement, too, of the masculine and feminine, the forbidden and the felt, a global mythology and a local one; Riobaldo is a rapprochement of the contemporary, literate, urban aspects of the interior of Brazil, “outside,” and the nature and archetypes of its past, “belonging”; and in the end the devil is nowhere else but *in* the whirlwind of the narrative, and the whirlwind of the narrator’s topographical and topical wandering, as the title tells us if we will listen: in the openness and grace of the *sertão* and *veredas*, “*o diabo*” is in the road, in the middle of the *redemoinho*, the chaos of *our own making* – as in his own telling. The *sertão*, humankind, and the metaphysical are produced in the work as one.

Further, this (meta)physical land, consisting of *both* the physicality of region, and further aspects of realm, is a “paradox” of unity of *setting* and *form*, as well as of physical and metaphysical, because text and context work together in the work to create a participatory literary realm as well. The thematic *redemoinho* of Riobaldo’s fears is echoed/echoes the labyrinth of his narrative; form and content, one. The narrative evinces several layers of complexity, even chaos or paradox, in its narrative, structure, characterization, setting, and themes; and this chaos itself ties all of these together in a way productive of meaning. And, beyond this aspect, the narrative itself also functions to create the *proximity of that space to the reader*: the literary space of dialogue in which room for the reader is made through such narrative techniques as non-linearity, untrustworthiness, and even open invitation to interpret and create.

In this first section, I will lay out the ways in which *GSV*’s literary elements function together – narrative, region, and, more than that, metaphysical quandaries, aligned through their own textures of paradox and chaos.

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<sup>44</sup> “*E não apenas isto, mas tudo: a vida, a morte, tudo é, no fundo, paradoxo. Os paradoxos existem para que ainda se possa exprimir algo para o qual não existem palavras.*”

In Chapter I, I will look more deeply at *GSI*'s *sertão*, which is central to the work in several ways: 1) It is the work's setting, and abundant in regional authenticity. 2) It is representative also of a higher plane of meaning, one of connection to human identity and experience, and, also, symbolic in Judeo-Christian cosmologies, in which its very materiality is imbued with – depending on the narrator's perspective at the time – grace or sinfulness or the possibility of both. 3) It is also a place that is indefinable and unexpected, chaotic and labyrinthine, many disparate and paradoxical things – and, in this, it is connected both to the labyrinthine narrative itself, and to its perplexed and divided protagonist/narrator. The land, in this work, is also the protagonist – both in reflecting Riobaldo, and in playing out the book's central quandaries in its multiple spaces.

Second, I will seek a deeper understanding of the nature of the place of paradox as a defining characteristic of the work by looking to the author's own apparent attempts to live a comfortably paradoxical inner life, and also look to his library of resources on mysticism, in which it is immediately apparent that the author preferred a mysticism that did not deny the material world, but instead incorporated it into a duality of meaning, in which there is a transcendent realm, but it is palpably “here.” The author's conceptualization of paradox, and readings in mysticism, both illustrate and promote discussion of the *sertão*'s role as *both* fully material land, *and* fully transcendent and conceptual place.

Third, I will look at the role of the narrative. The narrative itself being paradoxical and multiple in nature, with “*palavras tortas*” and a nonlinear form, it breaks down the narrator, text, and story. It provides the space of “paradoxical” (meta)physics in the work, and also provides the space of collaboration with the reader. I will also lay out the aspects of the narrative style and structure of the work that resemble the very *redemoinho* – or whirlwind – that Riobaldo views as being constructive of the devil in the *sertão*. Riobaldo implies in the work that mankind creates the devil, and he also ties the devil to the *sertão* and the *redemoinho*, in which the whirlwind creates its own darkness by drawing up dust and running away with it. This, too, is what Riobaldo does with his narrative; he runs away with his ideas and his fears, and creates his pact and its effects. The parallel here shows that the *redemoinho* and the *sertão* are *in* the narrative itself, constructed in the telling; the similarities tell the reader, implicitly, that this whirlwind of narrative which so parallels the whirlwind of Riobaldo's existential terror is a further illustration of the *creativity* of Riobaldo's own “*fôlego*” – his breath, his wind.

Fourth, I will look further to Riobaldo's explicit use of the term “*redemoinho*” (whirlwind) in the novel's refrain and its relationship to the “devil,” sin, and redemption. These thematic issues lie at the center of the work; it is for them, in part, that the *sertão* is built as (meta)physical, and the reader invited to partake of its realms.

This *sertão* ties together multiple layers of the work: it is a real place in Brazilian nation and history, as well as a place intrinsically linked to humankind in our minds, perceptions and destinies; and, further, a place linked to our metaphysical and existential concerns, embodying, producing, or materializing fears and desires. In the last chapter, I will peruse critical views of the work as both “regional” and “universal,” and summarize and conclude Part I of this work –

before looking into its mirror in Part II, *Pedro Páramo (PP)*, and showing them to be mutual origins of critical clarity.

Riobaldo's circuitous and paradoxical narrative reflect his circuitous and paradoxical self, belonging and not belonging in the *sertão*, and reflect the circuitous and paradoxical *sertão*, which is also Riobaldo himself. The narrator – and narrative – create his own *demo* in the blowing dust of his heart, mind, surroundings – perceived and created – and words. All of these levels of the novel *GSV* are one, tied together by their natures. Time in the *sertão* of Minas Gerais passes, and time in *GSV's* *sertão* passes, too, since it is a dynamic space, based on a “real” place; but it will never disappear, for it has attained in the work a level of existence beyond ordinary, beyond material, beyond specificity, beyond literary.

**CHAPTER I:  
SERTÃO, SUB/SOBRE**

There are several layers of meaning in this work, all of which have been held up by some critics and readers as the fundamental focuses of the work: among others, the land as a source of regional color, the language as a source of innovation, the story as a source of universal humanity, and at times the work as a source of innovation in metaphysical philosophy. The book itself, and the author's path to and relation to the work and to these layers of meaning, show that these layers are in fact all intertwined, connected in both intent and effect on the reader as described at times by the author himself, though he would likely not hold us to his word on the work. In *Grande Sertão: Veredas*, the land is a source of regional color, and deeply appreciable in its authenticity as Brazilian space and its uniqueness of expression within a tradition of regional literature, but it is also apparent from the very first page that there is a religious framework to the work: the novel is permeated by Christian vocabulary as pertaining both to religious cultural practices in the *sertão* in general, and to the specific struggles of the narrator Riobaldo – struggles concerning the existence of such beings as God and the devil, and such powers as destiny and salvation. The work is, then, quite apparently, about something other than – or, more to the point, *as well as* – *sertanejos* and *jagunços* and their cultural and natural heritage, and that something has to do with the spiritual or “transcendent.” The land is the land, *and* the land is also an apt stage for a play of universals – and, too, the land is, more than a stage, a dynamic protagonist in itself, an encompassing material and spiritual journey. As will be seen in Part II, this telluric complexity exists in *Pedro Páramo*, as well; Comala and the *sertão* are both “(meta)physical” spaces.

The *sertão* as presented in João Guimarães Rosa's *Grande Sertão: Veredas* is a physical place with a fixed location, and a place of history and associated culture and worldviews, and it is also a conceptual space to which many symbolic meanings are attributed, such as emptiness and lack, or infinite expanse, primordial quality, terrible beauty, etc. It allows for many dreams, inventions, beliefs, and brute realities, as well as, above all, contrasts, such as those between Heaven and Hell, and between Destiny and Choice, with Riobaldo-narrated and Riobaldo-narrator struggling between them.

The land is, too, in *GSV*, a transcendent space – a place for parables and metaphysical wanderings to take place. Yet unlike traditional views of allegory, the material aspect of the story is not unimportant to the message, but is a real part of it. It is a place that represents bigger ideas, but it serves a full role in this work, beginning with its documentary fullness, the author's way of accessing its identity as a region. This is, in a way, its own paradox: the *sertão* is a representation of something immaterial; *and* the *sertão* is material, earth; and, without the materiality of it and its connection to history, culture, and identity, the immaterial *sertão* could not exist either. Thus, though Guimarães Rosa uses the *sertão* in *GSV* to be in a sense a physical shadow of a metaphysical question or journey, in fact, as will be illustrated below in the exploration of the author's parameters of the mystical, the work is about the physical *sertão* too, and creative of it, and thus the land participates fully on many levels – natural, cultural, and mystical.



## 1. The PARADOXICAL *SERTÃO*, EXPLICIT and IMPLICIT:

The *sertão* in *GSV* is created as a paradoxical being, for it is at its root a physical place, with borders and describable characteristics; but it is, too, in the work, something else entirely. It both conforms to us, and forms us. Here, the *sertão* is made in our thoughts: “*Sertão. Sabe o senhor: sertão é onde o pensamento da gente se forma mais forte do que o poder do lugar*”<sup>45</sup> (Rosa 2001: 41). However, also, we must obey it: “*o sertão era para, aos poucos e poucos, se ir obedecendo a ele*” (391). The *sertão* is, in fact, serving as a manifold and paradoxical space: it accepts all names (“*aceita todos os nomes*”<sup>46</sup> (506)) and is in all places (“*está em toda a parte*” (24)) and yet has no place (“*é sem lugar*” (370)); it is the size of the world (“*é do tamanho do mundo*” (89)) and yet has no size (“*sem tamanho*” (24)). It is an “enormous waiting” (“*é uma espera enorme*” (591)), a place of possibility and relevance to all readers of all places and times. Also, besides being everything and nothing, the *sertão* also takes everything into itself and produces everything, too: “[*t*]udo aqui é perdido, tudo aqui é achado”<sup>47</sup> (470), “[*t*]em de todas as coisas” (429), “*O sertão tudo não aceita?*” (503). And, it is in a constant flux of innovation: in it, “*toda firmeza se dissolve*”<sup>48</sup> (331), and “*está movimentante todo-tempo – salvo que o senhor não vê; é que nem braços de balança, para enormes efeitos de leves pesos... Rodeando por terras tão longes...*” (533) (The scale in this last quote – could it be a metaphysical one?). In being all of these things, Riobaldo’s *sertão* shows itself to be integrally connected to human perception and experience, and to conceptualizations of spirituality, and, thus, to exist in a flux of possibility.

Much of *GSV*’s incarnation of the *sertão* is paradoxical: it is a real/imaginary *sertão*, passable/impassable, fixable/unfixable in space, controlled by/controlling of humankind, knowable/unknowable, coming/going/returning, finite/infinite, lost/found... beautiful, menacing... and, too, it contains even in its statements paradox, as in the abundant lack of the phrase “*os pastos carecem de fechos,*” “the fields lack enclosure” (24). In *lacking* enclosure, the fields are endless and unbounded – but they are still lacking, bounded by lack. “*Tudo é e não é*” (27): “Everything is and isn’t.” And, the world of the *sertão* impacts those who journey within it – and keeps them as a part of it, blind to their destinies:

...manter firme uma opinião, na vontade do homem, em mundo transviável tão grande, é dificultoso. Vai viagens imensas. O senhor faça o que queira ou o que não queira – o senhor toda-a-vida não pode tirar os pés: que há-de estar sempre em cima do sertão. O senhor não creia na quietação do ar. Porque o sertão se sabe só por alto. Mas, ou ele ajuda, com enorme poder, ou é traiçoeiro muito desastroso...<sup>49</sup> (548)

<sup>45</sup> “*Sertão. Know this, sir: sertão is where our thoughts are formed stronger than the power of the place*” ... “But the *sertão* was to, little by little, come to obey it” (391)

<sup>46</sup> “accepts all names” (506), “is an enormous waiting” (591), “is in every place” (24), “is of the size of the world” (89), “is without place” (370), “without size” (24)

<sup>47</sup> “everything here is lost, everything here is found” (470), “it has all things” (429), “Doesn’t the *sertão* accept everything” (503)

<sup>48</sup> “all firmness dissolves” (331), “is moving all the time, except that you don’t see; it’s like the arms of a scale, for enormous effects of light weights... Wandering through lands so far away...” (533).

<sup>49</sup> “...maintaining a firm opinion, in the will of man, in such a big world in which to go astray, is difficult. There go immense journeys. Do what you want or what you don’t want – you won’t be able to pull your feet away all your

In such a changing and immense world, with such long paths to travel, opinions don't stay firm; and people can do what they want or don't want, but will always be in the *sertão*, suffering its whim, and without ever understanding its true significance – which can only be seen from above. This complex *sertão* is something that no man can “know,” only the birds: “*Sei o grande sertão? Sertão: quem sabe dele é urubú, gavião, gaivota, esses pássaros: eles estão sempre no alto, apalpando ares com pendurado pé, com o olhar remedindo a alegria e as misérias todas...*”<sup>50</sup> (591).

The *sertão* is also unknowable in the work in that, while it appears to be tied firmly to a real plot of land, it also takes on flights of fancy, crossing into imagination. *GSV's sertão* contains geographical reality, and “reality” as perceived by inhabitants and visitors, but is also contains, as Cândido points out below, unreality; though we are “capable of identifying the majority of the toponyms,”<sup>51</sup> the renowned critic explains, the reader should be aware:

Pressed by curiosity the map disarticulates and flees. Here, a vacuum; there, an impossible combination of places; further along a mysterious route, unreal names. ... We begin then to feel that the flora and the topography frequently obey the needs of the composition; that the desert is more than anything a projection of the soul, and the vegetative galas symbolize affectionate signs. Bit by bit we see arising a fictitious universe.<sup>52</sup> (Cândido “O Homem” 124)

As Monteiro writes, too: “...there are occasions in which the author takes the liberty of creating sites and names without cartographic backing”<sup>53</sup> (51). Alan Viggiano (1974) disagrees with such an analysis; he undertook a study of Riobaldo's itinerary, and found on maps “more than 180”<sup>54</sup> of the “230 places cited in the book,” which include “lakes, brooks, waterways, villages, settlements, cities, that have real existence in the North of Minas, Southeast of Goiás and Southwest of Bahia”<sup>55</sup> (21, 31). “Guimarães Rosa,” Viggiano claims, “did not invent even one name, in all the toponymy used in the saga of Riobaldo Tatarana”<sup>56</sup> (21). However, he does admit that he didn't actually find them all: “Certain key places insist on not laying themselves bare”<sup>57</sup> – such as the Liso de Sussuarão, “that with this name does not exist on the maps” (23).

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life: for they must always be on top of the *sertão*. Don't believe in the quietude of the air. Because the *sertão* is known only from above. But, or it helps, with enormous power, or it is disastrously treacherous.”

<sup>50</sup> “Do I know the great *sertão*? *Sertão*: who knows of it is the *urubú*, hawk, gull, these birds: they are always above, touching airs with hanging foot, with their gaze measuring joy and all the miseries...”

<sup>51</sup> “*capazes de identificar a maioria dos topônimos*”

<sup>52</sup> “*Premido pela curiosidade o mapa se desarticula e foge. Aqui, um vazio; ali, uma impossível combinação de lugares; mais longe uma rota misteriosa, nomes irrealis. ... Começamos então a sentir que a flora e a topografia obedecem freqüentemente a necessidades da composição; que o deserto é sobretudo projeção da alma, e as galas vegetais simbolizam traços afetivos. Aos poucos vemos surgir um universo fictício...*”

<sup>53</sup> “...há ocasiões em que o autor toma a liberdade de criar sítios e nomes sem respaldo cartográfico”

<sup>54</sup> “*mais de 180*” “*230 localidades citadas no livro*”

<sup>55</sup> “*lagos, córregos, veredas, vilas, povoados, cidades, que têm existência real no Norte de Minas, Sudeste de Goiás e Sudoeste da Bahia*”

<sup>56</sup> “*Guimarães Rosa... não inventou sequer um nome, em toda a toponímia utilizada na saga de Riobaldo Tatarana*”

<sup>57</sup> “*Certos lugares-chaves teimavam em não desnudar-se*”... “*que com este nome não existe nos mapas*”

He claims that the rest must have come from Guimarães Rosa's notebooks, and are only not found because as Riobaldo himself affirms, with nostalgia and confusion, "*os lugares mudam constantemente de nome*," "the places constantly change names," (Viggiano 32, Rosa 2001: 58). Although Viggiano frames this information in an attempt to explain why the places have not been found, this in itself is confirmation of the *sertão*'s mutability and adaptability. The *sertão* of *GSV* is, quite probably, not a completely loyal reproduction of the "real" land, but in fact is a combination of those almost innumerable identifiable places, and also some invented or changed, in seamless patchwork.

The *sertão* itself in *GSV* is also constantly changing, not only in terms of what things are called, but also in terms of how one moves through it, in mind or in body, as in the passable/impassable Liso do Sussuarão – a space once impossible to cross, and once easy. And, too, though Riobaldo admits that names change, it is different to find that a name never existed at all, a fact that throws memory into confusion, and makes of the *sertão* a terrifying place: "Veredas-Mortas," (Dead *Veredas*) where Riobaldo makes his pact with the devil, either no longer exists or never did – and apparently the latter, as far as everyone but he is concerned: it is "Veredas-Altas" (High *Veredas*) when he returns, and supposedly always was (617). Does the *sertão* change, or does Riobaldo? The *sertão* has changed, or Riobaldo has, or they are one and the same. Or, the *sertão* is capable of holding a place which was real only to him, and only in one fateful moment, after which it "evaporates into mystery," "*se evapora no mistério*," (Cândido "O Homem..." 125). The duality of it makes it both symbolic, a place of perception and meaning, and geographical. That place is dual in existing and not existing, and dual in itself, a crossroads of two *veredas*: *Veredas-Tortas*, twisted, and the *Veredas-Mortas/Altas* – and thus dual in possibilities: to make the pact, or no? God, or the devil? And, more importantly, once the step was taken, it has dual consequences – it was *and* wasn't a real pact. The *sertão* is a space of choice, a possibility.

Riobaldo is multiple, and so are his *sertão* and his cosmology/religion. Returning to his interview with Lorenz, Guimarães Rosa places Riobaldo at the nexus of the local, the foreign, and the metaphysical, many things at once; Riobaldo is a part of global literary dialogue, "a Raskolnikov without fault" and "merely Brazil"; and he is "mundane" and "mystical" both; he is "my brother", and he is, too, "the *sertão* made man" (Lorenz 95-96).<sup>58</sup> Riobaldo is complex and paradoxical; Riobaldo is the *sertão*; so the *sertão* is...?

The text continues to create this new kind of space, this human land, in that it is, though inside of us and of us, also not able to be fully controlled or even expected by us: "*o senhor querendo procurar, nunca não encontra. De repente, por si, quando a gente não espera, o sertão vem*" (Rosa 397) ... "*Sertão é isto: o senhor empurra para trás, mas de repente ele volta a rodear o senhor dos lados. Sertão é quando menos se espera; digo*"<sup>59</sup> (302). And in its unknowability and unexpectedness, it creates another layer of connection to its protagonist and narrator, Riobaldo, tied together in parallels of ambiguity, chaos, and multiplicity. Paradox: of *sertão* as infinite,

<sup>58</sup> "*um Raskolnikov sem culpa*" ... "*apenas o Brasil*" ... "*mundano*", "*místico*" ... "*meu irmão*" ... "*o sertão feito homem*"

<sup>59</sup> "In desiring to look for it, you will never find it. Suddenly, in itself, when we don't expect it, the *sertão* comes". ... "*Sertão* is this: you push against it, but suddenly it returns to surround you on all sides. *Sertão* is when you least expect it; I tell you."

changing, unknowable, or as “real”; and of *sertão* as land and as Riobaldo. Much like the narrative, the landscape is wandering, true, untrue, here, there, coming, going...:

Sertão velho de idades. Porque – serra pede serra – e dessas, altas, é que o senhor vê bem: como é que o sertão vem e volta. Não adianta se dar as costas. Ele beira aqui, e vai beirar outros lugares, tão distantes. Rumor dele se escuta. Sertão sendo do sol e os pássaros: urubú, gavião – que sempre voam, às imensidões, por sobre... Travessia perigosa, mas é a da vida. Sertão que se alteia e se abaixa. Mas que as curvas dos campos estendem sempre para mais longe. Ali envelhece vento. E os brabos bichos, do fundo dele.<sup>60</sup> (558)

This is, much more than a physical space, a lot like faith or destiny – something you can search for or try to avoid, but which in the end finds you. “*Travessia perigosa, mas é a da vida*” (“It’s a risky crossing, but it is the crossing of life”) – here Riobaldo tells us explicitly that the journey through the *sertão* is the journey through life, for the protagonist and the reader – or, as Cândido states, the “projection of the soul,” twice relevant, as internal space and metaphysical one – and that access to it is only, again, from “above,” whatever that means to Riobaldo’s particular theism.

Riobaldo’s wars and struggles happen on a plane in which larger truths are written as immanent or possibly created, much as the author expresses in explaining *why* the *sertão*: because there, one can see the great works of rivers and the extremes of human existence, and the people are the stuff of parable – in itself a story that hides a deeper meaning.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> “Ancient *sertão* of ages. Because – mountain range asks for mountain range – and from those, high ones, it is that you can see well: how it is that the *sertão* comes and returns. It doesn’t help you to turn your back. It borders here, and goes to border on others places, so distant. One can hear murmurs of it. *Sertão* being of the sun and the birds: *urubú*, hawk – that always fly, to the immensities, above... Risky crossing, but it is that of life. *Sertão* that rises up and lowers itself down. But that the curves of the fields extend always farther. There wind ages. And the vicious beasts, in its depths...”

<sup>61</sup> “*Porque o povo do interior – sem convenções, “poses” – dá melhores personagens de parábolas: lá se vêem bem as reações humanas e a ação do destino: lá se vê bem um rio cair na cachoeira ou contornar a montanha, e as grandes árvores estalaram sob o raio, e cada talo do capim humano rebrotar com a chuva ou se estorricar com a seca*” (209 Barbosa, VGR 333) (“Because the people of the interior – without conventions, “poses” – give better characters of parable: there you can see well the human reactions and the action of destiny: there you can see well a river fall in the waterfall or form the contours of the mountain, and the great trees cracked under the lightning ray, and every stem of the human grass sprout again with the rain or are scorched in the drought.”) (my translation – mine throughout unless otherwise indicated)

## 2. The *REINO* and the *REINO-REINO*:

Antônio Cândido, in his 1963 preface to the 1964 work *Tese e Antítese*,<sup>62</sup> says of *Grande Sertão: Veredas* that it is “the first great metaphysical novel of Brazilian literature.”<sup>63</sup> He continues, with an illuminating framing of the work:

In the superficial layers of *GSV* there arises a representation of local reality, with a strong load of the picturesque, to the taste of our novelistic tradition. However, everything in it is also a symbol. From the documentary or semi-documentary is removed, from in between each line, a fabulous universe, which frames the true issue of the work... showing the tearing-asunder of a man taken between good and evil, debating without rest the validity of his conduct... Coherent with the proposed fable, Guimarães Rosa enters resolutely into the magical plane, suggesting for the decisive conduct a symbolic substrate...<sup>64</sup> (xiii)

The work has, according to Cândido, both the local reality, *and* a “substrate” of symbolism, dealing especially with the most archetypical of concerns, Good vs. Evil. The term “substrate” is especially descriptive, for, more so than “plane,” it can be taken to imply that the symbolism is somehow beneath the surface, but laid out throughout the land, *in* the physical: the picturesque and the metaphysical, two sides of coin, adhered to one another in all points. Cândido states that the work’s “true issue” is Riobaldo’s struggle, and that struggle, indeed, ties together all the layers of the work: *o diabo na rua, no meio do redemunho*. The devil (metaphysical), the road (physical), the whirlwind – drawing up “sertanejan” dust in its circuitous throes.

How can the work be both about the region and all its physical and cultural realities, and also about metaphysics? In Guimarães Rosa’s 1966 interview with Fernando Camacho, the author explains that his view of the world is not objective, but rather dual, seeing the physical as an agent of the metaphysical. He states in that interview, as will be explored later as well, that realism is a support, or a trampoline for ascension, that the text is not to be read as a material or objective thing even though, as Camacho states, the works are full of “very concrete descriptions... realistic scenes.”<sup>65</sup> Guimarães Rosa continues:

It’s necessary to have intuition, “spirit of finesse,” to apprehend it, or else it escapes... My conceptualization of the world is not in fact material, objective... This objective reality doesn’t exist, I don’t believe in it, it’s only appearance. The truth, the true reality is another thing beyond this objective world, other things... Therefore the realistic explanation actually explains nothing because in fact all the living acts happen far, far

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<sup>62</sup> He republished “O Sertão e o Mundo” as “O Homem dos Avessos” in *Tese e Antítese*.

<sup>63</sup> “o primeiro grande romance metafísico da literatura brasileira”

<sup>64</sup> “Nas camadas superficiais de *Grande Sertão: Veredas* surge uma representação da realidade local, com forte carga de pitoresco, ao saber da nossa tradição novelística. Entretanto, tudo nêle é também símbolo. Do mundo documentário ou semidocumentário se desprende em cada entrelinha um universo fabuloso, que enquadra o verdadeiro problema do livro... mostrando o dilaceramento de um homem tomado entre o bem e o mal, debatendo sem repouso a validade da sua conduta... Coerente com a fabulação proposta, Guimarães Rosa entra resolutamente no plano mágico, sugerindo para os comportamentos decisivos um substrato simbólico...”

<sup>65</sup> “descrições bem concretas, ... cenas realistas”

away. The true cause of things is not material. It isn't the microbe that kills, these are just the agents. There is something else... we are among shadows...<sup>66</sup> (Camacho 48)

His realism is strong, but he states that the “real” reality lies in that what we perceive as material is only appearance, and the relationship between here and “there” is that living acts and objects here happen also far away, and the cause of things comes from there. Just as one shouldn't look at life the way a collector of insects contemplates insects, focused on the insects' visible carapace, nor should we look at microbes as the killers, nor look at ourselves as other than shadows of the “something more” – akin to the way the author himself functions, according to Guimarães Rosa: “The author is a shadow, at the service of higher things, which at times even he doesn't understand” (Vicente Guimarães (VG) 169).<sup>67</sup>

Nonetheless, the “real” reality has a place; and it is more than simply a necessary localization, as described by Adolfo Casais Monteiro in “Guimarães Rosa não é escritor regionalista” (1958).<sup>68</sup> Casais Monteiro writes that it is simply necessary to express the character of a region because “men live ‘in some’ place, ‘in some’ environment; none live without taking with them this shell, and trying to paint human situations ‘in the air’ is completely incompatible with novelesque expression.”<sup>69</sup> In fact, however, the physicality of the *sertão*, its “carapace,” its “trampoline,” is both the *agent* or *shadow*, as Guimarães Rosa explains, *and* the necessary earthly groove that makes a waterfall a waterfall, and the *sertão* the *sertão*. Without the specificity of that place, and the deep connection Riobaldo feels to it as a space of experience and history, culture and mythology, it would be impossible to imbue it with meaning. It must be both material and metaphysical.

Drummond de Andrade's poem again provides some clarity on this issue, as it illustrates the nature of the combination of the metaphysical and the physical in Guimarães Rosa's work – words that appear to be in their very etymology separated by one being “beyond” the other, but in Guimarães Rosa's worldview are not necessarily so. As indicated previously, Drummond de Andrade makes reference to Guimarães Rosa's capacity for expressing the nature of the *sertão*, its concrete reality, by making references to the “*pastos*” (fields) and “*buritis*” (trees) planted in the author's heart, and wondering if he was a “*vegetal*” (plant) or “*passarinho*” (little bird) under his robust structure of “*boi risonho*” (cheerful ox). Such phrases draw attention to the immediacy and depth of Guimarães Rosa's connection with nature and the *sertão* in particular. However, the poem deals more than anything with Guimarães Rosa's interactions with the mystical or transcendent:

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<sup>66</sup> “...é preciso intuição, ‘*esprit de finesse*’, para apreender senão escapa... A minha concepção do mundo não é de verdade material, objetiva... Essa realidade objetiva não existe, eu não acredito nela, é apenas aparência. A verdade, a verdadeira realidade é outra coisa para além desse mundo objetivo, outras coisas... Portanto a explicação realista que na verdade nada explica porque na verdade todos os vivos atos se passam longe demais. A verdadeira causa das coisas não é material. Não é o micróbio que mata, esses são apenas os agentes. Há mais alguma coisa... nós estamos entre sombras...”

<sup>67</sup> “O autor é uma sombra, a serviço de coisas mais altas, que às vezes ele nem entende”

<sup>68</sup> “Guimarães Rosa is Not a Regionalist Writer”

<sup>69</sup> “os homens vivem ‘*nalgum*’ lugar, ‘*nalgum*’ meio; nenhum vive sem levar consigo essa casca, e tentar pintar situações humanas ‘*no ar*’ é de todo incompatível com a expressão romanesca”

Um Chamado João:

João era fabulista  
fabuloso  
fábula?

Sertão místico disparando  
no exílio da linguagem comum?

Projetava na gravatinha  
a quinta face das coisas  
inenarrável narrada?  
Um estranho chamado João  
para disfarçar, para farçar  
o que não ousamos compreender?

Tinha pastos, buritis plantados  
no apartamento?  
no peito?  
Vegetal ele era ou passarinho  
sob a robusta ossatura com pinta  
de boi risonho?

Era um teatro  
e todos os artistas  
no mesmo papel,  
ciranda multívoca?

João era tudo?  
tudo escondido, florindo  
como flor é flor, mesmo não semeada?  
Mapa com acidentes  
deslizando para fora, falando?  
Guardava rios no bolso  
cada qual em sua cor de água  
sem misturar, sem conflitar?  
E de cada gota redigia  
nome, curva, fim,  
e no destinado geral  
seu fado era saber  
para contar sem desnudar

o que não deve ser desnudado  
e por isso se veste de véus novos?

Mágico sem apetrechos,  
civilmente mágico, apelador  
de precípites prodígios acudindo  
a chamado geral?  
Embaixador do reino  
que há por trás dos reinos,  
dos poderes, das  
supostas fórmulas  
de abracadabra, sésamo?  
Reino cercado  
não de muros, chaves, códigos,  
mas o reino-reino?

Por que João sorria  
se lhe perguntavam  
que mistério é esse?  
E propondo desenhos figurava  
menos a resposta que  
outra questão ao perguntante?

Tinha parte com... (sei lá  
o nome) ou ele mesmo era  
a parte de gente  
servindo de ponte  
entre o sub e o sobre  
que se arcabuzeiam  
de antes do princípio,  
que se entrelaçam  
para melhor guerra,  
para maior festa?

Ficamos sem saber o que era João  
e se João existiu  
de se pegar

21. XI. 1967, Carlos Drummond de Andrade<sup>70</sup>

<sup>70</sup> One Called João: Was João a teller of fables / fabulous / fable? / Mystical *sertão* firing / into the exile of common language? // Did he project in his bowtie / the fifth face of things / inenarrable narrated? / A stranger called João / to disguise, to farce / what we don't dare comprehend? // Did he have pastures, *buritis* [tall regional palms] planted / in his apartment? / in his chest? / Was he a plant or a little bird / beneath his robust frame with the

Drummond de Andrade makes reference to what could be referred to as the transcendent, metaphysical, or mystical with phrases such as the “*místico*” (mystical), the “*quinta face das coisas*” (fifth face of things), the “*inenarrável*” (inenarrable), “*o que não ousamos compreender*” (what we don’t dare to comprehend), the “*reino que há por trás dos reinos, / dos poderes, das / supostas fórmulas / de abracadabra, sésamo*” (realm that there is beyond the realms, of the powers, of the supposed formulas of abracadabra, sesame), and, more specifically, the “*Reino cercado / não de muros, chaves, códigos, / mas o reino-reino?*” (Realm not fenced in by walls, keys, codes, but the realm-realm), and also the “*sobre*” (above). Drummond de Andrade paints a vision of a mystical beyond that is unencumbered by mythology or formulas or restricted entry, a mystical, incomprehensible, inenarrable face of things.

However, as is clear upon reading the poem, Drummond de Andrade is also concerned with the way in which *Guimarães Rosa* interacts with the *reino-reino*, the *sobre*, etc. It is not a straight-on approach, as a theologian or literary critic (as I am) perhaps would attempt to do (and perhaps fail), but is a subtle one, a mysterious one. *Guimarães Rosa* does the following (or perhaps he does so, as the phrases are formed as questions): “*sorria / se lhe perguntavam / que mistério é esse? / E propondo desenhos figurava / menos a resposta que / outra questão ao perguntante?*” (“smiled / if they asked him / what mystery is this? / And proposing designs he figured/showed / less the response than / another question to the questioner?”) The *sertão*, in fact, is the same way: “*o sertão não chama ninguém às claras; mais, porém, se esconde e acena*” – “the *sertão* doesn’t call anyone clearly; more, however, it hides and beckons” (GSV 538).

Moreover, as seen in the following phrases juxtaposing apparent opposites, *Guimarães Rosa*’s approach is, according to the poem, one in which the concrete is just as present as the abstract, and they exist in *relationship*:

- “*Sertão místico disparando / no exílio da linguagem comum?*” (“Mystical *sertão* firing / into the exile of common language?”)
- “*Projetava na gravatinha / a quinta face das coisas / inenarrável narrada?*” (“Did he project in his bowtie / the fifth face of things / inenarrable narrated?”)
- “*a parte de gente / servindo de ponte / entre o sub e o sobre...*” (“the part of people / serving as a bridge / between the beneath and the above”)

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appearance / of a cheerful ox? // Was he a theater / and all the artists / on the same page, / multivocal ciranda [Brazilian folkloric music form]? // Was João everything? / everything hidden, flowering / as a flower is a flower, even though it isn’t planted? / A map with accidents / slipping outward, speaking? / Did he keep rivers in his pocket / each one in its own color of water / without mixing, without conflicting? / And of each drop did he compose / name, curve, end, / and in the general destination / was it his destiny to know / to tell without unclothing / what shouldn’t be unclothed / and therefore dresses itself in new veils? // Magician without gadgets, / civilly magical, appealer / to precipitous prodigies turning to / the general call? / Ambassador of the realm / that there is beyond the realms, / of the powers, of the / supposed formulas / of abracadabra, sesame? / Realm not fenced in / by walls, keys, codes, / but the realm-realm? // Why did João smile / if they asked him / what mystery is this? / And proposing designs he figured/showed / less the response than / another question to the questioner? // Did he have part in... (I don’t know / the name) or was he himself / the part of people / serving as a bridge / between the beneath the above / that discharge themselves / from before the beginning, / that entwine themselves / for better war, / for better party? // We remain without knowing what João was / and if João existed / to be taken hold of.



- “*contar sem desnudar / o que não deve ser desnudado / e por isso se veste de véus novos?*” (“to tell without unclothing / what shouldn’t be unclothed / and therefore dresses itself in new veils?”)

The mystical *sertão* in common language, the fifth face of things in a bowtie, the inenarrable narrated, a bridge between the beneath and the above... in all these references, Guimarães Rosa’s work is seen as something that combines the concrete and the abstract harmoniously, using “new veils” to both reveal and approach the metaphysical and yet also to hide what should not be unclothed – a smiling and sideways approach to something that when approached head-on cannot be explained or understood. And this “*sub*,” the physical *sertão*, and “*sobre*,” the transcendent, once apart, are here tied together – for *guerra* or, perhaps, for *feira*: “*o sub e o sobre / que se arcabuzeiam / de antes do princípio, / que se entrelaçam / para melhor guerra, / para maior feira?*” (“the beneath and the above / that discharge themselves / from before the beginning, / that entwine themselves / for better war, / for better party?”) The poem uses terms like “*disparando*,” “*projetava*,” and the neologism “*arcabuzeiam*,” from *arcabuz* (harquebus) – words that bring to mind violent projectiles but also *projections*, ways in which the “*sobre*,” the “*reino-reino*,” can come through in common language or form.

For Guimarães Rosa, such a union would likely be *feira* (paradox 2.a), not *guerra* (paradox 2.b), as shown in part in this phrase “*Guardava rios no bolso / cada qual em sua cor de água / sem misturar, sem conflitar?*” The rivers in his pocket have their own colors but are not in conflict – though, unlike in Drummond de Andrade’s poem, they may in fact mix. Overall, however, the poem, like the works, points to a kind of transcendence that doesn’t abandon nor define itself against the transcended, but exists with it, a mysticism of both the flower itself and the immense possibilities of the flower, its *essence* or *ideal*: “*florindo / como flor é flor, mesmo não semeada?*”

Beyond just the narrator’s explicit concerns about “*o demo*,” leading to its definition as a “metaphysical” work, or the work’s remarkable philosophical and innovative nature, leading to its “universal” nature, it is also the *materiality* of this “sertanejan” story that leads to a better understanding of its larger *metaphysical* concerns. Drummond’s poem illustrates in part these further explorations: he alludes to the *mysticism* of the metaphysics in the work, beyond their evident Catholic context; and, too, indicates that such mysticism is intrinsically connected to materiality: the author has *in his gravatinha* his connection to the transcendent or hidden kingdom, “*o reino-reino*,” just as he had in his apartment and his chest and visage the regional nature of his works. GSV exists on many levels, but especially prominent is the interaction between two of them: the material and what lies beyond it, but connected to it... the *flor* in materiality and also in concept or even essence, given that, as Drummond says, a flower is a flower, even when it isn’t planted. This analysis will concentrate on the development of the *sertão* and its participation in answering metaphysical questions, as developed through the narrative components and the narration itself. For though it is a “shadow” or “agent” of a more meaningful realm, yet it is not metaphysical to the detriment of the physical; it is both semblance and essence, body and soul, matter and ideal, yin and yang, immanent and transcendent... a confluence of land and culture and concept and metaphysics, “*o espaço do mundo primeiro*” open to the magical and the “*supraordenado*”: *sertão*.

### 3. DOCUMENTARY *SERTÃO*:

The physical reality of the *sertão*, Brazil's interior, is more than a simple setting for this work; it is its starting point and its palette and much more. But in order to be more than a setting, it must, too, *be that setting*: the reality of the soil, the dust, the creatures and habits of the *sertão* and its engendered life are constructed in the work in their full concrete materiality. More than just a stepping-stone for other considerations, the *sertão* in *GSV* is a complete topography, a land, with history and culture and distinctive distinguishing characteristics – and is in conversation with previous works that celebrate the *sertão* as such. In fact, *PP* and *GSV* are both distinguished in this manner, for in *PP*, the physical reality of Jalisco is setting and is much more, but all of its layers are based first and foremost on the precise materiality and societal relevance of a town in that region, as shown in regionalisms past.

The land that Riobaldo roams with his band of *jagunços* in *Grande Sertão: Veredas* includes specific plots capable of real-world reference, at least in part, as mentioned above, as well as being ecologically precise. Geographer Carlos Augusto de Figueiredo Monteiro (2006) highlights Riobaldo's capture of the aspects of the *sertão* “essential in the geographical point of view,” beginning with its diversity. *GSV*'s *sertão* reflects the geographical *sertão*, or interior lands of Brazil, in having, according to Monteiro, huge, fragmented plateaus covered in scrubland of varying types, mountain ranges with forested slopes, a hierarchy of rivers ranging from large arteries, like the Chico, and tributaries, like the Urucuia; the “*gerais*”<sup>71</sup> without size, encompassing dry areas where water is scarce, and, all in supreme contrast to the *veredas*, “*o verde macio*,” (“soft green”) oasis valleys with ponds, meadows, and marshes consolidated around rocky areas where there is water – in a yang/yin contrast of dry, “*rude sertão*” and beautiful *veredas* (50). According to Monteiro's research, “In the whole narrative there are references to numerous places, geographical accidents, in their great majority identifiable and locatable on maps”<sup>72</sup> (51).

The author's own *sertão* can also be defined on a map, as he expressed in an interview: “My land is more or less near... Itabira, routes from *Côr de Espuma*... it's quite close but here in the middle passes the *Serra Geral*. It's a piece, it isolates more than the Andes, than the Atlantic Ocean. A person from there, who never crossed this range is a stranger when he comes here below”<sup>73</sup> (Camacho 51). This indicates that the author's *sertão* is, more than dotted lines on a map, a place isolated and unique from other places – specific, distinct, perhaps even naturally so.

Beyond its locatability and its topography, too, the *sertão* is reproduced in the work with great attention to detail in terms of its floral and faunal components. The “yang/yin” of the rude *sertão*

<sup>71</sup> “*gerais*” can mean something akin to “general areas,” but “backlands” may be the translation most akin to the meaning in Brazil. According to Nilce Sant'Anna Martins, “*gerais*” are “campos do Planalto Central; lugares desertos e intransitáveis, no sertão do Nordeste; campos extensos e desabitados” (“fields/lands of the Central Plateau; deserted and impassable places, in the interior of the Northeast; extensive and uninhabited open country”) (248).

<sup>72</sup> “*Em toda a narrativa aparecem as referências a numerosos lugares, acidentes geográficos, em sua grande maioria identificáveis e localizáveis nos mapas*”

<sup>73</sup> “*A minha terra está mais ou menos assim rumo com... Itabira, está rumo a rumo com Côr de Espuma ... está Ben perto mas aqui no meio passa a Serra Geral. É um trôço, isola mais do que os Andes, que o Oceano Atlântico. Uma pessoa de lá, que nunca atravessou essa serra é um estranho quando vem cá prá baixo.*”

and the green *veredas* play a deeply symbolic role in the narrator's moods, thoughts, and experiences, but are first and foremost carefully depicted.

The landscape and all of its components are detailed in the work in documentary vision - the *buritis*, *pastos*, *vegetais*, *passarinhos*, and *rios* mentioned by Drummond de Andrade, constructed in loving detail. The domestic animals in the work include *bezerro* (calf), *cavalo* (horse), *cachorro* (dog), *vaca* (cow), *porco* (pig), and wild animals include *cobra cascavel* (rattlesnake), *côrvo* (crow), *gavião* (hawk), and many more. The plants include flowers of many types, and the tall, elegant palms called *buriti* (*buritizal* in groves or plantations), and the *mandioca*, the starchy cassava root that is a staple of the Northeast Brazilian diet when dried and made into a sort of flour, *farinha*; it is described as both *mansa* and *brava*, and is indeed either sweet and docile or bitter and poisonous, depending on the level of an inherent toxin, though both look the same, leading to its use as metaphor.<sup>74</sup> The novel includes mention, too, of *palmeiras*, palms in general, and many other floras of the *matos*. The novel also includes reference to the multiple manifestations of water, an important commodity in the *sertão*. The river *Urucuia*, tributary of the *São Francisco*<sup>75</sup>, is the most mentioned river in the work. Also mentioned are *nascentes* (springs), *cachoeiras* (waterfalls), and others.

Edna Maria F. S. Nascimento and Erasmo d'Almeida Magalhães (2002) illustrate the "rich, truly documentary material about this scenery, regional costumes and socioeconomic organization of the space"<sup>76</sup> (100) by looking at Guimarães Rosa's research methods and statements and also looking at the text itself. The novel's *sertão* contains the Northeast of Minas Gerais, the Southwest of Bahia, and the Southeast of Goiás, and cover the phytogeographic (i.e. biogeography of plants) zone of the Planalto Central (100). As noted above here as well, Guimarães Rosa traveled to the region several times to take copious notes; these notes included, for example, "*listas de palavras ou verdadeiros glossários*," "lists of words or true glossaries" of "flora," including local and sometimes scientific names for plants (100). Guimarães Rosa includes very specific "*brasileirismos*" (brazilianisms) on the list and in the work, local names for things and local things, some edible for the horses, some poisonous or painful to touch, some simply remarked upon as part of the general scenery: "*macega*," "*almargem*," "*papuã*,"

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<sup>74</sup> "*Melhor, se arrepare: pois, num chão, e com igual formato de ramos e folhas, não dá a mandioca mansa, que se come comum, e a mandioca-brava, que mata? Agora, o senhor já viu uma estranhez? A mandioca-doce pode de repente virar azangada – motivos não sei; às vezes se diz que é por replantada no terreno sempre, com mudas seguidas, de manaíbas – vai em amargando, de tanto em tanto, de si mesma toma peçonhas. E, ora veja: a outra, a mandiocabrava, também é que às vezes pode ficar mansa, a esmo, de se comer sem nenhum mal*" (27) ("Better, take notice: well, in one ground, and with the same format of branches and leaves, isn't there the sweet manioc, which is commonly eaten, and the angry manioc, which kills? Now, have you seen something strange? The sweet manioc can suddenly turn angry – motives, I don't know; sometimes they say it's from being replanted in the earth always, with frequent moves, as a cutting – it becomes embittered, bit by bit, and takes poison on its own. And now, look: the other, the bitter manioc, sometimes can become docile, at random, being edible without injury").

<sup>75</sup> "The São Francisco River rises at about 2,400 feet (730 metres) above sea level on the eastern slope of the Serra da Canastra in southwestern Minas Gerais state, about 150 miles northwest of the city of Belo Horizonte. The river flows for more than 1,000 miles northward across the states of Minas Gerais and Bahia, through the extensive Sobradinho Reservoir, to the twin cities of Juazeiro and Petrolina. In this stretch the river receives its main left-bank tributaries—the Paracatu, Urucuia, Corrente, and Grande rivers – and its main right-bank tributaries – the Verde Grande, Paramirim, and Jacaré" ("Urucuia" Encyclopedia Britannica).

<sup>76</sup> "*rico material, verdadeiro documentário sobre essa paisagem, costumes regionais e organização socioeconômica do espaço*"

“folhiço,” “jaribara,” “lágrimas de moça,” “lírio de brejo,” “mocambira,” “xique-xique”... and some even have multiple names, depending on where the speaker is from, as when Alaripe calls a plant “dona-joana,” and Diadorim, “cavaleiro-da-sala” (102-103)

Also according to Nascimento and Magalhães, Guimarães Rosa wrote the first draft of the novel with blanks, which he carefully filled in with these terms from his lists, as in the following example (101):

*Rependurou o espelho no ramo de marmelo-do-mato , acertou seu cabelo, ...*

Nascimento and Magalhães also provide a personal explanation of the author, as given to Pedro Bloch:

You know my notebooks. When I go out mounted on a horse, through my Minas Gerais, I go taking note of things. The notebook becomes impregnated with the blood of oxen, sweat of horses, the torn page. Each bird that flies, each species, has a different flight. I want to discover what characterizes the flight of every bird, in every moment. I don't write difficultly. I KNOW THE NAME OF THINGS.<sup>77</sup> (101)

He knew the names of things; just as Cândido aptly remarks, he has a passion “*pela coisa e pelo nome da coisa,*” for the thing and for the name of the thing (“O Homem dos Avessos” 122). Guimarães Rosa appears to have admired not just the “creator” but the “creation” as well.

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<sup>77</sup> “Você conhece meus cadernos. Quando saio montado num cavalo, pela minha Minas Gerais, vou tomando nota das coisas. O caderno fica impregnado de sangue de boi, suor de cavalo, folha machucada. Cada pássaro que voa, cada espécie, tem vôo diferente. Quero descobrir o que caracteriza o vôo de cada pássaro, a cada momento. Eu não escrevo difícil. EU SEI O NOME DAS COISAS” In “RÓNAI, P. Rosiana: uma coletânea de conceitos, máximas e brocados de João Guimarães Rosa. Rio de Janeiro: Salamandra, 1983.” (p. 92)

#### 4. HISTORICAL and CULTURAL *SERTÃO*:

The distinctness of the *sertão* has cultural, historical, economic and other distinguishing associations, as well as topography and borders and natural markers, all of which are also represented in *GSV* as they have been in other regionalist works in Brazil. There are in *GSV* innumerable references to the local and picturesque and to archetypal figures, in description, language, and song.

The image or archetype of the *sertanejo* exists in various incarnations in the work, many of which are established archetypes throughout most representations of that region. There are the *jagunços*, wandering gunmen of the *sertão*, sometimes hired; similar are the bandits and hired gunmen; there are also land owners, ranchers, farmers and cowboys, soothsayers, prostitutes, “*índios*” (Rosa 2001: 38), “*pretos*” (165) and other ethnic groups, and even the ancient, original “*sertanejan*” communities, many of them isolated enough to be foreign to each other, such as the “*catrumanos*” that Riobaldo and his *jagunços* happen upon in a desolate place. These are people “*de estranhoso aspecto, ...molambos de miséria*”<sup>78</sup>, with strange voices and words, “*amarelos de tanto comer só polpa de buriti, e fio que estavam bêbados, de beber tanta saêta*” led by “*um roceiro brabo, arrastando as calças e as esporas...*” The “*catrumanos daquelas brenhas*”<sup>79</sup> were, according to Riobaldo, “*homens reperdidos sem salvação naquele recanto lontanho de mundo, grosseiros dum sertão*” (399-400). There is also the archetypal/mythical figure of the blind man, seen as inscrutably, anciently wise, and deeply connected to legend and land; Riobaldo asks him, “*Você é o sertão?*” (“Are you the *sertão*?”) (607). There is the lettered city man, *doutor*; and, too, the epic hero, and the iconic warrior maiden, among other figures/tropes that go far beyond the *sertão*, finding places in narratives medieval and modern, local and global.

These aspects were carefully researched, as were the anecdotes, songs, and the narrative voice of Riobaldo. Also, many aspects of the town Guimarães Rosa was raised in are apparent in *GSV* and its twin *Corpo de Baile*,<sup>80</sup> published in the same year. The land of his birth marked Rosa’s inspiration and was, as stated above by the author, the “*ponto de partida*” for his works, beginning with parts of *Magma* and with *Sagarana*. In fact, his uncle Vicente Guimarães (only a few years his senior, and a childhood companion) argues that, more than a vague regional inspiration, Guimarães Rosa’s hometown of Cordisburgo appears almost exactly in the pages of his nephew’s books, as explained in his chapter “*Tipos Populares*” (“Popular Types”) (71-93).

<sup>78</sup> “of strange aspect... rags of misery”... “yellow from so much eating only *buriti* pulp, and I confess that they were drunk, from drinking so much *saêta* [also a product of *buriti*]”... “a fierce *roceiro* [dweller of the *roça*, out-of-the-way rural lands], dragging his pants and his spurs...”

<sup>79</sup> “*catrumanos* of those thickets”... “men really lost without salvation in that secluded place distant from the world, rude/rustic of a *sertão*”

<sup>80</sup> The two works began as one, on which he worked “*‘burramente’, dia e noite,*” and “*a coisa logo virou dois... que ficaram enormes*” (Rosa, letter from July 12th 1954, in VGR 177-178, Barbosa 243). *Corpo de Baile*, composed of “*Sete novelas, que o autor chama também de poemas, ou de romances e contos*” (Barbosa 248)) in two volumes, was published first in 1956, closely followed by *Grande Sertão: Veredas* in the same year - (After the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, *Corpo de Baile* was published in 3 volumes: *Manuelzão e Miguilim, No Urubuquaquá, no Pinhém, and Noites do Sertão* (Guimarães 168).

Vicente (2006) points to the story known as “Miguilim”<sup>81</sup> to illustrate the rigid precision and persistence of the “*lembranças vivas*,” “living memories,”<sup>82</sup> of the *sertão* of their childhood. According to Vicente, toys<sup>83</sup>, scenes<sup>84</sup>, and scenery<sup>85</sup> from the boys’ youth are passed into the pages of this and other works, and two characters were in fact lifted out of the author’s life and into “Miguilim,” in body, spirit and name<sup>86</sup> (118) – Dr. José Lourenço<sup>87</sup>, and Mãitina<sup>88</sup> – and the character “Vovô Izidra” was modeled after Guimarães Rosa’s own grandmother Vó Chiquinha, including her room and nativity scene (110, 116). The natural and linguistic environment that the author carefully documented and explored in his childhood also appears in truthful representation, according to his uncle, including the song a local blind man would sing<sup>89</sup> and local anecdotes<sup>90</sup>, all recorded in Joãozito’s notebook with a pencil. His father’s influence also appears in the works, in stories, scenes, and choice of words.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> published as “*Campo Geral*” in *Corpo de Baile* (1956), and João Guimarães Rosa’s own professed favorite story, the one that is “mais forte que o autor” (“stronger than the author”) (Guimarães 168).

<sup>82</sup> “*Mas, como dizendo estava, seus livros cheiram à poeira sertaneja, são lembranças muitas, lembranças vivas de lá. Sim: gente, paisagem e usanças. Tudo nosso, tudo de nossa terra. Mesmo as personagens de imaginação literária pura, fabricadas estão com vestimentas típicas, seguindo, rígido, os costumes locais e palavreado.*” (“But, as I was saying, his works smell of ‘sertanejan’ dust, many of them are memories, living memories of there. Yes: people, scenery and customs. All ours, all from our land. Even the people of pure literary imagination are fabricated with typical clothing, following, rigidly, the local customs and way of speech”).

<sup>83</sup> Toys such as a *carrinho-de-boi* with painted *boizinhos* (114).

<sup>84</sup> Vicente mentions a scene in which a cook named Rosa, much like their own Florisbela, makes popcorn for the boys, saying of its details “*Era como se fosse ele e eu*” (114). Passed into the pages also were games the children played, and beliefs such as one about rainbows, that anyone passing under the rainbow would change gender (of interest, perhaps, to *Grande Sertão: Veredas*) (115).

<sup>85</sup> The train station of Cordisburgo appears in the story “Sorôco, Sua Mãe, Sua Filha,” “de quase fotografia” (118).

<sup>86</sup> “*de corpo inteiro, espírito e nome próprios*”

<sup>87</sup> Dr. José Lourenço, in the story, discovers Miguilim’s myopia (remarkably similar to the author’s own) by placing his own glasses on the boy, much as he did for Joãozito himself (30, 117).

<sup>88</sup> Mãitina was a woman rescued from a flood by Vicente’s father and given permanent shelter in their home. A former slave who lost her husband to leprosy, she turned to drinking to handle her sorrows, but was dedicated to the children, and taught them the traditions of her homeland. She appears in “Miguilim” remembered, according to Vicente, with loving care (90-93, 117).

<sup>89</sup> Vicente writes that the songs of a blind man in town, seo Emílio, appears in “A Hora e Vez de Augusto Matraga,” and remembers that his nephew recorded them as a child “*anotava em seu caderninho os gostosos e esquisitos termos usados pelo cego seo Emílio*”... “*Ele difere um pouco a narrativa. Põe a canção na boca de um outro cego, nascido em longes-lugares...*” (85). (“wrote down in his notebook the flavorful and strange terms used by the blind Mr. Emílio” ... “He differs the narrative a little. He puts the song in the mouth of a different blind man, born in far-away lands.”)

<sup>90</sup> Anecdotes such as that of a pharmacist who felt so pure that he wanted to fly, and so sought the place where the sky met the hills – and, when he fell into a lemon tree upon landing, realized that the sky had fled from him, to the top of the next hill (118-120). There is also an episode in “Dão-Lalalão,” in which, just as in a family anecdote about seo Fulô and seo Emílio, Surupita tells of giving a pair of boots to a blind man because he didn’t have spare change, and being recognized by his voice years later and far away by the same blind man: “*O homem das botinas!*” (“the man of the boots!”) (111-112) Anecdotes and occurrences of childhood bravery appear as well (119).

<sup>91</sup> According to Vicente, “*Muitas cantigas e quadrinhas aproveitadas nos livros foram... relembradas por consultas ao velho Fulô*” (“Many songs and ditties taken advantage of the works were... remembered from consultations with old Fulô”), including one that Florduardo would say to the “*moças bonitas de suas amizades, por agrado*” (“beautiful young women of his friendship, in pleasure”), transcribed with few modifications (111). Also, in “Miguilim,” “*Cenas de caçadas escreveu relembrando conversas de seu pai-caçador*” (“Scenes of hunts he wrote

Besides these personally experienced anecdotes and colloquialisms and attitudes, Guimarães Rosa also asked his father to send him any and all information pertaining to local custom and vocabulary, and he also turned to other accounts of oral histories, local mythology, and even popular fiction, according to Leonardo Arroyo's research. Arroyo explores the cultural aspect of *GSV* in his 1984 work *A Cultura Popular em Grande Sertão, Veredas: Filiações e Sobrevivências Tradicionais, Algumas Vezes Eruditas*.<sup>92</sup> According to Arroyo, oral literature and popular culture play a defining role in *GSV*, including, for example, the "theme of the woman dressed as a man or of the "damsel who goes to war" (30).<sup>93</sup> This topic, according to Arroyo, is mentioned elsewhere in Guimarães Rosa's canon – in "Uma Estória de Amor" ("Festa de Manuelzão") – as coming from an old popular novel which is supposedly based on historical fact and has many versions: in *Dom Varão*, in which a prince falls in love with a warrior, claiming that "*Os olhos de Dom Varão / É de mulher, de homem não!*" ("The eyes of Dom Varão / Are of a woman, not of a man") and tests her to determine her gender (Arroyo 31-32). Arroyo goes so far, in fact, as to claim that the themes, plot, and narrative style, as well as the adages, proverbs, and set phrases, are all a part of the "*revivescimento e atualização*" (revival and actualization) of oral literature<sup>94</sup> (30).

As is made clear by these references, Guimarães Rosa carefully researched the nature and culture of the *sertão* of his works, tapping into any available currents for fact and inspiration. His relationship to the culture of the land he portrays was not simply one of a medium for its pure expression as a result of being steeped in it from his youth, as argued by Arroyo (6-16), but was rather much more likely to be, as seen in his correspondence and complex relationship to his source, a systematic approach to portraying the land and its people and culture as a conscious means of obtaining a literary goal – a goal which included documentary precision and popular-cultural thematic incorporation, but also spoke to questions much larger than those of a documentary novel.

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remembering conversations with his father-hunter") (113). Specific colloquialisms of João's father seo Fulô also appear in the work (113).

<sup>92</sup> "Popular Culture in Grande Sertão, Veredas: Traditional Filiations and Survivals, Sometimes Erudite"

<sup>93</sup> "tema da mulher vestida do homem ou da "donzela que vai à guerra"

<sup>94</sup> "Na área do tema, dos adágios, das frases feitas, dos anexins ou dos provérbios, o impacto da cultura popular sobre a sensibilidade de João Guimarães Rosa resulta, como se verá, no *revivescimento e atualização do velho problema das fontes da literatura oral, a sua "santa continuidade," a reciprocidade das influencias entre o erudito e o popular...*" ("In the area of theme, of the adages, the catchphrases, the sayings of the proverbs, the impact of popular culture on the sensibility of João Guimarães Rosa results, as will be seen, in the revival and actualization of the old problem of the sources of oral literature, its "*sacred continuation,*" the reciprocity of influences between the erudite and the popular...") (29) ... "*O tema de Grande Sertão: Veredas, a estória, a armação narrativa, o enredo, o estilo, numa palavra, são de filiação popular.*" ("The topic of *Grande Sertão: Veredas*, the story, the narrative framework, the plot, the style, in a word, are of popular filiation") (30).

## 5. LAND, ITS ELEMENTS and APPROACHES:

As is shown above, the novel *GSV* portrays in print many scientifically verifiable elements of the *sertão*. Naturalists, geographers, and anthropologists can all find documentary precision in the novel. However, even outside the realm of literature, the human experience of such a region as the *sertão* goes far beyond the factually verifiable, and the novel portrays these elements as well. The *reino-reino* in the Rosian *sertão* that has been introduced above is constructed through the inherent possibilities of place in human experience: first, in our deep connection to land, and second, in the discursive and co-constitutive nature of our experience of land. The material *sertão* founds its connection to human experience; and the human experience of the *sertão* is as much about the interactive overlay of conceptual geography, the veiled but present *sertão*, as it is about the dirt and flowers. As Candace Slater (2011) explains with regard to “region,” “regions etymologically have a hard time not being fluid” because while a “locality” has a “fixed Indo-European root,” and can be easily defined, “region,” with its “regal” etymology, steps outside the boundaries of science and into the realms of society. The *sertão* is a “region,” more than a “locality”; it is “fluid” and social. In fact, it is, as I have discovered through exploring spatiality as described in the field of geography, a “place,” material and experiential, through direct experience, and through its stories and associations, as will be described in this section.

The geological, natural, and culturally/mythologically archetypal aspects of the *sertão* as portrayed in *GSV* have been mentioned here, as well as its spiritual elements. It follows, then, that the space of the Rosian *sertão* is in fact, as is its “material” counterpart, a combination of factors: the carefully reproduced physical/scientific factors of rocks/flora/fauna, which literally ground it in relevance for the reader, and the *felt* factors, those which superimpose value and understanding on land based on culturally agreed-upon markers, by human experience, and by imagination, hopes, and fears. Lands are both objective and subjective, insofar as human beings can experience and describe them; and that (human beings) is the context in which we find ourselves. Lands are defined by perceptions, just as the cultural manifestations of their peoples are defined by their own and others’ perceptions of their identity. The cultural archetypes and voices and natural imagery and weather and lifestyles all form a part of an image of the *sertão* and the Northeast that is not uniquely apprehended by Guimarães Rosa, but is part of a long tradition of discourse about the region; and it is that felt value that allows for the creation of a spiritual nexus therein. Likewise, as will be shown, the countryside described in *PP* is not simply an exercise in documenting physical reality, but relies also upon the connection between humankind and the land, both as agriculture and cemetery and as much more, in order to create the fluid (meta)physical and symbolic region of the novel.

### 5.1 The GEOGRAPHY of “PLACE” and “SPACE”:

#### PARTICULAR VS. ABSTRACT:

The complex components of our relationship to lands have been documented and explored within many areas of study,<sup>95</sup> including a discussion in the discipline of Geography surrounding

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<sup>95</sup> Bow and Buys (2003) delineate several fields of spatial study and ensuing “concepts of place bonds” in their conference article, including “‘place attachment’ (PA) (Altman & Low, 1992; Giuliani, 1991; Hidalgo &



the terms “place” and “space.” In this context, “space” is the more abstract concept, and “place” relates generally to the specificity of location with its ensuing associations and affectivity. For instance, “humanistic geographer”<sup>96</sup> Edward Relph, concentrating on a “phenomenology” of place in his work *Place and Placelessness* (1976), developed a concept of “place” – in opposition to “space” – as having 1) a “persistent sameness and unity” (45), i.e., specificity, as well as 2) relating not just to the definability of its location but also to human experience. Places are “significant centres of our immediate experiences of the world,” defined by “the focusing of experiences and intentions onto particular settings” (141). Another of the “humanistic geographers,” Yi-Fu Tuan (1977), also writes about the “space”/“place” distinction, claiming, similarly, that “place” has “identity” and “aura,” and even for “nonhuman animals,” “[p]laces are centers of felt value”<sup>97</sup> (4). “Space,” on the other hand, “is more abstract than ‘place’. What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value”<sup>98</sup> (6).

Discourses on “place” and “space” continue today, perhaps ever more relevant as our world is quickly changing. Chris Barker (2000) speaks of “places” as spatially organized centers of “social activity,” with meaning constructed through social processes as well as emotional investment and identification (291-293). Erica Carter et al. (2003), in exploring the meaning of ‘home’ to the imagination of displaced and exiled individuals and communities, explain that “place” is what “space” becomes when it is *named*: “How then does space become place? By being named” (xii).

Both the *sertão* and Comala’s Jalisco agricultural landscape partake of both spatial meanings: they are, though partially imagined, also mostly cartographically locatable as particular and demarcated land-regions within the geographical/political/cultural entities of Brazil and Mexico – and they have names and are the subjects of emotional investment – “places.” They are also “space,” place’s foil, symbolic concepts and containing much that is mysterious and unknown.

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Hernandez, 2001); and ‘place identity’ (PI) (Proshansky et al., 1978; Proshansky et al., 1979, Giuliani & Feldman, 1993; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996)”... and “‘place dependence’ (PD) (Stokols & Shumaker, 1981; Williams & Roggenbuck, 1989), which also has a strong psychological focus” as well as the “concept of ‘sense of place’ (SOP)” promoted by “human geographers” “Relph, 1976, 1997; Buttimer, 1980; Tuan, 1977; Hay, 1998” (4)

<sup>96</sup> p. 5 “Editors’ Introduction” in Hubbard, Phil; Rob Kitchin; and Gill Valentine, Eds. *Key thinkers on space and place*. London; Thousand Oaks: Sage publications, 2004. Print.

<sup>97</sup> Tuan works on the premise that there are two levels to human reality, general and cultural: first the “general human condition,” with its “general questions of human dispositions, capacities, and needs,” its “shared traits that transcend cultural particularities and may therefore reflect the general human condition,” and related to “our animal heritage” as well as our capacity for science and symbolization; and second, that particularity of culture, which in fact “emphasizes or distorts” the general human condition (5-6). In other words, our “human experience... ranges from inchoate feeling to explicit conception” (v). This duality of general/cultural is one possible way to see humanity, and while it discounts the transcendent and other more abstract views of the human condition – though Tuan does enter into “cosmology” in his chapter on “mythical space and place” – it is at least consistent in its organization of “culture” as overlaid upon, and distorting, the “universals” of human body and sensory experience (5-6), and useful in its exploration of the phenomenology of environments.

<sup>98</sup> Tuan, however, makes further distinctions between these “basic components of the lived world” (3), claiming that: “Place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other” (3). In further definition, space is “that which allows movement” and place is a “pause” – wherein “each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place” (6).

Geographer Solange Terezinha de Lima, in “Percepção ambiental e literatura: Espaço e Lugar no *Grande Sertão: Veredas*” (1996), applies the terms “space” and “place,” or “*lugar*” and “*espaço*,” to *GSV*, asking if the *sertão* in the novel is “a space or a place? Or, even, a great space punctuated by successive places?”<sup>99</sup> (153). Working on the premise that “place” is the particular scenery, the real, and “space” is the imaginary and conceptual, Terezinha de Lima defines Riobaldo’s landscape as “a lived scenery, marked by the persistence of strong feelings intrinsic to the environmental experience, oscillating between the thresholds of the real and the imaginary... now a sense of place, now of space”<sup>100</sup> (153). She finds in the “*Lugar-sertão*” (“Place-*sertão*”) symbols and meanings, personalized and lived spaces (positively or negatively), protective ones and repellent ones, particular “places” that are a pause in the larger movement through the “*Espaço-sertão*” (“Space-*sertão*”), which is a world unknown (and I would add, constructed as unknowable) in its imagined immensity, a labyrinth to which for example both the concept of freedom and that of imprisonment can be applied. “Transcending the dimension of mere local geography or its regional singularities”<sup>101</sup> (154), it is a land that is “accepting all names,” she says, referring obliquely to a quote from the text: “*O sertão aceita todos os nomes*” (“The *sertão* accepts all names”) (*GSV* 506). In reference to Carter’s definition of a “place” as “named,” this does in fact place the *sertão* somewhere in between the concepts of “place” and “space” – it has “names,” but is also has *all* names, which makes of it more of an abstract concept, a “space,” inenarrable.

The nature of “place” as valued and specific is, then, well explored, and often opposed to the “abstraction” of space. However, while “place” is consistently explored as specificity and “space” as abstraction, the dialectic is complex and multiple in its conceptualizations of “space,” especially in regards to its place inside or outside of human perception. For instance, although Terezinha de Lima’s usage of “place” and “space” in her exploration of *GSV* uses the term “place” (“*lugar*”) to refer to particular and meaningful locations within a larger conceptual “space” (“*espaço*”), that “space” in itself is also meaningful – it is mysterious, ineffable, immense, “accepting all names.” This is not a “space” of scientific or mathematical conception, but of human conception: a *humanly* abstract “space.” Indeed, Terezinha de Lima’s application of the “place”/“space” dialectic to *GSV* reflects, in a way, “place” as the documentary immediacy of the novel and its connection to culture and experience, and “space” as its more abstract spatial concepts relating to the mysterious and metaphysical. The regional aspects of the work may be its “place,” whereas its “space” is that of *redemoinho*, the road to war, the paths of God and the devil, the narrator’s experience of the *sertão* as powerfully unknowable even as it is interior to him.

Edward Casey (1997) is among the theorists who question the concept of the primacy of an abstract “space” and the secondary nature of its inscription as “place,” claiming that although “space” may be a larger or less specific concept than “place,” “space” too is humanly inscribed. Casey explains that “space” has been given to mean an “already existing monolith,” “tabula rasa onto with the particularities of culture and history come to be inscribed” (14), but he argues to

<sup>99</sup> “*um espaço ou um lugar? Ou, ainda, um grande espaço pontilhado por sucessivos lugares?*”

<sup>100</sup> “*uma paisagem vivida, marcada pela persistência de fortes sentimentos intrínsecos à experiência ambiental, oscilantes entre os limiares do real e do imaginário... ora o sentido de lugar, ora o de espaço*”

<sup>101</sup> “*Transcendendo a dimensão do mero local geográfico ou de suas singularidades regionais*” ... “*aceitando todos os nomes*”

the contrary, claiming that “first-order items in the universe” are not “denuded things,” but come secondary to perception, which is “primary (as both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty insist)” (17). As such, and “both Archytas and Aristotle proclaimed” and “Bachelard and Heidegger have reembraced,” “*place is prior to space*” (16, my emphasis). Human beings as sentient subjects “come to the world - we come into it and keep returning to it - as already placed there,” and therefore “spaces... are themselves emplaced from the very first moment.” (18) “Space” as a concept is grasped through the place we occupy – and the place we occupy is defined by our experience of it. Given the complexity of our conceptions of “space” as well as “place,” this appears to be true; “place” and “space” are different in our language and application, but while “place” can come to refer to meaningful localities, “space” is no less meaningful in its abstractions.

The “place”/“space” distinctions vary, then, by theorist and application; though “place” is consistently differentiated from “space” by its specificity and its felt value, “space” cannot be determined, as shown by Casey, to be necessarily lacking in meaning or indeed to be outside of the realm of human inscription. As such, the determining differences between “place” and “space” are not that “place” is inscribed on the emptiness of “space,” but rather that “place” contains particularity in both its material locality and its experiential components, whereas “space” speaks to the less definable aspects of our experience of our surroundings – our abstract, but often no less human, conceptualizations of the world around us.

#### **MATERIAL and EXPERIENTIAL COMPONENTS of SPATIALITY:**

Beyond determining the different levels of engagement with geography that human beings experience – particular, and abstract – the critics above have also sought to determine *how it is* that we engage with those aspects of geography. For some, this includes “place” only, and for some, both, depending on their definitions, but their analyses in general seek out the *nature of the creation of meaning* in those “spaces” or “places” – or regions, or lands. In these explorations, the elements of our creation of meaning of “place” include, according to many, both *material* and *experiential* components. For Relph, a “place” is both its persistent material location, and its associated “experiences and intentions.” For Tuan, “place” is both differentiated “space,” and is “endow[ed] with value,” “aura,” and “identity.” For Barker, “places” have constructed meaning, emotional investment, and identification. For Carter et al., “places” are not just specific in their names, but are the embodiment of symbolic and imaginary ascriptions:

...It is not spaces which ground identification, but places.

How then does space become place? By being named; ... and also, of course, by embodying the symbolic and imaginary investments of a population. Place is space to which meaning has been ascribed. (xii)

Riou, too, in his 1977 response to Foucault’s open questions to French geographers, explains (using “space” not within the space/place dialectic):

Social forces manifest themselves in space. They inscribe themselves on the landscape, the plan and the map. Space is the place where history inscribes itself, and geography should be the analysis of that which dwells and is born there. (37)

Space/place, then, is both the *landscape* and its *human inscription*, or the way in which we experience it.

Beyond the terminology mentioned here, Tuan also uses the neologism “topophilia”<sup>102</sup> to refer to those aspects of a “place” which have to do with “all of the human being’s affective ties with the material environment,” including “aesthetic,” “tactile,” “because it is home,” etc. (Tuan 1990: 93). He defines further: “The term *topophilia* couples sentiment with place” (120), and “[t]opophilia is the affective bond between people and place or setting. Diffuse as concept, vivid and concrete as personal experience” (4). The term has to do with affection, awe, and purpose. Those who work with the land feel a “topophilia” that is “compounded of this physical intimacy, of material dependence and the fact that the land is a repository of memory and sustains hope” (97). More generally, we feel “topophilia” because “the place or environment has become the carrier of emotionally charged events or perceived as a symbol” (93). “Topophilia” can be applied to the *sertão*; it is a concrete experience for some, felt in physical intimacy with the land, and also a symbol, a diffuse concept experienced both while present there and through mediations. The *sertão* is sometimes celebrated – but sometimes, too, it is feared, giving a sense of alienation, or “outsideness,” perhaps even “topophobia” (see Tuan’s 1979 “Landscapes of Fear,” Relph’s 1976 *Place and Placelessness*). These descriptions of the bond between people and place apply to *PP*, too, for what is Comala if not a “repository of memory”?

The “humanist geographers” of the 1970s were not the only ones looking at affectivity and experience in the framing of specificity or localization in our environment. French philosopher Henri Lefebvre was also exploring the experiential aspects of spatiality, as published in *La production de l'espace* (1974). Though he doesn’t use the term “place,” the concept is much the same: that there is a certain kind of “space” (“space” being a larger concept) that is *connected to human experience*, and is “qualified (and qualifying) beneath the sediments left behind by history, by accumulation, by quantification” (230), in which these “sediments” are both material and of the framing of experience. The “pre-existing space,” and “specific spatial bases” exist in materiality, and they are the foundation upon which repose “not only durable spatial arrangements but also *representational spaces* and their attendant imagery and mythical narratives” (230). In his project of “spatiology,” Lefebvre was, according to theorist Andy Merrifield (2000), among the first to create a “rapprochement between *physical* space (nature), *mental* space (formal abstractions about space), and *social* space (the space of human action and conflict and ‘sensory phenomena’” (170-171), which as a single domain was “radical” (170). This rapprochement has become commonplace among theorists of “place” as both the *physical* and the *perceived, material and experiential*, in concert.

The *sertão* in *GSV* is a particular “place” and an abstract “space” of symbol; and it is also the

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<sup>102</sup> Tuan did not invent the term, or at least was not the first to do so; the term “topophilia,” though widely attributed to Tuan, has been used by others including Bachelard, who used the term previously (1958) to reflect his examination only of “*felicitous space*,” or “the space we love,” “eulogized space” (xxxv); *topophilia*, he claims, is something one can experience in a beloved place (Bachelard 149), or engage in as a philosopher.

construction of both a material and an experiential landscape, since it derives its existence from a combination of “real” factors such as its carefully described natural flora and fauna, as well as from factors involving cultural and mythological inscriptions and Riobaldo’s own perception of its deep connection to him, to his fellow human beings, and to spirituality. Indeed, the first step towards understanding the meaningful (meta)physical space in the work is accepting that the experiential component of the landscape is just as “real” to Riobaldo and to the reader as is the natural; even in forced objectivity, our *perceptions* cannot be evaded.

### **DIRECT and INDIRECT EXPERIENCE/CONSTRUCTION of PLACE:**

Whether they are “place” or “space” or both, according to varied definitions, the *sertão* – and, as will be explored, Jalisco – are also both *material* and *experiential* in terms of their “reality” to their dwellers and visitors, and are accessed both *directly* and *indirectly*.

This “experiential” component is in itself complex, as it is composed of multiple factors: direct and indirect experience. The result is that, just as “place” (or “space,” depending on terminology) is both material and experiential, the indirect experience of it – that of *discourse* – is no less real to its audience because of its mediation. In fact, conceptualizations of space, related or not to direct experience, conform and construct others’ experiences of that space as well. In relation to the novel, *GSV* constructs a *sertão* that is a combination of Riobaldo’s direct experiences and his long-held individual, cultural, and religious expectations; and the reader, whether or not he/she has prior direct knowledge of the *sertão*, incorporates this conceptualization into his/her own, and, given the chance, will likely treat that space in future as the one informed by the novel.

Many of the geographers and theorists here elaborate on the point that experience of space, mediated or no, is still experience and is a vital component of the makeup of space. Relph defines experience of both place and space as “a continuum that has direct experience at one extreme and abstract thought at the other” (Relph 9). Tuan claims that the “experience” that constructs place out of space is “a cover-all term for the various modes through which a person knows and constructs a reality” (8), which “can be direct and intimate, or it can be indirect and conceptual, mediated by symbols” (6). This last phrase points, too, to the power of art in the construction of “place” – the experience which overlays it and defines it as “place” may be mediated by someone else, an experience of another’s experience, conceptual, symbolic. Relph’s phrase “discursive constructions” also highlights the dual nature of the experience that creates and interprets “place”: “discursive,” i.e. mediated by symbols and language, as well as “real.”

Lucy Machado (1996) also claims, echoing Tuan, that there are “two ways of experiencing space and place: direct and intimate and indirect and conceptual”<sup>103</sup> (97), and she further explains that we learn the reality that surrounds us through our senses, “which may be common (vision, hearing, touch, smell, taste) or special, like the sense of forms, of harmony, or equilibrium, of

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<sup>103</sup> “dois modos de experienciar espaço e lugar: direto e íntimo e indireto e conceitual”

space, or place”<sup>104</sup> (97) – and yet all of this is only a part of our “*repertório de conhecimentos*,” “repertory of knowledge/knowings.” The rest is transmitted to us through people and books – through words and images – making every idea we have of the world a combination of personal experience, learned knowledge, imagination, and memory: the places we live in exist in our minds through all of this. Indeed, it is not just in thought that the repertory of mediated knowing exists, but it colors our real experience of the Earth:

The surface of the Earth is elaborated for each person by the refraction by means of cultural and personal lenses, of customs and fantasies. We are all artists and architects of scenery, creating order and organizing spaces, time and causality, according to our perceptions and predilections.<sup>105</sup> (L. Machado 97-98)

Further citations from geographers’ and other theorists’ works echo these views of the discursively inscriptive power of society, culture, experience and intention upon our environment, and, too, of narrative. Denis Cosgrove (2008) explains: “Geographical inscription is simultaneously material and imaginative, shaping landscapes out of the physical earth according to human intentions,” and the maps and charts and essays we use to explain what we see are not just *reflective* of what is out there already, but are “active, constitutive elements in shaping social and spatial practices and the environments we occupy” (15). And Doreen Massey (2005) writes, too, of the way in which humans both experience and, through story and identity, constitute our environments:

Perhaps we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far... Space does not exist prior to identities/entities and their relations. More generally I would argue that identities/entities, the relations ‘between’ them, and the spatiality which is part of them, are all co-constitutive. (9-10)

Jungian analyst Elena Liotta (2009) illustrates the co-constitutive aspects of our experience of land in reference to Jung’s experience of the “sacred” in a place. Jung went into the Sahara, and found that “[t]he deeper we penetrated into the Sahara the more time slowed down for me; it even threatened to move backwards.” The Sahara felt, then, like a place outside of time. Jung continues: “...when we reached the first palms and dwelling of the oasis, it seemed to me that everything here was exactly the way it should be and the way it had always been” (Jung 1963: 268; Liotta 24). She explains that the cultural conceptions of the region in collective consciousness affected his actual experience; he expected to find a mystical and ancient experience in the Sahara (“the way it had always been”); and so he did (24).

As seen here, there are aspects of our environment that exist not only in a material sense, but in a meaning-imbued sense, in which the physical place is coupled with our conceptualization or experience of it, and our identification with it; “place” is both material and experiential, and

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<sup>104</sup> “*que podem ser comuns (visão, audição, tato, olfato, paladar) ou especiais, como o sentido das formas, de harmonia, de equilíbrio, de espaço, de lugar.*”

<sup>105</sup> “*A superfície da Terra é elaborada para cada pessoa pela refração por meio de lentes culturais e pessoais, de costumes e fantasias. Todos nós somos artistas e arquitetos de paisagens, criando ordem e organizando espaços, tempo e causalidade, de acordo com nossas percepções e predileções.*”

experience is direct and indirect. And, too, the process is “co-constitutive”: it is internalized and then externalized as our perceptions of land create its reality for us and for others.

This is how the “Northeast,” and the *sertão*, are much more than a piece of land; the *sertão* is both a particular place, and a place of identity, aura, felt value, inscribed by names and the sediments of symbol and experience and discourse – a discursive construction, “stories-so-far.” And it is not just *described/interpreted* but is *experienced* and *constructed* through the novel *GSV*.

Indeed, the *sertão* in Brazil on which the novel is based is not a land empty of symbolism or identity, but is rather full of both – for both its dwellers, and for those who have never seen it. As Vernaide Wanderley and Eugênia Menêzes explain in “Uma Viagem ao Sertão Brasileiro” (1996), the *sertão* is understood to be – in materiality – a region “distant from the coast, barely populated and interior”;<sup>106</sup> but the area’s “identity” is a mixture of “strength and desolation, of bravery and poverty, of the known and mystery” (173). These are but some of its many associations. From the time of Euclides da Cunha’s *Os Sertões* (1902) especially, the *sertão* was gaining complex symbolic associations in the public imaginary, emerging as the default regional identity for the Northeast, and as a place all at once unique, terrifying, and home for Brazil as a whole.

In *A Invenção do Nordeste e Outras Artes* (1999), Albuquerque Jr. explores in depth the history of the Northeast of Brazil, a region associated with the *sertão*, as the development of a symbolic space in association with a physical one. He places the “*emergência do Nordeste*” (emergence of the Northeast), in the decade of 1910<sup>107</sup> – not its geographical or even cultural emergence, but instead its *symbolic* one. According to Albuquerque, the origin of “region” lies in fiscal and military concepts, and then geographical ones, and this over time creates an artificially naturalized particularization of space, which is then compounded by cultural creation and its varied historical motives until it becomes a symbolic region (25-26). Pertaining to the construction of the Northeast, Albuquerque Jr. points specifically to the images readily available in the media and in the popular cultural conceptualization of the Northeast, including *cangaceiros* (bandits) such as Lampião and Maria Bonita, charismatic religious leaders such as Antônio Conselheiro, representative of a trend of *messianismo*, coronels and Fathers, folkloric linguistic markers, and, too, droughts or “*secas*” and hunger, all part of repetitive stereotyping that is in turn a product of a system of power.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> “*distante do litoral, pouco povoada e interiorana*”... “*fortaleza e desolação, de bravura e pobreza, de conhecido e mistério.*”

<sup>107</sup> Dated by the emergence of journalistic, scientific, literary and other artistic discourses.

<sup>108</sup> Albuquerque Jr. is primarily concerned with what he sees as the victimization and self-victimization – and subsequent obliteration as a human subject – “*O nexo de conhecimento e poder que cria o nordestino e, ao mesmo tempo, o oblitera como ser humano*” (“The nexus of knowledge and power that creates the Northeasterner and, at the same time, obliterates him as human being”) (21) – of the *nordestino* as a result of this imposition on them of conditions of stereotyping and marginalization, and concentrates on this aspect, which could be problematic at times in the argument’s tendencies towards a unilateral and yet unsupported view of written/performed discourses as “productive of reality” in accordance to set power systems in which the regional subject, though active in applying the discourses to himself, is otherwise subaltern in relation to urban centers and discourses (32-34).

Albuquerque Jr. has ideological goals in the work concerning that system of power, but he also provides a comprehensive exploration of the “invention” of a symbolic space out of a real one, the process of discursive particularization of the Northeast throughout Brazil’s history (19-20). Indeed, his focus is on the powerful role of discourse in *inventing* the region, according to Margareth Rago (1999): “in the field of the historical production of the social imaginary, of the subjective construction of a sentimental cartography, of the delineation of the existing territories, of the analysis of discursive configurations”<sup>109</sup> (13). These phrases – looking at the production/construction/delineation of imaginary/cartography/territories – all point to the active role of those “discursive configurations” in *producing* a sense of the land and culture of a place, which then has real-world consequences. In the Northeast, this formulation of “an archive of images and enunciations, a stock of ‘truths’” (22), this “national-popular discursive formation” (27) or “interference... in the institution and displacement of the idea of the Northeast, and its relationship with the idea of nation”<sup>110</sup> (31), occurs, according to Albuquerque, due to the following cultural enunciations, from: “the academic discourse... to the literary and poetic production of novelists and poets, Northeastern or no, even music, film, theatrical pieces, that took the Northeast as a theme and constituted it as an object of knowledge and of art.”<sup>111</sup> Albuquerque hypothesizes that works of art are “discourses, as producers of reality – machines of production of sense and meaning... proliferating the real, passing beyond its naturalization”<sup>112</sup> (30). This places the author’s role in an interesting light, as both reflective of, and productive of, the observed region.

The Northeast certainly does have a vibrant mythology, both the local and folkloric, and the mythology of its symbolism has developed throughout Brazil. In such a “place,” myth and reality are sometimes so intertwined as to be indistinguishable, for one begets the other; and sometimes, the “mythology,” the realm of belief and expectation and imagination and stories, in fact flourishes in spite of, or alongside, the knowledge that the *sertão* is a quantifiable and touchable tract of land.

These “space”/“place” critics provide tools for understanding the complexity of the *sertão* as portrayed in *GSV*. The land in which the novel is set has a strong history of “experiential” identification, both for its dwellers and for those who have never seen it; in fact, the “experiential” *sertão* is both direct and indirect even for Riobaldo, as shown in his experience with the song of Siruiz, a song that bewitched him into imagining the *jagunço* lifestyle to be epic and fantastical. As one more indirect discourse, *GSV* has the power to truly create the *sertão* for the reader, and the reader has the power to experience and construct it through the work.

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<sup>109</sup> “no campo da produção histórica do imaginário social, da construção subjetiva de uma cartografia sentimental, do delineamento dos territórios existências, da análise das configurações discursivas”

<sup>110</sup> “O que procuramos ver foi o nível de interferência destas muitas práticas, na instituição e no deslocamento da idéia do Nordeste, e a sua relação com a idéia de nação” (“What we sought to see was the level of interference from these many practices, in the institution and in the dislocation of the idea of the Northeast, and its relationship with the idea of nation”) (31).

<sup>111</sup> “o discurso acadêmico... à produção literária e poética de romancistas e poetas nordestinos ou não, até músicas, filmes, peças teatrais, que tomaram o Nordeste por tema e o constituíram como objeto de conhecimento e de arte.”

<sup>112</sup> “discursos, como produtoras de realidade... máquinas de produção de sentido e de significados... proliferando o real, ultrapassando sua naturalização...”



## 5.2 “PSYCHICAL GEOGRAPHY”:

Various theorists have searched for other words and approaches, too, to understanding the human connection to place. Said, Heidegger, and Foucault also provide us with terminology and approaches that illustrate the nature of this fundamental human interaction with our world.

“Psychical geography” is used in many ways, but implies first and foremost, in a metaphorical sense, the “geography” inside one’s mind – with its boundaries and paths and other geographical equivalents wherein one situates ideas, perhaps even completely unaffiliated with a physical counterpart. However, it also implies the “psychical” nature of land-based geography – a mental geography *of* a “real” geography, the aspect of “place” that is the seat of both experience and constructive discourse about the “real.” Edward Said uses the term (xi)<sup>113</sup> in his article “Invention, Memory, and Place” (2000), in which he uses Jerusalem as an example of “how geography can be manipulated, invented, characterized quite apart from a site’s merely physical reality” (180). Specifically, he points out that Jerusalem has both a *geographical* and a *mythical* location, and in its mythical one, the:

...landscape, buildings, streets, and the like are overlain and, I would say, even covered entirely with symbolic associations totally obscuring the existential reality of what as a city and real place Jerusalem is. (180)

The *sertão* certainly contains these societal “place” distinctions: from the most basic, there are places to sleep and places to work, places of agriculture or of wilderness, places that are welcoming or hostile, all specifically inscribed through human experience. There are, too, named places, and places associated with a particular event, act, or feeling. The *sertão* is overlain with “symbolic associations,” and embodies “the symbolic and imaginary investments of a population.” Too, those investments need not be local; Said adds that this symbolic overlay, the “mythical” or “psychical” geography, is, in the case of Jerusalem, not only local or felt by exiles, but exists also as an “idealized landscape” that was developed abroad through art by those who had never seen it, and this “sustained the European imagination for hundreds of years.” A locale or landscape – a “place” – can, then, live symbolically in the minds of those who have never seen it – so, then, can the *sertão*. Jerusalem and the *sertão* have locations in space, but they are, too, “places,” with everything that entails – a physical place and a social one, and also a concept, mediated or no.

## 5.3 “DWELLING”:

Martin Heidegger, in “Art and Space,” (1997, published in 1969 as “Die Kunst und der Raum”) speaks of “space” and “place” as distinguished by *belonging*, a concept similar to that of the *named* or meaning-inscribed, through he draws his distinction between “space” and “place” in the somewhat distinct circumstance of in an essay on sculpture. “Places,” he claims, “in preserving and opening a region, hold something free gathered around them which grants the

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<sup>113</sup> “The constitutive other of national or communal identity is neither an ontological nor an epistemological entity, but is integral to, and definitive of, a psychical geography.” (xi)

tarrying of things under consideration and a dwelling for man in the midst of things” (123). His view of the production of “place,” then, associates “place” with “dwelling” in a formative and conceptual way. Heidegger speaks, too, in a 1951 lecture, of how we “dwell” in the earth in a “fundamentally poetic” way (Padrutt 17), although our present dwelling suffers from too much calculation and measuring. According to Padrutt (2009), in *Being and Time*, Heidegger “distinguished the ‘being-in’ of ‘being-in-the-world’ from a thing’s being simply present in a container – and ascertained our being-in, from the original meaning of the German word *bin*, as a dwelling” (Padrutt 17). “Dwelling” is more intimate a term than “being present”; Heidegger also uses a term like “rescuing,” according to Padrutt:

...mortals dwell ‘insofar as they rescue the earth.’ This ‘rescuing’ is not to be understood only as a rescuing of something from danger, but also (in the old sense of the word) as ‘freeing something into its own way of being [unfolding; *Wesen*].’ (17)

With Heidegger’s insight, then, it becomes clear that our “dwelling” in places, as in the land, rather than simply “existing” in space as in an empty container, is a further term to describe the affective and even identity-oriented meaning of “place.” In fact, our “dwelling” in the earth, according to Heidegger, is not just how we experience the environment around us intimately, but in fact how we *cause* that environment, freeing it to be, or gathering it around us, through our experience of it. Heidegger’s terms and concepts of “dwelling” in a place and “freeing” or “unfolding” it into its being reflect how humanity creates its own environment, not just physically or conceptually, but both. Living in the space connects us to it, and allows it to be seen; the observed phenomenon is in its essence changed through observation, and “rescued” are its meanings, abilities, strengths, and connections to us and to the divine hand that, according to many belief systems, created it. Riobaldo was “dwelling” in the *sertão*; Guimarães Rosa was “dwelling” in the *sertão*; and the reader, too, subsequently “dwells” there, “rescuing” it into being its own mystical and elusive self.

#### 5.4 “HETEROTOPIA”:

Of particular interest to the way in which the *sertão* is experienced through both intimate, lived experience and a conceptual sense of kinship or aversion – even for those who have never visited it – is Foucault’s concept of “heterotopia.” In “Of Other Spaces” (1986, given as lecture in 1967), Foucault speaks of something akin to archetypal meaning attached to certain regions or places with his term “heterotopia,” something that he claims is “probably in every culture, in every civilization” – and, later, more firmly, “a constant of every human group”. “Heterotopias” are “places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (23). These “counter-sites” both exist “outside of all places,” and yet “it may be possible to indicate their location in reality.” They are something like a mirror in that, in reference to a subject, they would be “a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent.” However, unlike the “utopia” of the mirror, the “heterotopia” isn’t entirely a “placeless place” – it is a real site, as well as a virtual point through which one passes to better see the place that one occupies, both “real” and “unreal”

(24). He does not propose a “science” of the term, but proposes a systematic description, a “simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live,” – a “heterotopology.” Though there is no universal form or function, the heterotopia would have in common, among other criteria, varied and “superimposed meanings” and a juxtaposition of “spaces,” often linked to “slices of time,” and presupposing “a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable”... sometimes “pure and simple openings” that hide “curious exclusions” (25-26). Lastly, they “have a function in relation to all the space that remains,” either to “create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory,” or to “to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled” (27).

The *sertão* could in many ways be a “heterotopia” as used in *GSV*, for it is a space both open and closed, both real and unreal, a place and a “placeless place,” which in its nature serves as a mirror for the reader – and also, within its literary-historical context, a mirror for the Brazilian society as a whole, causing the interpreter to both create and experience it as something either more “real” than where he or she stands, or, in a slight twist on Foucault, more messy, ill constructed, and jumbled than the reader’s world, but yet also more meaningful – not entirely a colonial-style “compensation” (27), for it also bases the heart of the nation within a space that, while “real,” exists on a symbolic plane of frozen time and “legitimate” illusion. It is also, for Riobaldo, a “mirror” into his very soul; a space both mythic and real, penetrable and im-, a place to pass through in order to see himself.

## 5.5 SACRED SPACE:

In his works *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality* (1998) and *Landscapes of the Sacred* (2001), Beldan Lane points to the consistent relevance of the “particularity of place” in religious experience: the Bo Tree where Buddha reached enlightenment, the burning bush on Mount Horeb where Moses was instructed to remove his shoes to respect the holy land, the cave on Mount Hira where Muhammed heard the angel Gabriel, the hill Cumorah sacred to the Mormons, Mount Rainier’s name of Tahoma, “The Mountain That Was God” (*Landscapes* 6-7). These connections, he claims, become more meaningful as such places become fewer, threatened by “post-Enlightenment technological society.” With the loss of the fierce landscapes, Western culture becomes bereft of attentiveness to the “intimate connection between spirit and place”; habitat becomes mere scenery, alienating and meaningless (*Solace* 10). This “rampant estrangement from place that is prevalent in contemporary culture,” or “displacement,” is tragic to Lane – and to Heidegger, whom he also cites defining mankind by “dwelling,” being placed.

Lane argues that places have spiritual meaning, and sometimes the least hospitable are the most productive of metaphysical understanding... places like the *sertão*. He explains that the “aniconic” images of desert and mountain which prove to be productive metaphors – even for apophatic theologians, those who reject analogies for God – for the ineffability of the divine; they “question the overconfidence in words that sometimes characterizes the theological enterprise, and... suggest metaphorically the deepest, virtually indescribable, human experiences

of pain and joy...” (*Solace* 4). The desert and the mountains demand “relinquishment,” and are “often associated with the “limit-experiences” of people on the edge, people who have run out of language in speaking of God” (*Solace* 6). While modernity threatens such places with domestication and disregard, he explains, it becomes ever more vital to express and preserve the “healing power of wild terrain,” and the meaning of the verb “to dwell” (*Solace* 9).

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The human experience of a region such as the *sertão* is already one of both the physical and the perceived, in concert; the land has “attendant imagery and mythical narratives,” “symbolic and imaginary investments,” a “psychical” component, “sediments” of experience – direct and material, or indirect and “discursive,” and construction through physical or poetic “dwelling” therein... The *sertão* exists in Brazil with these components, with a vast mythology and symbolism attached to it, both in general and pertaining to specific areas or populations. Also, the *sertão*’s symbolic overlay has aspects of “space,” too, as opposed to “place,” in that much of its symbolism pertains to its ineffability, its mythical infiniteness of indeterminateness, its amorphous character, and its freedom. The aspect of symbolism/meaning/aura/imaginary investment/ representational space/etc. that surrounds the *sertão* is constructed through the “dwelling” of those within it, concretely and in “limit-experiences” and, too, discursively. And, in being “constructed,” it is not just descriptive, but inscriptive – and so the Rosian *sertão* is made real.

Places like the *sertão* – places of legend and possibility with deeply felt “experiential” components, “dwelled” in places, with “heterotopology,” and cultural and psychical manifestations in ourselves – these places are ever more relevant in our shrinking world. The West and its interiors have been colonized; the moon, walked upon, and the oceans sounded. The world has been mapped from outer space, codified with few exceptions; even Canada’s “fabled” Northwest Passage, with its 36,000 islands – currently only 10% charted – is becoming navigable due to global warming, and Russia is laying claim to the Arctic to drill for oil (Northam, Greene, NPR Aug. 2011). Even time has become mapped and, therefore, has lost its mystery and its meaning:

For most of human history... the equinox was a compass point... a mile marker for the *lived* year. Life was experienced through sky and season rather than through the construct of the clock. The equinox bound human communities together in a shared time that was both personal and cosmic. ... Today we rarely give the sky more than a passing glance. We live by precisely metered clocks and appointment blocks..., feeling little personal or communal connection to the kind of time the equinox once offered us. (A. Frank, NPR Sep. 2011)

People love to explore, explain, and chart the mysteries of the world – but we love, too, for the world to be mysterious, and few spatial frontiers remain in which to dwell in dreams. As Ari Schulman (2011) writes, “[e]ach generation reimagines the allure of the unknown world, and reinvents the means of discovering it” (4). Over time, that unknown went from, for example, the “River God” of Huck Finn to Kerouac’s “mythology of the road,” but there was still “something

wild in the West” (19). Thoreau explained a century and a half ago that this allure of the unknown in which to dwell in dreams is not an idle thing, but is fundamental to humanity and society:

The West of which I speak is but another name for the Wild; and ... in Wildness is the preservation of the world. Every tree sends its fibres forth in search of the Wild. The cities import it at any price. Men plow and sail for it... The story of Romulus and Remus being suckled by a wolf is not a meaningless fable. The founders of every state which has risen to eminence, have drawn their nourishment and vigor from a similar wild source. (paragraph 18, “Walking,” 1862)

In the 1950s, the *sertão* was being mapped and roads built; and so, too, in Mexico, modernization was changing the nation’s cities and interior both, threatening a historical relationship to place and land. Today, the culturally palpable threat is no longer so much that of the “progress” of infrastructure and cartographic encroachment, but is the threat to climate and to biodiversity, as well as to the possibility of being “off the grid” in mystery. With the increasing finiteness of our physical world, it is ever more important that the *experiential* and *symbolic* components of that world continue – and even those are under siege, according to many. For example, Ari Schulman explains – and he is not alone – that there is a trend in the United States of “the declining significance of place and locality,” and he explains, too, that tools like GPS function to further “insulate” and “isolate” us from experiencing the world; we live from destination to destination, without the journey (Moe).<sup>114</sup> With land at risk, and *experience* of land at risk as well, *GSV* is ever more relevant with its exploration of the infinite and internal nature of our experiential and sacred overlays on the earth.

Guimarães Rosa is another philosopher of space, just like the “humanistic geographers” and other philosophers above who have sought to unravel the complexity of our relationships to our environment. The novel *GSV* explores the *sertão*’s complex “spatiality” of co-constitutive human inscription, and also builds upon it, creating for the reader a *sertão* that is no less real than the one visible by satellite. The *sertão* in *GSV* is built in Riobaldo’s discourse to be a place that is, first, deeply connected to human morality and experience; and, second, deeply connected to the divine, in which every step taken is a step not only down a dust path, but down an inner path and a metaphysical one.

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<sup>114</sup> Schulman (“GPS and the End of the Road”) explains further that GPS is designed to “facilitate our interactions with places” (5) and, increasingly, to have its own “location-awareness” so it can tell us not just how to get where we’re going, but where we want to go. As a result, however, it *mediates* those spatial interactions, and having lost our role in actively interpreting our surroundings and creating mental geographies to match, we are ironically no longer *aware* of our *location* ourselves. It is *awareness*, he explains, engagement, and the “qualitative experience,” that make a “location” into a place”: “we cannot treat places as mere sensory data, as sights...” ... “finding your way around is how you begin to escape the realm of mere location and sight, wresting from it place and that elusive sense of the place” (24-25).

## 6. SYMBOLIC *SERTÃO*:

As seen above, the *sertão* in *GSV* exists as a geographical location, a particular natural zone of flora and fauna, and also – as is the *sertão* in Brazil, and many other spaces in the world – a place with a rich cultural history and its own way of being not just perceived but also conceptually and socially constructed through that perception and its associated discourses.

At its most basic, the land in *GSV* is discursively constructed as that substance that is separate from fire or air, as espoused by Zé Bebelo, who, when told by Joca Ramiro, “*O senhor não é do sertão. Não é da terra...*,” responds: “*Sou do fogo? Sou do ar? Da terra é a minhoca – que galinha come a cata: esgaravata!*”<sup>115</sup> (276-7). However, though Zé Bebelo brushes off the question of belonging in the *sertão* – by simplifying “*terra*” to mean “earth,” not “homeland,” and arguing that he is not from fire or air, either, and in fact only earthworms are from the “earth” – the question of the meaning of “*terra*” in the *sertão* stands. The *sertão* is, indeed, dirt and earth; but Zé Bebelo’s need to even make such an argument arises from the strong associations with the *sertão* as a homeland, a place with insiders and outsiders – its identity and context within Brazil, as geographically and also culturally and symbolically distinguishable from other lands – a “place.”

So what is the Rosian *sertão* in relation to these concepts of “place,” “psychical geography,” “topophilia,” “dwelling,” etc. discussed above – concepts tying humankind and region into a constructive union? The work’s *sertão* contains all of these things – it is a *sertão* made of and making humankind, a place that, “dwelled in” both materially and emotionally, becomes linked to its narrator and audience. The work shows – more than just natural and historical – symbolic and affective associations with the land, and in doing so, constructs a deep human bond with it, while at the same time creating out of it cosmic and conceptual planes of existence. And it is in this “placeness” of the *sertão*, or *sertão* as humanity, and “spaceness” of the *sertão*, or *sertão* as concept, in which the “transcendence” of the *sertão* into a “mystical” path begins to be wrought.

### 6.1 *SERTÃO* as HUMANLY INSCRIBED and INSCRIBING:

The multiple nature of the (meta)physical space developed in *GSV* – just as in *PP*, as will be explored in Part II – is dependant upon a relationship between the *land* and *humankind*. Only in finding a connection to the “*barranco de chão*,” the earthy groove of the waterfall, can the waterfall exist; and therefore it matters that the *sertão* is a place of felt relevance to the protagonist, to the author, and to the larger cultural context of the novel. The specificity of the *sertão* allows it to be a “trampoline” to metaphysical conjecture because the *sertão* provides a connection to humankind and to the themes of violence and evil inherent in that metaphysical conjecture as well. Indeed, it is the fact of the *relevance* of the land to Riobaldo that opens up the land to its possibilities in being more than simply a primary resource to be documented. The *sertão* is perceived by author and reader and subject, all, through particular lenses colored by discourse, experience, and perception, and thus it has the power to be both more than its physical components, *and its physical components*.

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<sup>115</sup> “You are not of the *sertão*. You are not of the land...” – “Am I of fire? I am of air? Of the land is the worm – that the chicken eats and gathers: scrapes!”

The flora and fauna, and land and water are all connected to Riobaldo and Diadorim, his secret love (and secret name for the boy he knows as Reinaldo), and their companions, and to the reader of the work, through a kind of symbolism that is no simple equation of metaphor, but rather a consistent tying of the human and the natural through both explicit and implicit means, i.e., means visible in symbol/metaphor of animals, plants, earth, etc., as well as those more deeply tied to feeling and narrative approach.

### FLORA and FAUNA:

As mentioned above, local creatures domestic and wild abound in *GSV*. In the work, they play a role larger than that of documentary precision, appearing in association with ideas, moods, even specific people. On a purely linguistic level, Nascimento and Magalhães remark upon the duality of documentary precision of “sertanejan” flora, and the plants’ poetic “transfiguration in Riobaldo’s speech” (108).<sup>116</sup> They indicate, as I have above, that the *sertão* has both material and ideological/symbolic elements<sup>117</sup> (99), and is, in the novel, “multiple and ambiguous,” having on one plane “a geographical area, occupying a vast region in the interior of Brazil,”<sup>118</sup> and on the other, “an interior reality, spiritual or psychological, which can be understood as the universe of Riobaldo” – or, as Antônio Cândido states, *mito* and *logos* (Nascimento/Magalhães 100, Cândido “O Sertão e o Mundo” 18). In their linguistic approach to the text, the authors distinguish between two uses of botanical terminology, and find evidence of the other reality – that of Riobaldo’s and others’ *experience* of the *sertão* – in the “expanded” and “contextualized” uses of the names of flora. For example, the “*flor de amor*” has various names, depending on whom one asks: to Riobaldo, sensual Nhorinhá calls it “*dorme-comigo*”; but sweet Otacília calls it “*casa-comigo*” to Riobaldo, representing pure love, according to the authors, while for Diadorim/Reinaldo, Otacília names it “*liriliro*,” making of the flower an ambiguous, ambivalent,

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<sup>116</sup> “*Contrastando o emprego de termos da flora, no romance, com a definição de dicionários e de livros especializados em botânica, temos como meta examinar a sua transfiguração no discurso de Riobaldo. A hipótese é de que, no uso de termos da flora, há: 1) traços de igualdade que, retomando as definições sedimentadas na cultura, fundam no discurso o efeito de veridicção; 2) traços novos, filtros do olhar do sujeito enunciador, que emprestam à flora um efeito poético.*” (Contrasting the use of terms of flora in the novel with the definition of dictionaries and of books specialized in botany, we aim at examining their transfiguration in Riobaldo’s speech. The hypothesis is that, in the use of terms of flora, there are: 1) features of equality which, on re-reading culturally formed definitions, found on that speech the effect of veracity; 2) new features, filters of the subject’s viewpoint, which lend to flora a poetic effect.”)

<sup>117</sup> “*o material: com vegetais de troncos e galhos retorcidos, casca espessa, onde o clima apresenta duas estações bem definidas, uma seca e outra chuvosa, com “cerrados,” podendo surgir como áreas florestais; o ideológico e simbólico: região longínqua e não urbana, onde manda quem é forte..., onde o pensamento da gente se forma mais forte do que o poder do lugar..., região com este seus vazios..., com tanta aspereza de vida..., desconhecido, O sertão nunca dá notícias*” (“The material: with vegetables with twisted trunks and branches, thick shells, where the climate presents two well-defined seasons, one dry and one rainy, with “fogs,” which can arise like forested areas” ... “the ideological and symbolic: a region distant and not urban, where the strong rule..., where the thinking of people is formed stronger than the power of the place..., region like its emptiness..., with so much harshness of life..., unknown, the *sertão* never gives news”).

<sup>118</sup> “*uma área geográfica, ocupando vasta região no interior do Brasil*” ... “*uma realidade interior, espiritual ou psicológica, podendo ser entendida como o universo de Riobaldo*”

or oscillating figure, much as Diadorim is herself<sup>119</sup> (103-106). The specificity of the terminology in itself, then, claimed by many as an effort to increase the verisimilitude of the narrative (102), has in itself a poetic relevance which points to the intrinsically human element of landscape, and, though the authors do not state it as such, the connection forged in symbolism between the characters and the documentarily exact *sertão*. This connection is part of how the geographical area and the interior reality are, in fact, also a psychological geography, with material/ideological unity. As the plants are transfigured in Riobaldo's speech into being relevant to himself, his friends, and the reader, so, too, Riobaldo's journey is transfigured in the work into a symbolic and spiritual one.

In "Imagens de Animais no Sertão Rosiano" (2002), Maria Célia de Moraes Leonel illustrates a similar point in relationship to the fauna of the *sertão*. Departing from the claims of Le Goff and Durand<sup>120</sup> that (Le Goff) symbolism is universal and that (Durand) the symbolism of particular animals is universally positive or negative, Leonel shows how the animal symbolism in *GSV* is in its very nature versatile and unexpected. She gives the example of bees, "*abelhas*," which are used in several cases to indicate "*caos*" and "*disforia*" (289)<sup>121</sup>, negative associations for a creature that is generally considered a symbol of discipline, order, and prosperity; later, however, the bees are used, several times also, as a symbol of joy, not chaos (289).<sup>122</sup> Leonel shows that the bee has at least two representations in *GSV*: a negative and a positive, and they are not the only fauna – or flora – to be so complex. The horse, Leonel explains, is supposed by many theorists on the subject to be universally accepted as an infernal beast; and indeed it appears as such a "dysphoric" beast in *GSV*. However, it is also the noble mount of heroes (291-293). The horse serves as a metaphor for the devil in a beast that he cannot tame, or one associated with Hermógenes, Riobaldo's demonic foe; the horses can supposedly sense in Riobaldo the pact he has made, and react violently to him, quieting only when he says the devil's name "Barzabu" (291). This is the dysphoric horse; but there is also in *GSV* the white horse ridden by Joca Ramiro, the grand and noble mount.<sup>123</sup> The horses' nobility is associated with Joca Ramiro, the *jagunços*, and Diadorim (292-293). This quotidian and yet symbolic "sertanejan" creature is reflective of the cosmic tightrope walked by the novel's hero – an animal akin to humankind's own heart and to the *sertão* through it.

<sup>119</sup> Diadorim is, in fact, also his golden flower, when Riobaldo knows her to be a woman, in her death: "*Diadorim, Diadorim, oh, ah... Buriti, do ouro da flor*" ("Diadorim, Diadorim, oh, ah, ... *Buriti*, of the gold of the flower"). (*GSV* 614)

<sup>120</sup> LE GOFF, J. *O imaginário medieval*. Lisboa: Estampa, 1994. DURAND, G. *As estruturas antropológicas do imaginário*. Trad. H. Godinho. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1997.

<sup>121</sup> For example, "*A minha gente – bramando e avisando, e descarregando: e também se desabalando de lá, xamenxame de abelhas bravas*" ("My people – bellowing and warning, and discharging [weapons]: and also fleeing there, "xamenxame" of angry bees") (Rosa, 1974, p. 438; in Leonel 288).

<sup>122</sup> "...os homens, enxergados tamanhinho de meninos, numa alegria, feito nuvem de abelhas em flor de araquá" ("The men, seen the little size of boys, in a joy, made a cloud of bees in the flower of *araquá*") (Rosa, 1974, p. 38, in Leonel 289); "*De manhã, com uma braça de sol, ele chegou. Dia da abelha branca*" ("In the morning, with a fathom of sun, he arrived. Day of the white bee") (Rosa, 1974, p. 68, in Leonel 289).

<sup>123</sup> "*cavalo branco*," "*estado de cavalos. Os cavaleiros*," "*cavalos mantidos, montados*," "*os cavaleiros na madrugada... os cavalos enchiam o curralão, prazentes*," (292-293). ("white horse," "state of horses. The horsemen," "maintained, mounted horses," "the horses in the early morning... the horses filled the big corral, pleased")



Some animals are given specific meanings in association with specific individuals, as well, as Leonel indicates; she points to the association between Diadorim and the *manuelzinho-da-croa*, a delicate shore bird, which Proença also perceived – an association that places Diadorim in a celestial sphere with elevation, flight, and power, as the “*anjo da guarda*” “guardian angel,” of Riobaldo, though she is also violently warlike (Leonel 295-296). Indeed, the birds are often shown in the work as not just a symbol but also an observer, the only ones who “know” the *sertão* and all of its joys and miseries. Riobaldo, too, is associated with creatures, when he changes his name from “Tatarana” to, as chief, “Urutu-Branco,” a white viper, a name to give him strength in battle; though, more than anything, he associates himself with his horse, for good or ill.

Leonel draws from all of this the conclusion that Guimarães Rosa’s work is in fact really about “*plurissignificação*” (plurality in signification) as its major characteristic; and this may be much more broadly true than what she indicates in her article. The creatures, in their multiple meanings, participate in the duality of the story, of the *sertão* created there: a *sertão* that, like mankind, is given choices, and creates its own destiny, creating divine beauty or darkness both. The devil, in *GSV*, exists and doesn’t, just as the horse and the bee are dysphoric and euphoric, evil and good; and, too, the manioc is *brava* (bitter, fierce and poisonous) or *doce* (sweet), though they appear the same. This is a “plurally signifying” *sertão* that is (meta)physical, place and space, material and experiential, physical and psychological... in a “plurally signifying” novel, with narrative *lacunae* creative of multiple and individual realities for every reader and act of reading.

The basis for the “placeness” of the *sertão* lies in its connection to humankind, and to Riobaldo. Indeed, the horse, a part of the *sertão*’s natural and cultural order, is said in *GSV* to be esteemed “*irmãmente*” (brotherly) by its rider,<sup>124</sup> and it loves its master so much that it breathes with him, as Riobaldo tells us in a metaphor for his transforming love for Diadorim: “*Cavalo que ama o dono, até respira do mesmo jeito*”<sup>125</sup> (*GSV* 89). He also confuses himself with his horse: “*Todo o mundo passou, por tanto, diante de mim, eu esbarrado em pé – isto é, a cavalo*”<sup>126</sup> (479). These creatures and plants, and the land in which they all *dwell*, are as intimate to Riobaldo’s journey as is his own mind – and the manioc, the bees, the horse, they all participate in his internal dilemma about evil and redemption, even as they are catalogued specimens of a natural order.

As Riobaldo says, when we sleep, we become rocks and flowers; an attitude he learned from his horse: “*O bom da vida é para o cavalo, que vê capim e come. Então, deitei, baixei o chapéu de tapa-cara. ... Quando a gente dorme, vira de tudo: vira pedras, vira flôr.*”<sup>127</sup> (*GSV* 304). Riobaldo is the *sertão*; the *sertão* is Riobaldo.

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<sup>124</sup> Leonel points this out, as well (293).

<sup>125</sup> “A horse that loves its master, even breathes in the same way”

<sup>126</sup> “The whole world passed, therefore, in front of me, colliding with me on foot – that is, on horseback”.

<sup>127</sup> “The good in life is for the horse, who sees hay and eats it. So, I lay down, put down my hat as face-cover. ... When we sleep, we become everything: we become stones, we become a flower.”

**RIVERS:**

The function of water in the work is also, beyond a universal significance of any kind, one tied to the human characters in the work. Waters often take on a renewing capacity; Riobaldo tells us - “*perto de muita água, tudo é feliz*”: “near a lot of water, everything is happy” (45). Diadorim’s green eyes are “*rios verdes*,” green rivers; perhaps a reference to the happiness she causes him, or to the depth of her, or to her fluidity, her flux. Upon explaining his feelings for Diadorim, Riobaldo asks his interlocutor/listener, “*o senhor dorme em sobre um rio?*,” “Do you sleep over a river?” (308); in the *Gerai*s, there are “*fortes águas, que vão rolando debaixo da terra*”<sup>128</sup> (308), which, if the man hasn’t experienced, he will not understand love, nor the *sertão*.

Just as streams and pools and the places where water flows – and doesn’t – take on importance in the work, so does the specific Urucuia river, Riobaldo’s most beloved, as he states: “*meu, em belo, é o Urucuia – paz das águas... É vida!...*” (43), and “[*m*]eu rio de amor é o Urucuia”<sup>129</sup> (89). Guimarães Rosa was baptized with water from the river Urucuia, on white stone from the local caves of Maquiné (Vilma Guimarães Rosa (VGR) 48); the same river is Riobaldo’s, too. Riobaldo loves the river, and it plays a fundamental role in his narrative and his life. For instance, Riobaldo explains, “*O meu Urucuia vem, claro, entre escuros. Vem cair no São Francisco, rio capital. O São Francisco partiu minha vida em duas partes*”<sup>130</sup> (321). This statement comes amidst a possible comparison of his life to Dante’s journey; he tells of his life as a journey, with God in the middle, then he asks if his life has a “*meio-do-caminho*,” as in the first lines of Dante’s *Inferno*<sup>131</sup>, implying that the Urucuia braves darkness and yet has goodness – the Urucuia, a metaphor for Riobaldo himself.

Later, too, he compares himself to the Urucuia, in a moment in which he wonders whether the sensible thing would be to leave the *sertão*:

Sensato somente eu saísse do meio do sertão, ia morar residido, em fazenda perto da cidade. O que eu pensei: ... rio Urucuia é o meu rio – sempre querendo fugir, às voltas, do sertão, quando e quando; mas ele vira e recai claro no São Francisco...<sup>132</sup> (591)

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<sup>128</sup> “strong waters, that go rolling beneath the earth”

<sup>129</sup> “mine, in beautiful, is the Urucuia – peace of the waters... It’s life!...” ... “My river of love is the Urucuia”

<sup>130</sup> “My Urucuia comes, clear, between darkneses. It comes to fall into the São Francisco, capital river. The São Francisco split my life into two parts.”

<sup>131</sup> *Inferno*: Canto 1: “*No meio do caminho desta vida / me vi perdido numa selva escura, / solitário, sem sol e sem saída. // Ah, como armar no ar uma figura / desta selva selvagem, dura, forte, / que, só de eu a pensar, me desfigura?*” (<[www.letras.ufmg.br/profs/sergioalcides/dados/arquivos/nomeiodocaminho.doc](http://www.letras.ufmg.br/profs/sergioalcides/dados/arquivos/nomeiodocaminho.doc)>, accessed 2011-09-10) “Midway upon the journey of our life / I found myself within a forest dark, / For the straightforward pathway had been lost. / Ah me! how hard a thing it is to say / What was this forest savage, rough, and stern, / Which in the very thought renews the fear.” (<<http://www.online-literature.com/view.php/inferno/1?term=midway>>, accessed 2011-01-13)) Guimarães Rosa had a copy of Dante’s *La Divina Commedia* in Italian (Milano, Hoepli, 1949), and his *Rime* (Torino, Einaudi, 1946) and *Vita Nuova e Opere Minori* (Torino, Internazionale, 1947) (Utéza 34).

<sup>132</sup> “Sensible only if I was leaving the middle of the *sertão*, I was going to live, residing, in a farm near the city. What I thought: ... the Urucuia river is my river – always wanting to flee, turning, from the *sertão*, when and when; but he turns and re-falls clearly into the São Francisco,”

*His* river is always trying to flee the *sertão*, but then it turns and falls into the *São Francisco*,<sup>133</sup> perhaps telling Riobaldo that he would lose himself in fleeing, or would only desire to turn back. His decision isn't explicit, but what is apparent is that the Urucuia is "his," and he sees his fate as tied to that of his river. In a more secure moment, he says of the same river: "*O rio não quer ir a nenhuma parte, ele quer é chegar a ser mais grosso, mais fundo*"<sup>134</sup> (450). The river's nature reflects his own; he wants to become deeper in the *sertão*, too.

Many other critics have commented as well on the role of the Urucuia in Riobaldo's narrative and life journey. Alaor Barbosa (2007) says of it that the Urucuia "in his work has the importance of the Scamander in Homer's *Iliad*"<sup>135</sup> (99), and geographer Monteiro claims that the Urucuia and its "father" river, the *São Francisco*, are significant in their crossings in the work, their "*travessias*," and serve as a "the symbol of the incessant and perilous flow of life"<sup>136</sup> throughout the narrative, and, too, he claims that the "places of the great moments in the novel are always tied to the courses of water" (51). Proença also claims that Riobaldo and the river lead parallel lives, and become confused at times:

In this plane, the river is the figure of highest grandness. There is indeed, in the development of the story, an indistinction in which it and the hero become confused, superimposing themselves, or running in parallel... The phases of his life find reflection in the river.<sup>137</sup> (32-33)

Specifically, Proença explains, river birds appear to the hero in his tranquil hours, and when Joca Ramiro dies, a huge rain falls to fill all the rivers as they seek the sea; and on a day in which Riobaldo feels wanderlust, a stream tells him "no," and he stays (33). In sum, as Proença explains, "the similes are established between men and rivers, feelings and emotions"<sup>138</sup> (36). Proença explains too that, in mentioning the river Urucuia, the devil, and the *sertão* soon into his narrative, Riobaldo is presenting those three as the great characters of the novel on its mythical plane<sup>139</sup> (32).

Philosopher and critic Cândido also finds significance in the Urucuia and *São Francisco* Rivers. He approaches Riobaldo's statement (above) that the river *São Francisco* "*partiu minha vida em duas partes*," ("split my life in two") concluding that:

Attending to its function in the book, we perceive in effect that it divides the world in two qualitatively diverse parts: the right side and the left side... the happy; the ill-omened...

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<sup>133</sup> This is true; the river does take a sharp turn to join the *São Francisco* (Viggiano 32).

<sup>134</sup> "The river doesn't want to go anywhere, what it wants is to come to be bigger, deeper"

<sup>135</sup> "*na sua obra tem a importância do Escamandro na *Iliada* de Homero*"

<sup>136</sup> "*o símbolo do incessante e perigoso fluxo da vida*" ... "*lugares dos grandes momentos do romance estão sempre vinculados aos cursos d'água*"

<sup>137</sup> "*Nesse plano, o rio é figura de primeira grandeza. Há mesmo, no desenrolar da estória, uma indistinção em que ele e o herói se confundem, superpondo-se, ou correndo paralelos. ... As fases de sua vida encontram reflexo no rio*"

<sup>138</sup> "*os símiles se estabelecem entre homens e rios, sentimentos e emoções*"

<sup>139</sup> "*Abrindo suas confidências, Riobaldo logo menciona o rio Urucúia, o Diabo e o Sertão. Guimarães Rosa está apresentando alguns dos grandes personagens do romance em seu plano mítico.*"

On the right shore the topography seems neater; the relations, more normal. ... On the left shore the topography seems fleeting, passing in every instance to the imaginary, ... Shore of vengeance, and of pain...<sup>140</sup> (“O Homem...” 124-125)

According to Cândido, each shore of the river represents the good and normative, on the right, or on the left, the bad, and the prone to flights of fantasy. And, in the middle, in the waters themselves, Riobaldo meets Diadorim, a presence of “incarnate transcendent values,”<sup>141</sup> uniting licit and illicit “being he himself double in his condition” (125).

The *sertão*, like the river, and like Riobaldo and Diadorim, can be many dual and contradictory things. For instance, Riobaldo can both cross and fail to cross the Liso do Sussuarão, as Cândido indicates: “the *Liso* [plain] is simultaneously passable and impassable, because its nature is more symbolic than real”<sup>142</sup> ... and he continues to explain that there is “adhesion of the physical world to the moral state of the man” (126). The duality is repeated on every level: Two banks of the river; land passable/impassable; and, too, Reinaldo/Diadorim, man/woman; Riobaldo as creature of good or evil; and, too, the narrative itself is multiple and paradoxical.

Indeed, in flora/fauna, in rivers, and in implied and explicit comparisons, the *sertão* reflects its travelers. “*Sertão: é dentro da gente*”<sup>143</sup> (Rosa 2001: 325) ... “*Sertão não é maligno nem caridoso, mano oh mano!: - ...ele tira ou dá, ou agrada ou amarga, ao senhor, conforme o senhor mesmo*” (537). Riobaldo sees the *sertão* as such to the extent that he believes it could be embodied in a human being: right before that last fateful battle, in the moment in which Riobaldo cannot distinguish between “Satanás” and “*Sertão*,” he asks the blind man Borromeu, who speaks in mysterious ways: “*Você é o sertão?!,*” “Are you the *sertão*?!” (607). And, too, the important moments in his life history are linked to *places*: “*Aquele lugar, o ar,*” “that place, the air,” says Riobaldo, realizing that he loves Diadorim (305). The *sertão* is *inside* of us, as well as the other way around; and it is not in its nature either malicious or caring, but rather gives and takes away, pleases or embitters, according to the individual human being. *GSV* tells us, then, that its *sertão* is all of those documentary things, a real place; and, too, a psychical geography, a place laid out in our minds and experienced according to our expectations and our natures. It is a “space” of symbol, and a “place” of human attachment, constituting and constituted by its “dwellers,” both material and those who imagine it only.

Riobaldo implies – in his description of his life as “*Travessia. Deus no meio,*” in his reference to his life’s “*meio-do-caminho,*” in his description of the *sertão* as “*dentro da gente*” (inside of us), and in his comparisons of himself to his beloved river (321-325) – that his life has had dark margins, crossings over into places that he regrets, and that his internal journey in reference to

<sup>140</sup> “*Atentando para a sua função no livro, percebemos com efeito que êle divide o mundo em duas partes qualitativamente diversas: o lado direito e o lado esquerdo... o fasto; nefasto... Na margem direita a topografia parece mais nítida; as relações, mais normais. ... Na margem esquerda a topografia parece fugidia, passando a cada instante para o imaginário, ... Margem da vingança, e da dôr...*”

<sup>141</sup> “*valores transcendentos encarnados*” ... “*sendo ele próprio duplo na sua condição*”

<sup>142</sup> “*o Liso é simultaneamente transponível e intransponível, porque a sua natureza é mais simbólica do que real*” ... “*adesão do mundo físico ao estado moral do homem*”

<sup>143</sup> “*Sertão: it’s inside of us*” ... “*Sertão isn’t malicious nor caring, brother my brother! – he takes or gives, or pleases or embitters, you, according to you yourself*”.

God and to (d)evil is the same as his external journey, crossing rivers in the *sertão*. The connection between the river, its banks, and the protagonist is a part of the literary incarnation of an immanent/transcendent *sertão*, the moral and symbolic adhesion between Riobaldo/humankind and the land, in which in the material world each step taken by the journeyers is in fact a step taken on a cosmic scale.

## 6.2 The *SERTÃO* as SACRED WILDS: “GOD” and “the DEVIL,” IMMANENT:

As Guimarães Rosa explains in his interview with Camacho, the *sertão* quickly moves beyond the concrete in his works. In fact, Guimarães Rosa complained to Camacho that many translations of phrases in his works were made “*terra-a-terra*,” instead of seeking out the poetic and metaphysical meanings; the German translator, being very open to the religious elements,<sup>144</sup> was the only one able to translate the meaning.

The *sertão* is material, documentary, real, and it is symbolic, felt, human, experiential. And, these two are not two, but one *sertão*, a physical plane which is, more than a static stage for parable, a participatory agent in a metaphysical and interior drama, in which the audience is constantly reminded through symbolism and more explicit narrative gestures that the actors, the stage, the audience, and the existential journey are one and the same.

This metaphysically and otherwise symbolic aspect of the use of the land in the work is seen above, and is also immediately underlined in the title, as throughout the work, in the binary aspect of the *sertão* with its rude *gerais* and its graceful *veredas*, its “yang/yin,” as Monteiro puts it, of contrast. This duality is just as prevalent in Riobaldo’s spiritual preoccupations about the existence of the Judeo-Christian figures of “the devil” and “God,” and all that they represent in terms of giving meaning to his actions and “destiny” and the stories unfurling around him.

As a part of the connection between Riobaldo/humankind, the land of the *sertão*, and the metaphysical, the *sertão* is constructed as a place of paradox: heaven-like, hell-like, and a place of crossing between good and evil, as well as between the material and the transcendent paths.

### ***SERTÃO, CÉU:***

The *veredas* in the *sertão* function, for Riobaldo, as places of love, of rest, and of oneness with the earth – places of grace in the middle of a life of struggle. The aspects of the *sertão* that are beautiful, that make it an “*assunto de Deus*” (205), “a matter of God,” are manifold, and have much to do with Riobaldo’s love for Diadorim/Reinaldo, and his other moments of peace. As he explains: “*Aquela visão dos pássaros, aquele assunto de Deus, Diadorim era quem tinha me ensinado*” (205). And again,

Quem me ensinou a apreciar essas as belezas sem dono foi Diadorim... Quando o senhor sonhar, sonhe com aquilo. Cheiro de campos com flores, forte, em abril: a ciganhinha,

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<sup>144</sup> He had an “*abertura religiosa muito grande*” (Guimarães Rosa, in Camacho 47).

roxa, e a nhiica e a escova, amarelinhas.... depois dali tem uma terra quase azul. Que não que o céu... Lembro, deslembro.<sup>145</sup> (42)

And he continues to give credit to Diadorim for showing him the beauty of, for example, the *manuelzinho-da-crôa*, allowing him to see birds as the beauty of their flight and landing, rather than as the object of a hunt:

Até aquela ocasião, eu nunca tinha ouvido dizer de se parar apreciando, por prazer de enfeite, a vida mera deles pássaros, em seu começar e descomeçar dos vôos e pouso. Aquilo era para se pegar a espingarda e caçar. Mas o Reinaldo gostava: - “É formoso próprio...” – ele me ensinou. ... O que houve, foi um contente meu maior, de escutar aquelas palavras. Achando que eu podia gostar mais dele. Sempre me lembro. De todos, o pássaro mais bonito gentil que existe é mesmo o manuelzinho-da-crôa.<sup>146</sup> (159)

Riobaldo refers often to the beauty of the *sertão* when he is happy or with Diadorim, painting it as a place of life and origin: “*pássaros felizes, peixe, sereno, alegre... Então, eu vi as cores do mundo. Como no tempo em que tudo era falante, ai, sei. De manhã, o rio alto brando, de neblim; e o ouricuri retorce as palmas. Só um bom tocado de viola é que podia remir a vivez de tudo aquilo*”<sup>147</sup> (164). “As in the time in which everything was speaking,” he says, comparing the *sertão* to the Garden of Eden; it is a paradise. Humans can benefit from this paradise in joy: “*os homens, enxergados tamanhinho de meninos, numa alegria, feito nuvem de abelhas em flôr de araquá...*”<sup>148</sup> (61), and: “*Só aquele sol, a assaz claridade – o mundo limpava que nem um tremer d’água. Sertão foi feito é para ser sempre assim: alegrias!*” (518). However, above all, the beautiful *sertão* is God’s land, “*Deus... O sertão é dele*”<sup>149</sup> (519). In fact, the truth of the *sertão* can only be known from on high: “*se sabe só por alto*” (548). So, too, does Riobaldo’s destiny belong to God, at least sometimes. He admits that God let him follow the path that he did, “*Deus deixou*” (519); and, too, in the telling of how he met Otacília in Santa Catarina, the woman he married and a bright spot in his confusing youth, he claims that it was God’s itinerary that he followed, at least in that moment:

E que, com nosso cansaço, em seguir, sem eu nem saber, o roteiro de Deus nas serras dos

<sup>145</sup> “The one who taught me to appreciate the beauties without owner was Diadorim... When you dream, dream of that. The smell of fields with flowers, strong, in April; the *ciganinha* (little gypsy), purple, and the *nhiica* and the *escova* (brush), yellow... after that there is a land almost blue. That is almost as if it were heaven... I remember, I unremember.”

<sup>146</sup> “Until that occasion, I had never heard of stopping to appreciate, for the pleasure of decoration, the mere life of those birds, in their beginning and not beginning of flights and perching. That was for grabbing the shotgun to hunt. But Reinaldo liked it: “It’s really beautiful...” – he taught me. ... What there was, was my bigger contentment, in hearing those words. Thinking that I could like him even more. I always remember. Of all of them, the most beautiful gentle bird that exists is really the *manuelzinho-da-crôa*.”

<sup>147</sup> “Happy birds, fish, serene, joyful... Then, I saw the colors of the world. As in the time in which everything spoke, yes, I know. In the morning, the high gentle river, of fog; and the *ouricuri* twists the palms. Only a good playing of the viola could redeem the liveliness of all that.”

<sup>148</sup> “The men, seen the little size of boys, in a joy, made a cloud of bees in the flower of *araquá*” ... “Only that sun, that considerable clarity – the world cleaned as not even a tremble of water. The *sertão* was made to be always like this: joys!”

<sup>149</sup> “God is urgent without hurry. The *sertão* is His.”

Gerais, viemos subindo até chegar de repente na Fazenda Santa Catarina, nos Buritis-Altos, cabeceira de vereda. Que's borboletas! E era em maio, pousamos lá dois dias, flor de tudo, como sutil suave, no conhecimento meu com Otacília.<sup>150</sup> (323)

His material path through the *sertão* is also the “roteiro de Deus nas serras dos Gerais,” the itinerary of God in the hills of Minas Gerais.

### **SERTÃO, INFERNO:**

The *sertão* of Riobaldo's experience is also, however, terrifyingly dark, and the place of war, violence, loss, regret, and his own sale of his soul to the devil – perhaps. That *sertão* of God and love and joy is only part of the equation, then, as the land serves also to house evil and violent aspects of men and the world, experienced fully by the narrator, though they be real or imagined: it is criminal (“*Sertão e o penal, criminal*” (126)), and dangerous (“*Homem a pé, esses Gerais comem*”)<sup>151</sup> (388), and, too, “*Conseguiu de muito homem e mulher chorar sangue, por este simples universozinho nosso aqui. Sertão*”<sup>152</sup> (35) etc. As such, it exists again as, more than a geographical and social place, its own little universe, a space of metaphor – open to grace, and to humanity's constant struggle to achieve it, or willingness to throw it away – a space of “parable,” as the author says. As his *cantiga* goes, it is all there, in that place and its waters: “*Remanso de rio largo... Deus e o demo, no sertão*”<sup>153</sup> (577).

Riobaldo has a very real fear of the devil's existence, due especially to the fact that he went through the motions of selling his soul to the devil at a crossroads in return for defeating his foe, Hermógenes, whom he had learned to be such a “*pactário*” – one with a pact with the devil. The question of “the devil” is consistent throughout the story, and may be considered, in fact, the topic of the narrator's central question or “thesis” in this story that he tells – his goal in telling his story to “*o senhor*,” his interlocutor, and to us, and to himself as well, for, as he says, “*Falar com o estranho assim, que bem ouve e logo longe se vai embora, é um segundo proveito: faz do jeito que eu falasse mais mesmo comigo*”<sup>154</sup> (55). The novel is a telling of his life on many levels, but always with a return to this topic, in conversation with himself and his interlocutor: Does the devil exist – and, therefore, did I really make a pact with him? He asks this question of his friend Quelemém in the following words: “*O senhor acha que a minha alma eu vendi, pactário?*”<sup>155</sup> (623), and prefaces the question with “*Mas, por fim, eu tomei coragem, e tudo perguntei*.”<sup>156</sup> In this one sentence, he asked his friend “*everything*.”

<sup>150</sup> “And that, with our weariness, in following, without my even knowing, God's itinerary in the mountains of the Gerais, we came climbing until arriving suddenly in the Estate of Santa Catarina, in the High Palms, the head (or altar) of the *vereda*. What butterflies! And it was in May, we paused there two days, flower of everything, like gentle subtlety, in my meeting with Otacília.”

<sup>151</sup> “*Sertão* and the penal, criminal.” “Man on foot, these moorlands eat”

<sup>152</sup> “It managed of many men and women to cry blood, for this our simple little universe here.”

<sup>153</sup> “The stillness of a long river... God and the devil, in the *sertão*”

<sup>154</sup> “Speaking with a stranger like this, who hears well and then goes far away, is a second advantage: it makes it as if I were speaking more with myself.”

<sup>155</sup> “Do you think that I sold me soul, as *pactário* (one who has made a pact; pact-maker, wagerer)?

<sup>156</sup> “But, finally, I took courage, and asked everything.”

In his telling of his life in the *sertão*, Riobaldo finds evil there, as well as joy/beauty/love. He speaks of the “dark holes” that everything comes from – at least, what doesn’t come from God: “*O senhor vê aonde é o sertão? Beira dele, meio dele?... Tudo sai é mesmo de escuros buracos, tirante o que vem do Céu. Eu sei*”<sup>157</sup> (611). This speaks to an understanding of a metaphysical dichotomy of good and evil, in which there are beings who are completely “other” than Godly. In fact, his friend Quelemém has instructed him to believe that “we all come from Hell,”<sup>158</sup> and Riobaldo speaks of the violent evil done by many in the *sertão*, and asks, “didn’t they come from Hell?”:

...as ruindades de regra que executavam em tantos pobrezinhos arraiais: baleando, esfaqueando, estripando, furando os olhos, cortando línguas e orelhas, não economizando as crianças pequenas, atirando na inocência do gado, queimando pessoas ainda meio vivas... Esses não vieram do inferno? ... Se vê que subiram de lá antes dos prazos, figuro que por empreitada de punir os outros, exemplação de nunca se esquecer do que está reinando por debaixo. Em tanto, que muitos retombam para lá, constante que morrem... Viver é muito perigoso.<sup>159</sup> (65)

The evil actions of mankind come from, according to this statement, “what is reigning from below” – the devil, a being or “thing,” that exists in the realm of the *sertão*, and on a level below.

In fact, Riobaldo finds “evil” in the *sertão* itself, its land, beyond just the “dark holes.” Plants that were once good can suddenly become evil, as mentioned above: “*A mandioca-doce pode de repente virar azangada – motivos não sei... vai em amargando, de tanto em tanto, de si mesma toma peçonhas*”<sup>160</sup> (27). The manioc, “*mansa*” and “*brava*,” have, though only one is deadly, “*igual formato de ramos e folhas*,” the same format of branches and leaves; and, strangely, it can begin as one and become the other – either becoming embittered and poisonous through constant replanting of cuttings, or becoming all of a sudden sweet and harmless when it once was poisonous. Riobaldo implies that these roots are like human beings, with a dual nature inherent, the seed of evil or good inside of their very being – and implies, too, that the *diabo* is at work in the desert. He continues, then, to speak about what appear to be manifestations of Catholic sin in the wild: the wrath and hatred of the rattlesnake (“*a feiúra de ódio franzido, carantonho*”<sup>161</sup>), the

<sup>157</sup> Do you see where it is that the *sertão* is? The brink of it, the middle of it? ... Everything comes out of dark holes, with exception of that which comes from Heaven. I know.”

<sup>158</sup> “*A gente viemos do inferno – nós todos – compadre meu Quelemém instrui. Duns lugares inferiores, tão monstro- medonhos, que Cristo mesmo lá só conseguiu aprofundar por um relance a graça de sua sustância alumiável... Senhor quer crer?*” (“We came from Hell – all of us – my friend Quelemém instructs. From inferior places, so monstrous-frightful, that Christ himself could only go deeply there for a glimpse by the grace of his illuminatable substance... Do you want to believe it?”)

<sup>159</sup> “...the wickednesses of rule that they performed in so many poor villages: shooting, knifing, eviscerating, penetrating the eyes, cutting tongues and ears, not saving the small infants, firing at the innocence of the cattle, burning people still half alive... Didn’t those come from Hell? ... If you see that they arose from there before the appointed day, I figure that in undertaking to punish others, in exemplification to never forget what is reigning from below. In so much, that many fall back down there, they die so constantly... Living is very dangerous.”

<sup>160</sup> “The sweet manioc can suddenly become irritated – I don’t know the motives... it goes along embittering, little by little, taking venom/malice from its own self”

<sup>161</sup> “the ugliness of the pleated hatred, grimace-making”



sloth and gluttony of the brutal feral pig (*cada dia mais feliz bruto, capaz de, pudesse, roncar e engolir por sua suja comodidade o mundo todo*<sup>162</sup>), the wickedness (“*ruim desejo*”<sup>163</sup>) of certain birds, and even the murderous capacity of rocks. According to Riobaldo, everything in the *sertão* has “*o demo*” dormant inside of them:

Tudo. Tem até tortas raças de pedras, horrorosas, venenosas – que estragam mortal a água, se estão jazendo em fundo de poço; o diabo dentro delas dorme: são o demo. Se sabe? E o demo – que é só assim o significado dum azougue maligno – tem ordem de seguir o caminho dele, tem licença para campear?! Arre, ele está misturado em tudo.<sup>164</sup> (27)

The devil is “mixed up in everything,” and everything in the *sertão* – rocks, birds, plants – is “the devil.”

The devil is also found, as is mentioned often in the novel’s epigraph and refrain, “*na rua, no meio do redemoinho*” – in the road, in the middle of the whirlwind. Taken literally, this “*redemoinho*” (sometimes “*redemunho*”) refers to a whirling vortex of wind, and it is implied in the novel that this is a folkloric representation of the devil. Upon seeing a whirlwind in the *sertão*, his companion *jagunço* Caçanje believes that “*redemunho era d’Ele – do diabo. O demônio se vertia ali, dentro viajava*” (“whirlwind was His – the devil’s. The devil was flowing there, traveling inside”) (261). At the time, Riobaldo laughs; but the refrain becomes much more significant to him over time.

There are also specific places that Riobaldo associates with the devil and with evil or Hell: the Liso do Sussuarão, Hell in itself, and the place of his pact making, the crossroads of Veredas-Mortas.

The Liso do Sussuarão is Hell to Riobaldo – the place where he confronts his worst nightmares, where his thoughts overcome him. It is for the *jagunços* a place of terrifying legend; when he first hears from Ana Duzuza that Medeiro Vaz is planning to take the band through there (on Diadorim’s advice, though no one knew it), he doesn’t believe it, for it would be insane: “*o Liso do Sussuarão não concedia passagem a gente viva, era o raso pior havente, era um escampo dos infernos. Se é, se? Ah, existe, meu! ...*”<sup>165</sup> (50). He tells of the lands which one passes through to get there... beyond, beyond:

Nada, nada vezes, e o demo: esse, Liso do Sussuarão, é o mais longe... Água, não tem. Crer que quando a gente entesta com aquilo o mundo se acaba... Ver o luar alumando,

<sup>162</sup> “every day a happier brute, capable of, if it could, snorting and swallowing in its dirty comfort the whole world”

<sup>163</sup> “*E gavião, corvo, alguns, as feições deles já representam a precisão de talhar para adiante, rasgar e estraçalhar a bico, parece uma quicé muito afiada por ruim desejo*” (“the hawk, crow, some, their features already represent the need to slice ahead, tear and tear with the beak, seems an old broken knife highly sharpened by evil desire.”)

<sup>164</sup> “Everything. There is even a twisted race of stones, horrible, venomous – that mortally spoil the water, if they’re lying in the bottom of the well; the devil sleeps inside of them: they are the devil. Is it known? And the devil – that is only like this the meaning of a pernicious quicksilver – is there an order to following his path, is there a license to search for him?! Dammit, he’s mixed up in everything.”

<sup>165</sup> The *Liso do Sussuarão* didn’t concede passage to living people, it was the worst flatland in existence, it was a desert of Hell. If it is, if? Ah, it exists, my...!”

mãe, e escutar como quantos gritos o vento se sabe sozinho, na cama daqueles desertos. Não tem excrementos. Não tem pássaros.<sup>166</sup> (50)

Their experience matches their expectation. Whereas the plants and birds are paradise and grace, this place is empty, undressed, and yet also infinite in its expanse, containing infirm ground and a calamity of heat, and, too, all of Riobaldo's own doubts and infirmities of thought and intention. It is new and old, empty and full, it goes until it doesn't – it is where vision is not found but lost. It is the land of imagination and paradox, the epitome of the possibilities of the *sertão*, but in nightmare form.

It is beyond there, in Bahia, that the “Judases” abide – Hermógenes and Ricardão, traitors who killed the band's beloved leader Joca Ramiro. They must cross Hell to have their vengeance. At first they feel they will achieve it – “*O que ninguém ainda não tinha feito, a gente se sentia no poder fazer*”<sup>167</sup> (61) – but Riobaldo's own courage, as that of the others, is “*variável*” (62). The plants and birds begin to disappear, the light becomes punishment, fire enters their very chests; they forget rain and everything but fear, and the sand begins to give under their feet, they feel that all the evil of the *sertão* resides there: “*o miôlo mal do sertão reside ali, era um sol em vazios*”<sup>168</sup> (65). Night comes “with no mouth,” nothing to eat, even for the animals. No water, no shadows... a nightmare of deliria – “*Pesadelo mesmo, de delírios,*” it is an evil silence. In his delirium, he dreams of Otacília, he sweet love from *Fazenda Santa Catarina*, but with Diadorim's green eyes: (“*Meu amor de prata e meu amor de ouro*”), and swears to leave *jagunçagem* and marry Otacília if he survives – “*‘Saio daqui com vida, deserteio de jaguncismo, vou e me caso com Otacília’ – eu jurei...*”<sup>169</sup> – but then he no longer cares for anyone but himself: “*Mas mesmo depois, naquela hora, eu não gostava mais de ninguém: só gostava de mim, de mim! Novo que eu estava no velho do inferno*” (68-69). The group falters, men and horses die; they turn back... and on their way, they see a monkey and kill him, only to find that it was a boy, naked and oddly shaped – still some are tempted to eat him, but they eat dirt instead (70). The Liso do Sussuarão is developed in Riobaldo's narrative as a place in which the inhospitable natural surroundings are indicative of Hell and the demonic, and lead to sinfulness in those who dare to cross it.

The second demonic place for Riobaldo is the “*Veredas-Mortas*,” the “Dead Paths.”<sup>170</sup> This is the place where Riobaldo made his “pact” – at a crossroads in the *sertão*. In his first mention of the fateful crossroads (113), one way, “*Veredas-Tortas*,” is capitalized; the other, “*veredas-mortas*,” the one with significance to him, isn't, implying that perhaps he speaks it quietly or quickly, trying to gloss over it. He immediately asks the interlocutor to never mention the name – “*Eu disse, o senhor não ouviu,*” “I said it, you didn't hear it” – and says that it is both “*um*

<sup>166</sup> ... “Nothing, nothing times, and the devil: this, *Liso do Sussuarão*, is the farthest... Water, there is none. To think that when we face that the world ends... To see the moonlight illuminating, Mother, to hear how many screams the wind knows itself alone, in the bed of those deserts. There are no excrements. There are no birds.”

<sup>167</sup> “What no one had ever done, we felt we could do” “variable”

<sup>168</sup> The bad kernel of the *sertão* resides there, the sun was empty

<sup>169</sup> “My silver love and my gold love” ... “If I leave here with my life, I'll desert banditry, I'll go and marry Otacília' – I promised...” ... “But right after, in that hour, I didn't like anyone else anymore: I only liked me, me! New that I was in the old of Hell.” ... “What soul isn't”

<sup>170</sup> *Veredas* are also, as explained previously, marshy waterways, oasis-like paths

*lugar*” and “*lugar não onde*” – “a place,” and “a place nowhere.” When he returns to the subject to narrate his pact, he says of the place, “*redizendo o que foi meu primeiro pressentimento, eu ponho: que era por minha sina o lugar demarcado, começo de um grande penar em grandes pecados terríveis*”<sup>171</sup> (417). And what kind of place is it? “*Até os buritis, mesmo, estavam presos*”; even the *buritis* were captive, as he felt he was to destiny. It was confining; but it was also dual: “*Só esta coisa o senhor guarde: meia-léguas dali, um outro corgo - vereda, parado, sua água sem - cor por sobre de barro preto. Essas veredas eram duas, uma perto da outra*”<sup>172</sup> (417). A place of dualities already – begging the question, was it destiny or choice?

### **SERTÃO, TRAVESSIA:**

This duality is part of a narrative-wide metaphor of crossings – crossings of rivers, crossings of land, crossings of realms from the real to the metaphysical, crossings of life choices between God and the devil, and dualities of possibility in the *sertão*, crossed by Riobaldo in his life journey.

After Diadorim’s death, Riobaldo steps down from his place of leadership (“*Desapoderei*”) and tries to return to the fateful spot, to the *Veredas-Mortas*. He hopes to return there to undo what he has done, in the understanding that Diadorim’s death was the price exacted for his pact:

Aonde ia, eu retinha bem, mesmo na doidagem. A um lugar só: às Veredas-Mortas... De volta, de volta. Como se, tudo revendo, refazendo, eu pudesse receber outra vez o que não tinha tido, repor Diadorim em vida? O que eu pensei, o pobre de mim. Eu queria me abraçar com uma serrania?... Eu vim. ... Ao deusdar.<sup>173</sup> (616-617)

He wants to return to the crossroads to *choose God instead* – to “*deusdar*,” “God-give.” However, when he tries to return to “Veredas-Mortas,” he finds it never existed at all. To further its multiplicity, after all this description and importance given to the place, he hears later from a local: “*que o trecho, dos marimbus, aonde íamos, se chamava mais certo não era Veredas-Mortas, mas Veredas-Altas... Coisa que compadre meu Quelemém mais tarde me confirmou. Daí, mais para adiante, dei para tremer com uma febre*”<sup>174</sup> (617). He becomes feverish, in response. “Veredas-Altas” no longer even sounds like the dark place of speaking to the devil, but rather a bright and friendly spot; did it ever exist as he remembers it? Could he never undo what he may have done – or ever know whether he really had? Just as his “pact” is shrouded in

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<sup>171</sup> “repeating what was my first presentiment, I put here: that it was for my destiny the defined place, the beginning of a long torment in big, terrible sins.”

<sup>172</sup> Keep only this thing: half a league from there, another ... *vereda*, motionless, its water without color over its black mud. These *veredas* were two, one near the other.”

<sup>173</sup> “Wherever I went, I remembered well, even in my craziness. To one place only: to the *Veredas-Mortas* (dead wetlands)... In return, in return. As if, re-seeing everything, redoing, I could receive again what I hadn’t had, put Diadorim back in life? What I thought, poor me. Did I want to hug a mountain ridge? I came. To God-give.”

<sup>174</sup> “that the stretch of land, of the riverland-swamps, where we went, was called more correctly not *Veredas-Mortas*, but *Veredas-Altas*... Something that my companion Quelemém confirmed for me later. From then on, I began to tremble with fever.”

doubt and mystery, so is the *sertão* of his memory and experience: a *Vereda* both *Morta* and *Alta*.

In fact, the Liso do Sussuarão, that space so firmly described as being of Hell and the devil, is dual as well, passable/impassible, and the devil's/God's. This tract of land becomes much less terrifying to Riobaldo after his "pact." In leadership, Riobaldo determines to cross the *Liso* again, to attack Hermógenes' family and draw him out. He gives those deviled orders, "*ordens diabradas*" (523), which the *jagunços* are happy to obey. This time, the sun is "*em glória*," "in glory," and the desert is like an ocean in horizons. They tear through it now that it is "real": "*Rasgamos sertão. Só o real.*" Even the road is shorter.<sup>175</sup> The land is still ugly, naked – "*um feio mundo, por si, exagerando. O chão sem se vestir,*"<sup>176</sup> and it is still infinite: "*e que se ia e ia, até não-onde a vista não se achava e se perdia. Com tudo, que tinha de tudo*"<sup>177</sup> (524). But soon they see clouds, hear bees, the "*abelhas... que indicavam flores*," the "bees that indicated flowers." They are able to cross by stopping at plant-filled "*paragens*," stations on the way, where "*se achava água... em lugar onde foi córrego morto, cacimba d'água, viável, para os cavalos*"<sup>178</sup> (525). It is a different place. In his narrative, the current Riobaldo tells of how he attributed this change to his pact at the time, and perhaps still does:

O que me mortifica, de tanto nele falar, o senhor sabe. O demo! Que tanto me ajudasse, que quanto de mim ia tirar cobro? - "Deixa, no fim me ajeito..." – que eu disse comigo. Triste engano. ... cheirava ao Cujo.... Era do demo...<sup>179</sup> (526)

This new Liso do Sussuarão is the devil's, too; it is no longer Hell, but its hospitality is that of evil, for his pact – or, perhaps, his *belief in his pact* – led him safely through. When they cross it into Bahia, what they enter – and thus, what the Liso de Sussuarão isn't – is "*terra cristã*," "Christian land."

However, Riobaldo prefaces this story of his bedeviled crossing of the Liso do Sussuarão with the following:

Agora, o senhor saiba qual era esse o meu projeto: eu ia traspassar o Liso do Sussuarão!

Senhor crê, sem estar esperando? Tal que disse. Ainda hoje, eu mesmo, disso, para mim, eu peço espantos. Qu'ê que me acuava? Agora, eu velho, vejo: quando cogito, quando

<sup>175</sup> "*o caminho mesmo se economizava.*" (524)

<sup>176</sup> "What was it, in its interior, the *Liso do Sussuarão*? – it was an ugly world, in itself, exaggerating. The ground undressed,"

<sup>177</sup> "... and which went and went, until not – where vision wasn't found and was lost. With everything, that had of everything."

<sup>178</sup> "water was found... in a place where there was a dead stream, a well of water, viable, for the horses"

<sup>179</sup> "What torments me, from so much speaking of it, you know. The devil! That so much he helped me, how much was he going to take payment? – "Leave it, in the end I'll adapt..." – what I told myself. Sad deception... it smelled of the devil... It was of the devil..."

relembro, conheço que naquele tempo eu girava leve demais, e assoprado. Deus deixou. Deus é urgente sem pressa. O sertão é dele.<sup>180</sup> (519)

Riobaldo vacillates between the devil and God as agents in his life; was it the devil, God, or his own courage that led them safely through that desert? But “old,” “*velho*,” he speaks of God, saying “God let me. God is urgent without hurry. The *sertão* is his.” God let him blow in the wind, taking wild risks in his youth; God let him cross the Liso do Sussuarão.

Both of the places that Riobaldo associates with Hell and the devil change over time, illustrating the nature of the *sertão* as *other than material only* – a place of paradox, a place connected to the metaphysical, and, too, to perception. The Liso do Sussuarão is impossible to cross, but then he crosses it; and the “Veredas-Mortas,” when he seeks them out, never existed, being instead “Veredas-Altas.” So did the *sertão* change, or did Riobaldo? The *sertão* in *GSV* is the space of both Riobaldo’s physical and his internal journeys. Physical/internal, here/gone, impassable/passable, the devil’s/God’s... these are but a few of the “*travessias*” in the work – the crossings, the changes.

A “*travessia*” is a crossing, or passage; and, too, a long open road, depending on its context.<sup>181</sup> In *GSV*, it is both; for in the road, there are crossings from one side to the other of physical and metaphysical obstacles. The “*travessias*” in the work are sometimes the crossing of rivers<sup>182</sup> or the crossing of the land of the *sertão*,<sup>183</sup> but are often also, or even only, the crossing of something else. “*Travessia – do sertão – a toda travessia*” (518), “Crossing – of the *sertão* – to all crossings”... the paths through the *sertão* are an aperture to *all paths*. Just as, in *PP*, as will be seen, Comala is a place where all paths cross – even those that go through the earth itself, and those of the past, raw wounds that cannot be un-trodden – the paths in *GSV* are all paths, physical and metaphysical.

The word “*travessia*” is often associated with life, the journey, in *GSV*: “*Travessia perigosa, mas é a da vida.*”<sup>184</sup> (558). It is also associated with the changes or decisions one encounters in life, from which there is no return: “*Travessia de minha vida*” (305), he says of the crossing without return that he takes when he knows that he loves Diadorim... “*Mas foi nesse lugar, no tempo dito, que meus destinos foram fechados. Será que tem um ponto certo, dele a gente não podendo mais voltar para trás?*”<sup>185</sup>. Again, the crossing-over taken in his heart is also in a place and time – “*nesse lugar, no tempo dito*” – a material and internal crossing in the *sertão*.

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<sup>180</sup> “Now, know you what this my project was: I was going to cross the *Liso do Sussuarão*! / Do you believe it, sir, without expecting it? Just what I said. Even today, I myself, from this, for me, I take frights. What was stopping me? Now that I’m old, I see: when I think, when I remember, I know that in that time I spun too lightly, and blown. God let me. God is urgent without hurry. The *sertão* is his.”

<sup>181</sup> <<http://michaelis.uol.com.br/moderno/ingles/index.php?lingua=portugues-ingles&palavra=travessia>> (accessed 2011-01-13)

<sup>182</sup> “*se aventurar a travessia do Rio do Chico*” (425), “to venture the crossing of the Rio do Chico”

<sup>183</sup> “*Travessia dos Gerais tudo com armas na mão...*” (480), “*Crossing the Gerais with arms in hand...*,” as the song goes in Riobaldo’s invention.

<sup>184</sup> “Perilous crossing/road, but it’s that of life” ... “Crossing/road of my life” ...

<sup>185</sup> “But it was in this place, in the mentioned time, that my destinies were closed. Could it be that there’s a certain point, from which we aren’t able anymore to turn back?”

And, too, the process of these “travessias” is as relevant as the places on either side, for, in the middle, one is blind:

Eu atravesso as coisas – e no meio da travessia não vejo! – só estava era entretido na idéia dos lugares de saída e de chegada. Assaz o senhor sabe: a gente quer passar um rio a nado, e passa; mas vai dar na outra banda é num ponto muito mais embaixo, bem diverso do em que primeiro se pensou. Viver nem não é muito perigoso?<sup>186</sup> (51)

It’s true that one might expect to cross a river in a straight line, but the journey takes you instead to a place down the opposite bank, a place unknown when you began the journey. The river, then, becomes the journey, the mystery of what happens in between where we think we are and where we think we will end up:

Por que era que eu estava procedendo à-toa assim? Senhor, sei? ... Um está sempre no escuro, só no último derradeiro é que clareiam a sala. Digo: o real não está na saída nem na chegada: ele se dispõe para a gente é no meio da travessia.<sup>187</sup> (80)

Riobaldo’s narrative is all about blind crossings – from his hometown to the *sertão*, from one side of the *sertão* to the other, from not loving Diadorim to loving her, from following to leading, from God to the devil, or vice versa... from the “places” to the “spaces” of the *sertão*. He wants clarity in his life, but cannot have it, for he is as yet *in its travessia*.

And in that dangerous and confusing “*travessia*” of life, in which he tries in vain to read his role and path, clear only at the end, Riobaldo experiences the divine plane in the physical one. Here, he places God in the middle of the mysterious passage of life:

Mas o demônio não existe real. Deus é que deixa se afinar à vontade o instrumento, até que chegue a hora de se dançar. Travessia, Deus no meio.<sup>188</sup> (325)

...and here, at the end of the work, he claims with finality that the human man is the only one responsible for the (non)existence of the devil, and he ends his narrative with “*Travessia*” and the sign of infinity (624):

Amável o senhor me ouviu, minha idéia confirmou: que o Diabo não existe. Pois não? O senhor é um homem soberano, circunspecto. Amigos somos. Nonada. O diabo não há! É o que eu digo, se for... Existe é homem humano. Travessia.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> “I cross/travel through things – and in the middle of the crossing I don’t see! – only that I was entertained by the ideas of the places of leaving and arriving. You are quite aware: we want to pass a river swimming, and pass; but it’s going to lead to the other side to a point a lot further down, quite different from what was expected.”

<sup>187</sup> “Why was it that I was proceeding at random like this? Sir, do I know? ... One is always in the dark, only in the final last is it that they brighten the room. I say: the real isn’t in the setting out nor in the arrival: it is arranged for us in the middle of the crossing.”

<sup>188</sup> “But the devil doesn’t exist really. God it the one that lets you tune your instrument at ease, until comes the hour of dancing. Crossing, God in the middle/the environment.”



This is ambiguous; the reader can cross between multiple paths of interpretation. Is the crossing complete, and the devil not incarnate? Is the devil *in* the crossing of the human man? Is Riobaldo's blindness ("*no meio da travessia não vejo*") or darkness (*Um está sempre no escuro*) over, the lights in the room turned on, the unseen seen? Or is Riobaldo's crossing not over until he dies – a continuous (∞) blind journey in-between, with God watching as he exercises choice, honed as an instrument?

In the term "*travessia*" Riobaldo recapitulates his whole story – a journey through the immanent/transcendent *sertão* in which the "*homem humano*" doesn't know why he follows the path he follows, but on his blind and circuitous way, he may be creating the only devil that exists. The devil is in the whirlwind, and God in the crossing... and this - ∞ - a constant journey.

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As we have observed, the space of the *sertão* in *Grande Sertão: Veredas* is carefully recreated in the work, with precision and authenticity in many instances, by an author who felt love for, as Cândido aptly puts, the "thing" and the "name of the thing"<sup>190</sup> – the specifics of geography, animals, clothing and gear, attitudes and behaviors, and especially words. However, this space is also a "trampoline" for the deeper metaphysical meanings of the work. Riobaldo is deeply connected to this *sertão*, both as the region that he wanders in body, and the one he wanders in spirit. If the material is the shadow of the immaterial, as Guimarães Rosa's library's metaphysics will indicate, the *sertão* is the shadow of Riobaldo and his deities – as the song of Riobaldo's invention claims: "*O Sertão é a sombra minha*," "The *Sertão* is my shadow" (480).

The work is both territorial and human, and its territory is both "real" and a space of metaphysics and metaphor – a (meta)physical space. Antônio Cândido illuminates this duality in his article "O Homem dos Avessos," explaining that:

It seemed that, in fact, the author wanted to and managed to elaborate an autonomous universe, composed of expressional and human realities that are articulated in original and harmonious relations, overcoming miraculously the powerful ballast of tenaciously observed reality that is its platform.<sup>191</sup> (122)

The "tenaciously observed reality" is a platform for the work's autonomous universe, Cândido explains; and he provides, too, his own poetic gaze into the "autonomous world" of *GSV*; the *Sertão* is the World, that "*Gerais-Mundo*", claiming that the invention of the work "removes the

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<sup>189</sup> "You heard me kindly, sir, my idea confirmed: that the devil doesn't exist. Right? You are a sovereign, circumspect man. We're friends. A trifle. The devil isn't! And what I say, if that's true... the human man exists. Crossing."

<sup>190</sup> "*a paixão pela coisa e pelo nome da coisa*" (122)

<sup>191</sup> "...*quis e conseguiu elaborar um universo autônomo, composto de realidades expressionalis e humanas que se articulam em relações originais e harmoniosas, superando por milagre o poderoso lastro de realidade tenazmente observada, que é a sua plataforma*"

book from the regional mold”<sup>192</sup> and that “the picturesque is accessory and that in truth the Sertão is the World” (122).

Indeed, there is a universe in the work; and it is one that looks to concerns such as love and war and metaphysics that may be construed as global in nature. What is questionable, as we have seen, is whether this “tenaciously observed reality” is an *overcome platform*, whether the “picturesque” is an “accessory”, whether the “regional mold” is “removed,” or whether instead that region is an *integral part* of the autonomous world, in keeping with the author’s admitted, and the text’s apparent, *material mysticism*. I believe it is the latter, both material and mystical, and united.

Riobaldo is the *sertão*, and so are his metaphysics. In his journey, his agony regarding his soul’s possible sale is constant – “*ao Demo ou a Deus...*”<sup>193</sup> (581)... “*Não sou do demo e não sou de Deus!*,” (510) etc. – and the recurrence of this preoccupation organizes the narrative and the *sertão* of his journey. Riobaldo’s duality of metaphysical mind is one with the multiplicity of the *sertão*. He finds, in turns, “*Deus e o demo, no sertão*”; his path through the landscape and through his own heart and soul is the “*roteiro de Deus nas serras dos Gerais*,” the itinerary of God in the *sertão*, even as he sees “*o demo... misturado em tudo*.” It has been established above that the *sertão* as constructed in *GSV* is one with Riobaldo in many senses; so, too, it is one with his divided mind. The *sertão* is seen as both Heaven and Hell, and Riobaldo is either – or both – of God and of the devil, in his mind. His *desassossego*<sup>194</sup> and constant state of *travessia* is the *sertão*’s; he is connected to the *sertão* in being torn in half, as Cândido indicates; and, too, in his and Diadorim’s multiplicity, reflective of that of the *sertão* itself, with its labyrinth of *veredas*. The *sertão* is his blind and circuitous journey, *travessia*, between God and the devil, between life-changing choice and life-changing act. It is, too, a shadow of his own soul and of the *reino-reino* of symbol or deity, where everything is “truly” wrought and both good and evil are possible. The *sertão* is, more than trampoline, the site of the *reino-reino* as well as of the *reino*.

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<sup>192</sup> “*subtrai o livro à matriz regional*” “*o pitoresco é acessório e que na verdade o Sertão é o Mundo*”

<sup>193</sup> “to the devil or to God” ... “I am not of the devil and I am not of God!” ... “But, what courage integrated in a piece was that, that of him? Of God, or the devil?”

<sup>194</sup> disquietude, unrest



## CHAPTER II: GUIMARÃES ROSA, PARADOX and PARTICIPATORY DICHOTOMIES

*GSV* is, then, the story of the setting – the “*reino*” or the *sertão* in its earthly manifestation, with all of the material and experiential components of the *sertão* as “region” – and, too, the story *behind* the story, and *behind* the land – the “*reino-reino*” mentioned by Drummond de Andrade. In magnificent paradox, neither kingdom – human land, or human metaphysics – exists without the other, as shown in the work’s constant attention to both aspects and also as illuminated by the author’s exploration of the works of Plotinus and Ruysbroeck, mystics who focused not only on transcendence, but on the role of the *material* in the *spiritual*. This is the “regional metaphysics” explored in *GSV*: transcendence, or the metaphysical – though they can be defined as anything but physically manifest – existing *only* in relation to the physical, the seen, to what is transcended – are here explored through the complex connection between human beings and a specific, archetypal stretch of land: the *sertão*.

This is a paradox that the author himself explains and illustrates in his interviews, letters, and even library, as well as in his works. The author’s statements about the work, and about his attitudes in life, show 1) paradox and contradiction, and, 2) comfort with paradox and contradiction, providing another layer of illumination for the complex multiplicity/oneness of the spatiality of his work.

### 1. PARADOX and the AUTHOR:

#### 1.1 “QUANTO MAIS REALISTA SOU, VOCÊ DESCONFIE”:

Though widely considered a regionalist work due to its setting in the Brazilian *sertão*, *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (“*GSV*”) has invited debate about its categorization for many years, and, in fact, whether or not we ought to take him at his word (a subject discussed later in this chapter), the author himself has contributed to the debate with statements about whether his literary work is to be taken at face value – its face being its local minutiae, the specificity of the *sertão*. For instance, in a 1963 letter to Italian translator Edoardo Bizzarri, Guimarães Rosa listed his considerations and priorities as pertaining to his writing, i.e. the spirit in which he writes his works: “This is how I would like to consider them [my books]: a) scenery and ‘sertanejan’ reality: 1 point; b) \*plot: 2 points\*; c) poetry: 3 points; d) metaphysical-religious value: 4 points”<sup>195</sup> (Rosa/Bizzarri 68). He claims that the two books from 1956, *GSV* and *Corpo de Baile*, were written in that spirit. This scale of valorization – giving one point for “sertanejan” authenticity, two for plot, three for poetry, and four if it obtains a metaphysical value – clearly indicates that, while the *sertão* comes first, it is also a building block for other considerations. Earlier in the same letter, too, he says that in his works there is “a certain exaggeration in the mass of documentation” pertaining to the “‘sertanejan’ life and scenery”<sup>196</sup> (67), indicating that the intensely researched local settings are not the sole focus of the work.

<sup>195</sup> “*assim gostaria de considerá-los: a) cenário e realidade sertaneja : 1 ponto; b) \*enredo : 2 pontos\*; c) poesia : 3 pontos; d) valor metafísico-religioso : 4 pontos*”

<sup>196</sup> “*certo exagero na massa da documentação*”; “*vida e paisagem sertanejas*”.

Later, in his 1966 interview with Fernando Camacho, he clarifies further that the “*terra-a-terra*” – a term meaning “concrete” or “material” in current Portuguese, but, and perhaps not coincidentally in this case, containing the term *terra*, the earth, as well – is never the point of his work, but is instead a support, a pretext. It is a stair for ascension, a trampoline for a jump... in other words, the physical for the metaphysical, for transcendence:

...when you have a doubt [in my book], adopt the poetic solution, the metaphysical solution, the mystical solution, and then you’ll get it right. In any case it’s never the concrete. The concrete is always the pretext. ... I like support, support is necessary, support is necessary for transcendence. But the more I am supporting, the more realistic that I am, you should be suspicious. It is there that is the step to ascension, the trampoline for the... (leap)... The text doesn’t always help when read as an objective, material thing...<sup>197</sup> (Camacho 47)

He explains here, to a degree, what we have found in the work: the “material” of the *sertão* is always “pretext,” “stair,” or “trampoline” for the “mystical solution,” or the “poetic,” the “metaphysical”... “*quanto mais realista sou, você desconfie*” (“the more realistic that I am, you should be suspicious”) but, too, that support is *necessary* for transcendence – “*o apoio é necessário para a transcendência.*”

The author cannot always be taken at his word, however, for that word changed often. He presented himself, and lived his life, in multiple ways: as a man of the *sertão*, in touch with the earth and with regional culture and history, and, too, as a worldly diplomat, a polyglot, concerned with much more than the *sertão*.

## 1.2 “*PODIA SER... a CHINA... o ESPAÇO ASTRAL...*”:

João Guimarães Rosa was well-spoken, well-traveled, and well-read. He taught himself French and Dutch before ten years of age (104 Barbosa, VGR 52), and added many more languages throughout his lifetime. In his secondary studies and in Medical School (1925-1930), both in Belo Horizonte, the young Rosa “breathed... a densely intellectualized environment”<sup>198</sup> (126 Barbosa), and there he learned Esperanto, and other languages as well. He was described by his peers as not only a passionate cultivator of good language, but also its policeman (133 Barbosa). By 1966, Guimarães Rosa would have an impressive list of languages spoken, read, and understood, as he wrote in a letter for a cousin’s school questionnaire (Guimarães 168, letter from the 19th of October, 1966; there is no verification for the entirety of the list, though he had many works in foreign languages in his home):

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<sup>197</sup> “...quando tiver uma dúvida (no meu livro), você adote a solução poética, a solução metafísica, a solução mística, então você acerta. Em qualquer caso nunca é o terra-a-terra. O terra-a-terra é sempre o pretext. ... Eu gosto de apoio, o apoio é necessário, o apoio é necessário para a transcendência. Mas quanto mais estou apoiando, quanto mais realista sou, você desconfie. Ai é que está o degrau para a ascensão, o trampolim para o... (salto)... O texto nem sempre ajuda se fôr lido como coisa objetiva, material...”

<sup>198</sup> “respirava... um ambiente densamente intelectualizado”

VI – I speak: Portuguese, German, French, English, Spanish, Italian, Esperanto, a little bit of Russian; I read: Swedish, Dutch, Latin, and Greek (but with dictionary in hand); I understand some German dialects; I studied the grammar: of Hungarian, Arabic, Sanskrit, Lithuanian, Polish, Tupi, Hebrew, Japanese, Czech, Finnish, Danish; I’ve pried a bit into others. BUT, ALL BADLY. I think the studying of the spirit and mechanisms of other languages helps a lot in a more profound comprehension of the national language. Principally, though, I study them for fun, pleasure, distraction.<sup>199</sup>

His interest in language went hand-in-hand with a fascination with foreign lands. His close biographers corroborate his lifelong interest in travel: according to his uncle Vicente, his daughter Vilma, and his (self-declared) friend/protégé Alaor Barbosa, Guimarães Rosa spent much of his childhood in libraries reading books about foreign lands, looking at and drawing maps, dreaming of far-off places, and teaching himself foreign languages.<sup>200</sup>

Indeed, his earliest writings were not in any way associable with the genre of regionalism, for they took place in distant lands. Guimarães Rosa’s first known works were four short stories written for a contest in the magazine *O Cruzeiro* in 1929 when he was twenty-one. “O Mistério de *Highmore Hall*”<sup>201</sup> took place in Scotland, while “ΧΡΟΝΟΣ ΧΑΙ ΑΝΑΓΚΗ,” or “CHRONOS KAI ANAGKE (Tempo e Destino)”<sup>202</sup> was an enigmatic love story centered on a

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<sup>199</sup> “VI – Falo: português, alemão, francês, inglês, espanhol, italiano, esperanto, um pouco de russo; leio: sueco, holandês, latim, e grego (mas com dicionário agarrado); entendo alguns dialetos alemães; estudei a gramática: do húngaro, do árabe, do sânscrito, do lituânio, do polonês, do tupi, do hebraico, do japonês, do tcheco, do finlandês, do dinamarquês; bisbilhotei um pouco a respeito de outras. MAS, TUDO MAL. Eu acho que estudar o espírito e o mecanismo das outras línguas ajuda muito a compreensão mais aprofundada do idioma nacional. Principalmente, porém, estudo-as por divertimento, gosto, distração”

<sup>200</sup> According to his daughter, the young Guimarães Rosa was known to be always “desenhando mapas no chão, os dedos sujos de terra, absorvido, criando uma geografia-miniatura. Riozinhos com pequenina pontes, ilhas. Até um mar. O mar que ainda não conhecia. Pássaros. Passarinhos. Depois, livros, livros, livros. Lidos às escondidas, vista fraca, miopia, proibição” (“drawing maps on the ground, his fingers dirty with earth, absorbed, creating a miniature-geography. Little rivers with tiny bridges, islands. Even a sea. The sea that he still didn’t know. Birds. Little birds. Then, books, book, books. Read in hiding, weak sight, myopia, prohibition”) (VGR 102-103).

<sup>201</sup> According to his daughter Vilma, it was: “[u]ma estória passada em terras da Escócia, cuidando de velhos clãs, referindo lugares e nomes de estranho som, como o castelo de Duw-Rhoddoddag, a família Glenpwy ou os Lleoddag, o tagarela Tragwyddol ... mal se poderia prever a revelação do sísmico escritor que meu pai viria mais tarde a ser” (“a story happening in lands of Scotland, attending to ancient clans, narrating places and names of strange sound, like the castle of Duw-Rhoddoddag, the family Glenpwy or the Lleoddag, the garrulous Tragwyddol... one could barely anticipate the revelation of the seismic writer that my dad would later come to be”) (65).

<sup>202</sup> Vilma explains that this story illustrates her father’s longing for the unfamiliar. The story was the “*A mais extraordinária história de xadrez já explicada aos adeptos e não-adeptos do tabuleiro, num conto de João Guimarães Rosa... O título era praticamente indecifrável ... O tema – jogo de xadrez – era grego também, para muita gente, e sedução de poucos. Iguamente a nova estória se apresentava em geografia distante: o sul da Alemanha. A personagem central tinha por nome Zviazline, enamorado de Ephrozine... Era um cosmopolitismo de atitude ambientando esses primeiros contos. Refletia provavelmente a vontade de transportar-se a outras terras, apenas conhecidas em tantas e tantas leituras, no sossego mineiro...*” (“The most extraordinary story of chess ever explained to the adepts and non-adepts at the chessboard, in a story by João Guimarães Rosa... The title was practically indecipherable... The topic – a game of chess – was Greek too, for many people, and seduction for few. This new story, too, was presented in distant geography: the South of Germany. The central character had as his name Zviazline, lover of Ephrozine... These first stories were in an atmosphere of an attitude of cosmopolitanism.

game of chess in Germany; the others were “Caçadores de Camurças” and “Makiné” (Barbosa 143, Guimarães 95, L.E. Machado 5-6). These works are indicative of Rosa’s longtime interest in the world beyond home, as he described to his cousin in his 1966 letter to her:

Since I was a boy, very small, I played with imagining interminable stories, true novels; when I began to study Geography – subject matter that I always liked – I placed the characters and scenes in the most varied cities and countries: a lighthouse keeper, in Greece, that courted a young woman in Japan, they fled to Norway, and then they go traveling in Mexico... things like that, almost surreal.<sup>203</sup>

His daughter Vilma echoes these thoughts, explaining that, while Minas was always in her father’s heart, in his youth he sought literature far away, to the ocean the beyond: “He was looking for his subjects and characters far beyond the ‘Mineiran’ mountains, far away from himself. Minas was only in his heart. And it was necessary to walk beyond the hills, beyond the lands. He wanted the sea, and beyond the sea”<sup>204</sup> (68). Despite their relevance to his desire to travel, however, the author didn’t think much of these early stories, later in life, as he explains: “But, writing, really, I only began in 1929, with some stories which, naturally, are worthless”<sup>205,206</sup> (Guimarães 167-168).” These were the last of his works to take place outside Brazil.

Though he ceased to invent foreign-set tales, the author’s linguistic passion and anxious desire to travel drove him abroad, as he explains in his 3<sup>rd</sup> person biographical sketch in a letter to his Italian translator on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 1964<sup>207</sup>: “The pleasure of studying language, and the zeal for

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It probably reflected the desire to transport himself to other lands, known only in so many, many readings, in the ‘Mineiran’ tranquility...”) (67-68).

<sup>203</sup> “Desde menino, muito pequeno, eu brincava de imaginar intermináveis estórias, verdadeiros romances; quando comecei a estudar Geografia – matéria de que sempre gostei – colocava as personagens e cenas nas mais variadas cidades e países: um faroleiro, na Grécia, que namorava uma moça no Japão, fugiam para a Noruega, depois iam passar no México... coisas desse jeito, quase surrealistas.”

<sup>204</sup> “Buscara os seus assuntos e personagens muito além das montanhas mineiras, muito longe de se mesmo. Minas era só no coração. E era preciso caminhar além das serras, além das terras. Queria o mar, e o além do mar.”

<sup>205</sup> “Mas, escrever, mesmo, só comecei foi em 1929, com alguns contos, que, naturalmente, não valem nada”

<sup>206</sup> His daughter Vilma, too, points to this time as “uma espécie de pré-literatura de curtíssima duração. Depois, uma pausa, uma espera, na procura do ideal” (VGR 56) (“a type of pre-literature of extremely short duration. Then, a pause, a wait, in the pursuit of the ideal”). As the author says in a preface to *Tutameia*, according to Vilma: “Tudo se finge primeiro; germina autêntico é depois” (67) (“Everything is pretended first; it is after that it evolves into the authentic”). His uncle adds, “Mais visava os prêmios – cem mil-réis por conto – que a veleidade literária”<sup>206c</sup> (Guimarães 95) (“He was aiming more at the prizes – one hundred mil-réis per story – than his literary whims”) The next time the author would actually publish a book would be 17 years later (VGR 70).

<sup>207</sup> João Guimarães Rosa wrote – in a February 25<sup>th</sup>, 1964 letter to his Italian translator Edoardo Bizzarri and in response to an urgent request for “un cenno bio-bibliografico sull’autore ed uno critico-pubblicitario sull’opera tradotta” (“a bio-bibliographic outline of the author and a critical-publicity one on the translated work”) – a short autobiography narrated in the third person and to be included in the Italian translation of *Corpo de Baile*. Rosa prefaced what he called “BOBAGENS BIOGRÁFICAS” by referring to it as a “torto bilhete,” “crooked note,” written in a hurry, and asking that it remain “entre ‘parêntesis’” (“in ‘parentheses’”) (Rosa/Bizzarri 111-112). Rosa attached his bibliography, as well as his CV – with the handwritten note: “(Acho-o muito calhorda.)” (“I find you very much a scoundrel”) (114); the author’s attitude towards listing the facts of his life appears to be either modest or carefully controlled.

traveling the world, brought him to leave medicine”<sup>208</sup> (Rosa/Bizzarri 113). His daughter Vilma echoes this sentiment: “His wish to know more and see more distanced him progressively from Minas Gerais. Beyond his enormous curiosity for knowing new lands and new types of people, he wanted to discover other worlds that could satiate his eternal search”<sup>209</sup> (VGR 56). Though he studied medicine and practiced it briefly in Itaguara (“*a roça*” (Dantas 1975: 54)) and Belo Horizonte,<sup>210</sup> the author left this career behind and went in 1934 to the *Palácio do Itamaraty* in Rio de Janeiro to take a series of tests to be a diplomat, whereupon he was given the position of “Cônsul de Terceira Classe” (third-class Consul) (Rosa/Bizzarri 113, Barbosa 162). He left Minas Gerais – and later Brazil – behind to pursue a career in diplomacy. He served as Adjunct Consul in Hamburg, Germany from 1938-1942,<sup>211</sup> and then immediately again as “Second Secretary” in Bogotá, Colombia from 1942-1944.<sup>212</sup> From 1944 to 1948, he stayed at the ministry in Rio de Janeiro as “Minister of Exterior Relations.”<sup>213</sup> In 1948, he went to Paris as “First Secretary” and later “Embassy Counselor”;<sup>214</sup> in the same year, he also represented Brazil in the Inter-American Conference in Bogota,<sup>215</sup> and later represented Brazil in “*Assembléias e Conferências da UNESCO*,” “Assemblies and Conferences of UNESCO” (Rosa/Bizzarri 113). After returning from Paris, however, Guimarães Rosa began to turn down highly desirable posts in the exterior, in order to, according to Vilma, “continue tranquilly his functions in the ministry and expand on his creativity writing new stories”<sup>216</sup> (VGR 60). Though he continued to travel after his return to Brazil from Paris, the trips were then largely related to literature and not the Ministry.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> “*O gosto de estudar línguas, e a ânsia de viajar mundo, levaram-no a deixar a medicina.*” Mortality was also difficult for Guimarães Rosa: “*A angústia provocada pela sua extrema sensibilidade, no convívio com a doença e a morte que algumas vezes, apesar de seus desesperados esforços, não conseguia impedir, levou-o a abandonar a Medicina*” (“The anguish provoked by his extreme sensitivity, in the familiarity with illness and death that sometimes, despite his desperate efforts, he didn’t manage to impede, led him to abandon Medicine”) (VGR 56).

<sup>209</sup> “*O seu desejo de mais saber e mais ver afastava-o progressivamente de Minas Gerais. Além da enorme curiosidade em conhecer novas terras e novos tipos de pessoas, queria descobrir outros mundos que pudessem saciar-lhe a eterna busca.*”

<sup>210</sup> Here, he had two daughters, Vilma (1931) and Agnes (1934) with his first wife Lygia. During his time in Germany in 1938 he fell in love with Aracy Moebius de Carvalho, whom he would marry in 1942 after divorcing Lygia, without drama, according to his own and his daughter’s accounts (“*aconteceu de uma forma suave que não nos chocou*”) (195 Barbosa, VGR 271).

<sup>211</sup> As “*Cônsul-Adjunto em Hamburgo*,” he expressed his *saudade* for Brazil, but enjoyed and was attentive to his travels throughout Europe, including France, Spain, and Italy (Barbosa 195, Rosa/Bizzarri 113). While in Germany, he became aware of the negative activities of the Reich and in fact assisted persecuted Jews in leaving Germany with Brazilian visas (Barbosa 178, 187). In 1942, he was forced to leave; at that time, Brazil broke off relations to Germany, and aided the USA in establishing air bases in return for aid with the establishment of heavy industry in Brazil (Keen 373).

<sup>212</sup> “*Segundo-Secretário*” (198 Barbosa, Rosa/Bizzarri 113).

<sup>213</sup> He served in the “*Ministério de Relações Exteriores*” at Itamaraty. He was at that time elected to the *Sociedade de Geografia do Rio de Janeiro*. As in much of his life and work, in these years Rosa combined his loves of collection, of language and of the minutiae of local experience, with his love of international participation.

<sup>214</sup> “*Primeiro-Secretário*” in the *Embaixada do Brasil em Paris*, then “*Conselheiro de Embaixada*”.

<sup>215</sup> “*foi o Secretário Geral da Delegação do Brasil à IX.a Conferência Interamericana, em Bogotá*” (Barbosa 113).

<sup>216</sup> “*continuar tranquilamente as suas funções no ministério e dar expansão à sua criatividade escrevendo novas estórias*”

<sup>217</sup> Correspondence shows that Guimarães Rosa did at times continue to travel, but these were travels for literature, not the Ministry. Among these travels were those to the Congressos de Escritores Latino-Americanos, as mentioned in the Introduction to this dissertation.

It was as a diplomat, far from the *sertão*, that he wrote *Magma* (1936) and, later, the *Contos* (1937) that would become integrated into *Sagarana* (1946) (Barbosa 161-171). And indeed, although *Sagarana* was written about the *sertão*, Guimarães Rosa was eager to define it at its moment of publication as a work that only happened to be “sertanejan” in setting because of a last-minute decision, secondary to all others on theme, style, etc. In a letter to João Condé, hand-written in a copy of *Sagarana* for the critic and published in newspaper *A Manhã* July 28<sup>th</sup> 1946, Guimarães Rosa pays the “*imposto João Condé*” (“João Condé tax”) with an explanation of the work (VGR 331-337, Barbosa 208-209), writing that: (1) *Sagarana* was conceived first just as a literary project whose time had come,<sup>218</sup> and then (2) was further conceived as “art” that is a path from the temporal to the eternal.<sup>219</sup> He then (3) conceived of it, more specifically, as a set of adult fairy-tales – specifically novels, not poems.<sup>220</sup> And then (4) the author prayed,<sup>221</sup> seeking to overcome all preconceptions, doctrines, norms and traditions, in all time and space:

I prayed, truly, so that I would be able to forget, completely, that one day there had existed septa, limitations, partitions, preconceptions, with respect to norms, modes, tendencies, literary schools, doctrines, concepts, actualities and traditions – in time and in space. This, because: in the pot of the poor, everything is seasoning. And, according to that wise Greek salmon of André Maurois: a river without shores is the ideal of the fish.<sup>222,223</sup>

Then (5) he hoped to be able to experiment with and distill a style that is linguistically rich: “beyond the liquid and solid states, why not try to work language also in a *gaseous state*?!”<sup>224</sup>

<sup>218</sup> “...quando chegou a hora de o “*Sagarana*” ter de ser escrito, pensei muito. Num barquinho, que viria descendo o rio e passaria ao alcance das minhas mãos, eu ia poder colocar o que quisesse. Principalmente, nele poderia embarcar, inteira, no momento, a minha concepção-do-mundo.”

<sup>219</sup> “Tinha de pensar, igualmente, na palavra “*arte*,” em tudo o que ela para mim representava, como corpo e como alma; como um daqueles variados caminhos que levam do temporal ao eterno, principalmente.”

<sup>220</sup> “Já pressentira que o livro, não podendo ser de poemas, teria de ser novelas. E – sendo meu – uma série de *Histórias adultas da Carochinha*, portanto.”

<sup>221</sup> “Rezei, de verdade, para que pudesse esquecer-me, por completo, de que algum dia, tivessem existido septos, limitações, tabiques, preconceitos, a respeito de normas, modas, tendências, escolas literárias, doutrinas, conceitos, atualidades e tradições – no tempo e no espaço. Isso, porque: na panela do pobre, tudo é tempero. E, conforme aquele sábio salmão grego de André Maurois: um rio sem margens é o ideal do peixe. ... Aí, experimentei o meu estilo, como é que estaria. Me agradou. De certo que eu amava a língua.”

<sup>222</sup> “Rezei, de verdade, para que pudesse esquecer-me, por completo, de que algum dia, tivessem existido septos, limitações, tabiques, preconceitos, a respeito de normas, modas, tendências, escolas literárias, doutrinas, conceitos, atualidades e tradições – no tempo e no espaço. Isso, porque: na panela do pobre, tudo é tempero. E, conforme aquele sábio salmão grego de André Maurois: um rio sem margens é o ideal do peixe.”

<sup>223</sup> Guimarães Rosa’s phrase to Condé – “*um rio sem margens é o ideal do peixe*,” “a river without shores is the ideal of the fish” – seems remarkably to suggest both a similar and a much different approach to rivers from the one in his later story “*A terceira margem do rio*,” discussed here in Chapter III. Here, all shores are a meaningless distraction, a homogenous limitation to the river’s desire to be other than flowing in banks, but in the story, the protagonist avoids the shores because the river, with its unique reality in *having* shores, is the only place in which the man can live in the eternal “*travessia*” of the journey, the third “shore” between the shores of origin and destination, and experience the unseen in *and through* the *sertão*.

<sup>224</sup> “*além dos estados líquidos e sólidos, porque não tentar trabalhar a língua também em estado gasoso?!*”

(209 Barbosa; VGR 333). It was *then* (6) – after placing the book in art and time and form – it was *then* that he decided to place the work in the *sertão* of Minas Gerais:

At that point, nevertheless, I had to choose the land in which to set my stories. It could be Barbacena, Belo Horizonte, Rio, China, the archipelago of Neo-Barataria, outer space, or even, the piece of Minas Gerais that was most mine. And that was what I preferred. Because I missed it a lot. Because I knew the land a little better, the people, creatures, trees. Because the people of the interior – without conventions, “poses” – give better characters for parables: there one can see better human reactions and the action of destiny: there one can see well a river fall in a waterfall or pass by a mountain, and the great trees bursting under lightning, and each stalk of human grass sprout anew with the rain or become parched with the drought.<sup>225</sup> (Barbosa 209, VGR 333)

According to this letter, the *sertão* was not in fact a starting point for *Sagarana*, but was actually a later consideration in a cosmopolitan and artistic novelistic strategy. This is possible, but may also be a momentary pose of the author, one of many; given that his earlier unpublished book of poems *Magma*<sup>226</sup> (1936) focused on the animals, lands, and cultures of his homeland as well,<sup>227</sup> it appears unlikely that *Sagarana*’s setting was a whim. In fact, in his contradictory fashion – and as already indicated above – the author would later claim that his identity as “man of the *sertão*” is present in his literary works as “starting point more than anything else”<sup>228</sup> (Lorenz 65), and that the material *sertão* was necessary for its transcendence. Also, it was the year before the publication of *Sagarana*, in 1945, when Guimarães Rosa had what was, according to his daughter, an “unforgettable” trip to Minas Gerais (VGR 60); it is evident that the region was not

<sup>225</sup> “*Àquela altura, porém, eu tinha de escolher o terreno onde localizar as minhas histórias. Podia ser Barbacena, Belo Horizonte, o Rio, a China, o arquipélago do Neo-Barataria, o espaço astral, ou, mesmo, o pedaço de Minas Gerais que era mais meu. E foi o que preferi. Porque tinha muitas saudades de lá. Porque conhecia um pouco melhor a terra, a gente, bichos, árvores. Porque o povo do interior – sem convenções, “poses” – dá melhores personagens de parábolas: lá se vêem bem as reações humanas e a ação do destino: lá se vê bem um rio cair na cachoeira ou contornar a montanha, e as grandes árvores estalaram sob o raio, e cada talo do capim humano rebrotar com a chuva ou se estorricar com a seca.*”

<sup>226</sup> Also written for a literary contest, *Magma* won first place, and was so far above any other submission that no second place was given; Guilherme de Almeida said the work that it was “*Nativa, espontânea, legítima, saída da terra com uma naturalidade livre de vegetal em ascensão, “Magma” é poesia centrífuga, universalizadora, capaz de dar ao resto do mundo uma síntese perfeita do que temos e somos. Ha aí, vivo de beleza, todo o Brasil: a sua terra, a sua gente, a sua alma, o seu bem e o seu mal*” (“Native, spontaneous, legitimate, come out from the earth with a free naturalness of vegetable in ascension, “Magma” is centrifugal poetry, universalizing, capable of giving to the rest of the world a perfect synthesis of what we have and are. There is there, living in beauty, all of Brazil: its land, its people, its soul, its good and its bad”) (VGR 71). However, the author decided never to publish the work (Guimarães 101, Barbosa 171), considering that “*a poesia profissional, tal como se deve manejá-la na elaboração de poemas, pode ser a morte da poesia verdadeira.*” (“professional poetry, as it must be managed in the elaboration of poems, can be the death of true poetry”) (Lorenz 70). *Magma* was published for the first time in 1997, posthumously, after remaining as two slightly different manuscripts for 61 years (Leonel *Magma*...22).

<sup>227</sup> The book focused on Brazilian themes of “*animais, natureza, vida no campo, manifestações culturais negras e indígenas, mitos e crendices, amor, proposições filosóficas*” (“animals, nature, life in the countryside, Black and indigenous cultural manifestations, myths and superstitions, love, philosophical propositions”) (Leonel 78). Many of these poems – and in particular, according to Leonel, “Maleita,” “Boiada,” “Chuva,” “Reza brava,” and “Gruta do Maquiné” (Leonel *Magma*... 17) – would repeat themselves in aspects of both form and theme in stories in *Sagarana*.

<sup>228</sup> “*homem do sertão*” ... “*ponto de partida mais do que qualquer coisa*”

a whim. However, it is also evident that the author had many other goals and influences in mind at that time.

As well as travel, the author's fascination with language also went hand-in-hand with his love of literature. As a child, "he took refuge in the Public Library, to devour the books" with a "*piquenique*"<sup>229</sup> (VGR 51), reading there French and other classics in their original languages, and fascinated by Homer's epic poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and by Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and the stories of Frances La Fontaine (Guimarães 177). Vicente explains that "the writer had two fonts of raw materials to work with his inspiration: the *sertão* of the Gerais and his library"<sup>230</sup> (177). According to Francis Utéza (1994), Guimarães Rosa's library was large and multi-faceted, including such works as the following (and many more): the Bible, and many works related to Christianity, such as that of Saint Francis de Assisi, and heterodox Christian works, like those of the Christian Scientists, and the Spiritism of Allen Kardec; but also works on Judaism, Islam, and the sacred works of Hinduism. He read Virgil, Plotinus, Plato, Eckhart, Ruysbroeck, Dostoevsky, Voltaire, Coelho Neto, Faulkner, Dante, Berkeley, Goethe, Novalis, Lewis Carroll, Lao Tsé,<sup>231</sup> etc., and in fact read the majority of them in their original language (32-39).

As is natural, the works he was exposed to, and their cultures and languages of origin, were influential to him. Although the settings for his works were never again foreign after his initial short stories, there have always been aspects of his work that reflect the global cultural awareness he gained through his language learning, reading, and travel. While he was abroad writing *Sagarana*, according to Vilma, he was: "Fascinated by the scripts of Reno, learning or recalling legends that so many times he told me later: the weeping and singing of Lorelei. ... cycle of the Nibelungen, the Valhalla, the fair Valkyries... Lohengrin, Parsifal..."<sup>232</sup> (VGR 58). In fact, the name "*Sagarana*" itself, according to Vilma, comes from the Nordic "saga" and the Tupi-Guarani suffix indicating the collective (VGR 73).

*GSV* was also influenced by Guimarães Rosa's library, as seen in his interview with Lorenz, in which he characterizes Riobaldo as many things at once, engaging in an erudite dialogue: Riobaldo is something like Raskolnikov, protagonist of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, he claims. And yet Riobaldo is also the "*sertão feito homem*," the *sertão* made man, and is the author's brother, and is Brazil, and Brazil is a universe... Riobaldo is both "*mundano*" and "*místico*," and he also states that the work is his "*auto-reflexão irracional*," (irrational self-reflection) (Lorenz 94-96):

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<sup>229</sup> "se refugiava na Biblioteca Pública, para devorar os livros"

<sup>230</sup> "o escritor tinha duas fontes de matéria-prima para trabalhar com sua inspiração: o sertão dos Gerais e sua biblioteca."

<sup>231</sup> As Utéza writes, Guimarães Rosa quoted many authors in his works' epigraphs: Plotinus, Ruysbroeck, and "Paul Valéry, Verhaeren, Virgílio, Dostoiévski, Kafka, Rilke, Cícero, Stendhal e Voltaire... Platão, Sextus Empiricus, Dom Dinis, Coelho Neto, Faulker, ... Paracelso, Van Helmont..." (32).

<sup>232</sup> "Fascinado pelos roteiros do Reno, aprendendo ou lembrando lendas que tantas vezes me contou mais tarde: o pranto e o canto da Lorelei. ... ciclo dos Nibelungen, o Walhalla, as louras Valquírias... Loengrin, Parsifal..."



*Guimarães Rosa*: Without doubt Brazil is a cosmos, a universe in itself. Therefore, Riobaldo and all his brothers are inhabitants of my universe, and with this we return to the starting point.

*Lorenz*: This Riobaldo – according to what I’ve read on various occasions – would be considered a Faust,<sup>233</sup> a mystic, a Baroque man, and designations of the of this kind have already been attributed to him. How would you outline your Riobaldo?

*Guimarães Rosa*: No, Riobaldo is not Faust, and even less a Baroque mystic. Riobaldo is the *sertão* made man and is my brother. ... Riobaldo is too mundane (of the world) to be a mystic, is too mystical to be Faust; ...  
(...)

*Lorenz*: And your Riobaldo? I think you still haven’t finished characterizing him.

*Guimarães Rosa*: I know. I would like to add that Riobaldo is something like Raskolnikov, but a Raskolnikov without fault, and yet who must atone for it. But I think Riobaldo also isn’t that: rather, he is only Brazil.<sup>234</sup>

This conversation concisely shows the multiplicity of interpreted meanings and origins of meaning in Guimarães Rosa’s work *GSV* – national meaning, personal, and literary, among others, including the metaphysical implications of mysticism and the characters Faust – who sold his soul to the devil, like Riobaldo – and, too, Raskolnikov, of *Crime and Punishment* – suffering from poverty and a type of madness, considering himself extraordinary but struggling with defining his own moral code as based on his regretted actions... like Riobaldo, full of regret and too much thinking, in constant feverish self-definition.

Other critics perceive global literary roots and affiliations, too. The work *GSV* is frequently compared to Joyce in its linguistic and experimental scope,<sup>235</sup> and even to Edgar Allen Poe.<sup>236</sup> Guimarães Rosa read the works in his library, and many more, and admitted, albeit with reservations, that his works have affiliations with what he read. In a letter from 1963 to Edoardo Bizzarri, in reference to “Cara-de-Bronze” in *Corpo de Baile*, the author explains that, as well as

<sup>233</sup> A fictional German scholar who sold his soul to the devil and suffered. Immortalized in literature by Goethe.

<sup>234</sup> “Guimarães Rosa: *Sem dúvida o Brasil é um cosmo, um universo em si. Portanto, Riobaldo e todos os seus irmãos são habitantes de meu universo, e com isso voltamos ao ponto de partida.* / Lorenz: *Este Riobaldo – conforme li em várias ocasiões – seria considerado um Fausto, um místico, um homem do barroco, e designações dessa espécie já lhe foram atribuídas. Como você delinea o seu Riobaldo?* / Guimarães Rosa: *Não, Riobaldo não é Fausto, e menos ainda um místico barroco. Riobaldo é o sertão feito homem e é meu irmão. ... Riobaldo é mundano demais para ser místico, é místico demais para ser Fausto; ... (..)* / Lorenz: *E o seu Riobaldo? Acho que você ainda não acabou de caracterizá-lo.* / Guimarães Rosa: *Eu sei. Gostaria de acrescentar que Riobaldo é algo assim como Raskolnikov, mas um Raskolnikov sem culpa, e que entretanto deve expiá-la. Mas creio que Riobaldo também não é isso; melhor é apenas o Brasil.*”

<sup>235</sup> See, for example, Verity Smith’s *Encyclopedia of Latin American Literature*: “[Guimarães Rosa] created via the pages of his fiction a series of stylistic and linguistic innovations akin to those introduced by James Joyce in English literature... He consistently favored an orally based story-telling style echoing medieval and ancient Middle Eastern patterns...” (398). See also Barbosa Lima Sobrinho and Assis Brasil (mentioned in the conclusions to Part I).

<sup>236</sup> See: Balbuena, Monique. *Poe e Rosa à luz da Cabala*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Imago, 1994. Print.

being from the authenticity of the *sertão* (65), he has realized *a posteriori* that there are roots and affiliations in the novellas of *Corpo de Baile* to Plato's *Dialogues*, Plotinus' *Enneads*, and ancient Hindu works (67). He says that he is, perhaps, as people say of him, somewhat neo-Platonic and Hindu ("meio neo-platônico" and "sempre impregnado de hinduísmo"), as well as, another important aspect to explore in his work, "meio-existencialista cristão" (somewhat-existentialist Christian") (67). However, as the author explains, these are influences, but not models, nor imperatives in his works:

[It is] very difficult to say what was influencing me or influenced me. Everything was influencing me. Do you understand? It's that I'm open to everything, but at the same time nothing holds me, nothing limits me. ... It's that music, cinema, other authors, everything... they're catalysts, they detonate things in me. Each one is an influence, and there isn't one writer that I don't think is good, agreeable, liking it, right? But turn it into a model? No.<sup>237</sup> (Camacho 51-52)

Rosa was himself very aware of these varied aspects of his life's influence and their place in his work, but did not want this place to be overstated. He perceived himself, or wanted to be, or be perceived as, open to everything, and, though catalyzed by his influences, not driven by them.

### 1.3 "SOU... ESTE 'HOMEM DO SERTÃO'":

Guimarães Rosa did, however, also make consistent claims that his work is in fact regionalist, and he an authentic *sertanejo* at heart. Guimarães Rosa's own professions and the published testimony of his biographers show him to be someone who profoundly valued the place of his birth, and also was – or at least wished to be seen as – viscerally connected to it, rooted there. In *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina*, Ángel Rama argues that even those regional writers who leave for the city or elsewhere never lose that "mark" of their homeland; although they may be creative in other ways and are not tied to conformity to stereotype: specifically, "Guimarães Rosa is not uprootable from his Minas Gerais... nor is Juan Rulfo from Jalisco"<sup>238</sup> (110). Guimarães Rosa's daughter echoes this idea in her biographical narrative of her father: "His land was his theme. It held his roots to him no matter how long his branches extended"<sup>239</sup> (88). Whether or not he is intrinsically inseparable from Minas Gerais, Guimarães Rosa's many references to his childhood home both in his literature and in his conversations and autobiographical writings show that the *sertão* was *not* a casual choice for him.

<sup>237</sup> "[É] muito difícil dizer o que me influencia ou influenciou. Tudo me influencia. Você compreende? É que eu sou aberto pra tudo, mas ao mesmo tempo nada me prende, nada me limita. ... É que musica, cinema, outros autores, tudo... são catalizadores, eles detonam coisas em mim. Cada um é uma influência, e não há nenhum escritor que eu não ache bom, agradável, gostando, não é? Mas torná-lo como modelo? Não."

<sup>238</sup> "João Guimarães Rosa es indarraigable de su Minas Gerais... o Juan Rulfo de Jalisco". Rama continues to say that the combination of geographical, economic, historical, ethnic and social components that delineate these regional spaces deeply affect those who are raised within their borders, leaving "*peculiaridades culturales*" (cultural peculiarities), "*la marca profunda con que los ha moldeado su cultura regional*" ("the profound mark with which their regional culture has molded them") (108-109). Even those writers who leave for the city or elsewhere never lose that "mark," says Rama; although they may be creative in other ways, and are not tied to conformity to stereotype, they are never "uprootable".

<sup>239</sup> "Sua terra foi seu tema. Segurou-lhe as raízes por mais longe que os ramos se estendessem"

Guimarães Rosa was born in 1908 in Cordisburgo, a small town in the middle of Minas Gerais, to, as he puts it, “*famílias tradicionais mineiras, de fazendeiros de gado*” (“traditional ‘Mineiran’ families, of cattle ranchers”) a description which underlines his connection to his region’s agricultural traditions (Rosa, “Bobagens...,” Rosa/Bizzarri 113). Barbosa, too, describes the family as having “traditionalism of ‘Mineiran’ mentality and customs”<sup>240</sup> (Barbosa 112). João Guimarães Rosa’s vision of his birthplace and the place of his young childhood is also given to be, besides one of connection through genealogy and culture, one of connection through beauty and magic – showing that he is connected not just “materially” but also “experientially,” even “spiritually,” to the landscape. As described by the author in his speech at his induction into the Academia Brasileira, November 16th 1967 – a speech in which he both begins and ends the speech with the word “Cordisburgo” – his birthplace is, for him, small but beautiful, a geographical mystery, a space of openness and the primordial, influencing a magical notion of the universe:

Cordisburgo was a tiny “sertanejan” land, behind mountains, in the middle of Minas Gerais. Just barely a place, but so suddenly beautiful: there the Cave of Maquiné releases itself, marvelous, the one of the Fairies; and the land itself, with ranchers’ salt troughs to the fierce cattle, among gentle hills or under the too many stars, it was called before “the pastures of Joyful View.” ... Taking from the inspiration of the scenery the *loci opportunitas* [seasonableness of the place], [the Father João de Santo Antônio] declared himself to erect to the Sacred Heart of Jesus a temple, in that geographical mystery. He did it and the small village was made, which the founder called “The Burgh of the Heart”. Only barely a heart – since where the rain and sun and light of the air and the early view reveal it to be the space of the first world that [is] all open to the superordinate: they influence, at least, a magical notion of the universe.

(...)

But I murmur and say, before smooth hills and strong *gerais* stars, green and bellowing *buriti, buriti*, and the *sempre-viva-dos-gerais* [“always-alive-of-the-gerais”] that from small adorn them: The world is magical.

– Minister, here is CORDISBURGO.<sup>241,242</sup>

<sup>240</sup> “*tradicionalismo da mentalidade e costumes mineiros.*” Exemplified by the fact that his mother Francisca’s oldest brother Joãozinho baptized the youngest, João Guimarães Rosa’s uncle Vicente de Paulo, in a practice said by local tradition to free the youngest child from the risk of becoming a werewolf, as cited in Barbosa (112).

<sup>241</sup> “*Ministro*” refers to João Neves da Fontoura, the Minister in whose office he worked, as explained in the same discourse: “...por “Cordisburgo,” igual, verve no sério-lúdico de instantes, me tratava, ele, chefe e o amigo meu, João Neves da Fontoura... Por mim, freqüente respondia-lhe topando topônimos. - “Cachoeira concorda?” - se bem que, no comum, o chamasse de “Ministro.”” (“Cordisburgo,” enthusiastically in serious or playful instants, he called me, he, my boss and friend... I frequently responded to him touching on place names – “Cachoeira concorda?” – although, ordinarily, I called him “Minister”)

<sup>242</sup> “*Cordisburgo era pequenina terra sertaneja, trás montanhas, no meio de Minas Gerais. Só quase lugar, mas tão de repente bonito: lá se desencerra a Gruta do Maquiné, milmaravilha, a das Fadas; e o próprio campo, com vaqueiros cochos de sal ao gado bravo, entre gentis morros ou sob o demais de estrelas, falava-se antes: “os pastos da Vista Alegre.”... Tomando da inspiração da paisagem a loci opportunitas, [Santo, um “Padre Mestre,” o Padre João de Santo Antônio] declarou-se a erguer ao Sagrado Coração de Jesus um templo, naquele mistério geográfico. Fê-lo e fez-se o arraial, a que o fundador chamou “o Burgo do Coração.” Só quase coração – pois onde chuva e sol e o claro do ar e o enquadro cedo revelam ser o espaço do mundo primeiro que tudo aberto ao supraordenado: influem, quando menos, uma noção mágica do universo.*”

Guimarães Rosa's biographers' views of the town and its place in his worldview are clear as well, and reflect the discourse of Guimarães Rosa's "authentic" connection to the "authentic" land. Cordisburgo is described by Vicente as being a "tiny place" with "gladdening beauty," "sertanejan' land among mountains",<sup>243</sup> it is described by daughter Vilma as "untouched Brazil," with "the docility of grazing cattle, the strength and the speech of the cow herdsman"<sup>244</sup>, "a pure sky, very blue. And the vastness of the fields extending themselves, without visible limits... And the *buritis*, masters of the horizon"<sup>245</sup> (46-47); and it constitutes the "border/coastline of the ancient 'Mineiran' *sertão*,"<sup>246</sup> according to Barbosa (87). All of these discourses indicate that the town was inspirational both in natural splendor and its remoteness, and in its proximity to ancient legend. Its descriptions as untouched, both strong and meek, pure and vast, ancient, the *sertão* an ocean (for which the beautiful small town was on the shore) etc., are all tropes with a long literary history, part of a magical view of the New World and of hinterlands.

And, more than just Cordisburgo, the author felt himself to be a "man of the *sertão*," as mentioned above, even though he was also a doctor, scholar, military captain, ambassador, and writer throughout his life. According to the author in one of his few interviews, with Günter Lorenz in 1965:

You called me a "man of the *sertão*". I have nothing against that, since I am a "sertanejan" and I think it is marvelous that you deduced that reading my books, because it means you understood them. ... It's that I am, more than anything else, this "man of the *sertão*"; and this is not only a biographical affirmation, but also – and in this at least I believe as strongly as you do – that he, this "man of the *sertão*," is present as a starting point more than anything else.<sup>247</sup> (Lorenz 65)

Guimarães Rosa admits the influence of the telluric and its magical associations, and claims a part of it – a belonging there. He claims, too, that his identity as "sertanejan" is the starting point of the works. The point of departure is not, then, as mentioned to Condé, its role as "literary project," then as "eternal art," as "fairy-tale," "novel," "gaseous language"; and, especially, it is not its place outside all riverbanks, all pre-existing norms and traditions, considering them all the same nondescript and limiting "seasoning."

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(...) *Mais eu murmure e diga, ante macios morros e fortes gerais estrelas, verde o mugibundo buriti, buriti, e a sempre-viva-dos-gerais que miúdo viça e enfeita: O mundo é mágico. –Ministro, está aqui CORDISBURGO.*" (www.academia.org.br)

<sup>243</sup> "lugarim" "beleza alegre" "terra sertã entre montanhas"

<sup>244</sup> "vaqueiro" can be translated as "cowboy," but since that term is heavily loaded with cultural associations related to the United States, I have opted for a more generic and open term.

<sup>245</sup> "Brasil intocado" "a mansidão dos bois pastando, a força e a fala dos vaqueiros," "um céu puro, muito azul. E a vastidão dos campos a se estender, sem limites visíveis... E os buritis, senhores do horizonte"

<sup>246</sup> "orla do antigo sertão mineiro"

<sup>247</sup> "Chamou-me 'o homem do sertão.' Nada tenho em contrário, pois sou um sertanejo e acho maravilhoso que deduzisse isso lendo meus livros, porque significa que você os entendeu. ... É que eu sou, antes de mais nada, este "homem do sertão"; e isto não é apenas uma afirmação biográfica, mas também – e nisto pelo menos acredito tão firmemente como você – que ele, esse "homem do sertão," está presente como ponto de partida mais do que qualquer coisa."

As a part of his discourse of the *sertão* as a vital part of his identity and works, Guimarães Rosa claimed to be truly of the place of his birth, an “*homem do sertão*,” and many of his biographers have participated in that narrative, as indicated above. According to Vilma,

Cordisburgo, ... was a first telluric influence, definitive, never forgotten by my father. [...] From the first years lived in the ‘sertanejan’ scenery, there arises in my father the obsession for nature, for the liberty that the boundless fields suggest, opening themselves to fantasy.<sup>248</sup> (47-48)

According to Vicente, as well, “Cordisburgo lived in his thoughts and heart” (109); and Barbosa, in his biography, affirms that João Guimarães Rosa was “viscerally municipal”<sup>249</sup> (89).

In describing his writing process of *Corpo de Baile* and *Grande Sertão: Veredas* to his friend Paulo Dantas, Guimarães Rosa spoke again of his deep connection to the *sertão*: “The *caboclos*<sup>250</sup> came down<sup>251</sup> into me... I only write highly inspired, as if ‘taken,’ in trance” (Dantas 1975, 28).<sup>252</sup> And, in a letter in 1963 to Edoardo Bizzarri, in reference to “Cara-de-Bronze” in *GSV*’s twin *Corpo de Baile*, the author explains that “the *sertão* is of supreme authenticity, total. When I wrote the book, I came from there, dominated by the ‘sertanejan’ life and scenery”<sup>253</sup> (Rosa/Bizzarri 65). He could mean that the *sertão* itself is “authentic” in some intrinsic way, but appears to be saying that the *sertão* in his works is authentic, since it comes from an author who “came from there,” “*vinha de lá*,” and was overcome by the “sertanejan” life and landscape.

Nothing is simple in relation to identity, however. Besides being “visceral,” the author’s interest in the region was also clearly based on intellect. The “*conversa*” with Günter Lorenz, cited above in parts, offers a lot of insight into the author and his complex regional/cosmopolitan/symbolic/other motivations. He tells the German literary critic about the place of Cordisburgo in his writing, constructing for his interlocutor from there the layers of town, region, and experience that he feels inform his work:

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<sup>248</sup> “Cordisburgo, ... foi uma primeira influência telúrica, definitiva, não mais esquecida por meu pai. [...] Dos primeiros anos vividos no cenário sertanejo, surge em meu pai a obsessão pela natureza, pela liberdade que os infundáveis campos sugerem, abrindo-se à fantasia”

<sup>249</sup> “Cordisburgo vivia em seu pensamento e coração.” “Os mineiros são então visceralmente municipais. João Guimarães Rosa o era, e muito.” (“Mineirans’ are then viscerally municipal. Guimarães Rosa was so, and a lot”)

<sup>250</sup> people of the interior, generally of mixed race

<sup>251</sup> “*baixar*” is parapsychological terminology for spirits becoming manifest, channeled, or incorporated.

<sup>252</sup> “Os *caboclos* “*baixaram*” em mim. . . Só escrevo altamente inspirado, como que “tomado,” em transe” In fact, he would write to Bizzarri that almost all of his later work was “*efervescência de caos, trabalho quase “mediúmnico” e elaboração subconsciente*” (Rosa/Bizzarri 67) (“effervescence of chaos, almost “mediumistic” work, and subconscious elaboration”).

<sup>253</sup> “o *sertão* é de suma autenticidade, total. Quando eu escrevi o livro, eu vinha de lá, dominado pela vida e paisagem sertanejas.”

I was born in Cordisburgo, a tiny city that's not very interesting, but for me, yes, of a lot of importance. Beyond that, in Minas Gerais: I am "Mineiran." And this is important, because when I write, I always feel myself transported to that world.<sup>254</sup> (65)

Rosa states that his work was deeply rooted in his personal homeland, that he was "*mineiro*," possessing of the "*mineiridade*"<sup>255</sup> that he loved to describe. However, he continues, then, to create around Cordisburgo the mystique of the exotic: "*Cordisburgo. Não acha que soa como algo muito distante?*" ("Cordisburgo. Don't you think it sounds like something really distant?") (65). He explains then his family name was once Guimaranes, the name of the capital of a state founded by Suebi migrants in the Roman province of Lusitânia. This history of a people whose destiny was to emigrate "to all places without being able to put down roots in any"<sup>256</sup> (65), he claims, indicates that in his origins he is predisposed towards the remote and strange, and also explains his own Brazilian ancestors', and his, deep, desperate attachment to the *sertão*.<sup>257</sup> This indicates to his audience that, beyond a typical regional Brazilian, he has an even more intense and even *conceptual* connection with the *sertão*, and also, in the same breath, that the *sertão* is not mundane but magical – it is not just his comfortable, known homeland, but even for him, an *exotic* place, magical, foreign. This is true for Riobaldo, as well; he is *aware* of the *sertão* as mythology, and of himself as other than innate to it, even as he is still of it now. The *sertão* is a place of Minas Gerais, Brazil, but it is also, for the author, and, too, for Riobaldo and his readers, a compendium of remote origins, and itself remote and strange even though he is so attached to it. And, further still, the *sertão* is not only a place of local/global multiplicity, but also a place of symbol, as has been developed more and more deeply in the works written throughout his life.

Guimarães Rosa also states unequivocally to his interlocutor that he *is* a representative of regionalist literature – "I am completely in agreement, when you situate me as a representative of regionalist literature"<sup>258</sup> (66) – and, in spite of remarks at other times to the contrary, as will be discussed further below,<sup>259</sup> he says the following (continued from above):

<sup>254</sup> "*nasci em Cordisburgo, uma cidadezinha não muito interessantes, mas para mim, sim, de muita importância. Além disso, em Minas Gerais: sou mineiro. E isto sim é o importante, pois quando escrevo, sempre me sinto transportado para esse mundo.*"

<sup>255</sup> In his essay "*Minas Gerais*," Guimarães Rosa paints the *sertão* in human adjectives, using "*mineiridade*," "*Minas*," and "*mineiro*" as interchangeable terms: "*De Minas, tudo é possível*" ... "*Só que o mineiro não se move de graça. Ele permanece e conserva*" ... "*sendo a vez, sendo a hora, Minas entende, atende, toma tento, avança, pelega e faz*" ("From Minas, everything is possible" ... "Only the 'Mineiran' doesn't move gratuitously. He remains and conserves." ... "being the time, being the hour, Minas understands, attends, takes caution, advances, contends and does") (273-274).

<sup>256</sup> "*para todos os lugares sem poder lançar raízes em nenhum*"

<sup>257</sup> "*Sabe também que uma parte de minha família é, pelo sobrenome, de origem portuguesa, mas na realidade é um sobrenome sueco que na época das migrações era Guimaranes, nome que também designava a capital de um estado suevo na Lusitânia? Portanto, pela minha origem, estou voltado para o remoto, o estranho. Você certamente conhece a história dos suevos. Foi um povo que, como os celtas, emigrou para todos os lugares sem poder lançar raízes em nenhum. Este destino, que foi tão interessante transmitido a Portugal, talvez tenha sido o culpado por meus antepassados se apegarem com tanto desespero àquele pedaço de terra que se chama o sertão. E eu também estou apegado a ele. . . (Lorenz 65-66)*"

<sup>258</sup> "... *estou plenamente de acordo, quando você me situa como representante da literatura regionalista*"

<sup>259</sup> "*Interessar deve ao público apenas uma entrevista sobre os livros e não sobre o particular do autor*" ... "*os livros, em si, é que são importantes. Os autores, não. O autor é uma sombra, a serviço de coisas mais altas, que às vezes ele nem entende.*" ... *etc.* ("Only an interview about the books and not about the particulars of the author

And here begins what I had already said before: it's impossible to separate my biography from my work. See, I'm regionalist because the small world of the sertão... this small world of the sertão, this world that is original and full of contrasts, is for me a symbol, I would say in fact a model of my universe. So, Germanic Cordisburgo, founded by Germans, is the heart of my Suebi-Latin empire. I believe that this genealogy will please you.<sup>260</sup> (66)

His attachment to the *sertão* appears to be informed by his understanding of history and genealogy – more than a visceral attachment, it is (also) an intellectual one. Also, the reference to Cordisburgo as a symbol and model of his universe further complicates the definition of “region” in that the space becomes more about its symbolic uses than its physical or cultural reality, and the author’s concern with the names of the birds and plants becomes relevant in a different way: as a method of capturing the material essence of a place/space in order to access its experiential and symbolic essences.

The author’s interest in the region of his birth was also based very seriously on an abiding interest in geography and in studying and classifying plants and animals. His was a firm, albeit erudite, appreciation of his local surroundings from a young age. According to Vicente, even after “Joãozinho” began to study in Belo Horizonte at age nine, he spent his holidays at home reading, hunting insects, and classifying plants and animals, recording and memorizing the names of all things related to *vaqueiros* and cattle – colors and breeds, the tools, weapons, and clothing worn by the *vaqueiros*, components of the oxcarts, etc. (Guimarães 27, 53, Barbosa 121). Joãozinho and Vicente loved to “*conversar com alguns tipos populares*” (“converse with some traditional/popular types”) (Guimarães 68-69). It remains unclear from these accounts whether the young author himself felt that the “*tipos populares*” with whom he conversed were subjects of study and curiosity, separate from him, or cultural peers, or somehow both, but even if he did feel innately to be a part of a different social stratum, he always expressed an interest in the “local” and “typical” people of his area and their activities and way of speaking – and the detail-oriented accounts in *GSV* of natural surroundings, cultural groups, unique local characters, farming, cattle, banditry, etc. clearly illustrate that his lifetime of careful study of his surrounding objects, lands, and people served as *research* for his later literary work.

Beyond transposing memories of his upbringing, João Guimarães Rosa turned to his father Florduardo Pinto Rosa, “seu Fulô,” as mentioned above, as a source of local lore, a cultural mine for his research (VG 111). As adults, the two became good friends, and correspondence shows that Guimarães Rosa wrote often to his father for information about the customs of the *sertão* as he wrote *Corpo de Baile* and *Grande Sertão: Veredas*. In a letter to his father in March of 1947, Guimarães Rosa wrote to ask for details on the stories from the interior that his father had told him about, asking not just for stories but also for the *words* of the stories, their lexical specificity:

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should interest the public”... “the books, in themselves, are what is important. The authors, no. The author is a shadow, in the service of higher things, which he sometimes doesn’t understand.”)

<sup>260</sup> “...e aqui começa o que eu já havia dito antes: é impossível separar minha biografia de minha obra. Veja, sou regionalista porque o pequeno mundo do sertão... este pequeno mundo do sertão, este mundo original e cheio de contrastes, é para mim o símbolo, diria mesmo modelo de meu universo. Assim, o Cordisburgo germânico, fundado por alemães, é o coração do meu império suevo-latino. Creio que esta genealogia haverá de lhe agradar”

I would ask that you send me in writing, when you have time, the words spoken by the men who carried the dead man... Also the words of that other story... But, what interests me the most is the story of Juca Ferreira, the one who came making parties, with the viola, by the Rio das Velhas, to Pirapema... I imagined a story, having him as a character, and for this I needed to know more details... Also, any time that you remember legitimate songs or sertanejan expressions, heard from our *caipiras*,<sup>261</sup> from Cordisburgo or Gustavo da Silveira. And anything that refers to cows or calves. I'm writing more books. I remember many interesting things, I have a lot of notes taken, and many more things that I create or invent, by imagination. But an expression, song or phrase, legitimate, original, with the force of truth and authenticity, that comes from the origin, is like a little nugget of gold, with enormous value.<sup>262</sup> (VGR 163)

This last phrase shows his view plainly – though he was creative in his writing, he placed extreme value on the “*authentic*,” “*legitimate*,” “*original*,” “*true*” words, characters, and cultural manifestations from Minas Gerais – the *origin*. He sought these descriptions from his father often in correspondence. In a letter to his father in July of 1954, while working on *Corpo de Baile* and *Grande Sertão: Veredas*, Guimarães Rosa wrote the following, as well, detailing exactly what he wanted from his father, the “amazing mine” of cultural facts and details:

I don't need them to be strange facts or stories/tall tales, but the common information, about the trivial aspects of life, customs, etc., from the interior is really important. ... I really appreciated the notes that you sent me, about the burials in the countryside. In fact, you can't imagine how much this information has value for me. ... little by little, they will, all of them, be taken advantage of in my books.

Principally, I take extraordinary interest in those that refer to CUSTOMS and to TYPES and picturesque or distinctive INDIVIDUALS. Now, after the “Burials,” why don't you send, for example, the “Weddings,” the “Baptisms,” or “Crime stories,” or the “Demands and Questions, etc.” from the time in which you were a Justice of the Peace? That would be wonderful. Also, descriptions of hunts – including the scenery, etc. Another thing, that I would really like to have, are your memories of the Sale, in Cordisburgo: at what time of year did they sell the most? when was it that the workers had more money, etc.? And with respect to the traveling salesmen, the COMETS... I am waiting for you to send me more. You don't need to send an ordered, continuous thing. Small topics are enough.

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<sup>261</sup> A *caipira* is a simple rural person, with the connotation of “hillbilly.”

<sup>262</sup> “...[P]ediria que o senhor me mandasse por escrito, quando tiver tempo, as palavras pronunciadas pelos homens que carregavam os defunto... Também as palavras daquela outra historia... Mas, o que mais me interessa é a história do Juca Ferreira, aquele que vinha fazendo festas, com a viola, pelo Rio das Velhas, até Pirapema... Imaginei uma história, tendo-o como personagem, e para isso precisava de saber mais detalhes... Também, sempre que se lembrar de cantigas ou expressões sertanejas legítimas, ouvidas de caipiras nossos, de Cordisburgo ou Gustavo da Silveira. E tudo o que se refira a vacas e bezerros. Estou escrevendo outros livros. Lembro-me de muitas coisas interessantes, tenho muitas notas tomadas, e muitas outras coisas eu crio ou invento, por imaginação. Mas uma expressão, cantiga ou frase, legítima, original, com a força de verdade e autenticidade, que vêm da origem, é como uma pedrinha de ouro, com valor enorme.”



Everything is useful. I need to take more advantage of you, sir, for the mine is amazing. I already thank you, a lot.<sup>263</sup> (VGR 177-179)

Guimarães Rosa also traveled himself during his writing process to parts of the *sertão* that he did not remember as a child or know through his father. In 1952, he finally achieved his long-wished-for voyage through the *sertão* of Minas Gerais, originally conceived in 1945 as a chance to, as explained to his father in a letter, “penetrate again in that interior that is ours, known to us, remaking contact with the land and the people, reviving memories, filling myself again with elements for other books, that I am preparing,” and in which he would have “open notebooks and sharpened pencils, to write down everything that might be of value, like offerings of local color, the picturesque and documentary exactitude, which are really important things in modern literature”<sup>264</sup> (VGR 159-160). He went to his friend Chico Moreira’s *fazenda*, “Fazenda da Sirga/Silga/Selga,” on the banks of the river São Francisco (Barbosa 234), for 11 days, according to the *fazenda*’s *capataz*, Manuelzão; perhaps more. He asked the *vaqueiros* about everything they were doing, writing down even the responses they invented. This voyage appears to have provided much of the inspiration for *Corpo de Baile* and *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (Barbosa 236). Rosa himself told Dantas about this trip, and the people he met there. “Trips, winds, feelings. I wandered alone in the *sertão*, hearing people”<sup>265</sup> (Dantas 22). He captured “*tipos e estórias*,” “types and stories,” there in his travels, and João Henriques da Silva Ribeiro, or “Zito,” a local and his interlocutor on his voyage, would sing and recite poems, according to Rosa’s notes: “he versified, minutely, too, lyrical offerings, other types. We slept with the Moon” (Barbosa, 235-238). These citations show the complex nature of Guimarães Rosa’s connection to the *sertão*: it appears to be a connection at once deeply felt and carefully contrived through studious observation.

His professed and evidenced attitudes towards his audience mirror multiple aspects of his motivations and experiences: in striking parallel to Riobaldo, though much more pronounced in his erudition, he is *of* the region, but also conceptually integrating the region into an intellectual (though metaphysical in its philosophical nature) exercise. He makes several statements in his interviews to the effect that the *sertanejos* are his preferred friends and brothers:

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<sup>263</sup> “Não precisa que sejam casos ou fatos curiosos, pois as informações comuns, sobre a vida trivial, costumes, etc., do interior têm muita importância. ... Apreciei, muitíssimo, as notas que o senhor me mandou, sobre os enterros na roça. Aliás, o senhor não imagina como têm valor para mim essas informações. ... aos poucos, serão, todas elas, aproveitadas nos meus livros. ... / Principalmente, acho um interesse extraordinário nas que se referem aos COSTUMES e aos TIPOS e INDIVÍDUOS pitorescos ou bem marcados. Agora, depois dos “Enterros,” por que é que o senhor não manda, por exemplo, os “Casamentos,” os “Batizados,” ou “Casos de crimes” ou de “Demandas, Questões, etc.,” do tempo em que o senhor foi Juiz-de-Paz? Seria ótimo. Também, descrições de caçadas – incluindo as paisagens, etc. Outra coisa, que muito gostaria de ter, são as lembranças da Venda, em Cordisburgo: qual a época do ano em que se vendia mais? quando era que os lavradores dispunham de mais dinheiro, etc.? E a respeito dos caixeiros-viajantes, ou COMETAS... Fico esperando que o senhor me mande mais. Não precisa de mandar coisa alinhavada e seguida. Bastam pequenos tópicos. Tudo é útil. Preciso de explorar mais o senhor, que a mina é ótima. Desde já vou agradecendo, e muitíssimo.”

<sup>264</sup> “penetrar de novo naquele interior nosso conhecido, retomando contacto com a terra e a gente, reavivando lembranças, reabastecendo-me de elementos, enfim, para outros livros, que tenho em preparo” ... cadernos abertos e lápis em punho, para anotar tudo o que possa valer, como fornecimento de côr local, pitoresco e exatidão documental, que são coisas muito importantes na literatura moderna”

<sup>265</sup> “Viagens, ventos, sentimentos. Andei solto pelo sertão, ouvindo gente.” “versejava, miudeadamente, também, proporções líricas, outras faces. Dormíamos com a Lua.”

Whoever deals with [cows and horses] learns a lot for his life and the lives of others... I wish the world were inhabited only by cow-herdsmen. (Lorenz 67-68)

I like to think on horseback, at the ranch, in the *sertão*; and when something isn't clear to me, I don't go to converse with some learned professor, but with one of the old cow-herdsmen of Minas Gerais, who are all clever men.<sup>266</sup> (Lorenz 79)

And, in conversation with Dantas about the story “*O Vaqueiro Mariano*”[sic]<sup>267</sup>, Guimarães Rosa explains: “That cow herdsman still exists. He is my great friend. It was with him that I learned a lot about the soul of cattle... I have the desire to transform that article into a book. Expand everything, in a crescendo. Mariano, my friend, deserves it”<sup>268</sup> (22). Mariano is his dear friend; he learns from the cow-herdsmen, and even from the cows and horses, not from learned professors; he wishes there were only cow-herdsmen in the world. And, too, while traveling in the *sertão* to do research, he wanted none of the locals to call him “*doutor*,” but rather to treat him as one of them, a simple man, “*João Rosa*” (Barbosa 235).

However, besides being his dearest friends and preferred teachers, the locals also appear to have been in a great sense his ethnographic subjects. While traveling in the interior, “he traveled with a little notebook and pencil, hanging from his neck”<sup>269</sup> (234), suggesting that they were not of his exact same background but were rather an object of research to be recorded and filed away, a primary resource. According to his uncle, as mentioned previously, the recording and study of the cow herdsman was something he did ever since he was a boy: “He noted down what he saw, heard, felt and sensed, in several notebooks, interested in the natural environment and in the stories of the cow-herdsmen” (VG 174). In fact, according to Barbosa, during a day on horseback on his trip, Guimarães Rosa “prenarrated” to Zito “a novel to be written – story with free people and poorly-intentioned vices, facts,” to which Zito responded by lowering his bullhorn and saying “you need to govern those notions, sir”<sup>270</sup> (238). His “*vaqueiro*” friend may not have appreciated the work, once written.

<sup>266</sup> “*Quem lida com [vacas e cavalos] aprende muito para sua vida e a vida dos outros. ... Eu queria que o mundo fosse habitado apenas por vaqueiros...*” “*Gosto de pensar cavalgando, na fazenda, no sertão; e quando algo não me fica claro, não vou conversar com algum douto professor, e sim com algum dos velhos vaqueiros de Minas Gerais, que são todos homens atilados*”

<sup>267</sup> “*Com o Vaqueiro Mariano*,” story written by Guimarães Rosa after a trip through the *sertão*, originally published in 1952 and republished posthumously in *Estas Estórias* as “*Entremeio: com o Vaqueiro Mariano*” (*Estas Estórias* vii, 67-98) According to Dantas, “*a mais bela reportagem transfigurada já feita sobre o pantanal*” (21) (“the most beautiful transfigured reporting ever made about the lowlands”)

<sup>268</sup> “*Aquele vaqueiro ainda existe. É meu grande amigo. Foi com ele que aprendi muito sobre a alma dos bois. . . Ando com vontade de transformar aquela reportagem num livro. Ampliar tudo, num crescendo. Mariano, meu amigo, merece.*”

<sup>269</sup> “*viajou com cadernetinha e lápis, dependurados do pescoço*” “*Anotou tudo o que viu, ouviu, sentiu e pressentiu, em várias cadernetas, interessado no ambiente natural e nos relatos dos vaqueiros*”

<sup>270</sup> “*Um dia, cavalgando um ao lado do outro, entre a Vereda-do-Catatau e o Riacho das Vacas, Guimarães Rosa se pôs a prenarrar a Zito “um romance a escrever – estória com grátis gente e malapropósitos vícios, fatos.” Zito baixou o berrante e disse: “– O Sr. tem de reger essas noções...”* (One day, horseback-riding side by side, between the Vereda of Catatau and the Stream of the Cows, Guimarães Rosa began to prenarrate to Zito “a novel to be written – story with free people and poorly-intentioned vices, facts.” Zito lowered his bullhorn and said: “You should govern those notions, sir”).

This discrepancy between ethnographer and “dear friend” is also apparent in that, while the folk of his region are the subject of his literary works, and ostensibly his peers and dear friends, *GSV* is also nonetheless a work that, in its complexity, appears to be directed towards an intellectually sophisticated and global audience that learns all they know of the region from the work. In fact, Guimarães Rosa once explained the erudite qualities of his work to his uncle, and why it isn’t written to reach the “*plebe*,” the “rabble,” but rather, if they read it at all, to elevate their tastes. As an indication of a moment in time of his complex philosophy of authors, readers, literary taste, and literary advancement, Guimarães Rosa wrote in 1947 to Vicente that, despite his uncle’s accusation that the story “*Histórias de Fadas*” provides “chewed and digested marmalade”<sup>271</sup> for the reader, doing so “was never my intention” (VG 134). In fact, he claims that he is never thinking to “obtain this or that cultural or educative effect” while he’s writing, but instead seeks to *elevate* the “taste of the people” through being courageously *sincere*, true to his own voice and thus dedicated to the betterment of Portuguese<sup>272</sup>. Guimarães Rosa responds to Buarque de Holanda’s proclamation against “the mediocre, ... the ordinary, ... subliterature.” ... “We will never seek to lower, but always to elevate the taste of the people” ... “THIS IS A PROGRAM: THE ONLY PROGRAM WORTHY OF A TRUE ARTIST”<sup>273</sup> (135).

This campaign against mediocrity involves “sincerity” in *style*, according to Guimarães Rosa:

4) profoundly sincere: his/her art should express itself according to the totality of his/her being, with his/her knowledge, culture, philosophy of life, with the words with which he/she thinks (thus, when one thinks with a determined level of erudition, in words or phrases, it would be a sin against the Holy Spirit, to become discouraged, for fear of the derision of the common people, use the preoccupation to lower his/her style, to come within reach of the bulls).<sup>274</sup>

Guimarães Rosa considered, then, at least in 1947, that lowering one’s style, writing below one’s level of erudition, is a sin, and would be giving in to the derision of the “*plebe*,” the “masses” or “rabble.” Guimarães Rosa’s letter evinces a definite awareness of intellectual class, and indicates that for him his own work would be, in being “sincere,” the product of his own quite high level

<sup>271</sup> “*marmelada mastigada e digerida*” “... *nunca foi minha intenção*” “*obter tal ou tal efeito cultural ou educativo*”

<sup>272</sup> In the letter, Guimarães Rosa lays out his vision of an artist’s role in society, saying that among other things that an artist must be “1) *humilde*..., 2) *independente*, 3) *corajoso*, 4) *profundamente sincero*, 5) *infinitamente paciente*” (“1) humble... 2) independent 3) courageous 4) profoundly sincere 5) infinitely patient”) (137-138). He must also strive to avoid the “*Empobrecimento de vocabulário*” (“Impoverishment of vocabulary”) in the Portuguese language by expressing his own aesthetic; and must avoid “*folklore puro: coisas toscas, não lapidadas, que só deviam aparecer ENTRE ASPAS.*” (“*pure folklore: crude things, not polished, that should only have appeared IN QUOTES.*”) He follows all of this with: “*É uma revolução branca, uma série de coups d’état.*” (“It is a *white* revolution, a *series of coups d’état.*”) His is a campaign against the limitations of “pure folklore” and the mediocrity of literature written for its popular audience.

<sup>273</sup> “*o mediocre, ... o ordinário, ... a subliteratura*” – “*Nunca procuramos rebaixar, mas sempre elevar o gosto do povo*” – with “(!!!!) *(ISTO É UM PROGRAMA: O ÚNICO PROGRAMA DIGNO DE UM VERDADEIRO ARTISTA)*”

<sup>274</sup> “4) *profundamente sincero: a sua arte deve expressar-se de acordo com a totalidade do seu ser, com os seus conhecimentos, sua cultura, sua filosofia da vida, com as palavras com as quais pensa (assim, quando se pensa com determinado nível de erudição, em palavras e frases, seria pecado contra o Espírito Santo, acovardar-se e, por medo de vaias da plebe, usar da preocupação de rebaixar o seu estilo, para ficar ao alcance de toros);...*”

of scholarly and linguistic achievement – not the artificial imitation of rural “plebeian” speech, nor artificially directed towards any audience other than someone with, or striving for, his own elevated qualifications. In this he is, he claims, not alone, and in so claiming he further illustrates an appreciation for the erudite at home and, also, abroad:

This isn’t about an intentional movement, artificially conceived. It is only the voice of the times. You think that it’s due to pure and simple coincidence, occasional, that new authors, speaking in another tone, are arising all over, and that the old ones, the best of them, are beginning to want to change their pace and correct their steps?<sup>275</sup> (VG 134)

Guimarães Rosa gives examples of these writers, and of authors and scholars whom he respects. He asks his uncle to read “what our best critics have written (Antônio Cândido, Álvaro Lins, Lauro Escorel, Almeida Sales, etc.).”<sup>276</sup> He claims that the weakness of Portuguese as a language “is worrying a lot of good people: philosophers, philologists, people of letters, laymen and professors of Portuguese.”<sup>277</sup> And he points his uncle abroad for inspiration: “you know who are the great foreign writers that are preoccupying, normally, on the first line, our people of letters? Rilke, Joyce, Charles Morgan, Boudelaire, Proust, Kafka, T. S. Eliot, Alain Fournier, Roger Martin Du Gard, Gide, etc.”<sup>278</sup> In these statements he shows a prejudice: erudite literary critics are “our best critics,” philosophers/philologists/people of letters/professors of Portuguese are “good people,” and the “great writers” that interest “our people of letters” are mostly European.

His letter is not without the familiar contradiction, however; after these statements, he refers back to the passage that his uncle disapproved of to say “Curious: the Prof. Jaime Cortesão, and another person who is neither erudite nor highly intellectualized, they both came, to Itamaraty, to congratulate me, especially, for this passage”<sup>279</sup> (VG 133). He legitimizes his story in his uncle’s eyes by referencing that the same segment of text was specifically appreciated by both a Professor, and a “non-erudite, nor highly intellectualized” person. Guimarães Rosa had a definite conceptualization of the high value of erudition as a betterment of things, and showed a tendency to overtly mention celebrity intellectuals in reference to their reception of his work. However, he was also careful to mention that a non-erudite person appreciated his work, thus legitimating his project as a literary masterpiece for the cultured, and also as an authentic work, appreciated by the authenticity of the non-intellectualized. “*Eu queria que o mundo fosse habitado apenas por vaqueiros...*,” he states... he would have both worlds (Lorenz 68).

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<sup>275</sup> “*Não se trata de um movimento intencional, artificialmente concebido. É, apenas, a voz dos tempos. Você acha que é por coincidência pura e simples, ocasional, que estão surgindo por toda parte, autores novos, falando em outro tom, e que os velhos, os melhores deles, começam a querer mudar de trote e acertar o passo?*”

<sup>276</sup> “*o que têm escrito os nossos melhores críticos...*” He also cites also Cândido A. Mendes de Almeida, Braga Montenegro, and Raquel de Queirós.

<sup>277</sup> “*está preocupando muita gente boa: filósofos, filólogos, literatos, leigos e professores de português.*”

<sup>278</sup> “*você sabe quais os grandes escritores estrangeiros que estão preocupando, normalmente, em primeira linha, a nossa gente das letras?...*”

<sup>279</sup> “*Curioso: o Prof. Jaime Cortesão, e outra pessoa não erudita nem altamente intelectualizada, vieram ambos, ao Itamaraty, para felicitar-me, especialmente, por esse trecho.*”

As has been shown here, it is impossible to extricate Guimarães Rosa from his *sertão*, but it is also impossible to place him within its borders. However, the “authenticity” of the work is – thankfully – not our question here. Rather, the question in this section is: can the author’s life and stated beliefs illuminate his work? Yes. The author was at a nexus of the foreign, the local, and the metaphysical, of erudite critics and wise cow herders, of European novels and local traditions, characters, words. The paradoxical complexity of the author’s relationship to the *sertão* reflects the larger complexity illustrated in this chapter: the *sertão* is central to the work, and yet, at the same time, the more realistically-depicted the setting, the more we should look *within* it for something else.

#### 1.4 PARADOX and the AUTHOR:

Guimarães Rosa shows a high level of contradictory complexity in his statements about the audience and origins of his works, and their relationship to their subject matter. In fact, as will be shown below, he was both paradoxical, *and a believer in paradox*. So, when can we take an author at his word? Guimarães Rosa doesn’t make the answer easy, beginning with his own view of an author’s role in literature. Just as he can consider himself both a peer and an ethnographer of the subjects of his literary works, and have the *sertão* be both central and peripheral to his works, he is paradoxical in his view of an author’s relevance to his work, stating that biography matters nothing at all, and yet at the same time carefully constructing his public image to mirror his literary purpose, and making illuminating statements about his works.

The author was notoriously unwilling to grant interviews, and several letters, interviews, and family testimonies express his opinion of the author’s limited role in literature once the work is published. In the aforementioned letter to Italian translator Bizzarri (pages 67-68), Guimarães Rosa states, after answering the question about his considerations and priorities in writing, that intention doesn’t matter in the reception of a work: “Naturally, this is subjective, it translates only the appreciation of the author, and of what the author would like, today, for the book to have been. But, in art, intention doesn’t matter.”<sup>280</sup> At other times, too, according to witnesses, he has indicated that his intentions and words are not what matters because it is, in fact, the work that expresses itself: “No, Alaor. I won’t grant interviews to the newspaper. I express myself through my books. Why say anything beyond what I say in my books? It’s in my books that I express myself”<sup>281</sup> (Alaor Barbosa 61; in response to Alaor’s request to quote him in *Jornal do Brasil*). Rosa’s letter to João Condé also expresses an unwillingness to expound upon the meaning of his own work. In response to Condé’s wish for a handwritten letter giving (in Guimarães Rosa’s words) “An explanation, a confession, a conversation, the most extensive possible – the João Condé tax for writers, that is,” the author writes: “Well, neither is the issue simple, nor do I know well what to tell. Be it a stunted stand of greens, a book ends up being, in the soil of the author, an ancient tree, capable of corrupting him/her, of leading him/her astray, if

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<sup>280</sup> “Naturalmente, isto é subjetivo, traduz só a apreciação do autor, e do que o autor gostaria, hoje, que o livro fosse. Mas, em arte, não vale a intenção.”

<sup>281</sup> “Não, Alaor. Não concedo entrevista a jornal. Eu me exprimo é por intermédio dos meus livros. Para quê dizer mais além do que digo em meus livros? É nos meus livros que eu me expresso.”

he/she tries to reach its furthest fibers, its labyrinth of roots. Thanks be to God, all is mystery.”<sup>282</sup> The book that is a withered little spring green in the author’s soil could become also an ancient tree, capable of leading him astray if he tries to reach its furthest fibers and the labyrinth of his roots. The work would be, then, a mystery to the author himself, simple as it might appear – and Rosa doesn’t seek (often) to explain the work to the reader, but to let the work speak for itself.

In fact, according to his uncle Vicente, “systematically, he didn’t grant interviews. He was against this and other ostentations... he refused all interviews, even money offers to appear on television, insistent proposals made through me”<sup>283</sup> (Guimarães 166-167). When Vicente asked him why, saying that it might help to sell the books, the author responded in “more or less” the following words:<sup>284</sup>

I treat my books as if they were children. While I’m writing, they are young and need all of my attention and complete dedication. I sacrifice myself for them, I only think of them. The publication is the signal of the coming of age of each one. They are thrown into the world to manage as they can. My books are like birds, after they take off in flight, they don’t need their parents’ help anymore, they were already prepared to live independently. And also, my dear Vincent, “each monkey in its own branch” [common expression implying that each should stick to his/her own job or responsibilities]: the writer writes, the sale is up to the editor.<sup>285</sup>

His unwillingness to interpret his books for his readers extended also to an unwillingness to tell them about himself. In response to an interview request by a journalist who admittedly hadn’t read the works, Guimarães Rosa replied: “Go read them, then, then come back afterward. Only an interview about the books and not about the particulars of the author should interest the public”<sup>286</sup> (167). His friend Paulo Dantas mirrors this view: “It’s impossible to write a profound biography of Rosa. His life is his work. It is whole/entire in them. Biographical facts only compose the exterior, informing us about a tall and strong man, doctor from the backlands, then taking public service exams in Itamaraty, traveling in the *sertão* and abroad. ... I don’t want to

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<sup>282</sup> “*uma explicação, uma confissão, uma conversa, a mais extensa possível – o imposto João Condé para escritores, enfim.*” “*Ora, nem o assunto é simples, nem sei eu bem o que contar. Mirrado pé de couve, seja, o livro fica sendo, no chão do seu autor, uma árvore velha, capaz de transviá-lo e de o fazer andar errado, se tenta alcançar-lhe os fios extremos, no labirinto das raízes. Graças a Deus, tudo é mistério.*”

<sup>283</sup> “*por sistema, não concedia entrevistas. Contrário foi a essas e outras ostentações... recusou e recusava inúmeras todas entrevistas, até oferta em dinheiro para apresentar-se numa televisão, proposta insistente feita por meu intermédio.*”

<sup>284</sup> “*Menos ou mais assim, em possíveis algumas palavras outras, me transmitiu seu pensamento.*” (“More or less like this, in possibly some other words, he transmitted his thought to me.”) (Guimarães 166)

<sup>285</sup> “*Trato meus livros como filhos fossem. Enquanto os estou escrevendo, são menores e precisam de toda a minha atenção e dedicação completa. Sacrifico-me por eles, neles só penso. A publicação é o sinal da maior idade de cada um. São lançados ao mundo e eles que se arranjam como puder. Meus livros são como as aves, depois que alçam vôo, não precisam mais de ajuda dos pais, já foram preparados para viverem independentemente. E também, meu caro Vicente, cada macaco em seu galho: o escritor escreve, a venda compete ao editor.*”

<sup>286</sup> “*Vai lê-los, então, e depois volte. Interessar deve ao público apenas uma entrevista sobre os livros e não sobre o particular do autor.*”

scrutinize him in anything. The reading of his works was enough for me”<sup>287</sup> (Dantas 1975: 22). In one of the few interviews conceded by the author, to a school-aged cousin in Curvelo writing a paper with her classmates, he wrote to her: “I would only say to you that you seek to read the books. You, yourselves: the books, in themselves, are what is important. The authors, no. The author is a shadow, in the service of higher things, which he sometimes doesn’t understand. The author is always the ‘banana tree that already gave its bunch’”<sup>288</sup> (Guimarães 169). As mentioned earlier in a footnote, too, Guimarães Rosa’s response to Bizzarri’s 1964 request for an outline of his life was to call the translator “*calhorda*” (a scoundrel) in an attached note, to preface the outline by calling it a “*torto bilhete*,” “crooked note,” to request that it be kept “*entre parêntesis*,” “in ‘parentheses’”, and even to title it “Bobagens Biográficas,” “Biographical Foolery” (Rosa/Bizzarri 111-114). Apparently, he did not like being asked to share his life details, or thought it distracting and/or irrelevant.

The few other interviews João Guimarães Rosa agreed to include one with German critic Günter Lorenz, in 1965, to which he referred as a “*conversa*,” (“conversation”) not an “*entrevista*” (“interview”)<sup>289</sup> (Lorenz 64), and one in 1963, with the Uruguayan critic Emir Rodríguez Monegal (Fantini 15), and then with Fernando Camacho in 1966 (Camacho). In the latter, Guimarães Rosa says of his works that, after being published, they have “something that I myself don’t use up or (monopolize) completely. ... [The] work takes on its own music”<sup>290</sup> ... and he continues to say: “I appreciate my things as if they weren’t mine” (Camacho 44). According to Guimarães Rosa, then, the works, once written, are both of the author and separate from him; they don’t require his biographical information to be complete, and in fact are beyond the author himself. Whether strategic, ideological, or simply based on not wanting to waste time in frivolous media pursuits, the author displayed a general reticence on the topic of himself. However, surprisingly, in the interviews he did agree to, he shared a lot about his thoughts and motivations as a writer.

As seen throughout this dissertation, Guimarães Rosa does, in spite of his many denials, speak for the works, and eloquently. He gives many viewpoints, as seen above, on what his literature prioritizes, and about whom and what he seeks to write. In spite of the infrequency of his interviews and articles, the pieces of his own perspective and history that he has shared and that

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<sup>287</sup> “*Impossível escrever uma biografia profunda de Rosa. A sua vida é a sua obra. Está inteira nela. Dados biográficos apenas compõem o exterior, informando-nos sobre um homem alto e forte, médico de roça, depois concursado no Itamarati, viajado para o sertão e para o estrangeiro. ... Não queria indagá-lo em nada. A leitura dos seus livros bastava-me.*”

<sup>288</sup> “*Diria apenas a vocês que procurem ler os livros. Vocês mesmas; os livros, em si, é que são importantes. Os autores, não. O autor é uma sombra, a serviço de coisas mais altas, que às vezes ele nem entende. O autor é sempre ‘bananeira que já deu cacho’*”

<sup>289</sup> In response to Lorenz’s comment that Guimarães Rosa is “*o inimigo de toda a espécie de entrevistas e terror dos repórteres...*,” Guimarães Rosa responds: “*agrada-me conversar com você, pois escreveu a meu respeito coisas tão encantadoras e interessantes que gostaria de tratar delas novamente,... peço-lhe que não use essa horrível expressão “entrevistas”. Eu certamente não teria aceito seu convite se esperasse uma entrevista. As entrevistas são trocas de palavras em que um formula ao outro perguntas cujas respostas já conhece de antemão. Vim como combinamos porque desejávamos conversar. Nossa conversa, e isso é importante, desejamos fazê-lo em conjunto. ....Só me oponho a matar o tempo com insignificâncias e com gente que não sabe nada de nada.*” (Lorenz 64-65)

<sup>290</sup> “*qualquer coisa que eu próprio não esgote num (abarco) completamente. ... [A] obra toma a sua própria música*” “*Eu aprecio minhas coisas como se elas não fossem minhas*”

his family members have shared about him fall into a shape that reflects the multidimensional impact of his works. This shape is perhaps carefully choreographed, and there have been, too, inconsistencies in his attitudes and actions that he did not address, such as his in regards to his political participation; for instance, though reportedly claiming that he sees no purpose in organized political change,<sup>291</sup> he appears to have supported both pro- and anti-Vargas revolutions in sequence, of which he spoke very little.<sup>292</sup> However, though he chose to concentrate on some aspects of his life over others, the vision of Guimarães Rosa that we have through interview and testimony is one that appears to mirror the work itself in its complexity of “sertanejan,” erudite, and spiritual identities, and thus, in a way, though he has told us to ignore it, it adds weight to its interpretation-of-intent, if not to its interpretation-of-effect (which are neither mutually exclusive nor exclusive in analysis). His viewpoint is not the only interpretation of his work, on which he would agree, nor indeed is it necessarily the most valid or valid at all (see Roland Barthes’ “The Death of the Author,” and Reader-Response Theory),<sup>293</sup> but nonetheless we *have* his viewpoint, despite his announcements to the contrary, and this paradox matches his paradoxical writing.

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<sup>291</sup> “Guimarães Rosa... era cético em relação a soluções políticas e considerava que as revoluções políticas nada resolvem” (Barbosa 51); and, in reference to Communist revolution: “Não, Almor. A solução é individual. Cada um encontra a sua solução. As soluções gerais não resolvem. A solução é individual” (Barbosa 64).

<sup>292</sup> In his 1964 letter to Bizzarri, under his 3<sup>rd</sup> person autobiographical list “Bobagens biográficas,” he states first, in parentheses, “(Em 1930, estêve, como voluntário, do lado das forças revolucionárias)” (“In 1930, he was, as a volunteer, on the side of the revolutionary forces),” apparently referring to Vargas’ revolutionary forces, and second, “Em 1932, durante a revolução, serviu incorporado às tropas de Minas Gerais” (“In 1932, during the revolution, he served incorporated into the troops of Minas Gerais”), those being the Constitutionalist Revolutionary forces against Vargas, in which he was *Capitão-Médico*; he then remained a medical doctor in the peace-time infantry: “Em 1933, aprovado em concurso para médico da Brigada estadual, foi incorporado, no posto de Capitão, ao 9º Batalhão de Infantaria, em Barbacena” (“In 1933, approved in his exams to be a doctor in the state Brigade, he was incorporated into the post of Captain, in the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion of Infantry, in Barbacena”) (Rosa/Bizzarri 113). In a 1957 letter to Paulo Dantas, he gives another summary biography, in which he states: “andou em duas revoluções (na de 32, já como Capitão-Médico)” (“he was in 2 revolutions (in that of ’32, already as Medical Captain”) (54). Guimarães Rosa makes little other mention in correspondence or interviews of ever having any political affiliations whatsoever, especially those of 1930.

<sup>293</sup> Barthes writes: “The *author* still reigns in histories of literature, biographies of writers, interviews, magazines, as in the very consciousness of men in letters anxious to unite their person and their work through diaries and memoirs. The image of literature to be found in ordinary culture is tyrannically centred on the author... The *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it. ... Mallarmé was doubtless the first to see and to foresee in its full extent the necessity to substitute language itself for the person who until then had been supposed to be its owner... We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of readings, none of them original, blend and clash” (1466-1468). See also: Stanley E. Fish (“...attempts to determine which of a number of readings is correct will necessarily fail... it is the structure of the reader’s experience rather than any structures available on the page that should be the object of description” (“The Case for Reader-Response Analysis” 2072-2074)); Wolfgang Iser (“the study of a literary work of art should concern not only the actual text but also, and in equal measure, the actions involved in responding to that text. In literary works, ... the message is transmitted in two ways, in that the reader “receives” it by composing it” (“Interaction between Text and Reader” 1673-1676)); Georges Poulet (“Books are objects... they wait for someone to come and deliver them from their materiality, from their immobility” (“Phenomenology of Reading” 1320)); Jean-Paul Sartre (“One of the chief motives of artistic creation is certainly the need of feeling that we are essential in relationship to the world... I feel myself essential in relation to my creation. But this time it is the created object with escapes me; I cannot reveal and produce at the same time... If our creation drive comes from the very depths of our heart, then we never find anything but ourselves in our work. ...the literary object is a peculiar top which exists only in movement. To make it come into view a concrete act called reading is necessary, and it lasts only as long as this act can last. ... Now, the writer cannot read what he writes... There is no art except for and by others.” (“Why Write?” 1336-1338)) etc.



In all, despite the author's professed desires to the contrary, he may have meant what he said – perhaps most of it, contradictions included. And whether or not he has the right to dictate the meanings of his works, his consistent inconsistency tells us one thing: that we can absolutely believe him when he proclaims his comfort with PARADOX.

As mentioned in the introduction to this section, Guimarães Rosa shares his perspective on paradox in his 1965 conversation with Günter Lorenz, and states that life in itself is curious, and should not be examined as one looks at the shell of an insect. In the interview, Guimarães Rosa addresses the multiplicity of his influences, and how this state of multiplicity is not necessarily one of conflict or contradiction. He tells Lorenz that his life experiences as “*médico, rebelde, soldado*” (doctor, rebel, soldier) were important stages in his life, even though, “formally, this succession constitutes a paradox”<sup>294</sup> (Lorenz 67). He explains that what he learned in these experiences is an array of mystical values – “As a doctor I learned the mystic value of suffering; as a rebel, the value of conscience; as a soldier, the value of the proximity of death...” – values which constitute the “*espinha dorsal*” (“dorsal fin”) of *Grande Sertão: Veredas*. However, he also adds some even more apparently contradictory influences, in this enlightening exchange: “so that this doesn't seem too simple, I wanted to add that my world is also configured by diplomacy, horsemanship, cows, religions and languages” (“*para que isto não pareça demasiadamente simples, queria acrescentar que também configuram meu mundo a diplomacia, o trato com cavalos, vacas, religiões e idiomas*”). When Lorenz repeats these elements back to him, rote, but then turns to place emphasis on the author's legendary language skills and on the Jewish lives he saved while serving at the German consulate, Guimarães Rosa asks him not to forget the cows and horses, as they teach one about life. He doesn't want to leave a single aspect out of his self-conceptualization; and he adds that he wishes the whole world were inhabited by *vaqueiros*, cowboys. As mentioned above, in response to Lorenz's ensuing comment “*Desculpe, mas relacionado com sua biografia isto não parece um tanto paradoxal?*” (“Pardon me, but in relation to your biography doesn't this seem a bit paradoxical?”), Guimarães Rosa responds: “And not just this, but everything: life, death, everything is, deep down, paradox. Paradoxes exist so that it is still possible to express something for which there don't exist words” (Lorenz 67-68).<sup>295</sup>

Guimarães Rosa shares fundamental aspects of his worldview in this conversation, which are evident in his work and its regional, mystical, and other components – components which may appear to be in paradox, or to be “curious” in conjunction, but are in fact multiple layers of the *same life*: its essence, and its outer shell, studied not to be pinned up in a taxonomy, but as representative of something further. And the existence of paradox is not arbitrary, but purposeful... it exists as an expression of something deeply important that can't be expressed in words. Of course, in *GSV*, he tries to express it in words; but sidewise, as Drummond de Andrade explains: “*Projetava na gravatinha / a quinta face das coisas / inenarrável narrada? ...*

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<sup>294</sup> “*a rigor, esta sucessão constitui um paradoxo*” ... “*Como médico conheci o valor místico do sofrimento; como rebelde, o valor da consciência; como soldado, o valor da proximidade da morte...*” ... “*para que isto não pareça demasiadamente simples, queria acrescentar que também configuram meu mundo a diplomacia, o trato com cavalos, vacas, religiões e idiomas*”

<sup>295</sup> “*E não apenas isto, mas tudo: a vida, a morte, tudo é, no fundo, paradoxo. Os paradoxos existem para que ainda se possa exprimir algo para o qual não existem palavras.*”

*seu fado era saber / contar sem desnudar / o que não deve ser desnudado / e por isso se veste de véus novos...*” (“Did he project in his bowtie / the fifth face of things / inenarrable narrated? ... was it his destiny to know / to tell without unclothing / what shouldn’t be unclothed / and therefore dresses itself in new veils?”). *GSV* is the telling of what can’t be simply unclothed, and narration of the inenarrable, projected in the author’s bowtie... in the material, the material of the *sertão*.

Guimarães Rosa often contradicts himself, and so, too, his work *GSV* is contradictory in itself, folding in on itself with things that exist and don’t, that are material and not, that are even both masculine and feminine... a rapprochement of opposites at its core. Although many of his individual statements appear contradictory, we can certainly take Guimarães Rosa at his word in reference to the prevalence of paradox in his works.

## 2. GUIMARÃES ROSA'S PREFERRED PHILOSOPHERS of a MATERIAL MYSTICISM:

As shown above, there appears to be an inherent contradiction in Guimarães Rosa's statements pertaining to his work and his priorities relating to it – that the material *sertão* is both vital to his work and identity, and that it is, at the same time, only part of what the work offers. And, as we have seen, as Drummond de Andrade shows us, and as *GSV* itself expresses, Guimarães Rosa's works are both about the *sertão*, and about “transcending” it, *in* it. As his readings and statements show, and as the work shows us in itself, the *sertão* can be both central *and* transcended, for it is in the detailed reality of the region's depiction that its deeper human attributes are accessed.

Besides being a “man of the *sertão*” and a world traveler, a brother to cowherdsmen and an erudite doctor, Guimarães Rosa claimed to be a very religious man. He said of himself, in fact, that he was profoundly, essentially religious (“*sou profundamente, essencialmente religioso*”) (Rosa/Bizzarri 67). In his childhood, according to his daughter's telling of family accounts, he played at celebrating Mass: “Perhaps influence by Brother Canízio, Joãozito played at celebrating mass, putting up the altar on a box and covering it in a white linen towel, from his mother's trousseau” (VGR 53).<sup>296</sup> He also believed in prayer. In fact, Guimarães Rosa censured his friend Dantas for his lack of prayer or religiosity, which as a “sertanejan” he should have understood: “I'm surprised that you, being a ‘sertanejan’, don't have these preoccupations. You seem like you don't even pray, that you don't like to pray. I pray a lot. I bring rosaries with me”<sup>297</sup> (26). The author also explained to his father in a 1938 letter: “I believe in fact that only those who count on supernatural aid and that turn to it, with faith, obtain success in life. ... Prayer is a much more transcendental thing than what it seems. At least, there is more than one way to pray”<sup>298</sup> (VGR 155). This last statement points to another aspect of his religiosity: beyond Judeo-Christian metaphysics, he was “outside of the strict label and the ranks of any confession or sect... first, perhaps, like Riobaldo from “*G.S.:V.*”, I belong to all. And speculative, too”<sup>299</sup> (Rosa/Bizzarri 67). Perhaps, he states, he is “*meio-existencialista-cristão*” (“somewhat-existentialist-Christian”), or “*meio neo-platônico*” (“somewhat neo-Platonic”), or “*impregnado de hinduísmo*” (“impregnated by Hinduism”), as he claims people say of him (Rosa/Bizzarri 67).

Further, beyond being Christian and otherwise spiritual, he thought of himself explicitly as a mystic: “I am a mystic, at least I think I am”<sup>300</sup> (Lorenz 79). His daughter confirms that,

<sup>296</sup> “*Talvez influenciado por Frei Canízio, Joãozito brincava de celebrar missa, armando o altar sobre um caixote e cobrindo-o com uma toalha de linho branco, do enxoval de sua mãe*” Frei Canízio was a Dutch Franciscan monk with whom he had a friendship (Barbosa 100, 104).

<sup>297</sup> “*Admiro que você, sendo um sertanejo, não tenha essas preocupações... Você até parece que não reza, que não gosta de rezar. Eu rezo muito. Carrego comigo terços.*”

<sup>298</sup> “*Creio mesmo que só obtêm êxito na vida as pessoas que contam com um auxílio sobrenatural e que a ele recorrem, com fé. [...] A oração é a coisa muito mais transcendente do que parece. Apenas, há mais de uma maneira da gente orar.*”

<sup>299</sup> “*fora do rótulo estricto e das fileiras de qualquer confissão ou seita... antes, talvez, como o Riobaldo do “G.S.:V.”, pertença eu a tôdas. E especulativo, demais.*” (67)

<sup>300</sup> “*Sou místico, pelo menos acho que sou*”

throughout his whole life, “*preocupava-se com o sentido místico das coisas,*” “he was concerned with the mystical meaning of things” (VGR 97). As seen above, he used the words “mystic” and “metaphysical” often in reference to his work and his identity, claiming that the “metaphysical-religious value” is worth 4 points (Rosa/Bizzarri 67-68), and that when the reader adopts the poetic, metaphysical, and mystical solution to doubts in the work, then we are right (Camacho 47), etc.<sup>301</sup> And, this mystical religiosity comes through in his works: “all of my, constant, religious, metaphysical preoccupations, my books imbibed... The books are as I am”<sup>302</sup> (Rosa/Bizzarri 67).

However, despite the frequency with which he spoke of his mystical nature, he gives little indication in those statements of what such terms as “mystic”/“transcendent”/“metaphysical” mean in his usage. And, in fact, many of the critics who apply such terminology to his work do so without explaining its use either: for instance, Proença refers to the “marches and countermarches in a strangely mystical spirit, oscillating between God and the devil” (6), and Lourenço calls *GSV* “an epic, but also a metaphysical elegy”<sup>303</sup> (211), and Antônio Cândido, in his 1963 prologue to the 1964 work *Tese e Antítese*, says of *GSV* that it is “the first great metaphysical novel of Brazilian literature.” Indeed, the work refers often to God and the devil, and *GSV* is known for its prominent Christian archetypes, but its relationship to mysticism remains quite unexamined, at least explicitly. The author had a mystical paradigm which he communicated in the novel and which was, too, reflected in his acknowledged interest in specific mystical theorists and religions.

Guimarães Rosa’s own use of “transcendence” or “mystical” or “metaphysical” may be the key to understanding this apparently paradoxical role of the *sertão* in *GSV*. Though “mystical” can often refer to the achievement of transcendence, and the term “transcendence” often implies that the “transcended” is left behind or discarded, and “metaphysical” implies “beyond”<sup>304</sup> the physical,” that separation is not necessarily the case. In fact, in this work, not only is the “*apoio,*” or the “*terra-a-terra,*” or the “*cenário e realidade sertaneja*” a *necessary* step towards reaching a more spiritual level in the work, it *participates fully* in the creation of meaning on a scale of human relationships, destinies, and understandings of the cosmos or the divine.

<sup>301</sup> “*valor metafísico-religioso: 4 pontos*” ... “[*Q*]uando tiver uma dúvida (no meu livro), você adote a solução poética, a solução metafísica, a solução mística, então você acerta ...”

<sup>302</sup> “*tôdas as minhas, constantes, preocupações religiosas, metafísicas, embeberam os meus livros... Os livros são como eu sou.*”

<sup>303</sup> “*marchas e contramarchas de um espírito estranhamente místico, oscilando entre Deus e o Diabo*” “*uma epopéia, mas também uma elegia metafísica*” “*o primeiro grande romance metafísico da literatura brasileira*”

<sup>304</sup> “meta-” as a prefix can mean “beyond,” or “dealing with second-order questions,” the meaning traditionally associated with metaphysics; but this “beyond” does not necessarily *exclude* the noun in modifies. Rather, it can imply a comprehensive approach, such as explained in definition 2a at the OED: “(a) Prefixed to the name of a subject or discipline to denote another which deals with ulterior issues in the same field, or which raises questions about the nature of the original discipline and its methods, procedures, and assumptions.” This “metaphysics” of Guimarães Rosa’s seems to relate to this sense of beyond – but related, including, of. (“meta-, prefix” *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Third edition, August 2010; online version November 2010. <<http://www.oed.com:80/Entry/117150>> Web. 17. Feb. 2011.) Merriam Webster also writes, “situated behind or beyond,” or “more comprehensive : transcending,” among other meanings. (“meta-, prefix. *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*. 2010. <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/meta?show=1&t=1298682696>> Web. 20. Dec. 2010.) Here again the “comprehensive” aspect applies more so than the more common usage of “beyond,” given that Guimarães Rosa’s metaphysics *encompasses* the physical.

Returning to Guimarães Rosa's statements about the *terra-a-terra*, it is apparent that they can be read in several ways. When he refers to the objective/material aspect of the text as a "*pretexto*" ("pretext"), as "*apoio*" ("support") for transcendence, a stair, a trampoline, it could easily be inferred that the objective/material aspect of the text is not as important as the transcendence of it. However, the use of "*apoio*" shows us that the material support *still matters* – that without its support, that "transcendence" of which he speaks is not possible. What could be reached without any "support," what would a "stair" be that rests on nothing, how could one jump without the "trampoline"? These terms point to transcendence – but also to the *sertão* as a vital part of the equation... the "*barranco de chão*" without which the "*cachoeira*" would never exist. The term "pretext," too, appears to imply that there are hidden intentions, that the materiality of the work is simply a disguise for something else, a screen behind which the "real" story occurs – but perhaps it is also a pre-text, something that comes before the text but is framing it, physically holding it up. The author's concept of "transcendence" may not, in fact, be one of *escaping* the physical world to attain a spiritual state, but one in which both are important – in which the poetry and metaphysics of the work, the "*solução poética, a solução metafísica, a solução mística,*" are completely connected to the earth. The author's friend Paulo Dantas tells of a conversation with Guimarães Rosa in which Dantas told his friend: "*Seu chão é metafísico,*" "your ground is metaphysical" (26). Dantas explained this statement no further, but it is perhaps more relevant than he know: Guimarães Rosa's novel's *ground* was, in fact, metaphysical.

Guimarães Rosa illustrates this earthly approach to "*transcendência*" and the "mystical" by pointing his reader towards the mystics whose works he himself imbibed, and that in turn, his works imbibed too, "*embeberem os meus livros...*" He mentions the mystics Plotinus and Ruysbroeck in particular, claiming that their place in epigraph was not random, "*Não foi à toa,*" for they are a complement to his work:

Those epigraphs from Plotinus or from Ruysbroeck the Admirable for my *Corpo de Baile* were not without reason. They are a complement to my work. I am a contemplative fascinated by the *Great Mystery*, by the *The Ring and the Sparkling Stone*.<sup>305</sup> (Dantas 26)

It wasn't random, Guimarães Rosa revealed, that *GSV*'s fraternal twin bears Ruysbroeck in epigraph; Rosa was a contemplative fascinated by Plotinus's and Ruysbroeck's works. He refers to the epigraphs of *Corpo de Baile* (1956 – published the same year as *GSV*, and initially conceived of as the same work), in which Guimarães Rosa quotes Plotinus, from his *Enneads*, and subsequently quotes "Ruysbroeck"<sup>306</sup> o Admirável's work *O Anel ou a Pedra Brilhante*.<sup>307,308</sup> The most apparent connection between Plotinus, Ruysbroeck, and Guimarães

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<sup>305</sup> "*Não foi à toa aquelas epígrafes de Plotino ou de Ruysbroeck, o Admirável para o meu Corpo de Baile. São um complemento da minha obra. Sou um contemplado fascinado pelo Grande Mistério, pelo O Anel ou a Pedra Brilhante*"

<sup>306</sup> Also known as John Ruusbroec, and other spellings

<sup>307</sup> The work was present in Guimarães Rosa's library in French, *L'Anneau et la Pierre brillante* (known in English as *The Sparkling Stone*) (Bruxelles, Vromant, 1938), along with his *Le Miroir du salut éternel* (*A Mirror of Eternal Blessedness*), and *L'Ornement des noces spirituelles* (*The Spiritual Espousals* or *The Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage*). Francis Utéza points to further works of Hermeticism in the author's collection: Hermes Trismegisto, Plato, Plotinus, Pythagoras, Ovid, Boethius, Eckhart, Dante, and Angelus Silesius, and Berkeley (p. 34).

Rosa is evident in the mystics' conception of transcendence and matter, or the connection between physical and divine worlds, the physical and metaphysical. Whereas many mystics have sought to escape materiality, these two otherwise disparate philosophers *intertwine* the physical and metaphysical in their works. In the philosophical writings of Plotinus, the reader finds the *connection* between body and soul, and between material reality and the realm of the Ideal, while in the Hermetic writings of Flemish mystic Ruysbroeck, from a different time and place, the reader finds a mystic who went into the forest – a physical place – to contemplate and write about God, and found Him in the tangible as well as the intangible.

Guimarães Rosa, in describing himself as a “mystic,” had, then, certain mystics in mind, and, as is apparent in his philosophical literary explorations, not all mystics were created equal. As seen above, when Lorenz asked him if Riobaldo was a Faust, a mystic, or a Baroque man, Guimarães Rosa replies: “No, Riobaldo is not Faust, and even less a Baroque mystic. Riobaldo is the *sertão* made man and is my brother. ... Riobaldo is too much of the world to be a mystic, is too mystical to be Faust”<sup>309</sup> (67-68). Riobaldo is too mystical to be Faust, but too much *of the world* to be a Baroque mystic. For Plotinus and Ruysbroeck, though, and for Guimarães Rosa, being of-the-world and being a mystic are one and the same, for the physical is the path to the metaphysical, in a journey seeking the rapprochement of the body and soul... or for Guimarães Rosa, of the *sertão* and the eternal questions beyond it.

## 2.1 “PLOTINO, RUYSBROECK... SÃO um COMPLEMENTO da MINHA OBRA”:

### PLOTINUS, and the COALESCENCE of BODY and SOUL, MATTER and IDEAL-FORM:

Plotinus' writings about the “coalescence” of “Matter” and the “Ideal-Forms,” and of the body and the soul, are indicative of a world-view in which the physical realm is related to – even inhabited by – the metaphysical, much as in Guimarães Rosa's demonstrated (meta)physics in the *sertão*.

Plotinus wrote in the 200s AD, at approximately the time that the Biblical gospels were being written, and provided a synthesis of Greek philosophy, especially Plato's (seen below), and elements of Christian doctrine as well to contribute in large part to what would become Neo-

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<sup>308</sup> Following the mystics, there is a song/poem called “*Côco de festa, do Chico Barbós*” that is, according to Biagio D'Angelo (2006), based on the same ancient Portuguese-language children's song that gave the title of one of the *Corpo de Baile* novellas, “*Dão-Lalalão*” (292). According to D'Angelo, however, in this version it is overwhelmed with a pulse of wanting: “*ritma a pulsão antropológica de desejar tudo em um frenesi existencial que responde da plenitude da vida própria,*” (“the anthropological pulse of wanting everything is marked with cadence in an existential frenzy that responds to the plenitude of life itself”) (292). The objects desired in this version are all locally Northeast Brazilian, such as manioc dough and *beijú*, and Chico Barbós is very specifically situated in the *sertão* by JRG: “*dito Chico Rabeca, dito Chico Precata, Chico do Norte, Chico Mourro, Chico Rita, - na Sirga, Rancharia da Sirga, Vereda da Sirga, Baixao da Sirga, Sertão da Sirga*”. A Greek philosopher, a Flemish mystic and a “sertanejan” poet: in Guimarães Rosa's world of comfortable paradox, they are not just equal, but also compatible.

<sup>309</sup> “*Não, Riobaldo não é Fausto, e menos ainda um místico barroco. Riobaldo é o sertão feito homem e é meu irmão. ... Riobaldo é mundano demais para ser místico, é místico demais para ser Fausto*”

Platonism<sup>310</sup> – in which, according to William C. Placher (1996), God is considered “as the ultimate form in which all finite things participate, and who is thus internal to them” (113). The interaction between those “finite things” and the “ultimate form” which inhabits them was a main concern of Plotinus, specifically regarding the relationship between the soul and the body and, in consequence, all “Ideal-Forms” or “Ideas,” and “Matter,” their physical counterpart.

In relation to the soul/body dialectic, Plotinus was, as many were in his time, accepting at first of the Hellenistic premise that body and soul are separate, and the body base, while the soul represents all that is perfect – a true dichotomy of conflict of physical/metaphysical. However, he came to an understanding in his *Enneads* that the body/soul duality was in fact, rather than two separate things, a “coalescence” (6; I.1.3). This “coalescence” includes the combination of sensing (physical) and perception (intellectual) as “Sense-Perception,” and the result is the “Animate” (Henry xlii-lxxxiii; Dillon, lxxxiv-ci). In this Animate, the portion of the All-Soul (God, or the “Ideal-Form”) that takes physical shape is “[t]he All-Soul particularized for the space, at least, of the mortal life of man” (Dillon xxxvi), a *particularization* of “the first,” “the one,” “the good,” “the simple,” “the absolute,” “the transcendence,” “the infinite,” “the unconditional,” “the father,” etc. (xxxii). Plotinus writes that, in this “coalescence” or “couplement,” the body acquires life, sensation, and affection. The soul, however, is not brought down by death or desire by being in the body, but instead is *in* the body much like the essence of the bed was manifested in Plato’s particular bed (see below). It is:

... as Ideal-Form in Matter... like axe-form on iron: here, no doubt, the form is all important but it is still the axe, the complement of iron and form, that effects whatever is effected by the iron thus modified: on this analogy, therefore, we are even more strictly compelled to assign all the experiences of the combination to the body: their natural seat is the material member, the instrument, the potential recipient of life. (6; I.1.4)<sup>311</sup>

This analogy brings to mind Guimarães Rosa’s own analogy, in *GSV* – the waterfall, which is both earth and water. Taken as metaphor, the earthy “natural seat” of the waterfall is its “material member,” the “recipient” of the water – the divine – that completes it. The water is important, just as is the form of the axe; but it is the “couplement” of earth and water that creates the waterfall... the (meta)physical *sertão*.

Indeed, according to Plotinus, that axe-form/iron “coalescence” exemplified in the human body does not apply to the body and soul alone, but also to “Ideal-Forms” and “Matter” in general. Plotinus explains in his *Enneads* that the transcendent realm (“sphere of the Highest”) is made up of Ideal-Forms, and material existence is based on Matter – which is, in itself, undetermined and formless. It is through the “couplement” of those realms that Matter is “taking shape by these”

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<sup>310</sup> Plotinus could also be called a mystic or a Gnostic, given that he sought a deeper understanding and union with God through the specific knowledge of a “science” or “Dialectic”: “But this science, this Dialectic ..., what, in sum, is it? It is the Method, or Discipline, that brings with it the power of pronouncing with final truth upon the nature and relation of things- what each is, how it differs from others, what common quality all have, to what Kind each belongs and in what rank each stands in its Kind and whether its Being is Real-Being, and how many Beings there are, and how many non-Beings to be distinguished from Beings.” (Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. Mackenna, First Ennead, Third Tractate, point 4)

<sup>311</sup> Using Dillon’s edition, Mackenna’s translation, 1991.

[Soul, Ideal] and is “led so to a nobler principle of form” (93; II.4.3). Although Matter is rudely wrought and in a constant flux of birth and decay, yet it is capable of holding the shape that distinguishes one Ideal-Form from another - akin to Clay for the potter, but “the stuff which underlies all alike” (97; II.4.8).<sup>312</sup>

Plotinus further claims that the soul (“Authentic-Existence”) interacts with *other* “Ideal-Forms” *through the intermediary of the body*. In other words, the “Animate,” though “[m]ingled in a lower phase,” has access through its body-soul “Couplement” to the “Ideal” outside of itself as well as within itself. In fact, Plotinus claims that the world is made up completely of “Ideas installed in Mass,” which the body *senses* and the soul *perceives*; and that *perception* is of the phantom communication of other “Ideal-Forms,” the Ideal inherent in, and decorating, all Matter with which we are made and interact (101; II.4.12). The body and all Matter serve, then, as vehicles for communication of the Ideal, between material manifestations of the Ideal (9; I.1.5). The implication of this is that, though the mystics would call for contemplation to reach transcendence, *it is in fact in Matter itself that we can perceive the transcendent*. Could the *sertão*, then, present the form that is a key to understanding destiny, divinity, and metaphysics? This theory, so far, shows not only how Riobaldo might be both his body and his soul, but how the entire landscape might be, as well; and his perceptions of its complex experiential and spiritual components could be seen, then, as not only his own expectations coloring the landscape of his experience, but as a true communication of spiritual elements... or a combination of the two. For, indeed, Riobaldo finds God in the *sertão*, but he struggles with whether the devil is there, too, and concludes that while God is real, the devil was of his own imagining.

The theories above can be applied to much of Riobaldo’s experience of the *sertão*, explaining how the *sertão* can be a metaphysical, as much as a physical or experiential, experience. However, it is the next component that explains why the *sertão* is such a *necessary* component for the metaphysical themes of the novel. Plotinus claims that it is not only Matter which requires Ideal-Forms into order to be formed, but that those Ideal Forms, themselves, *actually require shape* in order to be fully themselves – fully multiple and distinct:

...there must of necessity be some character common to all [Ideal-Forms] and equally some peculiar character in each keeping them distinct. This peculiar characteristic, this distinguishing difference, is the individual shape. But if shape, then there is the shaped, that in which the difference is lodged. There is, therefore, a Matter accepting the shape, a permanent substratum. (94)

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<sup>312</sup> He follows Plato’s reasoning, beginning with the premise of things as *images* of things, as put forth by Plato in Book X of The Republic, wherein Plato concludes that there is the “essence of the bed,” or “true existence” of all things made by God, and the “particular bed” made by a carpenter, or “semblance of existence”: “And if thing is ever the image of thing, so every Good must always be the image of a higher Good” (Plotinus 33; I.4.3). Plotinus then explains that the Ideal-Form is persistent, though its incarnations on Earth change, much as Plato argued that the Ideal is like the Sun. And though appearing to be in decay, nevertheless the physical mass of the universe is in a consistent flux in which the “total remains unchanged” and “the flux is not outgoing” (II.1.3), thus contributing to the agelessness of the Kosmos.



Matter, then, appears to be related to the existence of the Ideal, even necessary for it, given that the Ideal-Forms have unique characteristics only conceivable as a kind of shape in themselves.<sup>313</sup> That “sertanejan” support/stair/trampoline/pretext is no longer incidental, peripheral, or random; it is *fundamental*. Just as the waterfall could not exist without the water, neither could it exist without the earth.

The specific quotations that Guimarães Rosa chooses from the *Enneads* for *Corpo de Baile* are those that concentrate on the materiality of the Earth as well as the status of *image* of our exterior form. He changes them somewhat, as seen in the footnotes:

In a circle, without doubt, the center is naturally immovable; but, if the circumference were also, it wouldn't be a circle but an immense center. (my translation of Guimarães Rosa's paraphrase)<sup>314</sup>

The best, without doubt, is to listen to Plato: it's necessary – he says – that there be in the universe a solid that is resistant: it is for this reason that the Earth is situated in the center, like a bridge over the abyss; it offers a firm soil to whoever walks on it, and the animals that are on its surface take necessarily a solidity similar to its own.<sup>315</sup>

Because, in all the circumstances of real life, it isn't the soul inside of us, but its shadow, the exterior man, who wails, laments, and plays all the roles in this theater of multiple stages, that is the entire Earth.<sup>316</sup>

Their act is, then, an act of an artist, comparable to the movement of the dancer; the dancer is the image of this life, what proceeds with art; the art of the dance directs his/her movements; life acts similarly with the living.<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> To deal with this issue, Plotinus proposes that if “there is an Intelligible Realm beyond, of which this world is an image, then, since this world-compound is based on Matter, there must be Matter there also,” though the Matter there is “real-existent,” while the Matter here is “a dead thing decorated” (94).

<sup>314</sup> “*Num circulo, sem dúvida, o centro é naturalmente imóvel; mas, se a circunferência também o fosse, não seria ela senão um centro imenso*” In the current English translation: “Further, the centre of a circle [and therefore of the Kosmos] is distinctively a point of rest: if the circumference outside were not in motion, the universe would be no more than one vast centre” (*The Enneads*, II.2.1; trans. Mackenna). (Guimarães Rosa had Emile Bréhier's edition of the *Enneads*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1924 (Utéza, 34)).

<sup>315</sup> “*O melhor, sem dúvida, é escutar Platão: é preciso – diz ele – que haja no universo um sólido que seja resistente; é por isso que a terra está situada no centro, como uma ponte sobre o abismo; ela oferece um solo firme a quem sobre ela caminha, e os animais que estão em sua superfície dela tiram necessariamente uma solidez semelhante à sua*” Current English translation (Mackenna): “We can scarcely do better, in fine, than follow Plato. Thus: In the universe as a whole there must necessarily be such a degree of solidity, that is to say, of resistance, as will ensure that the earth, set in the centre, be a sure footing and support to the living beings moving over it, and inevitably communicate something of its own density to them” (II.1.7).

<sup>316</sup> “*Porque, em tôdas as circunstâncias da vida real, não é a alma dentro de nós, mas sua sombra, o homem exterior, que geme, se lamenta e desempenha todos os papéis neste teatro de palcos múltiplos, que é a terra inteira*” Current English translation (Mackenna): “For on earth, in all the succession of life, it is not the Soul within but the Shadow outside of the authentic man, that grieves and complains and acts out the plot on this world stage which men have dotted with stages of their own constructing” (III.2.15).

<sup>317</sup> “*Seu ato é, pois, um ato de artista, comparável ao movimento do dançador; o dançador é a imagem desta vida, que procede com arte; a arte da dança dirige seus movimentos; a vida age semelhantemente com o vivente.*” Current

Together, these particular citations indicate that it is not just the “soul” or “center” that makes up the world, but rather, it is necessary to have a moving (i.e. fallible, material) circumference, an “exterior man,” to play out the forms and roles of the Ideal. In the first, it is claimed that the circle without a circumference would be “all center”; therefore, existence requires that it have a shell, have shape. Second, it is claimed that the materiality of creatures on the planet draws sustenance from that “center.” Third, it is claimed again that the materiality itself is necessary, for the exterior man is what allows us to act on our earthly stage, not the soul; and fourth, it is claimed that living beings are like dancers, who are images in life but whose shape and movements are those of the Art of Dance – life itself.

Plotinus’ theories – as expressed in these citations, and in the rest of his *Enneads* – relate directly to Guimarães Rosa’s own stated opinion about his fictional work, and the mystical or metaphysical truths that lie beneath constructed material; he asked his reader to search for the “*solução poética, a solução metafísica, a solução mística*” in order to understand his work, and explained that the “*terra-a-terra,*” the concrete or realistic, is not complete in itself but is instead a support for transcendence. The truth or true reality, says Guimarães Rosa, according to his conception of the world – and that of Plotinus, his work’s “complement” – is as something beyond the material, in which the objective material reality is appearance, shadow, agent of the true reality (Camacho 47-48, see above). The more realistic, material, or objective the work appears, the more, he says, the reader is climbing a stair, on a trampoline; in other words, the more the reader has access to the human experience, or “dwelling” of the region, its full “placeness,” the more that region can be unfurled into its spiritual possibilities.

The author is telling us through such citations that the specificity of the objects, places, activities, figures, characters, and plot, the components of his meticulously researched regional masterpiece, are all to communicate something else *and* itself – the realm of “Ideal-Forms,” or the “All-Soul,” in the material, if read in light of his appreciation of Plotinus. Here, too, as quoted earlier, it makes sense what Guimarães Rosa says about parable:

...the people of the interior – without conventions, “poses” – give better characters of parable: there you can see well the human reactions and the action of destiny: there you can see well a river fall in the waterfall or form the contours of the mountain, and the great trees cracked under the lightning ray, and every stem of the human grass sprout again with the rain or are scorched in the drought.<sup>318</sup> (Barbosa 209)

Given his metaphysical interests, it is apparent that in choosing them for “parable” because they lacked “poses” and were more connected to nature, he considered the people of the *sertão* to be somehow more deeply in touch with the “true” realm.

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English translation (Mackenna): “Life, then, aims at pattern as does the pantomimic dancer with his set movements; the mime, in himself, represents life, and, besides, his movements proceed in obedience to a pattern designed to symbolize life. Thus far to give us some idea of the nature of Life in general” (III.2.16).

<sup>318</sup> “...o povo do interior – sem convenções, “poses” – dá melhores personagens de parábolas: lá se vêem bem as reações humanas e a ação do destino: lá se vê bem um rio cair na cachoeira ou contornar a montanha, e as grandes árvores estalaram sob o raio, e cada talo do capim humano rebrotar com a chuva ou se estorricar com a seca”

Regarding how one can come in contact with the true realm, Plotinus' work also plays a role in understanding Guimarães Rosa's audacity in attempting to narrate the "*inenarrável*", "inenarrable." His inclusion of "poetic" among "mystical" and "metaphysical," equates them through juxtaposition, implying that Guimarães Rosa feels about poetry as Plotinus did – that it brings one closer to truth - and not as Plato did – that it is deceiving. In Book X of Plato's Republic, where he comes to understand that every object is a manifestation of an ideal truth, Plato concludes that a painter or poet depicting an object is in fact, in the act of imitation, another step *farther* from truth than the object itself is, and should in fact be censored: "all poetical imitations are ruinous to the understanding of the hearers, and that the knowledge of their true nature is the only antidote to them" ... "the tragic poet is an imitator, and therefore, like all other imitators, he is thrice removed from the king and from the truth."<sup>319</sup> Plotinus, in contrast, uses the metaphor of the musician to point to those who have a natural propensity for understanding truth *through* art:

[the Musician] must learn to distinguish the material forms from the Authentic-Existent which is the source of all these correspondences and of the entire reasoned scheme in the work of art: he must be led to the Beauty that manifests itself through these forms... Consider, even, the case of pictures: those seeing by the bodily sense the productions of the art of painting do not see the one thing in the one only way; they are deeply stirred by recognizing in the objects depicted to the eyes the presentation of what lies in the idea, and so are called to recollection of the truth- the very experience out of which Love rises.

He goes on to say, explicitly:

Still the arts are not to be slighted on the ground that they create by imitation of natural objects; for, to begin with, these natural objects are themselves imitations; then, we must recognise that they give no bare reproduction of the thing seen but go back to the Ideas from which Nature itself derives, and, furthermore, that much of their work is all their own; they are holders of beauty and add where nature is lacking. (p. 411; V.8.1)

For Plotinus, then – and for Guimarães Rosa, the poet – poetry, as an art, is a way of better approaching the truth of which nature itself is a necessary and illuminating decoration.

### **RUYSBROECK, and DIVINE REALITY in the COMMON WORLD of MEN:**

Religious mysticism often searches for divinity beyond the physical, but Flemish mystic Jan van Ruysbroeck (1293-1381) based his mysticism on God's dynamic existence as both "other" than, and part of, creation. Ruysbroeck thus echoed Plotinus, for whom Material and Ideal-Form exist in coalescence, and, too, Plato, for whom Matter and Semblance exist in "participatory dichotomy" (see below). Ruysbroeck sought his unitive life with God through a cyclical

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<sup>319</sup> Plato arrived through logic at the conclusion that for every object, there exist God's ideal of the object, and the varied earthly manifestations of it. In his example using beds, there is the "one existing in nature, which is made by God"... "a bed which is essentially and by nature one only," and then there is "another which is the work of the carpenter". The artist, however, who attempts to be a "maker of all the works of all other workmen," does so as in a mirror, in image only.

transcendence of spiritual journey and earthly return, rather than a unidirectional search for spirituality beyond the material realm. He exercised his mysticism by seeking God in “common life” (*ghemeyne leven*) and proposing a harmonious balance of 1) “work in earthly things” (theological *vita activa*) and 2) *vita contemplativa*, “rest in God.” Reflecting this, he describes humanity as *both* “wholly in God” *and* “wholly in ourselves,” “in eternity” *and* “in time,” a duality for which he believes Jesus is key.

As indicated by Edmund Colledge in his introduction to *Mediaeval Netherlands Religious Literature* (1965), the “Mystics” are those who show “preoccupation with ... that searching of the soul for God which will lead it towards a union with Him so close ‘that the soul can no longer perceive difference between himself and God’” (Colledge 8). Evelyn Underhill (1998, originally 1913) also defines the goals, beliefs, and processes of mystics, or those who “tread the Mystic Way” (47). The “Mystic Way,” says Underhill, is the way “by which they [the mystics] move from the condition of that which we like to call the ‘normal man’ to that state of spiritual maturity... which they sometimes call the ‘Unitive Life’... as ‘attested by countless mystics of every period and creed’” (viii). In Underhill’s work *The Mystic Way...*,<sup>320</sup> she synthesizes the aspects of Christian mysticism that have defined it, specifically the stages/milestones that have generally been agreed upon as being a progression towards that “Unitive Life”: spiritual childhood,<sup>321</sup> and then *Awakening*,<sup>322</sup> *Purgation*,<sup>323</sup> *Illumination*,<sup>324</sup> *Dark Night of the Soul*,<sup>325</sup> and *Union*.<sup>326</sup> These stages appear to be a complete renouncement of the body and the physical world, indeed of the “self” as a whole, and for many they may be. Beldan Lane (2001), too, explains that mysticism lends itself to such a renouncement, one he believes to be flawed: “in ascetical theology the traditional pattern of purgative, illuminative, and unitive stages of the spiritual life has inadvertently implied a vertical movement away from the world in the journey toward God” (224). It doesn’t need to be this way, however, according to Lane and Underhill, the latter of whom argues, “the true mystic quest may as well be fulfilled in the market as in the cloister” (45).

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<sup>320</sup> The work is influenced by Freudian thought and her own theology. For example, she claims that the “genuine” Christian mystic has no affiliation to Plato or Plotinus or other “Pagan” origins, but is found only and completely in the New Testament (vii). She also asserts that there is in humanity an “an unmistakable instinct for transcendence” (4), and that there is psychological proof of the uniqueness of the Christian mystic.

<sup>321</sup> A vigorous and practical period (47)

<sup>322</sup> In a stage of spiritual adolescence, the contemplative finds new faculties, and is mobilized but also overwhelmed by the loss of his simple paradise (48). She equates this “adolescence” to the period of Mystic *Awakening*, a stage of re-birth.

<sup>323</sup> The *Awakening* leads to an often difficult or painful growth and readjustment, the remaking of the inner world – a process called *Purgation*, in which “Man, hampered by strong powers and instincts well adapted to the life he is leaving, is candidate for a new and higher career to which he is not fully adapted yet”. (58) This period is marked by an education in discipline and a painful readjustment to a loss of innocence in the inner world.

<sup>324</sup> Also called “Grace,” “the transcendent life-force” (53-54), a period in which the contemplative has “‘ornaments of the spiritual marriage’ put on”. This is not an end in itself, but is one more “halt” on the “upward march of the soul”.

<sup>325</sup> Those who move beyond *Illumination* experience a period of gloom and loss of equilibrium, “the last drastic purification of the whole character, ... called by some mystics the *Dark Night of the Soul*, by others the “spiritual death” or “purgation of the will”. In this stage, the “soul is finally cleansed of all attachments to selfhood” (55).

<sup>326</sup> “complete harmony with the divine” (55)

Ruysbroeck's work exemplifies this point more than many others. Although his initial public religious life began with campaigns and works against heresy,<sup>327</sup> Ruysbroeck then took religious vows and went to Groenendael on a "thirty-eight years sojourn in the forest" (Underhill "Introduction" xiv), where he founded an Augustinian house and schooled others in a working spiritual lifestyle (Colledge 12-13). In his works such as *The Sparkling Stone* and the *Espousals*, he was concerned with the mystical question of how one can achieve transcendence, or "union with God" (Colledge 13). This was not, however, a repetition of the same hierarchical path to God of which others wrote, as indicated above, including such as Eckhart, whom Guimarães Rosa also read<sup>328</sup> but didn't choose to list as an influence (Dupré xii). Rather, Ruysbroeck's works balanced worldly life and spiritual contemplation – what Underhill would call the "market" and the "cloister" – and sought a *cyclical*, rather than a *vertical*, path to God.

Ruysbroeck's mysticism is founded on a conceptualization of the connection between creature and creator in which the creature is *both* separate from, and one with, the divine, "wholly in God" and "wholly in ourselves":

... we cannot wholly become God and lose our created being, this is impossible. Did we, however, remain wholly in ourselves, sundered from God, we should be miserable and unblest. And therefore we should feel ourselves living wholly in God and wholly in ourselves and between these two feelings we should find nothing else but the grace of God and the exercise of our love. (*Sparkling Stone* 205-206)

Ruysbroeck writes, too, that every creature is *both* a physical reality, and a divine idea conceived long before, much as Plotinus wrote:

...through the Eternal Birth, all creatures have come forth in eternity, before they were created in time. So God has seen and known them in Himself, according to distinction, in living ideas, and in an otherness from Himself; but not as something other in all ways, for all that is in God is God. (*The Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage* 172-173)

Underhill also finds Ruysbroeck's dualities reminiscent of Plotinus'<sup>329</sup>: the truth of God, and the world of men, both connected and separate – *other*, but not *distinct* (xxxii).

Ruysbroeck ties this concept of humanity's material/divine nature, "in" and "other" than God, to Jesus, a uniter of man and God, whom he calls the "Sparkling Stone"<sup>330</sup> and the "Light"<sup>331</sup>: a being on Earth, who allows us to see eternal life *here*. He believed that Jesus' coming to our material reality is reflective of – or perhaps, key to – the connection between created beings and

<sup>327</sup> He waged a successful campaign against Bloemardinne (possibly a pseudonym), leader of "the Brethren of the Free Spirit" and a woman considered by many to be either a heretic or a prophetess (Underhill "Introduction" xiv).

<sup>328</sup> Guimarães Rosa had Mestre Eckhart's *Traité e Sermons* (Paris, Aubier-Montaigne, 1942) (Utéza 34).

<sup>329</sup> In her introduction to a collection of Ruysbroeck's works, Ruysbroeck says that in the mystic's work "we catch fragments which Plato or Plotinus on one hand, Hegel on the other, might recognise as the reports of one who had known and experienced the Reality for which they sought" (xiii).

<sup>330</sup> "By this sparkling stone we mean our Lord Christ Jesus" (*Sparkling Stone*, Chapter IV; p. 188)

<sup>331</sup> "...in this darkness there shines and is born an incomprehensible Light, which is the Son of God, in Whom we behold eternal life" (*Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage*, Book 3, Chapter I; p. 170)

God.

According to Ruysbroeck's works, the immanent/transcendent nature of created beings means that the path to a full devotion to God lies not in embracing the spiritual through leaving the material body and world behind, as thought by many contemporaries and predecessors, but in a dynamic process of *cyclical* transcendence, in which the way to reach God is through a cycle of *journey* to the divine and, just as important, *return* to the material world (Underhill "Introduction" xxiv). As Dupré (1985)<sup>332</sup> explains, in Ruysbroeck's philosophy "the contemplative mind moves with the same divine dynamism with which the Father moves into his divine image and into the multiplicity of creation" (xii-xiii). For Ruysbroeck, then, God is in the "multiplicity of creation" as well as in his "divine image"; so, too, the mystic must remain "in creation" as well as seeking the "divine" to find God.

Because of the cyclical rhythm of Ruysbroeck's mysticism – and his view of God as both divine and in the world, and humans as both in the world and in God – it could not be sought in contemplation alone. According to Underhill, Ruysbroeck did not approve of the "Quietism" of those who sought separation from the world, of their "passive" or "uninterrupted contemplation" ("Intro" xxvii). Warner and Webb (2007) explain that the mystic was not fully opposed to the contemplative life; in fact, he disagreed with society's growing tendency to place hermits in disrepute due to their perceived idleness or desire for recognition, for he was familiar with hermits and saw that "introspective people" pursuing the "grace of divine contemplation" (169) were often good. However, he believed that this wasn't enough, and he wrote, taught and practiced his combination of both contemplation and *work*.

Warner and Webb explain that Ruysbroeck's practice of mysticism consisted of a joining together of what medieval thought termed "*vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*: roughly speaking, ordinary life in the world and life according to the special rules and privileges of the religious state." Ruysbroeck saw the distinction between the "active life" and "contemplative life" as a hindrance to devoting one's life to God, and sought a model of balance in which the individual could "search for higher things" in doing "good works" (168). Brother Gerard, one of Ruysbroeck's disciples at Groenendael, wrote that the mystic "knew how 'he could work in earthly things and rest in God at the same time'" (170). In fact, according to Underhill, Ruysbroeck perpetually sought even the most menial service, even as he lovingly contemplated natural things, finding in them "intimations of divinity." In his "doctrine of the 'balanced career' of action and contemplation as the ideal of the Christian soul," Underhill explains, "his rapturous ascents towards Divine Reality were compensated by the eager and loving interest with which he turned towards the world of men" ("Introduction" xv).

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<sup>332</sup> Dupré's study of Ruysbroeck centers on its place within previous mystical theologies – specifically, as a "remarkably balanced" theology that "uniquely synthesized Greek spiritual theology with Augustinian introspection" (xi). While others such as Eckhart had found "a darkness beyond distinction" in similar syntheses, an "insurmountably negative theology" that "seems inherent in the introspective method itself" (xii), Ruysbroeck's balanced approach found God to be "dynamic, never at rest and, hence, never permanently withdrawn in its own darkness," and therefore, the contemplative's journey to the silent darkness, the "desert of the Godhead," is not terminal, but fluid, and "pregnant with the Word" (xii-xiii).

It is this combination of earthly work and Godly rest, the *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*, which defined, according to Warner and Webb, Ruysbroeck's ideal of the "*ghemeyn leven*", literally the "common life", and the "*ghemeyne mensche*", "common man."<sup>333</sup> In the *Sparkling Stone*, the *ghemeyne mensche* is fully portrayed as a "balanced person," "harmoniously combining" what were previously considered completely separate pursuits (Warner and Webb 169). As Dupré explains, the contemplative in Ruysbroeck's works – the *ghemeyne mensche* – practices virtuous works as part of the spiritual journey, and thus changes internally, is "transformed and become one with that same light with which they see and which they see" (Esp. III. 3.B, in Dupré xi). Dupré continues: "Creatures now appear in their divine foundation as well as in their divinely created otherness. They are to be respected and cherished for both." In this understanding, the contemplative spirit is propelled into "the clarity of God's personal image and the multiplicity of the entire creation established in that image" (xii-xiv). According to Dupré, then, Ruysbroeck's teachings, in combining the contemplative and active life into a dynamic, cyclical transcendence, led to an appreciation of the same duality in all things – creation/the image it's created in; otherness/the divine foundation. Ruysbroeck embraced these "paradoxes" of being/becoming,<sup>334</sup> of same/other, of creation/divine, of many/one – just as Guimarães Rosa, his reader, embraced paradox much later in his literary vision.

The three quotations that Guimarães Rosa chose from Ruysbroeck to place in his epigraph of *Corpo de Baile* relate to the "sparkling stone" of Ruysbroeck's contemplation: Jesus, as explained to the reader in the eponymous book ("By this sparkling stone we mean our Lord Christ Jesus" (188)). These three quotations are all from one passage in the *Sparkling Stone*, Chapter IV (p. 187-189), and are presented by Guimarães Rosa in reverse order:

See, this is the brilliant stone given to the contemplative; it brings a new name, which no one knows, except for the one that receives it.<sup>335</sup>

The precious stone of which I speak is entirely round and equally smooth on all of its parts.<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>333</sup> Warner and Webb explain that the translation "common man" is misleading; the terms *ghemeyne mensche* and *ghemeyn leven* ("common life") are much more complex than any translation has been able to satisfy.

<sup>334</sup> For Ruysbroeck, says Underhill, "as for St Augustine, Reality is both Being and Becoming: one-fold and changeless in essence, active and diverse in expression, a dualism aptly represented by the theological dogma of the Trinity in Unity" (Underhill "Intro" xv).

<sup>335</sup> "*Vede, eis a pedra brilhante dada ao contemplativo; ela traz um nome novo, que ninguém conhece, a não ser aquéle que a recebe*" In Colledge's English translation: "Behold, this is the sparkling stone which is given to the God-seeing man, and in this stone A NEW NAME IS WRITTEN, WHICH NO MAN KNOWETH SAVING HE THAT RECEIVETH IT" (*Sparkling Stone* 189). These English translations come from Colledge's 1965 English translation; Guimarães Rosa's Portuguese version is at times different in syntax and terminology, and may have been his own translation or paraphrase of the version in his library: *L'Anneau et la Pierre brillante*, Bruxelles, Vromant, 1938 (Utéza 34).

<sup>336</sup> "*A pedra preciosa de que falo é inteiramente redonda e igualmente plana em todas as suas partes*" In Colledge's English translation: "This noble stone of which I speak is wholly round and smooth and even all over" (188).

The little stone is designated by the name *calculus* because of its smallness, and because one can tread on it with one's feet without feeling any pain from it. It is of a brilliant luster, crimson like an ardent flame, small and round, all smooth, and very light.<sup>337</sup>

The first quotation (last in the passage) tells the reader that this stone is something that the contemplative earns, and it cannot be shared but only known by the one who receives it. The second quotation (second in the passage) and third (first in the passage) describe the stone as, among other things, "round" and "smooth", "fiery" and "small." These attributes of the stone are meaningful elements of Ruysbroeck's metaphor for Jesus, as he elaborates in the work:

That the stone is round teaches us that the Divine Truth has neither beginning nor end; that it is smooth and even all over teaches us that the Divine Truth shall weigh all things evenly, and shall give to each according to his merits; and that which he gives shall be with each throughout eternity.

The last property of this stone of which I will speak is, that it is particularly light; for the Eternal Word of the Father has no weight, nevertheless It bears heaven and earth by Its strength. And It is equally near to all things; yet none can attain It, for It is set on high and goes before all creatures, and reveals Itself where It wills and when It wills... (Colledge 188-189).

This statement is full of a particular kind of religious paradox. The stone is both weightless, and yet it holds up everything; it is near everything, but unattainable; it is on high, and yet revealed. It is also both great and humble; it has a brilliant fire, and yet it one can tread it underfoot and feel nothing at all. These paradoxes are representative of a further paradox, the one explained above here: that Jesus is both a divine being and a human form. He explains:

By this sparkling stone we mean our Lord Christ Jesus, for He is, according to His Godhead, a shining forth of the Eternal Light, and an irradiation of the glory of God, and a flawless mirror in which all things live. (187)

The stone (and Christ) are, according to Ruysbroeck, both earthly and divine, and in this mirror for all of creation, also dual.

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Guimarães Rosa's choice of Ruysbroeck over other mystics gives clarity to his own use of physical reality as both its material aspect, fully, and its metaphysical aspect, at the same time.

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<sup>337</sup> "*A pedrinha é designada pelo nome de calculus por causa de sua pequenez, e porque se pode calcar aos pés sem disso sentir-se dôr alguma. Ela é de um lustro brilhante, rubra como uma flama ardente, pequena e redonda, toda plana, e muito leve*" In Colledge's English translation: "This stone is also like to a fiery flame, for the fiery love of the Eternal Word has filled the whole world with love and wills that all loving spirits be burned up to nothingness in love. This stone is also so small that a man hardly feels it, even though he treads it underfoot. And that is why it is called CALCULUS, that is, 'treadling'" (188). (Guimarães Rosa's version appears to include also the earlier phrase, "small and round, and smooth all over, and very light" (187)).



Both Plotinus and Ruysbroeck spoke to material things as earthly manifestations of higher truths, but which, in giving body to those truths, are *no less* a part of the human experience of the divine. For Plotinus, the Ideal-Forms imbued earthly Matter with its nobility, even as Matter gave necessary shape to the Ideal; one could not exist without the other, and it is as bodies perceiving Matter that we are able to sense the transcendent Ideal present around us. For Ruysbroeck, the *vita contemplativa* is not enough to know God: God exists both separate from, and inside of, creation, and thus human beings – like Jesus, both of and other than God – can come to know Him only through both material *and* spiritual realms/ways.

Both mystics illustrate the role of the *sertão* as developed in *GSV*: it is the “Matter” or “created being” which allows Riobaldo, and the reader, to attempt to understand larger transcendent truths. In fact, *GSV* is a work *cyclical* in form and *dual* in focus, like Ruysbroeck’s *ghemeyn leven*: through narrator Riobaldo’s circuitous prose, *GSV* shows a remarkably precise description of the archetypal *sertão*, and a remarkably complex spiritual journey, at the same time. The narrative work is a grounded mysticism, in which the warrior’s paths and the *sertão*’s plants, creatures, and waters are all at once a physical and a metaphysical phenomenon, and the work becomes both a time/place in Brazil and a psychical geography for the relationship between humanity, earth, and spirituality. The *sertão* is the setting to pose metaphysical questions, but is also their answer: a regional metaphysics akin to Ruysbroeck’s material mysticism.

## 2.2 “QUERO FICAR COM...”

Guimarães Rosa has demonstrated beyond a doubt that he has affiliations with mystical thought, and surely has mystical affiliations beyond those discussed here, but these mentioned mystics – not chosen at random – profoundly illustrate the author’s understanding and appreciation for a vision of the world in which that which is material and specific to a time or place is in a very literal sense the incarnation of something much more meaningful, something we can grasp through a closer study of both the world around us and of our innermost reflections, and something to which art can give a clue. He admits openly, in fact, that his literary works reflect his mystical readings:

And I myself became surprised to see, *a posteriori*, how the novels, some more, others less, develop themes that could affiliate themselves, in some way, to the “Dialogues”, remotely, or to the “Enneads”, or have in the old Hindu texts some little root of departure.<sup>338</sup> (Rosa/Bizzarri 67)

He mentions here Plotinus and Ruysbroeck, and, too, Plato’s *Dialogues*, and ancient Hindu texts. In the same letter, Guimarães Rosa mentions several other specific philosophers and religions, as well, when he says that his works...:

...defend the high primacy of intuition, or revelation, or inspiration, above the presumptuous sparkle of reflexive intelligence, of reason, the Cartesian shrew. I want to

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<sup>338</sup> “E eu mesmo fiquei espantado de ver, *a posteriori*, como as novelas, umas mais, outras menos, desenvolvem temas que poderiam filiar-se, de algum modo, aos “Diálogos”, remotamente, ou às “Eneadas”, ou ter nos velhos textos hindús qualquer raizinha de partida. Daí, as epígrafes de Plotino e Ruysbroeck.”

stay with the Tao, with the Vedas and Upanishads, with the writers of the Gospels and Saint Paul, with Plato, with Plotinus, with Bergson, with Berdyaev– with Christ, principally.<sup>339</sup> (Rosa/Bizzarri 67-68)

This citation comes from the same letter in which Guimarães Rosa rated the importance of the “*cenário e realidade sertaneja*” and “*valor metafísico-religioso*,” but included both. To Plotinus and Ruysbroeck, he adds: Plato, Berdyaev, Bergson, the Gospels and St. Paul and Christ, the Tao, and the Vedas and Upanishads (sacred texts of Hinduism). These references, too, upon closer inspection, illustrate his profound interest in the oneness and duality of things, for they share in developing the ideas of connection (...participation, coalescence, hypostasis, mitigated dualism...) between semblance and essence, immanent and transcendent, God and man, Yin and Yang, etc. – terminology from many different times and places, but struggling with the same reconciliation of opposites.

### **PLATO, and a PARTICIPATORY DICHOTOMY of SEMBLANCE and ESSENCE:**

Plato’s works<sup>340</sup> consist of written dialogues with Socrates, his mentor, and other contemporaries, and include within them a construction of a worldview of duality which is seen often as a foundation for further philosophical dichotomies such as body/soul, earth/heaven, etc. In the *Republic*, for instance, he writes his famous conclusions about the image vs. ideal of objects within the metaphor of the “bed,” in which the “semblance of existence” of the “particular bed” is representative of the “true existence” of the “essence of the bed.” Further, in the *Republic*, he claims, “no artificer makes the ideas themselves: how could he? ... there is another artist... One who is the maker of all the works of all other workmen.” All earthly forms, then, are “semblance,” or the “particular” – similar to “Matter,” as Plotinus will later say – while there exists within those forms “essence,” or “true existence” – much as what Plotinus will label the “Ideal-Form.”

This conceptualization of “semblance” and “essence” is representative of his larger foundational conceptualization of the duality of the world and thought – the Platonic doctrine of “the world of phenomena and the world of ideas” (Nucho 51). This is also seen in part in, for instance, the famous allegory of the cave in Book VII of Plato’s *Republic*. In this allegory, men live in a cave or prison-house in which they can only see shadows of what happens outside, and thus, as Plato says: “To them... the truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images” and “if they were able to converse with one another, would they not suppose that they were naming what was actually before them?” He concludes, “the prison-house is the world of sight, the light of the fire is the sun, and you will not misapprehend me if you interpret the journey upwards to be the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world.” The shadows are the material world for Plato, as Guimarães Rosa too states, when he claims to Camacho: “*nós estamos entre sombras*.” These shadows, these phenomena, are corruptible and transitory, whereas the ideas are perfect and real

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<sup>339</sup> “...defendem o altíssimo primado da intuição, da revelação, da inspiração, sobre o bruxolear presunçoso da inteligência reflexiva, da razão, a megera cartesiana. Quero ficar com o Tão, com os Vedas e Upanixades, com os Evangelistas e São Paulo, com Platão, com Plotino, com Bérçson, com Berdiaeff – com Cristo, principalmente.”

<sup>340</sup> Guimarães Rosa owned Plato’s “principle works” (*Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *The Republic*), in French and English editions (Utéza 34).

in eternal essence (a word created by Aristotle<sup>341</sup>) – but nonetheless, those ideas are housed in the shadows.

In *Phaedo*, as well, Plato explains his vision of a material, experienced earth, and a different *true* earth: the earth we inhabit is vast, but “the true earth is pure and situated in the pure heaven,” and this pure, true earth is above us; “we who live in these hollows are deceived into the notion that we are dwelling above on the surface of the earth.” And in *Phaedrus*, Plato describes the place where the essences dwell: “Of the world which is beyond the heavens, who can tell? There is an essence formless, colourless, intangible, perceived by the mind only, dwelling in the region of true knowledge. The divine mind in her revolution enjoys this fair prospect, and beholds justice, temperance, and knowledge in their everlasting essence.” Also, in a dialogue written by Plato between Socrates and Parmenides (called *Parmenides*), it is posited that there are absolute ideas, “ideas in themselves,” behind the things that “partake of them.” These “absolute ideas” are of such things as beauty, good, and – though in the dialogue Socrates at first fears that such a leap would lead to nonsense – also “absolute ideas” of creatures, fire, water; hair, mud, dirt, the vile and paltry as well as the lofty. Parmenides says Socrates’ hesitation is only because he is young; when he is older, he will not “despise even the meanest things,” a statement which, in the midst of this criticism of the idea that there could be “absolute ideas” of vile things, shows that such criticism may be a part of the show. There is, the dialogue concludes, for all things “an idea distinct from the actual objects with which we come into contact,” and they further agree that these “ideas” are not separated by being manifest in many places at once, but are rather, “like the day which is one and the same in many places at once, and yet continuous with itself; in this way each idea may be one and the same in all at the same time.”

All of these statements show that there are two aspects of the world: the physical world, and the “true” one. Beldan Lane (2001) explains how Plato’s preference for the “true” in such a duality has left a legacy in the Western spiritual tradition that goes against the appreciation for the material world: he gives the example of Petrarch in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, who climbed a mountain and marveled at earthly beauty but then chastised himself, angry that he was “admiring earthly things” when he should have been reflecting on how “nothing is wonderful but the soul,” and he left the mountain “reflecting on how the world’s beauty can divert men and women.” The Platonic heritage, he claims, is *reactive* to the “thingness of things, the placeness of place” and “seeks to move immediately to the ultimate, the spiritual, the One” (*Landscapes...* 225).

However, even though the Platonic search is for the essence behind the semblance of things, the “true” one in Plato’s discussions is nonetheless *manifest in the physical*; they are not unconnected. Francis Peters explains that although the “*eide*”<sup>342</sup> are “indivisible, eternal,” and the “phenomena (*aistheta*)” are “transient, sensible,” they are in their very natures connected, participatory:

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<sup>341</sup> “‘Essence’ is the standard English translation of Aristotle’s curious phrase *to ti ên einai*, literally “the what it was to be” for a thing. This phrase so boggled his Roman translators that they coined the word *essentia* to render the entire phrase, and it is from this Latin word that ours derives” (Cohen 2008)

<sup>342</sup> *eide*, plural of *eidōs*: “appearance, constitutive nature, form, type, species, idea,” used earlier in Greek philosophy with various meanings but canonized by Plato to mean “idea” with a transcendent, separate quality, unchanging, “suprasensible reality,” as opposed to “sensible phenomena” (Peters 46-47).

The *eide* are the cause (*aitia*) of the *aistheta* (*Phaedo* 100b-101c), and the latter are said to participate (*methexis*, q.v.) in the *eide*. In an elaborate metaphor, pervasive in Plato, the *aistheton* is said to be a copy (*eikon*, q.v.) of its eternal model (*paradeigma*), the *eidos*. This act of artistic creation (*mimesis*, q.v.) is the work of a supreme craftsman (*demiourgos*, q.v.) ... There is little question of the transcendence of the *eide* (cf. *Tim.* 51b-52d), but Plato's use of *methexis* suggests a degree of immanence as well (*Phaedo* 103b-104a, *Tim.* 50c; and see *genesis*). (48)

Plato, then, supposes a world of ideas that is separate from that of images or objects, and superior to it, but *nonetheless manifest in it*. These ideas or ideals are the forms in which material manifestations *participate*, in a sort of participatory dichotomy.<sup>343</sup> This is a duality of things – but the shadows resemble the ideals, and the ideals require the shadows. This is familiar to readers of *GSV*: the metaphysical and physical are distinct concepts, but are completely intertwined.

Plato, and whosoever influenced him in his construction of this connected dichotomy, laid the foundation for many later thinkers, not the least of which was Aristotle, who in the texts known as *Metaphysics* further complicates and develops Plato's concept of “ideal” forms and the “phenomena” that represent them on our level of earth. These Greek philosophers' constructs surrounding such dualities were foundational to such thinkers as Plotinus and Ruysbroeck, as mentioned above, and Berdyaev; and, too, foundational to Guimarães Rosa's works, per his admission and as evidenced by the nature of the *sertão* within the works.

### **BERDYAEV, and the “PARADOXICALISM” of the GOD-MAN, IMMANENT and TRANSCENDENT:**

The religious philosophy of Nicolas Alexandrovich Berdyaev (Kiev 1874 – Paris 1948)<sup>344</sup> revolves around issues of freedom, social justice, and the materiality-divinity of man's being and destiny, among other topics. However, he too is extremely relevant to Guimarães Rosa's considerations (as expressed in his views of paradox and explored in *GSV*) in his construction of a vision of duality for humankind. Fuad Nucho (1966) explains (50):

For Berdyaev, man is a complex being with a dual nature. Man belongs at one and the same time to, and is the meeting place of, two worlds. He is both divine and human,

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<sup>343</sup> Plato takes a similar dichotomy of material/immaterial to apply to body and soul, as well, matter and mover, as seen in “Laws”.

<sup>344</sup> According to Nucho (pp. 11-15), Berdyaev was born to a military father and French-Polish princess mother, and raised with access to both Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions. In Berdyaev's military education, he came to struggle with understanding the role of freedom in humanity's being and destiny. He turned to Marxism as a young man in pursuit of social justice, and then idealism; he was several times in political exile. In 1901 he met Sergius Bulgakov and became deeply interested in religion, and after traveling in France to understand current religious and philosophical movements, he returned to Russia to live in Moscow and become active in the Religious Philosophical Society there, and found the Free Academy of Spiritual Culture. According to Nucho, his philosophical influences include Vladimir Solovyev, Jacob Boehme, Immanuel Kant, and Søren Kierkegaard, as well as the Russian Orthodox faith which, according to Nucho, has innate freedom of thought having never suffered through anything analogous to a Counter-Reformation to recast artificially rigid dogmas (22).

heavenly and earthly, the child of God and the product of nature. Man is the point where two spheres intersect, the place at which they meet. He belongs to two different orders. “There is a spiritual man and there is a natural man, and yet the same individual is both spiritual and natural.”<sup>345</sup>

In *The Meaning of the Creative Act*<sup>346</sup> (1916), Berdyaev continues:

Man is conscious at once of his greatness and power and of his worthlessness and weakness, of his imperial freedom and his slavish dependence: he knows himself as the image and likeness of God and as a drop in the ocean of the necessities of nature. ... Man is one of the phenomena of the world, one of the things caught in the maelstrom of all things of nature: and man passes beyond this world, as the image and likeness of absolute being transcends all things of the order of nature. (60-62)

Berdyaev believed that “[a]ll deep thinkers have felt” this “duality of man’s nature,” of “uniting in one being... the eternal with the corruptible”, including, for example, Pascal,<sup>347</sup> and at its roots in Western discourse, Plato, as is evident from the discussion of Plato above here (Nucho 51). As Berdyaev explains, man is “a contradictory and paradoxical being, combining opposite poles within himself.”<sup>348</sup> This shows what Piama Gaidenko (1994) refers to as “a “consciously adopted *paradoxicalism*, a stress on the incompatibility of man’s basic characteristics” (107).

Michel Alesander Vallon (1960) explains further that Berdyaev conceived of humanity as “God-Man,” writing: “Both philosophy and theology should start neither with God nor with man... but rather with God-Man”<sup>349</sup> (Vallon 193). Vallon explains that, in Berdyaev’s opinion, “traditional theology... has seldom been able to realize the ... continuity-discontinuity of God,” preferring to accept formulas and choosing to “rationalize God... [i]n their attempt to respect the elements of logic.” Berdyaev, however, accepting that “logical contradiction is no evidence of existential impossibility,” accepts that God is “at the same time immanent and transcendent,” “God-in-the-world” and “God-beyond-the-world,” in which it is possible to have “the encounter and mutual infusion of God and man whereby transcendence and immanence are unified” (Vallon 193-194).

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<sup>345</sup> Berdyaev, *Freedom and the Spirit* (Original title: *Philosophy of the Free Spirit*, Paris, 1927) trans. by Oliver Fielding Clarke (New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1935), p. 27

<sup>346</sup> According to Utéza, Guimarães Rosa’s personal library contained only one work of Berdyaev’s, the English version of “*Espírito e Realidade*” (*Spirit and Reality*, London, 1946) (Utéza 36). However, there is no way of knowing what else he may have read by the author.

<sup>347</sup> Nucho points out (p. 51) Berdyaev’s exclamation – “What a strange being – divided and of double meaning, having the form of a king and that of a slave, a being at once free and in chains, powerful and weak, uniting in one being glory and worthlessness, the eternal with the corruptible” (Berdyaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, (Moscow, 1916), trans. Donald A. Lowrie (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), p. 60)” – mirrors Pascal’s: “What a chimera is man! What a novelty! What a monster, what a contradiction, what a prodigy! Judge of all things, imbecile worm of the earth; depository of truth, a sink of uncertainty and error; the pride and refuse of the universe... know then, proud man, what a paradox you are to yourself!” (Blaise Pascal, *Pensées – Provincial Letters* (New York: Modern Library, Inc., Random House, 1941, No. 434, p. 143)

<sup>348</sup> *The Destiny of Man*, (Paris, 1913), trans. Natalie Duddington (New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1937), p. 46. (Gaidenko 107)

<sup>349</sup> Berdyaev, *Freedom and the Spirit*, trans. Oliver Fielding Clarke, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1935, p. 189.

This is, according to Vallon, not a doctrine, but “a mystery of which a man can become aware only in the depths of his existence, not by means of reason, but by intuition” (194). This concept echoes Guimarães Rosa’s preoccupation with the logical or rational as being limited, as when he states (above) that his works defend “*o altíssimo primado da intuição, da revelação, da inspiração, sobre bruxolear presunçoso da inteligência reflexiva, da razão*” – “the high primacy of intuition, or revelation, or inspiration, above the presumptuous sparkle of reflexive intelligence, of reason.”

This *intuitive* grasp of the *paradoxical* nature of mankind’s relationship to the divine in *immanent/transcendent unity* is – as seen in the other material mystics’ conceptualizations of similar concepts – reflective of *GSV*’s immanent/transcendent, material/metaphysical *sertão*.

### **CHRIST, HYPOSTATIC UNION, CONSUBSTANTIATION, and an IMMANENT/TRANSCENDENT GOD:**

As illustrated in his inclusion of Ruysbroeck and Berdyaev, his own many statements about his religiosity, and the themes of his works, the Judeo-Christian religious tradition was very important to Guimarães Rosa,<sup>350</sup> and among those philosophers and mystics with whom the author wishes to “*ficar*” “stay,” he mentions the writers of the Gospels (“*os Evangelistas*”) and Paul (“*São Paulo*”), but *principally* Christ (“*com Cristo, principalmente*”). As explored by Berdyaev and Ruysbroeck, Jesus Christ is the epitome of a vision of a duality of the human/earthly and the divine, a “paradox” such as Guimarães Rosa appears to appreciate. In fact, the term used for Christ, “Immanuel,” contains this paradox within it: its ancient Hebrew origin means literally “with us is God.”<sup>351</sup>

Besides being surprisingly heretical in his teachings for his time, turning the cultural taboos and dogmas of his contemporaries on their heads and ruling through meekness and unconditional love instead of being the expected warlord, Jesus Christ’s religious legacy has much to do with his in-both-Heaven-and-Earth status as “son of God.” Theology has long been concerned with the duality of humanity/divinity or flesh/spirit of Christ; in fact, this particular topic has led to debates, controversies and schisms for centuries. The simultaneity of the man/God states in Christ appears to many to be illogical, but theologically, this duality is absolutely central to the issue of salvation in the Christian faith: if Jesus were fully God, his sacrifice would have been meaningless to humanity’s relationship to God, while if he were fully human, he would not have been the Messiah.<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> According to Utéza, the “Christian tradition evidently dominates” the author’s library (“*A tradição cristã domina evidentemente*”), which includes the sacred texts as well as many volumes of historical and current theology, including the heterodox (33).

<sup>351</sup> <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/immanuel?show=0&t=1292894302>> accessed December 20, 2010.

<sup>352</sup> William Reiser explains in *An introductory dictionary of theology and religious studies* (2007): “Salvation would not be possible if Jesus were only human (for in being joined to him we would not be joined with God), or if Jesus were only divine (since our humanity would have remained untouched)” (598).

Four religious Councils were held in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries to try to resolve the issue: the Councils of Nicaea, of Constantinople, of Ephesus, and of Chalcedon. The First Ecumenical Council, the Council of Nicaea, was held in 325 in order to resolve the “Arian controversy,” regarding a teaching that claimed that the “Second Person of the Trinity” was “subordinate to the Father in divinity” (Macy 275). The Council rejected the Arian teachings and produced the Nicene Creed, which is still repeated in worship in many churches today. The Creed includes reference to Jesus as both completely divine and of God’s same substance: “Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made,” and (yet) also completely man and flesh: “...who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man.” Though Arius’ teachings were condemned at Nicaea, however, the issue was still being debated decades later, leading to the Second Ecumenical Council, the Council of Constantinople, held in the year 381 (Macy 274). It was convened to condemn once and for all the teachings of both Arius and Apollinaris, the second of whom, on the other end of the divinity/humanity spectrum, “denied that Jesus has a human mind or soul.” The Council condemned Apollinaris’ teachings, thus confirming that Jesus was human, and also “reaffirmed the creed of Nicaea,” again elevating Jesus to full divinity. The Third Ecumenical Council, the Council of Ephesus, from 431-433, was surrounded by controversy,<sup>353</sup> so a fourth council was called in 451. The Council of Chalcedon was summoned by the emperor Marcian to again “solve the problem of how to describe the relationship between the divine and human existence of Jesus as the incarnation of the Logos” (217). According to Macy, “[a]fter extensive discussion, the bishops at Chalcedon reaffirmed the creeds of the Council of Nicaea (325) and of the Council of Constantinople (380), nullified the decrees of Ephesus, and reasserted the teaching that Jesus has two natures, human and divine” (217).

This doctrine that Christ is “one divine Person with two natures” is called the “hypostatic union,” and affirms that Christ is “both one with God and one with us,” “consubstantial” with both. William Reiser explains, “the word ‘hypostatic’ became part of a technical expression that states, but does not (because it cannot) explain, the union of the divine and human in Christ. The word’s intent is that Jesus Christ is fully and really God, and fully and really human” (598). The nature of this paradox was not laid to rest in the Ecumenical Councils, but has led to centuries of continued debate, and indeed was never accepted by several Orthodox branches of the faith (Macy 217). These official Councils, then, are only a part of global concern regarding Jesus of Nazareth’s true nature; but, even so, their apparently paradoxical compromise has become a major foundational aspect of many branches of the Christian church.

A further controversial issue involves the nature of the Eucharist, or the blood and body symbolically given by Christ at his death, become bread and wine received in communion in churches. Like the nature of Christ, “there has been extensive and often acrimonious dispute

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<sup>353</sup> The Third Ecumenical Council, the Council of Ephesus, was held to discuss the condemnation of Nestorius, who held that Mary could not be called the “Mother of God” because she was “mother only of the man Jesus”. In 431, the Council opened without all members present, and condemned Nestorius’ teachings (Ryan 402-403). After years of argument and mutual condemnations, the bishops came to some agreements; however, the decrees were considered by many to be unofficial, especially due to the council’s “irregular proceedings” and its “its apparent support of Monophysitism (the teaching that Jesus has only one divine nature)” (Macy 217).

among the churches about the nature of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper" (Migliore 289). In the Roman Catholic tradition, the transformation in the church of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ is generally referred to as "transubstantiation," though to this day various branches of the church understand it in different ways. "Transubstantiation" implies in general that though the senses perceive bread and wine, these objects are in fact *become* body and blood; Migliore explains:

According to this view [*transubstantiation*], the "substance" of the elements of bread and wine is transformed by the power of God into the substance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The "accidents," or outward form, of the elements – those qualities that can be seen, tasted, and felt – remain the same. (289)

The distinction between "substance" and "accidents" reflects that of essence and semblance proposed by Plato; in one object, bread or wine, it is a metaphysical physicality. According to Migliore, newer interpretations include "transignification" (a change of meaning) of bread and wine and "transfinalization" of the elements (a change of end or purpose), both again attempts to explain a duality troubling to rationalism. Separate attempts to understand the phenomenon include the Calvinist tradition in which Christ "is present in the whole eucharistic action rather than in the elements viewed in isolation," joining us "by the grace and power of his Spirit" and the faith of the recipient, and the "*memorialist*" doctrine, in which the Lord's Supper is simply a reminder of Biblical events (290-291).

The interpretation of the liturgy of communion which is relevant to *GSV's sertão* as I have described it is certainly not that of "transignification," "transfinalization," or "memorialism," which avoid paradox completely in a bow to rationalism, or even that of "transubstantiation," which, though accepting of both material objects and divine presence, still tries to separate them in function in saying that the elements *are* divine but just *seem* like bread and wine. The term for the *sertão* may in fact be "consubstantiation" (as proposed by Slater), the liturgical understanding based on pure paradox, for a "consubstantiate *sertão*." In "consubstantiation," the bread and wine remain, but the body and blood are also present, all completely and indiscernibly: "the substance of the bread and wine coexist with the substance of the Body and Blood" (Macy 276). This coexistence is not explained by differentiated aspects, as transubstantiation does, but is a complete "sacramental unity" (Migliore 290). In *consubstantiation*, "Christ is present "in, with, and under" the elements of bread and wine, as fire permeates and envelops a glowing ember. The Lutheran doctrine<sup>354</sup> stresses that Christ is present not just "spiritually" but also "bodily" (290). The *sertão* of *GSV*, too, is neither purely material nor purely metaphysical, but both, in unity.

Other aspects of the Christian religion also reflect the existence of the divine inside or behind the physical world; for instance, the term "Apocalypse," used to describe the end of the world as we know it, and often feared as a fiery judgment, in fact means "uncovering," from the Greek word

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<sup>354</sup> Migliore explains that Luther was the root of this view, though not of its name; he rejected the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation because God could not, for him, be separated from the physical: "The idea of a merely "spiritual" presence of Christ was anathema to Luther. "No God like that for me!" he declared" (290).



“*apokalyptein*,” “to uncover”<sup>355</sup>; and, too, a “revelation,” or “disclosure.” Perhaps what lies behind it is that other Reality of essences or images of which the philosophers speak? So when Guimarães Rosa said he is with Christ, and with the Apostles and St. Paul, he was at the very least aware that the figure of Christ is the most commonly accepted manifestation of that same paradox of humanity/divinity that the author so sought through his mystical and philosophical readings – something which can be stated, but not explained, though perhaps it can be illustrated through literature.

Indeed, contemporary theologians continue to be concerned with the relationship between the material world and God. Recently, for instance, Kathryn Tanner (2005) and William C. Placher (1996) have written works about the Christian view of God’s role in the world and the transcendence/immanence paradox within Christianity. Tanner and Placher both come to the conclusion that there is – despite a long history of theological struggle with apparent paradox in the physical/metaphysical divide – *no conflict* between the transcendence and immanence of God, because there is in spirituality a different category altogether, bypassing paradox – or embracing it, as Guimarães Rosa himself purports to do.

In *God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment*, Kathryn Tanner points to a historical dialogue about the nature of the relationship of God to created beings. The charge of “incoherence” has been placed on theology for what appear to many to be internally opposing views: for instance, that on the one hand “God transcends the world,” and on the other hand, “God is directly involved with the world” (38). Responses to the “paradox” vary, often taking denominational turns, and generally involving the distance of God from creation.<sup>356</sup> Tanner argues that all of these approaches to the “paradox” of Christian coherence in fact misconstrue Christianity: there is, she argues, *no coherence crisis between the transcendence and immanence of God*, because God’s transcendence is *self-determined* and therefore outside the realm of comparison with – or mutual exclusion from – the “immanent,” and outside of any conceptualization of distance:

Because it is not based essentially on an opposition with the non-divine, this radical transcendence of God can be exercised in both God’s otherness over and against the world and God’s immanent presence within it. (79)

Tanner clarifies by pointing out that, while created beings “risk the distinctness of their own natures by entering into intimate relations with another,” God alone is not subject to that rule, being both transcendent and “nearer to us than we are to ourselves” (79). She continues to explain that God in fact is outside of “the mutual exclusion of all apparent antitheses,” including the infinite/finite, non-spatial/spatial, and eternal/temporal (79-80).

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<sup>355</sup> <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/apocalypse>> accessed December 20, 2010; “apocalypse, n.” The Oxford English Dictionary. 2nd ed. 1989. OED Online November 2010. Oxford University Press. <<http://oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/9229>> Web. 17. Feb. 2011.

<sup>356</sup> Tanner explains that the Protestants charge that Roman Catholicism sinfully elevates the powers of the creature, while the Roman Catholics charge that the Protestants denigrate the grace given to the creature by making God overly sovereign (3)

In *The Domestication of Transcendence*, William C. Placher looks at a similar question – and with Tanner’s book in hand – and finds several trends in theology that struggle, unnecessarily according to Placher, with the apparent paradox of God’s transcendent/immanent place in the world. He explains again that the “contrastive” approach (Tanner’s term) “makes divine transcendence and involvement in the world into a zero-sum game” (111), in which God is either utterly remote or domestically involved, because to be both is irrational. Placher looks to Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin to provide insight into a third way to see the divine, a “radical” way:

Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin ... had a more radical understanding of transcendence. God was not one of the things or agents among others in the world, to be located either closer or farther away, more involved in interactions or less. Rather, God transcended all our ways of classifying, locating, and relating the things in the world. (111)

Therefore, he continues, it is not “natural to ask where God is located-in the world or outside it?” (112) Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin refuse to answer the question “Where is God?,” explains Placher, saying that “God is present in the world but not contained in it” (112).<sup>357</sup>

Theologians Tanner and Placher, along with Aquinas, argue that the assumption that God’s transcendence implies distance reflects a flawed understanding of theology, one in which God’s ability to be present or distant from the world and human beings is measured according to our own conceptualizations of space and the limits of the *body*; rather, they argue, God transcends such worldly classifications of location, and is the only being that can be intimately immanent with another without risking the “distinctness” of His nature. Tanner and Placher, then, deal with the issue of paradox in the immanence/transcendence question by pointing to God’s ability to define transcendence according to His own rules, not ours; what looks paradoxical to us is merely beyond our experience and understanding.

They say, too, that this view of what I would call the *immanent transcendence* of God is “radical,” and it may be. However, it is also one that is shared by many traditions’ views of the locatability of the spiritual realm – a kind of “place” that goes beyond the tactile, beyond the visible. In fact, this apparently incoherent kind of “place,” containing the “radical” location of the divine, may be a concept that is much more fundamental to human understanding of the universe than it appears. In Werner Herzog’s *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (2010),<sup>358</sup> French prehistorian Jean Clottes claims that “*homo sapiens*” should be called “*homo spiritualis*” instead; man knows little but has always had spiritual leanings, evidenced by art objects and paintings which indicate a belief in “fluidity” and “permeability.” He explains that by the term “fluidity” he means an understanding of the world in which categories are impermanent: a man, a woman,

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<sup>357</sup> Placher looks at Aquinas’ views in depth, providing an illuminating analogy: “Aquinas distinguished the sense in which God is “in” all things in terms of *power*, *presence*, and *essence*. He considered the analogy of a king. A king is present in *power* in every part of his kingdom (wherever his royal power extends), present by *presence* in everything within his range of vision (everywhere, we might say, that is visually present to him), and present by *essence* “in those things in which his substance is” (in the space of his own physical body). God’s power extends to all things, and God sees all things, so God is obviously present everywhere in the first two senses. But also, Aquinas asserted, “He is present everywhere by his essence, because his essence is innermost in all things. . . .” (Placher 113-114) (Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John* (1:9-10), no 134, trans. James A. Weisheipl and Fabian R. Larcher (Albany, N.Y.: Magi Books, 1980))

<sup>358</sup> a 3D film exploring the prehistoric cave paintings of the Chauvet cave in France

an animal, a tree, a rock could all change places or belong to more than one category given the right circumstances. By “permeability,” he indicates the belief that the physical world and the spiritual world are connected; for those painters, the stone walls – like everything else – were *permeated* by the spiritual realm. Incoherent? By some standards, perhaps; but nonetheless a part of many traditions and understandings.

Beldan Lane, another contemporary theologian, also speaks to the immanent/transcendent debate in Christianity, specifically with regard to God’s role in sacred spaces. He looks at landscape’s place in the Christian imagination, and with it the tenuous balance between viewing landscapes as particular and physical, and landscapes as metaphors or windows to spirituality. He explains:

The history of Christian spirituality expresses a persistent tension between the impulse of the incarnation – with its affirmation of flesh and world, its concrete placing of redemption in first-century Judea – and the impulse of an otherworldliness fostered by Gnostic-Manichaean sources. Too often the latter has been emphasized at the expense of the former. Not a few Christians ... have sought escape from the entanglements of matter. (*Landscapes... 224*)

Much of theology, according to Lane, tends to “dis-place the phenomena it has observed, abstracting an experience from its specific context,” a practice which has “lent the study of spirituality a certain rarefied, unsubstantial quality...,” and removes spirituality from the “phenomenal world,” the ordinary, to focus only on the extraordinary – to the detriment of both religiosity and worldly experience (*Landscapes 9*).

Lane explains the challenge of balancing the substantial and the unsubstantial in understanding the layers of the world:

The challenge is to honor the thing itself, as well as the thing as metaphor. When Emerson declared in 1836 that “every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact,” he sent people racing to the woods, anticipating the voice of God in the call of every thrush. But too often they paid scant attention to the songbird in their anxiousness to hear some transcendent message. They returned home full of nothing but themselves, their pockets stuffed with metaphors. As the imagination reaches relentlessly for a timeless, interior soulscape, it is easy to sail over the specificity of particular landscapes... This book of necessity walks a thin line between distance and participation. (*Solace... 17*)

That “thin line” is walked by *GSV* as well – is, in fact, embraced by it. Rather than relaying only “some transcendent message” in “metaphors”, *GSV* participates in “the thing”, finding that meaning in “the songbird” itself. Land as land, and land as spiritual metaphor: both aspects are important, and at once, even if it appears to be paradoxical.

The concept is developed here of Christianity – one of the worldviews explored by Guimarães Rosa, and the one he was the most steeped in culturally, the religion based on Christ whom he was “particularly” with – as understanding (sometimes – and often struggling with) the divine essence as both something other than the created realm and yet also something that nonetheless permeates the created realm. This is the unity-in-duality found in all of the writers whom the

author so illuminatingly cites in his interviews. Some of them are Christian, laying the discursive foundations for the arguments currently pursued by Tanner and Placher above, and some from very different faiths as well, and yet in all of these writers professed by Guimarães Rosa as preferred influences there is a window into the *sertão* developed in his literature: a *sertão* that is fully land and fully spirit, an (in)tangible space, a permeable membrane.

### **BERGSON, and INTUITION:**

Bergson's philosophy is equally about metaphysics, and about the essential identity of objects in the world, but while "the French philosopher defends his theses in which the fundamental principles of Hermetics shine through"<sup>359</sup> (Utéza 35-36), Bergson concentrates also in his metaphysics on the importance of an "intuitive" way of knowing our physical world rather than one governed by generalizing symbols. According to Bergson, as explained by Mullarkey (2007), we must attempt to experience objects and human beings by first being free from the "crust solidified on the surface" of "perceptions," "memories," "tendencies" which distract from the flux at the core (7). In some respects, this view appears to be the complete opposite of the discourses given by Plato, Plotinus, Ruysbroeck, and Berdyaev: it focuses not on the relationship between the higher plane of essential meanings and the physical plane which expresses those meanings, but, rather, looks at each physical object as completely *non-representative* of any category. However, the concepts are not as contradictory as they first appear; Bergson asks us not to separate ourselves from the possibility of seeing a higher essence in matter, but, instead, to separate ourselves from the need to limit matter by categories, symbols, definitions, and expectations. In doing this, we become integrated into matter, and allow it to become more than our expectation; we allow "material" objects to be ineffable, to be *more* than the perceived – to be *more than material*.

Bergson begins his work *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (originally 1903) by pointing out the "two profoundly different ways of knowing a thing" that are present in all metaphysical philosophers' apparently divergent perspectives: "The first implies that we move round the object; the second that we enter into it. The first depends on the point of view at which we are placed and on the symbols by which we express ourselves. The second neither depends on a point of view nor relies on any symbol" (1). Mullarkey explains that this "twofold nature of knowing" is known throughout Bergson's work in many ways – "analytic or intuitive, symbolic-conceptual or imagistic-pathetic, exterior or interior, static or variable, divisible or indivisible, ready-made or in the making, elemental or in part" (xv) – and in all of these couples, the second is preferred, for, he explains, Bergson believed that "The singular object is never seen from the outside, never totalized under a general concept: its singularity must be grasped in the individuality of its movement, for there is no generic model of movement." (xvi).

This leads to *intuition*, one of the concepts mentioned by Guimarães Rosa as having primacy in his citation above: the "*altíssimo primado da intuição*." *Intuition*, according to Bergson, is "the

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<sup>359</sup> "o filósofo francês defende suas teses em que transparecem os princípios fundamentais do hermetismo". These views, according to Utéza, appear in the essays contained in *L'Energie spirituelle* (Paris, Félix Alcan, 1938), in Guimarães Rosa's collection; Guimarães Rosa also had Bergson's essay on laughter. While not present in his library, Guimarães Rosa also claimed to have read *L'Evolution créatrice* (35-36).

kind of *intellectual sympathy* by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible” (5). Mullarkey explains, too, that Bergson’s “intuition” is the “‘metaphysical investigation’ of what is ‘essential and unique’ in the object,” an act of sympathizing experience in which “we have ... *integrated* our movement into its own: we have participated in its becoming. ... We pacify our desire to control the object, to totalize it in fixed categories as “this” or “that” by attuning our duration to its” (xvii). Like the concept of “dwelling,” we can “integrate” ourselves into the *sertão*, helping it to become its own truer self or essence.

Just like Plato and others, then, Bergson speaks of an integration, of a becoming, and also of the inexpressible that is inherent in all objects. Although to Bergson, no bed is representative of the essence of all beds, nonetheless, every bed has its *own* hidden essence, which we can only know through an intuitive and open interaction with the world around us. This *intuition* may be what Guimarães Rosa intended when he stated that his works “defend the high primacy of intuition, or revelation, or inspiration, above the presumptuous sparkle of reflexive intelligence, of reason, the Cartesian shrew.” With *intuition* of this type, our interaction with the *sertão* becomes one participatory experience, of *allowing it to become what it really is*, rather than assuming that it is the material space that our eyes might behold. With Bergson’s guidance, the *sertão* is not just a mimetic shadow of the ideal-*sertão* in a place beyond, but would also be a place of infinite possibility, dependent only on the ability of its witnesses to surrender to its will.

### **TAO, and the MITIGATED DUALISM of YIN and YANG:**

Beyond the Western tradition of philosophy and Judeo-Christian religion, Guimarães Rosa also alludes to the religious texts of the East, specifically those which express cosmic and earthly dualities and their union. These include Taoism and the Hindu holy texts.

As Julian Pas (1998) explains, “Taoism eludes a precise definition” – it consists of both a school of philosophy, the “School of the Way” (*Tao-chia/Daojia*), and also what may be termed a religion, the “Doctrine of the Way” (*Tao-chiao/Daojiao*) (1-2). The latter is the *teaching* of the philosophy, which contains both “clearly religious components,”<sup>360</sup> but also an eclectic – and syncretistic – series of practices and doctrines having to do with “the Way,” otherwise known as “Tao.” According to Pas:

*Tao* is the eternal reality beyond, but also within, the visible universe. It is... an impersonal energy that creates and transforms without interruption. Its presence is everywhere, not as a spiritual being, but as the basic stuff, the *ch’i*, out of which all things have issued. It gives life to all living beings, and maintains them, dispassionately, ... This *Tao* is deepest mystery, it cannot be grasped by the rational mind only, but intuitively, if the mind is still and desires are controlled. That must be done through spiritual cultivation, through contemplation. (318)

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<sup>360</sup> ...such as the divinization of Lao-tzu and the worship of other deities.

This concept of *Tao* intrinsically unites all things, and is an interesting counterpoint to the Western mystics and philosophers explored above, for in its very nature it unites physical objects and causative divinity, but without a conscious will. The concept of “Tao,” the Taoist system of cosmology, the “Five Agents Theory,” and the concept of Yin-Yang form the backbone of the Taoist worldview, and are all together reflective of the theme of dualism and a divine/material connection as expressed in the other theories to which Guimarães Rosa says he adheres.

Part of the purpose of the “Way” is to “transcend the petty values of ordinary life” and soar “into the beyond,” becoming “perfected,” “realized,” or “authentic,” according to the writings of Chuang-tzu, an important text to Taoism<sup>361</sup> (9). Although it is less theistic than the Christian mystics, this does reflect a similar world-view to that of mystics in general, in which there is a realm of divinity that is accessible to humanity through a practice of contemplation or behavior. However, as Chuang-tzu further explains, this is a “natural mysticism”, an “ecstatic union with the Tao – ... as a naturalistic, humanist experience” (7). In fact, the “Way” of Taoism – the method of attaining that union – is, as explained by Pas, “based on observation of nature” (5), and on the “Five Agents,” wood, fire, metal, water and earth, which are of nature; they are “present in heaven”<sup>362</sup> and also in *earth* (5). These five, explains Pas, “have mutual relationships and interact continuously. Their unceasing action explains all the processes on earth, which interact with heaven” (5). Nature, then, is not just a shadow of the heavens, but *is* the heavens. “Nature,” according to Taoism, is “the inner essence of all things combined, but also of all individual things, ... the visible expression of *Tao*.” (Pas 318). Taoism, then, reflects that added aspect of the mystics chosen by Guimarães Rosa – the drawing together of the divine and material realms – in the definition of *Tao* and its approach. In Taoism, the *sertão* would be the way to understanding divinity.

Furthering the profound interaction of all things, Chuang-tzu also writes that “life and death are two sides of one reality, equally acceptable,” (9), a concept that easily ties in with the Yin and Yang. Chuang-tzu was comfortable with paradox,<sup>363</sup> and he also held intuition higher than rational thought, which he saw as fallible, stating that “the “truth” expressed in words is never absolute.”<sup>364</sup>

Yin and Yang, in their well-known paradoxical union, were incorporated into Taoism from the “Naturalist School of Tsou Yen (305-240? BCE))” (Pas 5). As Pas explains further, the *Tao-te*

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<sup>361</sup> Guimarães Rosa’s library has Lao-Tsé’s *Teo-Te-King* (Koln, Diederich, 1957), a German book of the poems of the *Teo-Te-King*, Chuang Tsu’s *The Musings of Chinese Mystic*, and Liu Tsu’s *Taoist Teachings* (London: John Murray, 1947) (Utéza 38).

<sup>362</sup> Beyond the *Tao*, an inherent interconnectedness of all things through the same formative stuff, there are, according to Taoist doctrine, multiple connected realms, though there are various interpretations of these. There are both a division into heaven, earth, and mankind, and one into heaven, hearth, and water, the most prominent in Taoism (Pas 341). There are, two, cosmological maps of the levels of space and heavens, numbering up to 36 which fall into the “world of desire,” the lower six, the “world of form,” the middle 18, the “world of formlessness,” the higher four, and, above these three, the eight “Heavens” (341).

<sup>363</sup> As seen in such aphorisms as “Great achievements are as if deficient. . . great fullness is as if empty...” (Chapter 45), and “Superior virtue/power appears as non-virtue/power; therefore there is [real] virtue/power” (Chapter 38)” (Pas 37).

<sup>364</sup> “The ‘real’ can be expressed in thousands of different ways and none is absolute; none is without partial truth either. ... *all* things and theories have their place” (9-10).

*Ching* states that the “*Tao* or the One produced the Two”; *yin* and *ying* have become associated with this “Two,” resulting in the belief that “All things are produced by the interaction of *yin* and *yang*. They are also made of *yin* and *yang* energies” (370). This foundational dualism is, according to Pas, not a simple division, but is both ancient and also complex: a “mitigated dualism, according to which *yin* and *yang* are two cosmic powers and/or mental categories by which all the phenomena of nature and human life can be interpreted and placed into context...” (5). The terms *yin* and *yang* are often used to categorize the universe into opposites; originally, according to Pas, “*Yin* signified: dark, shady, cloudy” and “*Yang* signified: light, bright, sunny” (371).<sup>365</sup> It is a “macro- and microcosm interaction,” present on a cosmic scale and in the individual psyche. However, “[i]f *yin* and *yang* are dualistic, it is not in an absolute sense. They are relative to one another, as two extremes of one continuum. Combined, *yin* and *yang* are the Supreme Ultimate, the oneness that combines all opposites” (372). Though they are polar extremes, then, these “inherent powers in things or energies constituting things” are both “competing and harmonizing in continuous transformation,” and are “ultimately blending into harmony” (5).

In Taoism, life and death are as two sides of a coin, neither inferior or more real; the *Yin* and *Yang* as intertwined even as they are opposites, a “mitigated dualism,” and inherent in all things; intuition is superior to rational thought in understanding the *Tao*, the Way; and the *Tao* is a deep and mysterious impersonal energy that is present everywhere both in nature and in heaven, creative and of and permeating all things – a unity of the divine and the material as observed in nature – further painting possibilities for *GSV*'s *sertão*.

### **The *VEDAS*, and ONENESS MANIFEST in “VARIEGATED CREATION”:**

The ancient *Vedas* hymns,<sup>366</sup> too, belong in this picture being painted by the chosen philosophers of Guimarães Rosa, for they deal with the “Oneness” of creation, and express “the underlying oneness of all life behind the multiplicity of forms and forces that hide it (Miller 1). The *Vedas* contain a vision of the *rta*, which Miller (1985) translates loosely as “Cosmic Order,” involving “the law [of the Cosmic Order] as it manifests in the universe and therefore nature, the cosmic aspect,” “the socio-ethical aspect which, in the human context, can be translated as integrity-integration, truth at the human level being equivalent to harmony at the universal level,” and, too, “the religio-sacrificial level” (2). The Vedic vision places a divine force at work in nature and in people, a connection between all things.

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<sup>365</sup> By extension, *Yin* has been used to mean “heaven (bright), its generative power, the sky,” as well as the sun, and by extension the father, husband, male, ruler, the “high, manifest, open, visible, public, and full..., rationality, reason” – and *Yang* “earth (dark), its life-giving power, the soil,” as well as the moon, the mother, wife, female, subject, and the “low, hidden, mysterious, closed, invisible, private, and empty..., emotion, feelings, intuition” (371). It is *not*, however, a judgmental duality; Pas explains that, just as death is not “worse” than life, the *yin* and *yang* cannot be reduced to “good” or “bad”.

<sup>366</sup> The Vedic hymns are considered to be a “timeless revelation, the transcendent made manifest at the empirical level by means of visions couched into words through the poetic inspiration of illumined sages” (Miller 3). They are dated “back to about 1500 to 1200 B.C.,” and, according to Miller, “form the original source book of Indian religion” (1).

Jeanine Miller explains that the vision she has found<sup>367</sup> in the *Vedas* is a vision “of Oneness, of godly and human interlinkedness, of divine solidarity, of cosmic harmony which underlies this bewildering array of activities, images and names, the vision of cosmic integrity which is the Rgveda’s peculiar contribution to religious speculation” (3-4). In his foreword to her work, Raimundo Panikkar rephrases the human, natural, and divine aspects of *rta*, calling it “the warp and woof of reality which is being woven in the spinning loom of the sacrifice. *Rta* manifests the cosmotheandric activity of reality itself, i.e. the dynamic interaction between the cosmic, the human and the divine factors of the real. It is the very expression of the harmony of the All (*sarvam*), of all that is” (xviii). Mascaró, too, explains that in the *Vedas* “we often find a sense of oneness,” and he gives the following example from the song of *Purusha*: “Purusha is the whole universe: what has been and what is going to be. One fourth of him is all beings, three fourths of him is immortal heaven” (9).

In such statements in the *Vedas* as “One whole governs the moving and the stable, that which walks and flies, this variegated creation” (III.54.8, Miller 4) and “That which is one has developed into the all” (VIII.58.2d, Miller 4), the *Vedas* show a vision of the manifest world, in its multiplicity, including the gods and all of creation, as an expression of an “unmanifest yet ever present Oneness” (4). Miller explains, too, that the earthly manifestations, in all of their variety, are deeply connected to *nature*; the writing itself contains the “poetry of and feeling for nature” (1), and, too, the archetypal symbols are natural expressions of cosmic concepts: “Heaven and Earth as parents, ... sun and moon as fosterers, ... bull and cow as impregnators, ... water and fire as cleansing and creative agents, ... tree and bird or swan as image of the cosmos or the human psyche” (1). Mascaró adds, “[i]n the songs of the *Vedas* we find the wonder of man before nature: fire and water, the winds and the storms, the sun and the rising of the sun are sung with adoration” (8). With this vision of nature (“manifest”) containing the divine (“present”), it is no wonder that the work appealed to Guimarães Rosa, with his professed love for the *sertão* and its magic<sup>368</sup>: the “space of the first world”, “all open to the superordinate”, with its power to invoke “a magical notion of the universe”.

### **The UPANISHADS, and BRAHMAN, “IMMANENT and TRANSCENDENT”:**

The Hindu *Upanishads*,<sup>369</sup> as well, with their exploration of Brahman, show a divine being that is both transcendent and immanent, and a material world that is both as well. The *Upanishads* contain reference to Brahman, the Hindu “Spirit of the Universe” (Mascaró 11), who is both “the Universe, God in his transcendence,” and, too, “immanence... the Spirit of man, the Self in every

<sup>367</sup> As Jeanine Miller explains, the Vedic hymns appear at first to contain a confusing “multiplicity of gods, of praises and invocations and sacrifices, of obscure allusions, riddles and myths” (3), which has led to a “Western exegesis” which fails to understand it. She explains that, though the *Vedas* were never written to be an explanation of a religious worldview, and thus the foundational vision is only alluded to and taken for granted, this vision can nonetheless be gleaned from a careful unraveling of the hymns.

<sup>368</sup> Academia Brasileira speech (see above). “o espaço do mundo primeiro,” “tudo aberto ao supraordenado,” “uma noção mágica do universo.”

<sup>369</sup> The *Upanishads* are, according to Juan Mascaró, “spiritual treatises of different length, the oldest of which were composed between 800 ad 400 B.C.” The word *Upanishad*, he explains, is Sanskrit for something like “the sitting at the feet of a master” (7). Guimarães Rosa had the work “*Chandogya-Upanishad*” in French (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1930) (Utéza 37).



one and in all, Atman,” accessible within each person and not far away (12). When pressed to define God, Mascaró (1965) explains, the sage says to his interlocutor: “Thou are That” (12). Brahman is “immanent and transcendent, within all and outside all,” for everything is created not from nothing but from Brahman, and also everything continuously returns to Brahman (12). The *Upanishads* contain direction for the unity of Atman and Brahman – Yoga – and the “conception of a fourth state of consciousness, above waking, dreaming and deep sleep.” Much like the Christian mystics, this religious text seeks a Oneness with the divine – and, much like those specific mystics and philosophers mentioned here, it is a Oneness that does not merely discard the physical, natural world, but is connected to it. *Yogavasishtha* explains in the *Upanishads*: “As the statue pre-exists in the wood; and a statue exists again in every limb of that statue; and so on *ad infinitum*, so does this gigantic statue – the Kosmos – exist in the One” (*The Spirit of the Upanishads*, 35-36).

Mascaró compares portions of the texts to portions of the New Testament of the Bible, “summed up in the words “I and my Father are one” and “The kingdom of God is within you...” (7). Too, he says, “One of the messages of the *Upanishads* is that the Spirit can only be known through union with him, and not through mere learning,” as reflected in the statement “Words are weariness” (11). Here are two of the main ideas about which Guimarães Rosa has shown concern – the unity of what appears to be disparate<sup>370</sup> (the earthly in all its chaos and fragility, and the transcendent or supreme) – as well as his concern about how it is that one can understand such a question: through instinct, insight, experience – or “*intuição*” (intuition), “*revelação*” (revelation), “*inspiração*,” (inspiration) – over “*inteligência reflexiva, da razão, a megera cartesiana*,” reason and mere Cartesian intelligence. What can’t be *explained*, Guimarães Rosa endeavors to *show* in fictional narration, expressing the indescribable with his particular sleight of hand.

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These philosophers and faith tomes were all claimed by Guimarães Rosa to be central to his understanding of the world, and also to his work. Thus, it is likely no coincidence that they so mirror the concerns illustrated in *GSV*, having to do with the material/spiritual duality of the *sertão* and those who walk its physical/metaphysical paths, and having to do, too, with accepting as possible the paradox inherent in this duality.

These writers, Guimarães Rosa’s professed favorites – whom he was “with” and with whom he was fascinated as both and “contemplative” and, as seen in his work, as a writer – all share fundamental characteristics which are also reflected in Guimarães Rosa’s work. They share in an exploration of material/spiritual dichotomies or even paradox, and the place of nature and

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<sup>370</sup> The *Upanishads* deal with the apparent contradictions of this physical reality/transcendent deity union in two ways, according to Balbir Singh (1983): “If Brahman is the absolute Spirit and the world at bottom blind and mechanical matter, how can the two be reconciled to each other? This problem is sought to be resolved in two ways: one, that the world is but a manifestation of an aspect of Brahman” (60) and, though he pervades the physical universe, its failures don’t reflect on him: “As the Sun, the eye of the world, is not sullied by the eternal defects of the eyes, so the one inner Self of all things is not sullied by the imperfections of the world.” (*Kena Upanishad*; Singh 61). The second way of creating coherence in paradox is that “the world as revealed to us is a mere false appearance” (60).

mankind in divine or cosmic meaning. Plato was concerned with a participatory dichotomy of Semblance and Essence, and Plotinus was likewise concerned with Matter and Ideal-Form, and their coexistence in “coalescence,” both one and separate; Ruysbroeck, too, saw mankind as both “living wholly in God and wholly in ourselves,” and sought through a combination of spiritual and material pursuits to attain an understanding of a God who is both *other than* and *in* creation. The figure of Christ also epitomizes this paradox, and was a foundation for Ruysbroeck’s study; in a “hypostatic union” of man and divine, Christ represents this duality, and lays a foundation for a Western worldview that accepts the material as merely a covering, and a Christian conceptualization of God as both above and intimate with mankind, “consubstantiate.” Berdyaev was concerned with this aspect as well, and like Ruysbroeck and Plotinus, he brought together the seemingly opposed ideas of immanence and transcendence, “God-in-the-world” and “God-beyond-the-world,” accepting the paradox. Bergson’s views appear to clash with these material mystics’, but nonetheless his *intuition* allows for the *sertão* to be manifest as its own beyond-material self through its appreciation and experience by Riobaldo and the reader. Tao is concerned with “mitigated dualisms” and comfort in the paradox of the connectedness of all things, as, too, are the Hindu sacred texts, the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, which explore a rapprochement of immanence and transcendence as well as of multiplicity and oneness, and find what is “present” and what is “manifest” to be without contradiction. These are all paradox, and all pertaining to the nature of nature as being both its material self and also very much something else.

These apparent paradoxes of body and soul, or *sertão* and beyond the *sertão*, form a part of the author’s understanding of the role of paradox, as cited above: “*tudo é, no fundo, paradoxo. Os paradoxos existem para que ainda se possa exprimir algo para o qual não existem palavras*” ... “everything: life, death, everything is, deep down, paradox. Paradoxes exist so that it is still possible to express something for which there don’t exist words” (Lorenz 67-68). In this “paradox,” the material/metaphysical *sertão* is the path to a sort of enlightenment, to things that can’t be expressed in words. Guimarães Rosa’s works are metaphysical, yes; but, for him, as has been illustrated here, the metaphysical *is in* the physical, even as it is other: a light that casts a shadow, and the shadow, too, together. The *sertão* is a body, and it is also beyond a body, because in it is something that does not risk its own distinctness by being present and permeating that body: the spiritual realm.

As Leonardo Arroyo mentions, Riobaldo has “*certeza suprema*” – supreme certainty – that “*tudo é e não é...*,” “‘everything is and isn’t’” (GSV 27), and contains even mathematical hints as to this conclusion, as indicated by Manuel Antônio de Castro: “*a narrativa se inicia com um sinal matemático, o travessão que indica o nada, e termina com o sinal matemático de infinito, ou tudo*”<sup>371</sup> (Arroyo 4). The apparent contradictions in the work, the things that exist and don’t exist, can’t be explained, but can they be narrated, as Drummond de Andrade, too, asks – the “*inenarrável narrada*”? According to GSV, yes: larger questions can be explored by writing about a local space and its dirt, cows, characteristic figures, idioms, and paths... the key to metaphysical in the *sertão*.

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<sup>371</sup> “Manuel Antônio de Castro pointed out that the narrative begins with a mathematical sign, the dash that indicates nothing, and ends with eh mathematical sign of infinity, or everything”

In keeping with the concepts developed above of a mysticism of “coalescence,” “mitigated dualism,” “dichotomy,” “immanence and transcendence,” the *sertão* takes a central role in Riobaldo’s narrative decision about the existence of God and the devil and the role of good and evil in his world. For instance, in a moment of dread, he says: “*eu ia denunciar nome, dar a cita: ...Satanão! Sujo!... e dele disse somente – S...-Sertão... Sertão...*”<sup>372</sup> (607). The *sertão* can be Satan, then, insofar as that is meaningful to the protagonist. It is also, however, “*assunto de Deus*” (205). He explains, too: “*Deus está em tudo – conforme a crença? Mas tudo vai vivendo demais, se remexendo. Deus estava mesmo vislumbrante era se tudo esbarrasse, por uma vez*”<sup>373</sup> (328). God is present in the *sertão*, in everything, hidden behind it all, and would become clear if our excessive motion of living were to slow down, if our *travessia* were less blind. The *sertão* as microcosm of the material earth can seem a more ambiguous space, a space with the devil, perhaps, too – but it is always, in *GSV*, a space in which there are multiple levels present which make up the whole, as explained in reference to the waterfall, the *cachoeira*, his metaphor for the spiritual and material world. The earth and the water together are the waterfall, and without one or the other it would cease to be what it is; more than the sum of its physical and metaphysical parts, the *sertão* requires both.

This is his paradox of material mysticism: the immanent transcendent *sertão*. The *sertão* is permeated by the spiritual realm, in Riobaldo’s understanding; and it is fluid in its relationship to mankind and even itself. It is a place that is both a physical environment, and a spiritual one, immanent and transcendent. The work consistently expresses the confluence of the seen and the unseen, the physical and metaphysical. The following quote uses the metaphor of subterranean water to point to the underlying complexity of what appears at first to be inhospitable earth: “*O senhor vê, nos Gerais longe: nuns lugares, encostando o ouvido no chão, se escuta barulho de fortes águas, que vão rolando debaixo da terra*” (308). In English, “You see, far away in the *Gerais*: in some places, placing your ear against the ground, one hears the clamor of strong waters, that are rolling beneath the earth.” And when Riobaldo imagines Heaven, he imagines it as a state of *seeing the unseen*, of knowing what lies behind/beyond material experience: “*O inferno é um sem-fim que nem não se pode ver. Mas a gente quer Céu é porque quer um fim: mas um fim com depois dele a gente tudo vendo,*” “Hell is a no-end that you can’t even see. But we want Heaven because we want an end: but an end with afterwards, us seeing all” (76). The *sertão* is always more than what can be seen, in concert with the seen, embracing paradox.

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<sup>372</sup> “I was going to denounce the name, to cite it: ... “Satan! *Sujo!*... but of it I only said – S... -*Sertão... Sertão...*”

<sup>373</sup> “God is in everything – according to belief? But everything is living too much, and shuffling itself. God would be really shimmering, if everything stumbled, for once”

**CHAPTER III:  
RIOBALDO'S *SERTÃO* as LITERARY SPACE**

Heidegger claims that to “dwell” in the earth is to “rescue” it, to free it “into its own way of being,” to “unfold” it. And we are not simply present in the world; rather, in or “being-in-the-world” we intimately cause or allow the world to be (Padrutt 17). But, as has been shown, it is not just in our material presence in a material world that we live “in-the-world”; rather, our perceptions and experiences, direct or mediated, construct not just our internal/psychical geographies, but the way in which we then interact with the geographies around us. As readers of *GSV*, we are asked to not just be present in the *sertão*-space of the novel, but to “dwell” in it – to unfold it, to free it into being itself, and to free ourselves into interacting fully with all of its realms.

Bergson, too, with his concept of “intuition,” claims that in an act of sympathizing experience of an object, we have “*integrated* our movement into its own: we have participated in its becoming”, and are “attuning our duration to its” (Mullarkey xvii). *GSV* asks us, too, to integrate ourselves into its space of (meta)physical *sertão* and therefore allow it to become its inexpressible self: that *reino-reino*, “realm-realm,” explored in depth above.

Although their metaphysical realm aspects are quite different, as will be seen, both *GSV* and *PP*, in remarkably similar fashion, ask their readers to *participate*, to *experience*, to *intuit*, and to *dwell*, in their landscapes – and they both do so with narrative techniques that not only encourage reader collaboration and “dwelling” in the texts, but also aid in the creation of the texts’ internal (meta)physical spaces by fortifying paradox within the novels’ realms. The narratives create space within the works, and space for the reader’s own insertion, “rescuing” it into its “becoming” as a (meta)physical space.

**1. DWELLING in PARTICIPATORY NARRATIVE:**

The narrative of *GSV* – as is that of *PP* – is constructed as an inherently participatory one due in large part to its textual *lacunae*<sup>374</sup> – the “blanks” it leaves for the reader to fill in. These openings for reader participation take many forms. First of all, Riobaldo is an unreliable narrator; he says and then unsays, he says too much and too little, he forgets details and glosses over them, and he even tells his listener to fill in the blanks. The narrative form is itself non-linear, much like the whirlwind (*redemoinho*) of which Riobaldo often speaks, which also introduces a level of ambiguity and possibility into the reader’s relationship with the text. Even the language itself invites attentive and active reading due to its complexity. Riobaldo tells his story for reasons hinted at but undisclosed, and with constant chronological jumps, contradictions, and admissions of wrong tellings; he is unreliable as a narrator, and the reader must constantly interpret and internally organize the tale.

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<sup>374</sup> As mentioned in the introduction, “*lacunae*” is used here as it was introduced by Wolfgang Iser: his “*Leerstellen*” – translated as “ ‘blanks’, ‘gaps’ or ‘lacunae’ ” – refer to spaces in the text that “have to be filled in or ‘concretized’ by the reader in order to interpret the text.” (Cuddon and Preston 726).

Riobaldo's characterization provides further possibilities for reader integration into the novel's space through both its ambiguity and its multiplicity. As mentioned above, Riobaldo is untrustworthy and ambiguous: this comes through also in the fact that he is never formally introduced, and his interlocutor never introduced at all, remaining only *o senhor*, "sir." The work enters *in medias res*, and the ambiguous interlocutor/narratee may well be us, ourselves. Further, Riobaldo is multiple. The Riobaldo who narrates is not the Riobaldo-narrated, but an older and wiser man who possesses knowledge of a secret that the younger did not. Too, Riobaldo is double again in his character: he is both "of" the *sertão*, and also, consciously, its observer – erudite, different. Like many of the work's readers, Riobaldo was not raised in the wilds of the *sertão* for the simplicity of the *jagunço* life; rather, he went to school and learned to read, and heard of the *sertão* through others' tales, becoming inspired by its magic (as we are). However, when he chose the life of the *sertão*, the *sertão* chose him as well, becoming him, and he it. Riobaldo is the *sertão*, and his difference and introspection provide a bridge that allows the reader to be the *sertão*, too.

## 1.1 EXPLICIT and IMPLICIT TEXTUAL LACUNAE

### UNCERTAINTY and UNRELIABILITY:

As will be shown *PP*, albeit in somewhat different ways, the narrative of *GSV* is brimming with inconsistency and unreliability in the nature of the telling itself. As part of creating unreliability in the narration, Riobaldo expresses constant doubt as to whether he is believed; and, too, he admits explicitly to falsehood. Riobaldo asks, "*O senhor crê minha narração?*"<sup>375</sup> (601) as well as a veritable theme and variations on "*o senhor crê?*" as related to parts of the narration. This could be a simple verbal tick of a colloquial phrase, as in "would you believe it?" but in its quantity points to a real doubt: "*o senhor crê?*" (189)<sup>376</sup>, "*O senhor me crê?*" (253)<sup>377</sup>, "*o senhor crê?*" (310)<sup>378</sup>, "*Senhor crê, sem estar esperando?*" (519)<sup>379</sup>, "*o senhor crê?*" (525).<sup>380</sup>

Riobaldo also says, mandating, "*acredite o senhor*" ("believe, sir") (181), and, explaining, "*falo*

<sup>375</sup> "Do you believe my narration, [sir]?" ("sir" is implicit in the formal form of address, "*o senhor*".)

<sup>376</sup> "... *o senhor crê? – a mocinha me agüentava era num rezar, tempos além*" (189). ("...do you believe me, [sir]? – the young woman endured me it was in a [state of] prayer, times beyond.") (in reference to an act of violation that he regrets)

<sup>377</sup> "*Mas o sarro do pensamento alterava as lembranças, e eu ficava achando que, o que um dia tivessem falado, seria por me ofender, e punha significado de culpa em todas as conversas e ações. O senhor me crê?*" (253) ("But the residue of thought altered the memories, and I remained thinking that, what one day they had spoken, would be to offend me, and I placed a meaning of fault in all conversations and actions. Do you believe me, [sir]?"

<sup>378</sup> "... *passava a mão nas tetas de uma vaca – capins tão bons, o senhor crê? – algumas ainda guardavam leite naqueles peitos*" (310). ("I passed my hand on the teats of a cow – such good grasses, do you believe, [sir]? – some still kept milk in those breasts.")

<sup>379</sup> "*Senhor crê, sem estar esperando? Tal que disse. Ainda hoje, eu mesmo, disso, para mim, eu peço espantos*" (519). ("Do you believe, sir, without expecting it? Just what I said. Even today, I myself, from this, for me, I take frights.")

<sup>380</sup> "*E buraco-poço, água que dava prazer em se olhar. Devido que, nas beiras – o senhor crê? – se via a coragem de árvores, árvores de mata, ...*" (525). ("And hole-well, water that gave pleasure in looking. Due to that, on the shores – do you believe, [sir]? – one could see a boldness of trees, trees of the forest, ...")

*para o senhor crer*” (“I speak for you to believe”) (360) – an admission which, unfortunately, has the opposite effect, as it promotes doubt as to motive. Just as disconcerting are such statements as “*Eu era assim. Sou? Não creia o senhor*” (“I was like that. Am I? Don’t believe it, sir”) (560), “*possível o que não foi*” (“possible what wasn’t”) (538), and “*Ah, mas falo falso. O senhor sente? Desmente? Eu desminto. Contar é muito, muito dificultoso... O que eu falei foi exato? Foi. Mas teria sido? Agora, acho que nem não*” (200).<sup>381</sup> He admits openly that he speaks falsely; he denies his own words. He claims that telling is difficult; and that what he said is both exact, and wouldn’t have been.

In another particularly confusing statement in relation to “truth,” he admits that his story of war is implausible, but in his defense claims that war is not implausible, and one who tells the truth lies... but little: “*A guerra tem destas coisas, contar é que não é plausível. Mas, mente pouco, quem a verdade toda diz.*”<sup>382</sup> (380) And:

O senhor, mire e veja, o senhor: a verdade instantânea dum fato, a gente vai departir, e ninguém crê. Acham que é um falso narrar. Agora, eu, eu sei como tudo é: as coisas que acontecem, é porque já estavam ficadas prontas, noutra ar, no sabugo da unha; e com efeito tudo é grátis quando sucede, no reles do momento. Assim. Arte que virei chefe. Assim exato é que foi, juro ao senhor. Outros é que contam de outra maneira.<sup>383</sup> (453)

In this confusing statement (in which it is not unique), Riobaldo claims that people don’t believe things because of something in the very nature of every occurrence, every fact: everything that happens was already waiting to occur, but when it actually comes, it is free to take, free to misinterpret. He uses this dubious logic to convince *o senhor* that he did, in fact, become chief of the *jagunços* in the manner he has narrated, though others would explain it otherwise.

The tale is convoluted and unbelievable in many respects, as will be explored here. His tale is, in many respects, told like a *caso* – a tall tale of the region, generally having to do with war, miracles, courageous escapes, and even love, and lying squarely on the line between truth and invention. Riobaldo evidences his own blurry line in an episode with a young man. He begins by telling *o senhor* the *caso* “*Olhe: conto ao senhor. Se diz que, no bando de Antônio Dó, tinha um grado jagunço, bem remediado de posses – Davidão era o nome dele*”<sup>384</sup> (101) ... the story involves this man’s fear of death, and his attempt to pay a poor man, Faustino, to die first, if Davidão’s destiny should come for him. Riobaldo then explains that he told the story to a young man, “*um rapaz de cidade grande, muito inteligente,*”<sup>385</sup> who tells him it would make a good

<sup>381</sup> “Oh, but I speak falsely. Do you feel it? Do you deny it? I deny it. Telling is very, very difficult. ... Was what I told exact? It was. But would it have been? Now, I don’t really think so.”

<sup>382</sup> “War has these things, telling is what isn’t plausible. But, he lies little, who tells the whole truth.”

<sup>383</sup> “You, sir, look and see: the instant truth of a fact, people will divide/deviate from, and no one believes. They think it’s a false telling. Now, I, I know how it all is: the things that happen, it’s because they were already staying ready, in another air, in the root of the nail; and indeed all is free when it happens, in the commonness of the moment. Like this. Art that I became the chief. Exactly like this is how it happened, I swear to you. Others are that tell it in a different way.”

<sup>384</sup> “Look: I’ll tell you. They say that, in the band of Antônio Dó, there was a notable *jagunço* (bandit), neither rich nor poor in possessions – Davidão was his name”

<sup>385</sup> “a boy from the big city, very intelligent”

book if it had a great ending. This young man promptly imagined such an ending, involving a fight to the death between the two – and Riobaldo’s response to the invention is the following:

Apreciei demais essa continuação inventada. A quanta coisa limpa verdadeira uma pessoa de alta instrução não concebe! Aí podem encher este mundo de outros movimentos, sem os erros e volteios da vida em sua lerdeza de sarrafaçar.<sup>386</sup>

The young man then wants to know the ending “*na verdade de realidade*” of the tale; Riobaldo neither knows, nor cares. In this episode, Riobaldo shows an attitude that accepts a neat invention conceived of by a brilliant and learned person as “*coisa limpa verdadeira*,” a “clean and true thing,” better than life itself. Indeed, his own story requires at times a suspension of disbelief; in this regard, he censures his listener about doubts: in the following phrase, pointing to the uniqueness of his life as *jagunço* and chief, and the difficulty of expressing it, he tells *o senhor* that if he can’t believe in what he thinks is impossible, he could never be a *jagunço* chief as Riobaldo has been: “*Mas o senhor acreditando que alguma coisa humana é de todo impossível, então é que o senhor não pode mesmo ser chefe de jagunço*”<sup>387</sup> (505).

In sum, Riobaldo’s tale does not invite confidence in its substance, perhaps, but most of all in its telling; and this is a fundamental part of the puzzle of the work, part of its texture and construction.

### SAYING and UNSAYING:

Riobaldo also changes his story as he tells it. Here, he asks for his words to be returned to him, put back into his mouth:

Alegria! Eu disse? Ah, não, eu não. O senhor de repente rebata essa palavra, devolvida, de volta para os portos da minha boca... Que foi, o dito? Novas Novidades...<sup>388</sup> (580)

Here below, he takes back what he said in a different way – saying “*Digo, desdigo*,” “I say, I unsay” – when he encounters the fact that his interlocutor has received the wrong impression from his telling:

Desistir de Diadorim, foi o que eu falei? Digo, desdigo. Pode até ser, por meu desmazelo de contar, o senhor esteja crendo que, no arrancho do acampo, eu pouco visse Diadorim, amizade nossa padecesse de descuido ou mingua. O engano. Tudo em contra.<sup>389</sup> (202)

<sup>386</sup> “I really appreciated that invented continuation. Of how many clean and true things a person of high instruction conceives (literally, “does not conceive”)! There they can fill this world with other movements, without the errors and turnings of life in its sluggish botching.”

<sup>387</sup> “But you believing that any human thing is entirely impossibly, then it is that you cannot in fact be a *jagunço* chief.”

<sup>388</sup> “Joy! Did I say? Ah, no, not me. Parry that word back immediately, returned, back for the doors of my mouth... What was it, the said? New Novelties...”

<sup>389</sup> “To give up on Diadorim, was that I said? I say, I unsay. It could even be, by my slovenliness in telling, that you could be believing that, in the place we stayed at the encampment, I saw little of Diadorim, that our friendship was

Interestingly, in this case, he admits that what he told *o senhor* was wrong, but with the word “*engano*,” which implies both *error* and *deception*... a textual loophole, among many, which creates an insecure truth-quotient for the narrator.

Then, he also tells *o senhor* that he simple tells the story in his own way, and *not in deceit*:

Sei que estou contando errado, pelos altos. Desemendo. Mas não é por disfarçar, não pense. De grave, na lei do comum, disse ao senhor quase tudo. Não crio receio. ... Não. Eu estou contando assim, porque é o meu jeito de contar.<sup>390</sup> (114)

However, though he says his errors in telling are not to hide anything, he also says that he has told “almost everything” – thus, Riobaldo’s reliability remains in question... “*Ou conto mal? Reconto.*” ... “Or do I tell it wrong? I’ll retell it.” (77)

### SAYING TOO MUCH, or NOT AT ALL:

There are also many examples in which he admits to telling either more<sup>391</sup> – or, more commonly, less – than what seems appropriate for a complete and truthful narrative. He claims that, because he is old, he tells too much – and, ambiguously, that everything either does or doesn’t matter:

Desculpa me dê o senhor, sei que estou falando demais, dos lados. Resvalo. Assim é que a velhice faz. Também, o que é que vale e o que é que não vale? Tudo.<sup>392</sup> (160)

He chooses what to tell, saying for instance that he doesn’t see the point of telling every detail, or that much of it sounds all the same or was just empty, spent time:

De tudo não falo. Não tenciono relatar ao senhor minha vida em dobrados passos; servia para que?<sup>393</sup> (232)

De contar tudo o que foi, me retiro, o senhor está cansado de ouvir narração, e isso de guerra é mesmice, mesmagem.<sup>394</sup> (319)

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suffering from carelessness of lack. An error/deception. All to the contrary.”

<sup>390</sup> “I know that I am telling wrong, from up high. I un-correct. But it isn’t to disguise, don’t think that. Gravely, in the common law, I told you almost everyting. I don’t create suspicion. ... No. I’m telling like this, because it’s my way of telling.”

<sup>391</sup> “*Digo ao senhor. Mas o senhor releve eu estar glosando assim a seco essas coisas de se calar no preceito devido. Agora: o tudo que eu conto, é porque acho que é sério preciso.*” (189) “I tell you. But you pardon my commenting like this eagerly about these things that are for being quiet in the due rule. Now: everything that I tell, it’s because I think it’s seriously necessary.”

<sup>392</sup> “Give me pardon sir, I know I’m speaking too much, on the sides. I’m sliding. This is what old age does. Also, what is it that matters and what is it that doesn’t matter? Everything.”

<sup>393</sup> “I don’t speak of everything. I don’t intend to tell you my life in marching steps; what would that serve?”

<sup>394</sup> “Of telling all that was, I retreat, you are tired of hearing the narration, and this about war is sameness, same-message.”



Mas, conto ao senhor as coisas, não conto o tempo vazio, que se gastou....<sup>395</sup> (548)

At times he holds back, too, not because the details would be irrelevant, but because he doubts *o senhor's* ability to understand it at all:

De que serve eu lhe contar minuciado – o senhor não padeceu feliz comigo –? Saber as revezadas do capim?<sup>396</sup> (387)

Mas, como vou contar ao senhor? Ao que narro, assim refrio, e esvaziado, Luís-e-silva. O senhor não sabe, o senhor não vê. Conto o que fiz? ... Como vou contar, e o senhor sentir em meu estado? O senhor sobrenasceu lá? O senhor mordeu aquilo? O senhor conheceu Diadorim, meu senhor?!...<sup>397</sup> (608)

O senhor nonada conhece de mim; sabe o muito ou o pouco? O Urucuia é ázigo... Vida vencida de um, caminhos todos para trás, é história que instrui vida do senhor, algum? O senhor enche uma caderneta... O senhor vê aonde é o sertão? Beira dele, meio dele?... Eu sei.<sup>398</sup> (611)

The listener doesn't know how the grass is, or know the *sertão* in its shores and depths, its Hell and Heaven... he receives the tale without seeing or knowing, only writing in a little notebook – a reference, perhaps, to the author himself, and his belonging/non-belonging. *O senhor* wasn't reborn there, and more than anything, doesn't know Diadorim - but Riobaldo knows, “*Eu sei.*”

### The REMEMBERED, the FORGOTTEN, and LINEAR STORYTELLING:

Or, does he know? He also openly admits that he didn't understand his own life, and thus speaks in twisted words: “*Falo por palavras tortas. Conto minha vida, que não entendi*”<sup>399</sup> (506). He might understand it with his heart, but that doesn't aid in the clarity of the telling: “*Meu coração é que entende, ajuda minha idéia a requerer e traçar*”<sup>400</sup> (326). So beyond choosing what to say or not say, or claiming ignorance in the art of telling, part of Riobaldo's explanation for the unreliable and non-linear nature of the narrative is ignorance of his own life, and, also, the very nature of memory and of the past: a nature which makes it impossible to know what really happened after it occurred as well as during, and impossible, too, to tell a story in a linear

<sup>395</sup> “But, I tell you the things, I don't tell the empty time, which was spent.”

<sup>396</sup> “What does it serve me to tell you minutely – you did not undergo happiness with me - ? Know the alternating of the grass?”

<sup>397</sup> “But, how am I going to tell you? To what I tell, like this cold, and empty, *Luís-e-silva*. You don't know, you don't see. Tell what I did?” How am I going to tell, and you feel in my state? Were you reborn there? Did you bite that? Did you know Diadorim, dear sir?!”

<sup>398</sup> “You know a trifle of me; do you know the much or the little? The *Urucuia* is unpaired... Life defeated of one, paths all backwards, is it a story that instructs the life of a man, any? You fill a little notebook... Do you see where it is that the *sertão* is? The brink of it, the middle of it? ... I know.”

<sup>399</sup> “I speak in crooked words. I tell my life, which I did not understand”

<sup>400</sup> “It's my heart that understands, it helps my idea to want to appeal and to outline”

fashion. The occurrences were unclear to begin with, and are placed into memory in a scattered fashion, too. For instance, memory is kept, he says below, in various places, in various ways, sometimes as if he were a different person each time; so only when one is concentrating on the least important, can one tell a story in a straight line:

A lembrança da vida da gente se guarda em trechos diversos, cada um com seu signo e sentimento, uns com os outros acho que nem não misturam. Contar seguido, alinhavado, só mesmo sendo as coisas de rasa importância. De cada vivimento que eu real tive, de alegria forte ou pesar, cada vez daquela hoje vejo que eu era como se fosse diferente pessoa. Sucedido desgovernado. Assim eu acho, assim é que eu conto. O senhor é bondoso de me ouvir. Tem horas antigas que ficaram muito mais perto da gente do que outras, de recente data. O senhor mesmo sabe.<sup>401</sup> (114-115)

He also asks, for instance, “*Como vou achar ordem para dizer ao senhor ...*,” “How am I going to find an order to tell you...” (66), indicating that the order of telling is something he searches for constantly and consciously, not something that is already in place due to chronology. And here, below (in a continuation of a citation above), he claims that it is due to the *cunning* of past events that they mix themselves up in memory:

Contar é muito, muito dificultoso. Não pelos anos que se já passaram. Mas pela astúcia que têm certas coisas passadas – de fazer balancê, de se remexerem dos lugares. ... São tantas horas de pessoas, tantas coisas em tantos tempos, tudo miúdo recruzado.<sup>402</sup> (200)

He claims that of the many people, times, and things in the past, some have the cunning to create confusion – which is, again, just what the above sentences themselves create in the reader, in that, for instance, though what he told was “exact,” it also “wouldn’t have been.” There are other mentions, too, of the faults of memory, here as an excuse for why the story might be contradicted, though *o senhor* is not really in a place to do so: “*A qualquer narração dessas depõe em falso, porque o extenso de todo sofrido se escapole da memória. E o senhor não esteve lá*”<sup>403</sup> (418). But then, to create further confusion, he contradicts himself again, as he often does, here trying to prove that he has, as well as a faulty memory that pardons his inconsistencies, a firm memory, in order to convince *o senhor* of the veracity of the tale:

Aos dez e dez, digo, afirmo que me lembro de todos [os meus homens]. Esses passam e transpassam na minha recordação, vou destacando a contagem. Nem é por me gabar de retentiva cabedora, nome por nome, mas para alimpar o seguimento de tudo o mais que

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<sup>401</sup> “The remembrance of our lives is kept in different sections, each one with its sign and feeling, and some with the others I think don’t mix. Telling continuous, tacked in place, only really being the things of shallow importance. Of each lived moment that I really had, of strong joy or weight, each of those times I see today that I was as if I were a different person. Ungoverned occurrence. As I think, so it is that I tell. You are kind to hear me, sir. There are ancient hours that stayed much closer to us than others, of recent date. You, sir, know.”

<sup>402</sup> “Telling is very, very difficult. Not because of the years that have already passed. But because of the cunning that certain past things have – of causing confusion, of mixing up places. ... They are so many hours of people, so many things in so many times, all tiny, repeatedly crossed.”

<sup>403</sup> “You can depose any of these narrations as false, because the extent of everything suffered escapes from memory. And you weren’t there.”

vou narrar ao senhor, nesta minha conversa nossa de relato. O senhor me entende?<sup>404</sup> (466)

He remembers them all, just as when he claims earlier that forgetting is like losing money<sup>405</sup> – and he tells *o senhor* of his dependable memory not simply to prove that he retains everything, but to “clean the continuation of everything else that I will tell you” – i.e., to prove truth. Does it? No, not really – he claims first that memory is tricky, to pardon the narrative; then, that memory is firm, to prove truth.

The truthfulness of Riobaldo’s narrative is open to question, and at its roots are his motives, which will be discussed further in the next chapter:

O senhor sabe?: não acerto no contar, porque estou remexendo o vivido longe alto, com pouco caroço, querendo esquentar, demear, de feito, meu coração, naquelas lembranças. Ou quero enfiar a idéia, achar o rumozinho forte das coisas, caminho do que houve e do que não houve. As vezes não é fácil. Fé que não é.<sup>406</sup> (192)

His telling of the tale has a very personal purpose; its confusion may be due to deceit, but if he deceives the listener, he is deceiving himself. Riobaldo’s narrative is purposeful, both for his own reasons of the heart and soul, and in his comprehensive construction of the *sertão* of his life’s unfolding.

## LANGUAGE:

The creativity of the language, too, creates a certain amount of confusion and complexity in the work; it is verdant and inventive, ambiguous and dark, beautiful and complex, local, ancient, and new. The language is epic and deeply personal, introspective, and, in its difficulty, labyrinthine. In *GSV*, Guimarães Rosa seems to paint with a fat brush, much like an impressionist, using words that suggest and connote rather than denoting. As Guimarães Rosa tells Camacho in their interview, “you can’t blame any translator because the text is not very clear, almost ambiguous” (“*você não pode culpar nenhum tradutor porque o texto é pouco claro, quase ambíguo...*”) (Camacho 47).

According to Guimarães Rosa’s uncle Vicente, this style was inaugurated in the story called “Histórias de Fadas”<sup>407</sup> in 1947. Guimarães Rosa’s responding letter, discussed in part above, is illuminating of that style’s origins:

<sup>404</sup> “To the ten and tens, I say, I affirm that I remember them all. They pass and cross in my recollection, I am separating the telling. Nor is it to praise myself as a retentive container, name for name, but to clean the continuation of everything else that I will tell you, in this my our conversation of narration. Do you understand me?”

<sup>405</sup> “*Esquecer, para mim, é quase igual a perder dinheiro*” (423). (“Forgetting, for me, is almost like losing money.”)

<sup>406</sup> “Do you know? I don’t hit it right in the telling, because I’m shuffling the long-ago lived, with little kernel, wanting to heat it up, to put together, really, my heart, in those memories. Or I want to thread the idea, find the strong little route of things, the way of what was and what wasn’t. Sometimes it isn’t easy. Faith that it is not.”

<sup>407</sup> As mentioned above, Vicente didn’t appreciate the style, and wrote to his nephew to criticize its incomprehensibility. Vicente pardons himself now by saying that this first example with which *Guimarães Rosa*

I keep thinking that you read my chronicle-fantasy very quickly and superficially. Now, ... the “Histories of Fairies” were written to be reread, three-times-read and... meditated. ... reread, with attention and leisure, those columns; afterwards, if you have time, return to reread it, several times; each time, you are going to uncover new elements, that will have fatally escaped from the previous reading... in the molds of speech and writing of our Portuguese grandparents, in the era of the big discoveries and of the maritime journeys... daringly hypermodern passages, dealing with a very modern event... humor and sweet irony...<sup>408</sup>

He then assures his uncle that the passages that Vicente found overly complicated and frustratingly artificial are, instead, as Vicente will find if he reads the texts again, carefully designed; the juxtaposition of intentionally archaic forms, “in the casts of the speaking and writing of our Portuguese grandfathers, in the era of the great discoveries and of the maritime journeys,”<sup>409</sup> placed next to “daringly hypermodern passages, and dealing with an extremely modern event” to achieve an effect of contrast and “humor and sweet irony” (VG 133). This passage shows us the extent to which Guimarães Rosa was, even then, conscious of and careful with his word choice; each phrase is carefully placed to amuse and also to challenge his readers to new and fascinating conclusions.

Vicente provides further insight in Guimarães Rosa’s use of language, as well, citing his nephew as saying that he likes to use words as if they were just born, clean of all associations: “First, there’s my method which implies the utilization of each words as if it had just been born, to clean it of the impurities of quotidian language and reduce it to its original meaning”<sup>410</sup> (172). Vicente calls Guimarães Rosa’s work a “linguistic laboratory,” in which the author constructed neologisms and abolished syntax and punctuation, creating a result that “*aproxima sua prosa da poesia*,” “approximates his prose to poetry.” Vicente also cites his nephew’s comments in the interview with Lorenz, wherein Guimarães Rosa states that he uses languages other than Portuguese in his writing:

I write, and I think that this is my apparatus of control: the Portuguese language, such as we use it in Brazil; in the meantime, deep down, while I am writing, I extract from many other languages. From this my books result, written in my own language, and one can deduce that I don’t submit to the tyranny of grammar and others’ dictionaries. Grammar

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“initiated the style that consecrated him” (“*iniciava o estilo que o consagrou*”) simply took him by surprise “without the necessary preparation,” he was “*tomado de surpresa, sem a necessária preparação*” (132 Guimarães).

<sup>408</sup> “*Fico pensando que você leu muito rápida e superficialmente a minha crônica-fantasia. Ora, ... as “Histórias de Fadas” foram escritas para serem relidas, treslidas (sic) e ... meditadas. ... releia, com atenção e vagar, aquelas colunas; depois, se tiver tempo, torne a reler, várias vezes; de cada vez, você irá descobrir elementos novos, que terão fatalmente escapado à leitura anterior...*”

<sup>409</sup> “*nos moldes da fala e escrita dos nossos avôs portugueses, na época dos grandes descobrimentos e das viagens marítimas*” ... “*trechos ousadamente hipermodernos, e tratando de um acontecimento moderníssimo*” ... “*humour e doce ironia*”

<sup>410</sup> “*Primeiro, há meu método que implica a utilização de cada palavra como se ela tivesse acabado de nascer, para limpá-la das impurezas da linguagem cotidiana e reduzi-la a seu sentido original.*”

and the so-called Philology, linguistic science, were invented by the enemies of poetry.<sup>411</sup> (VG 172-173; Lorenz 70)

They are in his own language; but, it is still good Portuguese; in reference to the new word “*hipotrérico*” in *Tutaméia*, Guimarães Rosa writes, in the preface: “The term is new, of unresearched origin and still without a definition that will pull off its petals of significance. It is known, only, that it comes from good Portuguese”<sup>412</sup> (VG 173).

Guimarães Rosa also wrote something of his linguistic philosophy earlier, in his letter in *Sagarana* to João Condé – before “Histórias de Fadas,” but not before he had begun to think about his linguistic ideals:

... I tried my style, how it would be. I liked it. Certainly I loved language. Only, I don't love it as a severe mother, but as a beautiful lover and companion... And richness, oh! richness... At least, impious, horror of the cliché... But, there would still be more, if possible (dreaming is easy, João Condé, realizing it is what they are...): beyond the liquid and solid states, why not try to work language also in *gaseous state*?!<sup>413</sup>

Vocabulary and syntax in gaseous form, new-born, free and clear of hackneyed phrases – that was his ideal, and in *GSV*, he went a long way towards realizing it; loving language as a mistress rather than mother, however, he molds it into a further tool for creative ambiguity.

There are numerous studies on the language of the work, as it is probably the most saliently innovative characteristics of the novel,<sup>414</sup> including Nilce Sant'Anna Martins' dictionary, *O Léxico de Guimarães Rosa*. Martins explains that to “To give flow to his marvelous imagination,” and place his characters in surprising stories and in an “a meticulous and poetically described natural environment” Guimarães Rosa “turned over the potentiality of the language and created a style that astonishes and challenges the reader. His verbal opulence includes extremely varied expressive resources, be them of lexical order, be they syntactic, be they rhetorical... from imagination, sensibility, memory, knowledge, research, erudition...”<sup>415</sup> (xi).

<sup>411</sup> “Escrevo, e creio que este é o meu aparelho de controle: o idioma português, tal como usamos no Brasil; entretanto, no fundo, enquanto vou escrevendo, extraio de muitos outros idiomas. Disso resultam meus livros, escritos em um idioma próprio, meu, e pode-se deduzir daí que não me submeto à tirania da gramática e dos dicionários dos outros. A gramática e a chamada filologia, ciência lingüística, foram inventadas pelos inimigos da poesia.”

<sup>412</sup> “O termo é novo, de impesquisada origem e ainda sem definição que lhe apanhe as pétalas de significado. Sabe-se, só, que vem do bom português”

<sup>413</sup> “... experimentei o meu estilo, como é que estaria. Me agradou. De certo que eu amava a língua. Apenas, não a amo como a mãe severa, mas como a bela amante e companheira... E riqueza, oh! riqueza... Pelo menos, impiedoso, horror ao lugar-comum... Mas, ainda haveria mais, se possível (sonhar é fácil, João Condé, realizar é que são elas...): além dos estados líquidos e sólidos, porque não tentar trabalhar a língua também em estado gasoso?!”

<sup>414</sup> Such studies as Eduardo de Faria Coutinho's *The process of revitalization of the language and narrative structure in the fiction of João Guimarães Rosa and Julio Cortázar*, Aglaêda Facó's *Guimarães Rosa, do ícone ao símbolo: ensaio de estilística*, and many others,

<sup>415</sup> “dar vazão à sua portentosa imaginação,” ... “ambiente natural minuciosa e poeticamente descrito,” ... “revolveu as potencialidades da língua e criou um estilo que assombra e desafia o leitor. A sua opulência verbal

And, in her research of the lexicon, Martins had to turn to dictionaries of Tupi, Latin, Greek, French, Spanish, Italian, English and German (xii).

Certainly, the carefully ambiguous language of the work contributes to its labyrinth, its chaotic *redemoinho*; and also, opens it to many different interpretations, in many different minds. *GSV* is, for every reader, a different work, due to its winding ways and tangled webs.

### OPEN to INTERPRETATION:

As is shown above, Riobaldo refers to his story as “...*esta minha conversa nossa de relato*,” “this my our conversation of narration” (466). Is it “mine,” or “ours”? Is it a “conversation,” or one man’s “narration” or “account,” told to another? He asks, at the end, “*O senhor me entende?*,” “Do you understand me?,” and though we don’t hear the answer, a first impression upon reading might be: “No.” However, there is one way in which a “*conversa*” and a “*relato*” can be both at once, and also be both “*minha*” and “*nossa*”: in being truly *open to interpretation*. Just as the language makes the work an interpretative one, an interaction for every reader rather than a one-way communication, a further aspect of this narrative is that there is much more to the story than what is actually told in it, and *o senhor* – like the reader, or an extension of the reader – needs to put the pieces together himself. The nature of the messages, connections, parables and transcendent worldviews hidden in plain sight in the *sertão* has been discussed in terms of material mysticisms, i.e. the *reino-reino* in the *reino*; but there are also explicit textual references to the holes that need to be filled in the narrative itself, and which promote a complete reader integration into the text and the *sertão*. For instance, right after recounting the moment when he first meets “*O Menino*,” Reinaldo/Diadorim, he asks *o senhor* to listen to *more* than he is saying, and with an open mind, since many important things don’t have names:

Eu? O sério pontual é isto, o senhor escute, me escute mais do que eu estou dizendo; e escute desarmado. O sério é isto, da estória toda .... Muita coisa importante falta nome.<sup>416</sup>  
(125)

“Listen to me more than what I am saying; and listen unarmed.” Perhaps part of the story is, indeed, *in between* the words/names (and worlds), and in the interpretation of the interlocutor, a space for possibilities to unfold.

In the following statement, Riobaldo claims that in telling half, he avoids telling too much, in the hope that his listener will form an idea: “*Mas conto menos do que foi: a meio, por em dobro não contar. Assim seja que o senhor uma idéia se faça*”<sup>417</sup> (359). The interlocutor should make his own idea; that is why the story lacks complete clarity. Later, too, he gives his interlocutor the reigns to “suppose,” to fill in the blanks of the narration: “*Aí, narro. O senhor me releve e*

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*inclui recursos expressivos extremamente variados, quer de ordem léxica, quer sintática, quer retórica... de imaginação, sensibilidade, memória, conhecimento, pesquisa, erudição...*”

<sup>416</sup> “I? The precise seriousness is this, you listen, sir, listen to me more than what I am saying; and listen unarmed. What’s serious is this, of the whole story ... Many important things lack a name.”

<sup>417</sup> “But I tell less than what was: half, to not tell double. Let it be, like this, that you make yourself an idea.”

*suponha*" (477). "There, I tell," he says, "You relieve me [pardon me] and suppose [guess, assume, imagine]." Here, Riobaldo points the reader to the *lacunae*, and invites us in.

These literary effects all share in destabilizing the narrative, and expanding its possibilities of origin and, too, reception. For origins, we have truth, lies, the untrustworthy recesses of memory, and imagination, and we have Riobaldo in different stages of life, belief, and motivation – it's all suspect. We also have his act of opening up the narrative to the interlocutor's own impressions and interpretations, when he asks the interlocutor – and, through him, implicitly, the reader, us – to fill in the blanks, make our own ideas, come to our own conclusions. As will be seen in *PP*, *GSV* is a work that requires and encourages reader integration, and so opens up the work in ambiguity, pulling the text and its internal spaces out of the realm of literature and into the imaginations and hearts of its readers – a new *psychical geography* for every reader.

## 1.2 RIOBALDO and READER INTEGRATION:

Riobaldo is twice double, and thus twice invites the reader further into his narrative. First, he is both past Riobaldo and present Riobaldo, Riobaldo-narrated, Riobaldo-narrator; this complexity points to a consistent uncertainty in the text as to *how much Riobaldo knows*. Are his memories of the past precise – and, if so, are they his past self's thoughts that he discloses? Or, some combination of the two, in indistinguishable ambiguity? This complexity adds another layer of doubt in the veracity of the work's narrative.

Riobaldo is also double in that he – like, as will be seen, Juan Preciado in *PP* – is both deeply attached to his narrated world, and also separate from it, thus reaching both towards the reader and towards the work's regional space and its secrets. Riobaldo is very much a part of the *sertão*, as shown above; and yet he is also separate from it, literate, consciously different, a part of the world he left behind upon *choosing* to become a *jagunço*, the world attempted to return to after trying to leave the *sertão*'s wilds behind. His examination of the *sertão*, even as it is integral to him, is a bridge to the reader.

## MULTIPLE NARRATOR or NARRATOR, DIVIDED:

On its surface, the narrative is composed by one man, whom we learn along the way is called Riobaldo, telling a story – but the reader soon finds that this story is told to another man, "*o senhor*," and, too, that the "–" that marks the beginning of the novel does, in fact, indicate a line of dialogue – one that is 600 or so pages long. This line of dialogue appears to be interrupted at times by *o senhor*'s commentary or questions, but those are not recorded – only Riobaldo's voice is. The narrator of the story, then, is in fact the "internal narrator" of the work, as well as its human protagonist; and the fictional narratee, *o senhor*, appears to be the one to have recorded the work, though how faithfully we can't be sure; the act of recording is implicit, as the one-sided dialogue is unframed by any introductory or conclusive commentary.

What we learn from the opening pages, and throughout with some detective work, is that *o*

*senhor* is a well-educated man from the city (“*Ah, eu só queria era ter nascido em cidades, feito o senhor, para poder ser instruído e inteligente!*” (423) ... “*Inveja minha pura é de uns conforme o senhor, com toda leitura e suma doutoração*”<sup>418</sup> (30)). He is also younger than the speaker, for Riobaldo calls him “*seu moço,*” “young man” (32). He is visiting the *sertão* hoping to learn about it, hoping to travel through it to take note of what is there, in a little notebook (611). Riobaldo won’t let him leave “today” or “tomorrow,” but asks him to stay until Thursday, at least three days, to hear all about the *sertão* and Riobaldo’s own story (41).

The internal narrator “Riobaldo” is now growing old, with “white hair” (“*cabelos brancos*” (601)) heading towards old age after a life of orderly work (“*Para a velhice vou, com ordem e trabalho*” (623)). He is living comfortably along the São Francisco river as a *fazendeiro*, or great landholder, since his godfather passed away and in his will left to Riobaldo his two largest estates in honor of his brave acts.<sup>419</sup> He has nice and valuable things: coffee, cigarettes, a well-made chair, and a “*saquinho de relíquias,*” or “little bag of relics” (325), to surround him and keep him safe, as well as many friends settled nearby – whom he considers to be his true riches, and who will rise in arms if need be.<sup>420</sup> He appreciates a good book, but slowly, and in fact enjoys being “ignorant,” and in his own thoughts and his comfortable chair: “*Sou um homem ignorante. Gosto de ser. Não é só no escuro que a gente percebe a luzinha dividida? Eu quero ver essas águas, a lume de lua...*”<sup>421</sup> (325). We also learn that, upon accepting his inheritance, he married that sweet and beautiful woman named Otacília from Santa Catarina, whom he loved gently ever since he first saw her as a young man, and who lovingly waited for him to return to her in body and then in heart after his journey, which is now long ago.

This is *not* the same Riobaldo as is told in the story; nor is it “Tatarana,” nor “Urutu-Branco,” the names Riobaldo takes as a *jagunço*. And, Riobaldo-narrator and Riobaldo-narrated are not only separated by their age and station in life, but, too, by a momentous piece of knowledge which

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<sup>418</sup> “Ah, I only wanted to have been born in cities, made like you, to be able to be instructed and intelligent!” ... “My pure envy is of those like you, with all reading and high doctoration”

<sup>419</sup> “*E era que meu padrinho Selorico Mendes acabara falecido, me abençoando e se honrando, orgulhoso de meus atos; e as duas maiores fazendas ele tinha deixado para mim, em cédula de testamento... no Curalim, no Corinto, ... e tudo recebi em limpo*” (619-620). “And it was that my godfather Selorico Mendes ended up deceased, blessing me and honoring himself, proud of my acts; and the two greatest estates he had left for me, in a note of testament... in the Curalim, in the Corinto, ... and I received it all cleanly”

<sup>420</sup> “*E sozinhozinho não estou, há-de-o. Pra não isso, hei coloquei redor meu minha gente. Olhe o senhor: aqui, pegado, vereda abaixo, o Paspe – meeiro meu – é meu. .... Banda desta mão, o Alaripe: soubesse o senhor o que é que se preza, em rifleio e à faca, um cearense feito esse! Depois mais: o João Nonato, o Quipes, o Pacamã-de-Prezas. E o Fafafa ... tem uma eguada. Ele cria cavalos bons. ... Uns outros. ...E não vou valendo? Deixo terra com eles, deles o que é meu é, fechamos que nem irmãos. Para que eu quero ajuntar riqueza? Estão aí, de armas areiadas. Inimigo vier, a gente cruza chamado, ajuntamos: é hora dum bom tiroteiamento em paz, exp’rimentem ver. (40)* “And all alone I’m not, not at all. For this not to happen, I put my people around me. Look sir: here, close, down the *vereda*, Paspe – my sharecropper – he’s mine... Band on this side, Alaripe: if you know what it’s worth, in rifle and knife, a man from Ceará like this! Then more: João Nonato, Quipes, Pacamã-de-Prezas. And Fafafa... he has a herd of mares. He raises good horses... Some others... And aren’t I worthy? I leave land with them, theirs what’s mine, we are close like not even brothers. Why would I want to accumulate riches? They’re there, with ready arms. If an enemy comes, we share a call, we join together: it’s time for a good shoot-out in peace, try and see.”

<sup>421</sup> “I am an ignorant man. I enjoy being so. Isn’t it only in the dark that we see the little divided light? I want to see these waters, by the light of the moon...”



defines the narrated protagonist's worldview, choices, opinions, and even pronouns – specifically, the gender of his beloved, the fascinating and tragic heroine O Menino/Reinaldo/Diadorim, a source of great tribulation for the young “Riobaldo-narrated.” As will be seen with Juan Preciado in *PP*, Riobaldo is divided by secrets. Juan Preciado's secret is that he is dead; Riobaldo's secret is that he found out after her death that Diadorim was a woman, the love of his life, and her tragedy is much of the reason for his years of inner torture about his demonic pact.

In this, Riobaldo, the source of the story, is split; and, indeed, he is split in further ways, as is Diadorim. The characters in the work are as paradoxical as the telling; the “boy” that Riobaldo meets by a river and is fascinated by becomes his friend, “Reinaldo,” another jagunço and the son of Joca Ramiro, their leader; but Reinaldo is known by “Diadorim” to Riobaldo, as a secret name:

Pois então: o meu nome, verdadeiro, é Diadorim... Guarda este meu segredo. Sempre, quando sozinhos a gente estiver, é de Diadorim que você deve de me chamar, digo e peço, Riobaldo...<sup>422</sup> (172)

Riobaldo places no great importance on the fact that it is a secret, for many *jagunços* have something to hide; but having the secret shared with him has tremendous value, and tells him that Diadorim does not want an ordinary friendship. Though Riobaldo uses the name consistently in telling the story, only once does he let it slip by accident in company, and luckily no one was really listening.<sup>423</sup>

But even “Diadorim” is not the final name for this person, for she is, in fact, “Deodorina,” as Riobaldo finds on a birth certificate dated September 11<sup>th</sup> 1800-something... “*Maria Deodorina da Fé Bettancourt Marins* (620). And she is so confusing to him until he knows that she is a woman:

O sol dava dentro do rio, as ilhas estando claras. – “É aquele lá: lindo!” Era o manuelzinho-da-croa, sempre em casal, indo por cima da areia lisa, eles altas perninhas vermelhas, esteiadas muito atrás traseiras, desempinadinhos, peitudos, escrupulosos catando suas coisinhas para comer alimentação. Machozinho e fêmea – às vezes davam beijos de biquinim – a galinholagem deles. – “É preciso olhar para esses com um todo carinho...” – o Reinaldo disse. Era. Mas o dito, assim, botava surpresa. E a macieza da voz, o bem-querer sem propósito, o caprichado ser – e tudo num homem-d’armas, brabo bem jagunço – eu não entendia!<sup>424</sup> (159)

<sup>422</sup> “Well then: my name, true name, is *Diadorim*... Guard this my secret. Always, when we are alone, it's by Diadorim that you should call me, I say and ask, Riobaldo...”

<sup>423</sup> *Eu despropositava*. – *Diadorim é doído*... – eu disse. *Todo me surripiei, instanteante: tanto porque “Diadorim” era nome só de segredo, nosso, que nunca nenhum outro tinha ouvido*. (583) “I spoke randomly. – *Diadorim is crazy*... - I said. Then I instantly stole it back; so much because “Diadorim” was a name only in secret, ours, that no one else had ever heard.”

<sup>424</sup> “The sun shone inside the river, the islands being clear. – “And that there: beautiful!” It was the *manuelzinho-da-croa*, always as a couple, going over the smooth sand, those high little red legs, set very behind the read, tiny and straight, chesty, scrupulously gathering their little things to eat alimentation. Little male and female – sometimes they gave kisses of little beaks – the tiny little fowliness of them. – “It's necessary to look for these with a real

Riobaldo is multiple, too; he has many names as well. He begins as “Riobaldo,” a name introduced to his listener through in Diadorim’s mouth<sup>425</sup>; but he is also “Professor,” “Tatarana,” and “Urutu-Branco,” over time. He is “Professor,” because he ends up secretly teaching Zé Bebelo to read and write, after a complicated series of events: his godfather Selorico Mendes teaches him to defend himself, but also sends him to school; so, when he runs away after finding out that Mendes was his father, an old teacher gives him an opportunity to be a “professor” – not to children, but to Zé Bebelo, who hopes to become a government delegate one day (“*José Rebelo Adro Antunes, cidadão e candidato*” (346)). Zé Bebelo calls him “Professor,” and also “Secretário” in public, given that he chooses to hide his own illiteracy.<sup>426</sup> Bebelo is building an army, apparently to support the federal troops in a conflict against provincial ones.<sup>427</sup> Both sides of the conflict use paid bandits, or gunmen – *jagunços* – to fight; Joca Ramiro, whom Riobaldo already looks up to, is leading the other side. Riobaldo follows Zé Bebelo for a while with notebook in hand<sup>428</sup>, enjoying his experience of sojourn and war, but feels loyalty in his heart for Joca Ramiro, his hero. One day, the “Professor” decides to flee:

Em certo ponto do caminho, eu resolvi melhor minha vida. Fugi. De repente, eu vi que não podia mais, me governou um desgosto... Meu cavalo era bom, eu tinha dinheiro na algibeira, eu estava bem armado... eu não podia ficar com Zé Bebelo, porque meu seguimento era por Joca Ramiro, em coração em devoção”<sup>429</sup> (151-152)

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care...” – Reinaldo said. It was. But the saying, like this, caused surprise. And the softness of the voice, the caring with no purpose, the capricious being – and all in a man of arms, vicious hired gunman – I didn’t understand!”

<sup>425</sup> “*Riobaldo, escuta, pois então: Joca Ramiro era o meu pai...*” (52) “Listen, Riobaldo, then: Joca Ramiro was my father...”

<sup>426</sup> “...*me levou para um quarto, lá dentro, ligeiro, parecia até que querendo me esconder de todos. Uma doidice, de quê?... ‘Você fica sendo meu secretário.’... ‘E ele me apresentava com a honra de: Professor Riobaldo, secretário sendo.’*” (144, 147) “he took me into a room, there instead, softly, it seems even that he was wanting to hide me from everyone. A craziness, from what?... ‘You are becoming my secretary’ ... ‘And he presented me with the honor of: Professor Riobaldo, being secretary”

<sup>427</sup> Joca Ramiro’s group worked for the provincial government, supported by Riobaldo’s godfather/illegitimate father Selorico Mendes, and by Riobaldo’s own actions while living on the estate with him: “*Semanas seguintes, meu padrinho só falou nos jagunços. Dito que Joca Ramiro era um chefe cursado: muitos iguais não nascem assim – dono de glórias! Aquela turma de cabras, tivesse sorte, podia impor caráter ao Governo.*” (137) “The next weeks, my godfather only spoke of the *jagunços*. Said that Joca Ramiro was a well-traveled leader: not many are born equal – owner of glories! That group of fellows, if they had luck, could impose character on the government.”. On the other hand, Zé Bebelo’s federal-government aspirations, and the fact that federal government troops come to avenge his death (though he had actually been exiled), support his federal affiliation: “*aquela soldadama viera para o Norte era por vingar Zé Bebelo, e Zé Bebelo já andava por longes desterrado, e nisso eles se viravam contra a gente, que éramos de Joca Ramiro, que tinha livrado a vida de Zé Bebelo das facas do Hermógenes e Ricardão; e agora, por sua ação, o que eles estavam era ajudando indireto àqueles sebaçeiros* (319). “that group of soldiers had come to the North to avenge Zé Bebelo, and Zé Bebelo already was long exiled, and in this they came against us, who were with Joca Ramiro, who had saved Zé Bebelo’s life from the knives of Hermógenes and Ricardão; and now, by their action, they were indirectly helping those sackers (*sebaça*: to assault a property then rob it (Martins 446))

<sup>428</sup> “*Me chamou para junto, eu tinha de ter à mão um caderno grosso*” (148) “He called me with him, I had to have in my hand a thick notebook”

<sup>429</sup> “At a certain point on the way, I resolved my life better. I fled. Suddenly, I saw that I couldn’t do it anymore, I was governed by disgust... My horse was good, I had money in my pocket, I was well armed... I couldn’t stay with Zé Bebelo, because my following was for Joca Ramiro, in heart in devotion”

However, Riobaldo doesn't want to betray either. He isn't sure where he's going, but is received at the home of a man who also supports Joca Ramiro, and tells him his story; and in the morning, he is given an opportunity to join the troops when a representative of Ramiro arrives: the very same "*O Menino*" whom he admired as a boy, with the green eyes and beautiful mouth... "*O Menino me deu a mão: e o que mão a mão diz é o curto*"... "The Boy gave me his hand: and what hand says to hand, is short" (154). Riobaldo follows him back to Joca Ramiro's nearest camp, under the leadership of Titão Passos.

There, Riobaldo proves his worth as a marksman, and thus earns the name first "Cerzidor" and then "*Tatarana, lagarta-de-fogo*," fire lizard (179). When Diadorim uses the name to introduce him to Joca Ramiro, it stays with him, a badge of honor: "*Tatarana, pêlos bravos... Meu filho, você tem as marcas de conciso valente*"... "Tatarana, for your bravery... My son, you have the marks of a precise valiant man" (265).

His first mention of the name "Urutu-Branco" is in the grammatical third person: "*E o "Urutu-Branco"? Ah, não me fale. Ah, esse... tristonho levado, que foi – que era um pobre menino do destino...*"<sup>430</sup> (33), probably in reference to the internal and real battles fought under that name. He is given the name "Urutu-Branco" when he is baptized as chief by Zé Bebelo, become the band's chief after Ramiro and Medeiro Vaz, who then leaves the band in Riobaldo's hands:

Mas, você é o outro homem, você revira o sertão... Tu é terrível, que nem um urutu branco..." O nome que ele me dava, era um nome, rebatismo desse nome, meu. Os todos ouviram, romperam em risos. Contanto que logo gritavam, entusiasmados: - "O Urutu-Branco! Ei, o Urutu-Branco!..." Assim era que, na rudeza deles, eles tinham muita compreensão. Até porque mais não seria que, eu chefe, agora ainda me viessem e dissessem Riobaldo somente, ou aquele apelido apodo conome, que era de Tatarana.<sup>431</sup> (454)

This statement shows another division of Riobaldo, to be looked into later in this argument; Riobaldo as separate from the "*rudeza*" of the other *jagunços*, Riobaldo, something different in the *sertão*, of it and yet not of it – literate gunslinger, deep thinker, pact-maker... and between Joca Ramiro, "*rei da natureza*" and Zé Bebelo, "*Deputado*."

Besides being divided by his names (and, too, his achievements and his sense of belonging), Riobaldo is also divided by *knowledge*, as mentioned above – the knowledge of Diadorim, whom as narrator, an old man, Riobaldo-narrator, he knows to be a woman; but whom, as a young man, Riobaldo-narrated, he loves and doesn't know why. Riobaldo and Diadorim are both divided beings, paradoxical in their very characterization; as is the narrative, and so it the *sertão*.

<sup>430</sup> "And the "White-Viper"? Ah, don't speak to me of that. Ah, this one... unquiet, dejected, that he was – he was a poor boy of destiny..."

<sup>431</sup> "But, you are another man, you turn the *sertão* inside out... You are terrible, as not even a white viper...' The name that he gave me, was a name, rebaptism in this name, mine. They all heard, and broke into laughter. But then they soon yelled, enthusiastic: "The White Viper! Hey, the White Viper!..." Thus it was that, in their rudeness, they had great understanding. Even in that it wouldn't be that, I chief, they could not come and call me Riobaldo only, or that nickname, that was Tatarana."

Riobaldo is Riobaldo, and the Professor, and Tatarana, and Urutu-Branco; and, too, he is Riobaldo-narrator, telling, and Riobaldo-narrated, told, split by his knowledge of Diadorim, a character also with many facets. There are, then, always several Riobaldos – the one suffering rheumatism, telling the story to a learned stranger, constructing his own liberation or redemption in its telling, and the other, Riobaldo-told; the story contains within it at all times both the perspective of experience and “truth,” and that of ignorance: sometimes mixed, often separate, always multiple, even paradoxical, in essence. And this combination of factors – a multiple/split narrator, an unreliable, unframed, and nonlinear narrative, and a mysterious narratee – adds to the ability of the book to *leave the confines of a literary piece* – as it will be shown in Part II to do, too, for *PP*. Both stories are unfixed, as is their telling; they live in possibility, and are received as such by the reader.

### ADOPTED SON: BELONGING and ACCESS in the *SERTÃO*:

Riobaldo is, as mentioned above, different than the other *jagunços* – something he and Diadorim share. As he describes:

Diadorim e eu, nós dois. A gente dava passeios. Com assim, a gente se diferenciava dos outros – porque jagunço não é muito de conversa continuada nem de amizades estreitas: a bem eles se misturam e desmisturam, de acaso, mas cada um é feito um por si.<sup>432</sup> (44)

Riobaldo also differs deeply from his companions in his background. He is the godson and illegitimate son of a wealthy *fazendeiro*, and as such he was treated to privilege and education. He was as a child accomplished in grammar, civics, and geography, drawing “*bonitos mapas*,” “beautiful maps”; and his teacher hoped he would go on to learn Latin in a school (30). He didn’t do this, instead leaving school; but as is seen in the following quote, he didn’t lose his estimation for erudition: upon seeing his old teacher, as mentioned above, and when the Mestre asks what he is doing in town, he lies, saying, “*que eu tinha merecido licença de meu padrinho, para começar vida própria em Curalinho ou adiante, a fito de desenvolver mais estudos e apuramento só de cidade*”<sup>433</sup> (142). He tells the man a lie that he wishes were true – that he was going to pursue his studies in the city.

Riobaldo’s longing for the city life doesn’t leave him, even in the *sertão*. It remains for him as a sweet and mysterious dream of escape from the *jagunço* life: “*Tanto eu tinha um aperto de desânimo de sina, vontade de morar em cidade grande. Mas que cidade mesma grande nenhuma eu não conhecia, digo*”<sup>434</sup> (262). He thinks often of leaving, in fact, but Diadorim holds him back. “*lá eu não podia mais ficar. Onde eu tinha vindo para ali, e por que causa, e, sem paga de preço, me sujeitava àquilo? Eu iame embora. Tinha de ir embora. Estava arriscando minha*

<sup>432</sup> “Diadorim and I, we two. We took strolls. With this, we differentiated ourselves from the others – because *jagunço* isn’t much for continued conversation nor for close friendships: on account of [that] they join and unjoin, at random, but each one is made one in himself.”

<sup>433</sup> “that I had earned permission from my godfather, to begin my own life in Curalinho or beyond, in the aim of developing my studies and improvement in the city”

<sup>434</sup> “I had such a pressure of dejection of fate, a will to live in a big city. Except that I didn’t know any big city, I tell you.”

*vida, estragando minha mocidade. Sem rumo. Só Diadorim*<sup>435</sup> (197). He decides, too, once that he will leave the *sertão* to live near a city, though also feels that he won't – like the river Urucuia, who flees the *sertão* only to turn around and come back. And again, “*Mas eu fui sempre um fugidor. Ao que fugi até da precisão de fuga*”<sup>436</sup> (200).

Zé Bebelo tells him, at the time in which Riobaldo is suspicious of him, that they will enter Januária together in glory; Riobaldo feels uncomfortable at the prospect, for neither does he feel that the selfish Bebelo is really his friend, nor does he want to enter the city in “glory” – but *Januária in itself* is tempting to him:

E, desde, naquela hora, a minha idéia se avançou por lá, na grande cidade de Januária, onde eu queria comparecer, mas sem glórias de guerra nenhuma, nem acompanhamentos. Alembrado de que no hotel e nas casas de família, na Januária, se usa toalha pequena de se enxugar os pés; e se conversa bem. Desejei foi conhecer o pessoal sensato, eu no meio, uns em seus pagáveis trabalhos, outros em descanso comedido, o povo morador... À Januária eu ia, mais Diadorim, ver o vapor chegar com apito, a gente esperando toda no porto.<sup>437,438</sup> (354)

Riobaldo has too, at times, violent reactions to the topic of cities, a rage born of jealousy: “*Rodeando por terras tão longes,*” he nonetheless had a “*raiva surda das grandes cidades que há, que eu desconhecia. Raiva-porque eu não era delas, produzido...*”<sup>439</sup> Unlike Bebelo, who longs for cities to appreciate him and write up his deeds in their newspapers, Riobaldo would rather appreciate them. So, unable to have an urban origin, he turns, in self-protection, to the identity he has, that he has built for himself: “*Eu podia lá torcer o azul do céu por minhas mãos?! Tem as telhas e tem as nuvens... Virei os tigres; mas mesmo virei sendo o Urutu-Branco, por demais*” (533).

Torn inside, he also feels alienated from the other *jagunços*, from whom he is different. They are truly of it, in a way he fears he can't be. “*O senhor saiba: eu toda a minha vida pensei por mim,*

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<sup>435</sup> “I couldn't stay there anymore. Where had I come from to here, and for what cause, e, without payment of price, I subjected myself to that? I was going away. I had to go away. I was risking my life, ruining my youth. Without direction. Only Diadorim.”

<sup>436</sup> “But I was always a flee-er. Until I fled even from needing to flee.”

<sup>437</sup> “And, from, in that hour, my idea advanced that way, toward the great city of Januária where I wanted to appear, but without any glories of war, nor attendances. Remembering that in the hotel and the family houses, in Januária, they use a small towel to dry their feet; and they converse well. I wished to know the sensible people, I in the middle, some with their payable jobs, others in modest rest, the resident people... To Januária I would go, with Diadorim, to see the steam arrive with a whistle, all the people waiting in the port”

<sup>438</sup> He is not alone; Diadorim, who none could argue as being other than of the *sertão* with her heritage and ties, also dreams of the city once with Riobaldo, though she expressed it to him in terms of what Riobaldo will do with Otacília... combing her hair, her bridal veil, her house and children, and on Riobaldo's arm, in a new dress, going to parties in the city. He thought she was talking about Otacília... “Era?,” he wonders, “Was she?” (393)

<sup>439</sup> “Wandering through such far lands” ... “dead rage of the big cities that there are, that I didn't know. Rage – because I wasn't of them, produced...” ... “Could I, there, twist the blue of the sky with my hands?! They have roof tiles and clouds... I became the tigers; but I really became being the White Viper, for the rest”

*forro, sou nascido diferente. Eu sou é eu mesmo. Diverjo de todo o mundo*<sup>440</sup> (31) he says; and he repeats throughout the work that he is different from the others: “*em toda a parte, por onde andei, e mesmo sendo de ordem e paz, conforme sou, sempre houve muitas pessoas que tinham medo de mim. Achavam que eu era esquisito*”<sup>441</sup> (177). And, later, “*Eu era diferente de todos? Era. Susto disso – como me divulguei. Alaripe, o Quipes, mesmo o calado deles, sem visagens, devia de ser diverso do meu, com menos pensamentos. Era?*”<sup>442</sup> (585). They accept him, but treat him differently, especially those of Hermógenes camp (when still under Joca Ramiro): “*Ao às-tantas me aceitaram; mas meio atalhados. ... eu soube que eu era mesmo de outras extrações*”<sup>443</sup> (180). His place with them is one that he is always aware of: Riobaldo, and the people, two different things: “*Com os casos, que todos iam contando, de combates e tiroteios, perigos tantos vencidos, escapulas milagrosas, altas coragens... Aquilo, era uma gente. Ali eu estava no entremeio deles...*”<sup>444</sup> (202).

The “*fundo*” of the *sertão* in fact terrifies him, the place of the *catrumanos*; he feels like a complete outsider there. He tells *o senhor* that people who are so different are inherently dangerous: “*Mesmo que maldade própria não tenham, eles estão com vida cerrada no costume de si, o senhor é de externos, no sutil o senhor sofre perigos. ... O que assenta justo é cada um fugir do que bem não se pertence*”<sup>445</sup> (405). Wandering through that stifling land, with those oddly-dressed and malnourished people, he thinks it is hellish; for an hour, on horseback with his companions on their way through that place, he thinks about their misery, and feels bizarrely different from them – and, too, he thinks about how he is the only one to think about it: “*Bobéia minha? Porque os companheiros, indo cuidando de seu ramerrão comum, nenhum não punha tento em dessas idéias. Então era só eu? Era*”<sup>446</sup> (552). He is more thoughtful than the others; he is different. In fact, he remarks often on the *jagunços*’ behavior as something separate from his own: “*O senhor mal conhece esta gente sertaneja. Em tudo, eles gostam de alguma demora. Por mim, vi: assim serenados assim, os cabras estavam desejando querendo o sério divertimento*”<sup>447</sup> (277). Too, though it sounds hypocritical coming from Riobaldo, they don’t think in straight lines: “*jagunço, pelo que é, quase que nunca pensa em reto... gente airada*”<sup>448</sup> (291). He comments on the “*rudeza deles*”, their “*rudeness*” (625). The narrator’s capacity for thought, speaking, and writing, though convoluted, are a part of his struggle for belonging, and express his own complex relationship with the complex *sertão*. This makes him solitary; he has since

<sup>440</sup> “You know: I all my life thought for me, free, I am born different. I am I myself. I diverge from the whole world.”

<sup>441</sup> “everywhere, where I went, and even being in order and peace, as I am, there were always a lot of people who were afraid of me. They thought I was strange”

<sup>442</sup> “I was different from all of them? I was. Fear of this – as I disclosed. Alaripe, Quipes, even the quiet of them, without countenance, were probably different from mine, with fewer thoughts. Was I?”

<sup>443</sup> “They slowly accepted me, but somewhat perplexed. ... I knew that I really was of other extractions.”

<sup>444</sup> “With the *casos*, which they were all telling, of combats and shootings, so many dangers defeated, miraculous flights, high braveries ... That, that was a people. There I was interspersed with them...”

<sup>445</sup> “Even if they don’t have evil of their own, they are with life closed in their custom, you are from the outside, subtly you suffer dangers... What sits right is for each one to flee from what really doesn’t belong to him.”

<sup>446</sup> “My idiocy? Because the companions, going along taking care of their common routine, non of them put care in these ideas. Then it was only me? It was.”

<sup>447</sup> “You barely know this ‘sertanejan’ people. In everything, they like some delay. For myself, I saw: so calm so, the fellows were desiring wanting serious amusement.”

<sup>448</sup> “*jagunço*, in what he is, almost never thinks in a straight line... frivolous people.”

been to cities, as he expresses, “villages, old ones, high cities...” but the “*sertão* is solitude”: “*Estive nessas vilas, velhas, altas cidades... Sertão é o sozinho*” (325).

Riobaldo’s reasons for being a *jagunço* alienate him from the others, too, though at the same time, they draw him closer to the *sertão* of his heart; he came to the *sertão* because he was vulnerable to its mystique, its magical nature, much as Guimarães Rosa is himself, as expressed above. Riobaldo first began dreaming of the *sertão* when he met Joca Ramiro, a heroic man of mythical stature, and he was further captured in its idealistic dreams when he heard the song of Siruiz. It was this song, as well as Joca Ramiro, which caused him to enter *jagunçagem*. He heard it the same night that he first saw Ramiro and his *jagunços*, as they camped out at his godfather’s ranch. The song was strange to him, evocative of mystery, beauty, adventure... “*palavras diversas, para mim a toada toda estranha*”:

Urubu é vila alta,  
 mais idosa do sertão:  
 padroeira, minha vida –  
 vim de lá, volto mais não...  
 Vim de lá, volto mais não?...  
 Corro os dias nesses verdes,  
 meu boi mocho baetão:  
 buriti –água azulada,  
 carnaúba – sal do chão...  
 Remanso de rio largo,  
 viola da solidão:  
 quando vou p’ra dar batalha,  
 convido meu coração...<sup>449</sup> (135-136)

The song stays with him, a thing of glory: “*O que me agradava era recordar aquela cantiga, estúrdia, que reinou para mim no meio da madrugada, ah, sim. Simples digo ao senhor: aquilo molhou minha idéia*”<sup>450</sup> (137). He tries to invent his own verses, as he often will later; but those, even though they seemed more relevant to his life, are soon forgotten, whereas he remembers the original song, and every detail about that morning, perfectly: “*os cavaleiros no sombrio amontoados, feito bichos e árvores, o refiñfim do orvalho, a estrela-d’alva, os grilinhos do campo, o pisar dos cavalos e a canção de Siruiz. Algum significado isso tem?*”<sup>451</sup> (138)

This sweet notion follows him in his *jagunçagem* – a glimpse, he thinks, into their being and soul. He even names his horse Siruiz, the creature he tamed, who becomes like a part of him. However, it is not a song that the men know, nor care to; when he brings it up with his brother-

<sup>449</sup> “different words, for me a very strange melody: Vulture is a high village, / more ancient than the *sertão*: / patron, my life – / I came from there, and won’t go back... / I came from there, and won’t go back?... / I run the days in these greens, / my hornless ox a woolen blanket: / *buriti*-palm – blue water, / wax palm – salt of the ground... / The stillness of a long river, / viola of solitude: / when I go to give battle, / I invite my heart...”

<sup>450</sup> “What was pleasing to me was to remember that ballad, frolic, the reigned for me in the middle of the early morning, ah, yes. I tell you simply: that wetted my idea.”

<sup>451</sup> “the riders pilled up in the shade, made animals and trees, the *refiñfin* or the dew, the star of morning, the little crickets of the countryside, the step of the horses and the song of Siruiz. Does this mean something?”

in-arms, they begin to talk about how Siruiz died, which Riobaldo finds horrifying. They teach him a new song, one for war, for the band – a song about being unable to leave a woman for the *sertão*: “*Olererêê, baiana... Eu ia e não vou mais: Eu faço que vou lá dentro, oh baiana, e volto do meio p’ra trás...*”<sup>452</sup> (193). Riobaldo asks another time about the song of Siruiz, and they tell him, “*Sei não, gosto não. Cantigas muito velhas...*” (“I don’t know, I don’t like it. Very old ballads...”) (310). So the very thing that drew him to the *sertão* was a thing of the past; but it nonetheless follows him, a symbol for his connection to the land. In his disturbed moments, he fears he is losing it, and this is symbolic to him: “*No peso ruim do meu corpo, eu ia aos poucos perdendo o bom tremor daqueles versos de Siruiz?*”<sup>453</sup> (332). He then tries, in a moment of rebellion, to invent his own verses, rather than singing those of “*um homem que eu nem conheci,*” but these verses didn’t give him any comfort – “*Nem eles me deram refrigério. Acho que porque eu mesmo tinha inventado o inteiro deles*”<sup>454</sup> (333). He does, at times, however, alter it slightly, in his own memory, adding something of meaning to him: “*Ao menos achei de tirar, do tó da noite, esse de-fim, canto de cantiga: Remanso de rio largo... Deus ou o demo, no sertão...*”<sup>455</sup> (577) The only thing that gives him joy and comfort, he claims, is that song (and, too, memories of his mother, the *buritis*, Diadorim, Nossa Senhora da Abadia, the image of little children hiding behind their mothers at the river, and Otacília.) (533). In fact, when the other warriors are singing the “*Olererê Baiana...*” he sings his song, the *sertão*’s song, to himself: “*Assim, aquela outra – que o senhor disse: canção de Siruiz – só eu mesmo, meu silêncio, cantava*”<sup>456</sup> (561). The *sertão* of his imagination – it separates him from the *jagunços*, but is, to him, stronger than the men who think it is a thing of the past.

In feeling alienated from the other *jagunços*, and drawn to cities, Riobaldo feels somewhat alienated from the *sertão*, too: if he is different from the *jagunço*, and the “*Jagunço é o sertão,*” “*Jagunço is the sertão*” (327) – then, what is his place? But – we have already answered that: Riobaldo is complicated; but he is also of the *sertão*. It reflects him, he reflects it, on so many levels; he experiences it physically, emotionally, and spiritually as a realm that is truly himself. As the old *catrumano* tells Riobaldo, “*Sertão não é malino nem caridoso, mano oh mano!: – ... ele tira ou dá, ou agrada ou amarga, ao senhor, conforme o senhor mesmo*”<sup>457</sup> (537). Depending on Riobaldo’s frame of mind, he belongs or doesn’t belong to the *sertão*; and, the *sertão* was in his youth – and *is* in his telling – according to his mind, as well as somewhat ineffably *in* it. Compared to his profound and multi-layered belonging in the *sertão*, to its ownership of him, these doubts are small, and serve a different purpose altogether – inviting the reader to feel that we, too, can have access to the *sertão*, if such a being as Riobaldo – stuck in between his literacy and his *jagunçagem*, his desire for urban scenery and his desire for the *sertão* – is able to bridge his differences and become both *of* it, and *other than* it. Because he is,

<sup>452</sup> “Olererêê, Bahian woman... I was going and I won’t go any more: I plan to go there inside, oh Bahian, and return back from halfway”

<sup>453</sup> “In the bad weight of my body, was I gradually losing the good tremor of those verses of Siruiz?” ... “a man whom I didn’t even know”

<sup>454</sup> “They didn’t even give me solace. I think because I myself had invented the whole of them.”

<sup>455</sup> “At least I found a way to take away, from the sound of the night, this end, this piece of ballad: Stillness of the long river... God and the devil, in the *sertão*.”

<sup>456</sup> “Like this, that other – that you said: the song of Siruia – I alone, in my silence, sang.”

<sup>457</sup> “The *sertão* isn’t malign nor charitable, brother my brother!: - ... it takes away or gives, or pleases or embitters, you, according to you yourself”



really, both – paradoxical as that seems: “*Mas firme não pegou. Em mim, apelido quase que não pegava. Será: eu nunca esbarro pelo quieto, num feito?*”<sup>458</sup> (178-179). Hard to pin down, even for himself, he is both “*nascido diferente,*” “born different,” and, at times, born to be a *jagunço*:

Aonde é que jagunço ia? À vã, à vã. Tinha minha vontade, de estar em toda a parte. ... eu bem que tinha nascido para jagunço. Aquilo – para mim – que se passou: e ainda hoje é forte, como por um futuro meu. Eu estou galhardo. Naquilo, eu tinha amanhecido. Comi carne de onça?<sup>459</sup> (463-466)

Riobaldo, in between, is an open question like the *sertão* itself – and a doorway for the interlocutor, a city man, to enter by.

Just as Juan Preciado is of and not of Comala in *PP*, and thus invites the reader into the tale just to trap us there, so Riobaldo is and is not of the *sertão*, and so aids in the integration of the reader into that space that has so dominated his “destiny,” that is become him – the *sertão* which one can never leave;<sup>460</sup> the *sertão* which is now inside of all of us.<sup>461</sup>

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<sup>458</sup> “But it didn’t stick firmly. In me, nicknames almost never took. Could it be: I never stay with ease, in one configuration?”

<sup>459</sup> “Where did a *jagunço* go? To the emptiness, to the emptiness [p. 512 Martins]. I had my will, to be everywhere... I was well born to be a *jagunço*. That – for me – that passed: and still today is strong, like a future of mine. I am courageous. In that, I had dawned. Did I eat jaguar meat?”

<sup>460</sup> “*O sertão não tem janelas nem portas. E a regra é assim: ou o senhor bendito governa o sertão, ou o sertão maldito vos governa...*” (“The *sertão* has neither windows nor doors. And the rule is thus: either you, blessed, govern the *sertão*, or the *sertão*, damned, governs you...”) (511), “[*a*] gente tem de sair do sertão! Mas só se sai do sertão é tomando conta dele a dentro...” (“We need to leave the *sertão*! But one only leaves the *sertão* by taking charge of it inside...”) (295).

<sup>461</sup> “*Sertão: é dentro da gente*” (“*Sertão*: it’s inside of us”) (325) ... “*Sertão não é maligno nem caridoso, mano oh mano!:- ...ele tira ou dá, ou agrada ou amarga, ao senhor, conforme o senhor mesmo*” (“*Sertão* isn’t malicious nor caring, brother my brother! – he takes or gives, or pleases or embitters, you, according to you yourself.”) (537).

## 2. NARRATIVE and SPACE:

### 2.1 PARADOX and CONFUSION as MESSAGE:

As will be seen in *Pedro Páramo* as well with its silent sounds and living deaths, *Grande Sertão: Veredas* is full of explicit textual paradox as well as the developed paradox of their (meta)physical spaces, and these consistent references to opposites in rapprochement and juxtaposition serves to reinforce the nature of their multiple spaces.

Contradictions and paradoxically coexisting dichotomous elements abound in the narrative of *GSV*, apparent from the first glance as an inherent part of the texture of the narration. The narrator Riobaldo tells us, for example, that: “*Viver é muito perigoso; e não é não*” – life is perilous, and it *also* isn’t (328); “*Tudo é e não é*” – everything is and isn’t (27); “*Tudo aqui é perdido, tudo aqui é achado*” – everything here is lost, and everything here is found (470); “*E era a pura mentira. Mas podia ser verdade.*” – it was a pure lie, but could be the truth (622); “*Sem crer, cri*” – without believing, I believed (424). There are also redundancies, which are perhaps equally confusing, such as: “*Cada dia é um dia... Cada dia é um dia*” (“Every day is a day... Every day is a day”) (414), and “*E tudo conto, como está dito*” (423).<sup>462</sup>

There are also many juxtapositions of opposites, like “new” and “old”: “*Novo que eu estava no velho do inferno*” (69),<sup>463</sup> and “hot” and “cold”: “*frio e calor, lado dum doutro*”<sup>464</sup> (567), “*se mexer, em quente e frio, diante das minhas vistas*” (452), “*De dia, é um horror de quente, mas para a noitinha refresca, e de madrugada se escorropicha o frio*” (330), “*Vingar, digo ao senhor: é lamber, frio, o que outro cozinhou quente demais*” (110), “*... o calor e o frio mais perseguem*” (65), and, also, of “dark” and “light”: “*A luzinha dos santos-arrepentidos se acende é no escuro*” (161)<sup>465</sup>... and his advice about keeping them separate is as follows:

Aprendi dos antigos. O que assenta justo é cada um fugir do que bem não se pertence. Parar o bom longe do ruim, o são longe do doente, o vivo longe do morto, o frio longe do quente, o rico longe do pobre. O senhor não descuide desse regulamento, e com as suas duas mãos o senhor puxe a rédea. Numa o senhor põe ouro, na outra prata; depois, para ninguém não ver, elas o senhor fecha bem. E foi o que eu pensei.<sup>466</sup> (405)

<sup>462</sup> “Every day is a day... Every day is a day” ... “And I tell everything, as it’s told.”

<sup>463</sup> “New that I was in the old of Hell”

<sup>464</sup> “cold and heat, one beside the other” ... “mixing, in heat and cold, in front of my eyes” ... “by day, it’s a horror of heat, but by dusk it gets cool, and in the early morning the cold drains out” ... “Avenging, I tell you, sir; it’s licking, cold, what another cooked too hot” ... “Heat and cold persecute the most”...

<sup>465</sup> “The little light of the repented-saints is lit in the dark”

<sup>466</sup> “I learned from the ancients. What settles right is each one fleeing from what really doesn’t belong to him. Stopping the good far from the bad, the healthy far from the ill, the living far from the dead, the cold far from the heat, the rich far from the poor. Don’t neglect this rule, sir, and with your own two hands pull in the reins. In one you put gold, in the other silver; then later, so no one sees, close them well. That is what I thought.”

He says this after encountering the local *catrumanos*, strange and miserable band of autochthonous people whom he fears in their difference.<sup>467</sup> However, as seen above, his own narrative doesn't desire such separation or clarity, even if that is what he himself desires; his narrative takes place in a paradoxical *sertão*, and a torn life. The convolution is part of the *message* of the work in tying Riobaldo's life and consciousness and his feverish demonic concerns to the *sertão*.

## 2.2 NON-LINEAR NARRATIVE: WHIRLWINDS and PARADOX in the TELLING:

The disordered structure of the narrative also supports the paradoxical nature of Riobaldo, the paradoxical nature of the (meta)physical *sertão*, and the connection between the two. Riobaldo admits often to telling things out of order, such as: “*Só que isso foi mais tarde,*” “Except that this happened later” (620), and “*Mas, me escute. A gente vamos chegar lá,*” “Just listen, we'll get there” (262). And below, he admits to telling the story out of order, claiming it is due to his own “ignorance”:

Essas coisas todas se passaram tempos depois. Talhei de avanço, em minha história. O senhor tolere minhas más devassas no contar. É ignorância. Eu não converso com ninguém de fora, quase. Não sei contar direito... Agora, neste dia nosso, com o senhor mesmo – me escutando com devoção assim – é que aos poucos vou indo aprendendo a contar corrigido. E para o dito volto.<sup>468</sup> (214)

Besides the text's linguistic texture and its inroads into ambiguity and paradox, the *structure itself* does so, as well. The work is told in non-linear fashion, layering, labyrinthine, a “*redemoinho*” of human confusion much like the one that the devil rides in, the very one Riobaldo most fears.

The text begins and ends not at the beginning or end, but is rather non-linear in its structure. To “begin” with, there are at least 3 “endings” in the novel. The narrative “ends” on the last page, when Riobaldo stops talking, leaving the story on the subject of the devil's nonexistence, and claiming to have told “all” of who he was and saw (624):

E me cerro, aqui, mire e veja. Isto não é o de um relatar passagens de sua vida, em toda admiração. Conto o que fui e vi, no levantar do dia. Auroras. Cerro. O senhor vê. Contei tudo.<sup>469</sup> [...]



<sup>467</sup> According to Nilce Sant'Anna Martins, “*catrumano*” is a regional term with a derogatory connotation used to describe “*caipira, mutato, sertanejo*” (108) – (“yokel”) – and comes from “*quadromano,*” which in its approximation to “*quadrupe*” implies an animal-like quality.

<sup>468</sup> “All of these things happened times later. I cut out in advance, in my story. Tolerate my bad exposures in telling, sir. It's ignorance. I don't converse with anyone from outside, almost. I don't know how to tell correctly. ... Now, in this our day, with you – listening to me with devotion like this – is that little by little I am starting to learn to tell correctly. So to the told I return.”

<sup>469</sup> “And I conclude/close myself, here, look and see. This isn't about relating passages in one's life, in all admiration. I tell what I was and saw, in the getting up of the day. Dawns. I close. You see. I told it all... ∞”

He “closes” the story, he has “told all”; however, he has also not told “all,” as he has admitted himself; he tells the story for a purpose, and with many deletions, repetitions, and convolutions on the way. In fact, as is shown here, the physical “end” of the work is the mathematical symbol for infinity,  $\infty$ , an echo perhaps of the endless circularity of the narrative whirlwind itself. The work begins, too, with a symbol – the symbol for lack or subtraction, as has been pointed out by others.<sup>470</sup> This indicates that the narrative, like the *sertão*, both is and isn’t complete, and contains all and nothing, although the “ – ” is used here most apparently in its property as punctuation, marking the start of the work as “conversation.” Those symbols “ – ” and “ $\infty$ ” could refer to the *sertão*, humanity, the journey, the struggle... and, especially, the story, in its internal and external labyrinth of what is told and what lies between the words.

There is another ending, too, close to the apparent physical end of the text, with Diadorim’s burial in the abandoned village of Paredão, that place taken over by nature, and the place of the fateful battle at the end. Riobaldo tells us that, after her burial, “Here the story finished. Here, the finished story. Here the story finishes”:

Tal que disse, doidava. Recai no marcar do sofrer. Em real me vi, que com a Mulher junto abraçado, nós dois chorávamos extenso. E todos meus jagunços decididos choravam. Daí, fomos, e em sepultura deixamos, no cemitério do Paredão enterrada, em campo do sertão.

Ela tinha amor em mim.

E aquela era a hora do mais tarde. O céu vem abaixando. Narrei ao senhor. No que narrei, o senhor talvez até ache mais do que eu, a minha verdade. Fim que foi.

Aqui a estória se acabou. Aqui, a estória acabada. Aqui a estória acaba.<sup>471</sup> (616)

Though he will continue, he tells us here that the story is over, but that he leaves us work to do: “In what I narrated, you might find more than I do, my truth. The end that was” (616) – the “end,” then, might be what is told here, Diadorim’s death and its consequences in his heart and soul; or the “end” may be what’s between the lines, or even something after the last page of the book.

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<sup>470</sup> “Manuel Antônio de Castro destacou que a narrativa se inicia com um sinal matemático, o travessão que indica o nada, e termina com o sinal matemático de infinito, ou tudo.” (Arroyo 4) (“Manuel Antônio de Castro emphasized that the narrative begins with a mathematical symbol, the dash which indicates ‘nothing’, and ends with the mathematical symbol of infinity, or everything”)

<sup>471</sup> “What I said, I was a madman. I relapsed into the marking of suffering. In reality I saw myself, that with the Woman held close, we two cried extensively. And all of my determined bandits cried. From there, we went, and in burial we left her, in the cemetery of Paredão buried, in the field of the *sertão*.

She had love in me.

And that was the latest hour. The heavens are coming lower. I narrated to you. In what I narrated, you might find more than I do, my truth. The end that was.

Here the story finished. Here, the finished story. Here the story finishes.”

Besides these tardy endings, however, the story also ends in the *middle*, according to Riobaldo. He mentions victories with Zé Bebelo, and the Fazenda São Serafim, and then says the following:

Só sim? Ah, meu senhor, mas o que eu acho é que o senhor já sabe mesmo tudo – que tudo lhe fiei. Aqui eu podia pôr ponto. Para tirar o final, para conhecer o resto que falta, o que lhe basta, que menos mais, é pôr atenção no que contei, remexer vivo o que vim dizendo. Porque não narrei nada à-toa: só apontação principal, ao que crer posso. Não desperdiço palavras. Macaco meu veste roupa. O senhor pense, o senhor ache. O senhor ponha enredo.<sup>472</sup> (325)

This is the end; but, nevertheless, he continues. And in such a way that, as in the beginning, the text is a labyrinth, touching upon events in an order that makes sense only to him, if that.

And apparently, as listeners, we could extrapolate the whole story by paying attention to what he said so far, up to page 325, by placing his words in our own order, reading between the lines. And much of this is in fact true, if we listen/read carefully; for instance, he tells us obliquely on page 56 that Diadorim is a woman, even though we “learn” it when he does, near the end of the novel, and after her death.

From the very first page, in fact, Riobaldo jumps from idea to idea, time frame to time frame, ever *circling* closer to his important truths. The first 35 pages give an indication of the narrative structure of the work as a whole. The so-far unnamed narrator begins by discussing the *sertão* and the devil (“o *demo*”) as a cultural superstition, but then spends 7 pages discussing the possible reality of such a being, personified in people such as Hermógenes, or existing only in such people, perhaps in all of us; he discusses the theme with *casos*. He moves, then, to discuss his literate childhood, and his various religions and the people he pays to pray for him; and then, he introduces some of his *jagunço* leaders and friends. He returns to the topic of “evil,” then back to the *sertão*, God, and repentance. Then – nature, and the introduction of Diadorim, and an introduction to the topic of thinking and suffering, then back to people, the world, God, and then his *jagunço* friends – then back to Diadorim, and the first mention of the idea of a pact with the devil. A discussion ensues of soul, the *sertão*, its changing times and the interlocutor’s desire to visit it, and an eloquent introduction to its natural beauty. Then, Diadorim, sitting together, memories of the scenery, Diadorim’s desire for revenge, and then – the order of the story: “*Eu me lembro das coisas, antes delas acontecerem*” (47). The *sertão*, nature, communities, Diadorim, *sertão*, Nhorinhá, Diadorim... The Liso de Sussuarão, Diadorim, the Liso de Sussuarão, Diadorim, jealousy... on page 54: the narrator’s name is Riobaldo, spoken by Diadorim; Diadorim’s father is Joca Ramiro. Then – the narrator’s poor response to the news, the devil, the pact, God, his love for Diadorim...

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<sup>472</sup> “Only yes? Ah, my sir, but what I think is that you already know everything – that I confided everything to you. I could put a period here. To pull out the ending, to know the rest that is lacking, what suffices, less or more, is putting attention in what I told, shuffling alive what I came saying. Because I didn’t narrate anything randomly: only the principal mentioning, to what I can believe. I don’t waste words. My monkey wears clothes. You think, you find, sir. You place the plot.”

As seen in this summary, the work is far from linear, but rather touches on single points again, and again, and again, circling, gaining each time more detail or specificity, providing a fuller picture of who the narrator is and where, what concerns or motivates him, and what has happened in his life and why. For instance, Diadorim is mentioned on p. 37 as “*meu amigo*” – “my friend” – but a friend about whom he thinks constantly, whom he wishes to think of while dying. The next time Diadorim is mentioned, it is again to say that the narrator is thinking about him, as “*minha neblina,*” “my fog,” in opposition to his current wife’s “*bem-querer,*” “well-loving” (40). The next time Diadorim is mentioned, it is to say that the two of them were always together, and happy, though Diadorim was awaiting the day of revenge for his father. The next mention of Diadorim is in a natural setting again, and the narrator shows Diadorim’s lack of approval of him at times, leading to a deep sense of uncertainty and self-accusation. Diadorim is next shown being aware – and jealous – of the narrator’s interest in Nhorinhá, and the narrator, jealous of Diadorim’s connection with the leader Medeiro Vaz and devotion to the deceased leader, Joca Ramiro. The reader then learns at once that Joca Ramiro was Diadorim’s father, and the narrator is called Riobaldo. The next mention of Diadorim is to say that Riobaldo loves him, but with a tantalizing mention of Diadorim as a woman: “*Deamar, deamo... Relembro Diadorim. Minha mulher que não me ouça*” (56).

The structure informs the reader; nothing is random, though it is firmly set in the realm of chaos. The fact that the narrator returns several times in these first 35 pages to discuss Diadorim “out of order” indicates the importance of this character to him – two of the many references to the chaos of his own storytelling immediately follow mention of this friend, whom he is apparently not ready to speak about: “*esta minha boca não tem ordem nenhuma*” (37), “*Agora, bem, não queria tocar nisso mais*”<sup>473</sup> (40). The pact, something much more shameful to him, is mentioned several times in those pages too, though so far as a hypothetical – because of his shame. These first pages juxtapose Diadorim, the *sertão*, and the devil and God, and the pact, in such a sequence that it becomes apparent that the themes or concerns are all deeply interlocked – not simply setting, character, topic, plot, but all *one united quandary*.

The whole work reflects the cyclical nature of these first pages, minutely, in page-by-page passing from one theme to another, ever building in detail and understanding, and in the “macro” sense, too, as shown above: halfway through the novel’s pages, Riobaldo tells his interlocutor that he could stop there. All of Riobaldo’s continued storytelling, then, is, according to himself, over already-trodden ground; the ingredients of a linear narrative are scattered in the preceding testimony for the interlocutor to find, if he so wishes. The “exposition” of the work takes all 624 or so pages, in a sense; details are worked in slowly and cyclically, in a shape that can be realistically conceived of as *the very redemoinho of the work’s epigraph*.

Some have undertaken to undo the chaos, to lay out the bare story, the bare journey: in *Itinerário de Riobaldo Tatarana*, Alan Viggiano attempts to, in the words of Fernando Correia Dias in the introduction (as mentioned above), “merely lift out the chronological and geographical itinerary of Riobaldo. Merely? ... it’s already a lot... persistent exercise of patience, ... enormous effort”<sup>474</sup> (Viggiano 11). But, in many ways, the itinerary is beside the point, because the very

<sup>473</sup> “this my mouth has no order at all” ... “Now, well, I didn’t want to touch on this more.”

<sup>474</sup> “*apenas levantar o itinerário cronológico e geográfico de Riobaldo. Apenas? ... já é muito... persistente exercício de paciência, ... esforço enorme*”

chaos of the narration of the journey, and the internal divisions of the narrator himself, are more important than attempting to follow clues to the journey's "reality." The narrative is a labyrinth; it appears to be a *redemoinho*, turning in on itself again and again, much as in its repeated phrase: "*O diabo na rua, no meio do redemoinho.*"

The journey of life, the *sertão*, and the metaphysical are all the same "travessias." And – the same *redemoinhos*. As Riobaldo speaks – with *breath*, with *wind* – he constructs an elusive, cyclical, searching narrative, a whirlwind of sorts, treading the same ground over and over again in a search for clarity. Riobaldo's narrative is a *redemoinho*. There is a connection of analogue between the unreliability and paradox in the narration, and that of Riobaldo, his *sertão*, and his deepest fears: the narrative, in its own state of paradox and chaos, bears a distinct resemblance to that very *redemoinho* that Riobaldo consistently cites as being the origin of the *demo*. Form and content: one.

As seen in the previous chapter and above, much of the explicit interaction between Riobaldo and his learned interlocutor revolves around questions regarding the devil, be it in direct requests for confirmation of its non-existence, or otherwise rhetorical questions in regards to that issue. The second topic of conversation which is very directly engaged in with *o senhor* is, interestingly, the narrative itself – showing in yet another way that there is a connection between that very narrative and its *redemoinho*-like make-up, and that devil who exists in a *redemoinho*, causing Riobaldo's abiding unrest – or caused by it. Riobaldo's struggle with the existence of the devil is one of the central leitmotifs of the work, an issue of constant doubt and fear for the protagonist, and a source of the elusiveness of the text itself; therefore, the text's resemblance to the devil's *redemoinho* is relevant. The space of his telling is the type of labyrinthine, confused *travessia* that could *create* the devil in the *sertão*: "*o diabo na rua, no meio do redemoinho.*"

Analogous to the whirlwind of the devil, and the whirlwind of the text, is, too, the natural confusion of the *sertão* itself, with its many possibilities and aspects – as seo Ornelas tells Riobaldo: "*O sertão é confusão em grande demasiado sossego...*"<sup>475</sup> (470). The *sertão*, its narrator, and his biggest fear, are *united* in their underlying tangle of paradox; a stage for parable, and a human being who, *in his very narrative*, his *wind* and *breath*, is constructive of a union between that stage and all its paradox, and the "Evil" that he so fears.

The result of the binding-together of narrative, narrator, narratee, *sertão*, and the metaphysical in their inscrutability and our own interactivity in producing them in our minds is, in fact, our own *sertão* – one that, like the "real" one, is dynamic, in the sense that no matter who we are, we can fill in the blanks, interact with the narrative and the tale, and create a space of participation with our own mystical quandaries.

### 2.3 SPACE and TIME in LITERATURE:

As has been discussed here, in both novels, the land is a complex "paradoxical" (meta)physical space, *both* the physical substance of a setting, *and* the stuff of an alternate realm, *no less*

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<sup>475</sup> "The *sertão* is confusion in great and too much repose"

*present*; and in both novels, the narrative techniques play the fundamental role of both supporting the state of paradox in the works, and opening up the literary spaces of the works to the reader in order to fully and continuously engage in discussion of the issues at hand such as those of violence, evil, and redemption. The space of region and the space of the novel are both complex, and both fundamental to the works.

Literary “space” is often defined as the correlating element to “time,” in literary criticism as in many other philosophical branches, in which both together somehow define all reality or human experience of it.<sup>476</sup> Many view these two concepts as dialectical, perhaps even in conflict, in terms of physics, in terms of social thought, and in literature as well, in which the arts have traditionally been divided into temporal (i.e. music, theater, literature) and spatial (i.e., the visual arts).

Research shows there to be an ongoing discussion among literary critics regarding the place of “space” in literature, and what exactly that “space” entails. Some claim that “space” has no place in literature at all, such as W.J.T. Mitchell in *Space, Ideology, and Literary Representation* (1989), who struggles with viewing space as relevant to the realm of literature.<sup>477</sup> Mitchell begins with an exploration of how literature has traditionally been conceived of as primarily temporal: “The first thing to say about the notion of space from a literary point of view is that it does not exist, or should not exist. Literature, as we have been told at least since Lessing’s *Laocoon*,<sup>478</sup> is a temporal art” (91). Mitchell claims that “Western literary theory is resolutely iconoclastic, that is, antipictorial, antivisual, anti-spatial, even, at the most general level, antimimetic” going back to Aristotle’s view of poetry as distinguished by “plot, the arrangement of incidents in time” (91). Mitchell is operating under the view that space is “static, visual, external, empty, corporeal, and dead...” and that “it must be pushed into motion, temporalized, internalized, filled up, or brought to life by time and consciousness” (93). And neither Aristotle nor Mitchell are alone, as the latter shows: Derrida, in his 1974 *Of Grammatology*, claims that the necessary evil of writing down speech is in fact its death, the entombment of the “spirit” of the voice to the deadly blankness of inscription (Mitchell 92). Others simply disapprove of the use of *description of spaces* in literature: Gerard Genette, in *Figures of Literary Discourse* (1982), sees, according to Mitchell, description as the “slave” to narration, unequal, in which the latter is “pure processes” and the former merely suspends time briefly for “spreading the

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<sup>476</sup> For instance, Robert David Sack, in his 1980 work *Conceptions of space in social thought: a geographic perspective*, explains that “space, in conjunction with time, provides a fundamental ordering system interlacing every facet of thought” (4). Crang and Thrift (2000) explain, similarly, that “space is exceedingly difficult to write about shorn of its relation to time” (1), indicating that the two are so closely entwined as to define each other, and that “space” doesn’t truly exist outside the space-time dialectic.

<sup>477</sup> Mitchell writes his book in an effort to see the other side, to see the usefulness of space in literature, but he counters the previous statements on the temporality of literature only tentatively, with conclusions about the slight validity of shaped poetry, ekphrasis, and fictional description of painting and seeing in *Jane Eyre* (93, 100).

<sup>478</sup> *Laocoon: An essay upon the limits of painting and poetry*. (German, *Laokoon: oder, Über die grenzen der malhercy und poesie*; 1766). This is a foundational work for the study of literary space, as seen in its frequent mention even now; J.J. van Baak, for instance, though he uses distinctions that are somewhat artificial in his structuralist, semiotic study, claims outright that there is something called “narrative space, i.e., space involved in the construction of the fictional world” (3) – unlike, he points out, in Lessing’s “*Laocoon*,” which define the visual arts as spatial and the literary ones as temporal (1). (Baak, J. J. van. *The place of space in narration: a semiotic approach to the problem of literary space, with an analysis of the role of space in I.E. Babel's Konarmija*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1983. Print.)



narrative in space” (Mitchell 92).

Other theorists, however, see “space” and “time” as a dichotomy of elements that coexist much more fully in literature, albeit still in a kind of conflict. For instance, as mentioned in the introduction, Wegner (2002) claims that Western culture traditionally privileges “temporality over space”, a position which has its analogue in literature, in which the “complex psychology of characters” is celebrated “as the highest achievement of narrative art,” and those characters are “fundamentally temporal constructs that unfold in a space, or ‘setting’, which, once established, seems to remain constant.” This is to the detriment of “setting”: “Space is thus once again treated as a ‘stage’ upon which the drama of character development unfolds, and setting in such a tradition is viewed as distinctly secondary in importance to character” (180). However, this is an injustice for Wegner: he claims that space is not a static object, not the Enlightenment/Cartesian “space as an objective homogeneous extension (*res extensa*), distinct from the subject (*res cogitans*),” nor the Kantian “space as an empty container...” but is instead both *connected* to the subject, and *full in itself* – *produced* and *producing*<sup>479</sup>, much as in the conceptualizations of place/space mentioned above (181). As such, in the portrayal in literature of “real” spaces with cultural geographical significance (much like the *sertão*), the “subject” is part of the formation of that real and conceived space; “temporal” characters are not literature’s greatest achievement, but “setting” is, when set free to be alive (181). The *sertão* in *GSV* is indeed set alive in the telling; it is the work’s great achievement. It is not merely a stage for a temporal art, in spite of one comment by Riobaldo about his “role” in life’s “theater.”<sup>480</sup> The *sertão* that we have explored is not static, not an empty container nor an object distinct from us, or from Riobaldo; it is a dynamic part of the work, its foundation and method, and a *protagonist in itself*.

Joseph A. Kestner in *The Spatiality of the Novel* (1978) argues, too, for the importance of space in literature, though not without time; time is “primary illusion,” and spatiality “secondary,” he writes (9). He defines the existence of a “spatial poetics” in novels, specifically involving “first, the use of space as a formal construct in the text; and second, the nature of spatiality as a critical method of reading the text (9). For *GSV*, this would be, (1) the *sertão*, and (2), the space of the complex narrative, and the manifestation of its worldview in the “psychical geography” of the reader through the act of reading. Cary Nelson in *The incarnate word; literature as verbal space* explains, too, that “space” in literature is a “self-protected and self-generative space that transcends or escapes historical time” and is shared, or enacted, between writer and reader (4). That is the *sertão* which is *GSV*’s gift to the reader; in its interactiveness, its creativity, its indefinability, and its participatory dichotomy of material and metaphysical.

Nelson (1973) continues to say that he considers “space inherent to literary form,” though it is never *fully* achieved: “Pure spatiality is a condition toward which literature aspires, but which it

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<sup>479</sup> “space itself is both a *production*, shaped through a diverse range of social processes and human interventions, and a *force* that, in turn, influences, directs and delimits possibilities of action and ways of human being in the world” (181)

<sup>480</sup> “*Em desde aquele tempo, eu já achava que a vida da gente vai em erros, como um relato sem pés nem cabeça, por falta de sisudez e alegria. Vida devia de ser como na sala do teatro, cada um inteiro fazendo com forte gosto seu papel, desempenho. Era o que eu acho, é o que eu achava*” (260-261). (“Since that time, I already thought that our life goes in error, like a story without feet nor head, due to a fault of wisdom and joy. Life should be like in the theater, each one whole, playing out with strong pleasure his/her role, performed. That was what I think, and what I thought.”)

never achieves. The desire to overcome time competes with the temporal succession of words” (3). In an attempt to overcome such a barrier, Edward Soja (1989), yearning for a non-linear, “spatialized” view of history,<sup>481</sup> pursued this “spatialization” by claiming to have written his book “laterally” rather than “linearly,” writing the postscript and preface at the same time. These visions of “literary space” have great kinship to the narrative act in *GSV* as productive of space; after seeing the extent of the non-linear, anti-chronological aspects of the narrative, *GSV* seems like it could in fact be, in its *redemoinho*-ness, a “lateral” work, one which does, in fact, seek to overcome the temporality of the succession of words: a spatial novel, about a space, and creative of a space.

The work of James Joyce has been studied as a similar example of the use of non-sequential, temporally undefined narrative to attain a more spatial novel, though not in the same metaphysical sense. In 1963, Joseph Frank wrote that contemporary literary works, such as Joyce’s *Ulysses*, “intend the reader to apprehend their work spatially, in a moment of time, rather than as a sequence (9). Frank writes of *Ulysses*, the “modern epic”:

Joyce's most obvious intention in *Ulysses* is to give the reader a picture of Dublin seen as a whole - to re-create the sights and sounds, the people and places, of a typical Dublin day, much as Flaubert had re-created his *comice agricole*. And like Flaubert, Joyce aimed at attaining the same unified impact, the same sense of simultaneous activity occurring in different places... Joyce breaks up his narrative and transforms the very structure of his novel into an instrument of his aesthetic intention. (17-18)

And he writes, too, of Proust:

He has almost invariably been considered the novelist of time par excellence – the literary interpreter of that Bergsonian “real time” intuited by the sensibility, as distinguished from the abstract, chronological time of the conceptual intelligence. To stop at this point, however, is to miss what Proust himself considered the deepest significance of his work.

Oppressed and obsessed by a sense of the ineluctivity of time and the evanescence of human life, Proust was suddenly, he tells us, visited by certain quasi-mystical experiences (described in detail in the last volume of his book, *Le Temps Retrouvé* [1927]). These experiences provided him with the spiritual technique for transcending time, and thus enabled him to escape time’s domination. Proust believed that these transcendent, extratemporal moments contained a clue to the ultimate nature of reality; and he wished to translate these moments to the level of aesthetic form by writing a novel. But no ordinary narrative, which tried to convey their meaning indirectly through exposition, and description, could really do them justice. (20)

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<sup>481</sup> “it may be space more than time that hides consequences from us, the ‘making of geography’ more than the ‘making of history’ that provides the most revealing tactical and theoretical world” (1989: 1). In a later book, too (*Thirdspace: journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. 1996. Print), he advocates for seeing the “the inherent *spatiality of human life*: place, location, locality, landscape, environment, home, city, region, territory, and geography” (1).

Joyce used the breakdown of linear time to create an aesthetic space – and Proust, considered to be creating a type of time related to intuition rather than chronological progression, also, in so doing, attempted to escape time altogether in order to see beyond it. Their narrative journeys are analogous to *GSV*'s use of circuitous and unreliable and multiple narration as a way to create a *sertão* no longer tied to 1956, nor to the time of Riobaldo's youth, but to the space itself, both real and psychical – overcoming the “temporal succession of words” to “overcome time” (Nelson 3), and create literary space as well as (meta)physical space.

These theorists illustrate how it is that *GSV* also creates a lasting space, more than just a symbolic one, a space for the reader to take home – *through* its circuitous narrative, as well as, as we have seen, through the creation of a material/mystical realm.

In Riobaldo's worldview, as expressed in his narrative, the *sertão* contains both his own internal reality and the spiritual realms; they are all connected. Thus, the *space* of the *sertão* is central to the explorations of the work; in fact, it ties together the elements of region and metaphysics, and, too, the thematic questions of spirituality, and the narrative construction of an integrated and readerly literary spatiality. Riobaldo's journey through the *sertão*, the *redemoinho* of his non-linear journey, is the construction of his own *demo*; and that *redemoinho* is mirrored in the non-linear narrative that frees the space from temporal specificity and from being mere “setting” for “plot”. The narrative techniques provide the reader with a way into the *sertão* of their combined creation: an experienced and constructed individual psychical geography, for the reader, of a *space*.

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Riobaldo and his identity crises, his narrative, the *sertão*, and the possibility of the *demo* are all united in their natures of paradox and whirlwind: Riobaldo is split in his own nature, belonging and not belonging to the *sertão*, but nonetheless tied to it in his soul and voice; he is split in his narrative in being both Riobaldo, narrated, and Riobaldo, narrator, both with different vaults of knowledge and different goals; and he and his narrative, both, are lost in meandering thought and memory and path, circuitous winds and breath, and in paradox. The *sertão*, as has been shown, is also a paradox in and of itself, all and nothing, good and evil, passable and impassable, mappable and infinite, etc.; as is God, and perhaps the *demo*, as a part of the *sertão*, the paradox of the transcendent immanent. And there are more paradoxes and ambiguities even than these: Cândido points out that the social types that participate in banditry are ambiguous, as are Riobaldo's feelings towards Nhorinhá, Otacília, and Diadorim, all in a “*dialética extremamente viva – que nos suspende entre o ser e o não ser para sugerir formas mais ricas de integração do ser*” ... “*o real e o irreal, o aparente e o oculto, o dado e o suposto*”<sup>482</sup> (135). And, this unity or integration of apparently disparate elements marks these all as *creative* of one another – Riobaldo is creative of himself, and of the *sertão*, and the *demo*, through his narrative, linked in their nature. His “pact,” and his decision to believe in it or not, are a choice, and a product of his physical meandering through the *sertão*, lost in his own mind: the story tells, among other things, of choice, and the recesses of the mind, and their consequences, as connected to our material

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<sup>482</sup> “extremely alive dialectic – that suspends us between being and not being to suggest richer forms of the integration of being” ... “the real and unreal, the apparent and the hidden, the fact and the supposition”

existence and place.

All of these elements are *in* the whirlwind of narrative and topographical wandering... constructed, but real... land, more than land, hiding all of these things which are revealed in the circuitous narration/creation of the novel, those things that we're close to but don't see: "*a gente está pertinho do que é nosso, por direito, e não sabe, não sabe, não sabe!*" (116). Dualisms, in rapprochement: material/immaterial, space/time. Language, textual form, and narrative voice function together in both *GSV* and *PP* to undermine certainty and to create narratives that tell stories in a mode that allows for multiple interpretations and opens the works and their local imaginaries to dialogue between past, present, and future.

Riobaldo is creative of himself, his life, and the *sertão* through his narrative, tied together in their layers of *redemoinho*; and, too, *so are we* creative of all of these things. The paradox of the text, its bridges, its *lacunae* and openness in unreliability, all of these elements allow *us* to participate with the text, bringing it with us and thus removing it from temporal stagnation in a past moment. And its state of *redemoinho*, whirlwind, also makes of it a *spatial* work, provides it with further *spatiality* in making of its temporality chaos rather than a definable straight line.

### 3. CHANGE and BELONGING: CONSTRUCTING a PLACE IN and OUT of TIME

Riobaldo's own circuitous, chaotic narrative, just as divided as the narrator himself, *constructs* his pain, his destiny, his *demo*. And, too, in being an innately interactive text, in which the reader reaches into the story as *o senhor* to fill in the blanks, the novel invites the reader to participate in the creation of the complex *sertão* and of Riobaldo's explorations, in the *reader's own time* – in a story-space outside of time, and a *sertão*-space outside of specificity.

This does not mean that the novel ignores entirely the issue of history or chronology in the work, nor does it ignore the passage of time. Time does pass; the *sertão* changes. Roads are built, names are changed, styles of dress and behavior differ. And indeed it is *consistently* so, from the time of the ancients to that of Riobaldo's youth, and again from Riobaldo's youth to his telling of the story – and, too, from that telling to the later life of the work's author, and to today. However, the way in which that change through time is used in the work is not to *historicize* the *sertão* described there, life-like in embalming but not alive. Instead, that change serves to create a further doorway for our interaction with the *sertão* enunciated therein, which also enunciates us.

The *sertão* is dynamic, and that quality makes it enduring; “dynamic” is part of what it always has been and always will be, in its experiential, material, and sacred elements. Our access to it through Riobaldo is also dynamic, due to his own belonging in/estrangement from the land. Riobaldo's uncertainty about his own place in the *sertão* is shown in the work through the archetypes of Joca Ramiro and Zé Bebelo, archetypes of past and progress and illustrations of the *sertão*'s inevitable change in modernization. But despite the physical changes to the space, the *sertão* in *GSV* is constructed by both narrator and reader as a constantly renewed experiential and spiritual place. The *sertão* is Riobaldo, both explicitly and in implicit reflection of his *riobaldemoinho* nature; and it is the reader, in our moment.

The created and creative space of the physical/metaphysical *sertão* has been shown in earlier chapters; it has also been shown that the circuitous narrative and the chaotic narrator all contribute to the atemporal nature of the novel, and therefore its accessibility to the reader today. Riobaldo's duality of alienation from the *sertão* and belonging therein provide a bridge to the reader; and, further, the changing nature of the *sertão* – as seen in the passing of the baton from Joca Ramiro to Zé Bebelo – is characterized in the work not as a threat to the *sertão*'s identity, but as further proof that the *sertão* contains all things, and exists inside all of us: a living, productive, and indestructible geography in the mind of the reader – and, therefore, in the “real” world.

#### 3.1 CHANGE in the SERTÃO:

In the *sertão*, the much-discussed *travessia* (journey and crossing) is mentioned again in reference to the passing of time – asking whether we pass through time, or time through us:

O senhor não pode estabelecer em sua idéia a minha tristeza quinhoã. Até os pássaros, consoante os lugares, vão sendo muito diferentes. Ou são os tempos, travessia da gente?<sup>483</sup> (418)

And, indeed, whichever came first, we or chronology, time does pass as far as we can tell; the birds do change, whether or not memory can be trusted to know what they once were like. The *sertão* captured in the work is one that is being “lost” to history in many aspects, as many of these archetypal spaces are.

During the 1950s, both Mexico and Brazil were undergoing “progress” and modernization. The *sertão* was beginning to be carved up by roads. The *zeitgeist* of the era was progress, and many projects were undertaken during the decades surrounding the writing of *GSV*, under very different styles of leadership but all promoting development, change, and modernization, steps that would greatly change the interior of the nation as well as the cities. According to Keen and Hayes (2004), the Brazilian government consistently pursued strategies of modernization beginning in the 1940s, albeit through different strategies. The Vargas government in the 1940s sought “progress” through establishing national strength in mining, oil, steel, electric power, chemicals, heavy industry, hydroelectric power, railway, the production of trucks, etc. (374). The Monteiro and Dutra government of 1945 to 1951<sup>484</sup> continued modernization with international investment, and the Vargas government from 1951 to 1955<sup>485</sup> sought further industrialization through protectionism. In 1955, Juscelino Kubitschek, governor of Minas Gerais and a personal friend of Guimarães Rosa, ran for the presidency on a platform of accelerated economic growth, “fifty years of progress in five” (377). In 1956, the “Ano de Ouro” of Brazilian literature (245), the Juscelino Kubitschek government took office, and Guimarães Rosa became *Chefe do Serviço de Demarcação de Fronteiras*. The Kubitschek administration would – in few years, just as promised – change “profoundly the material conditions of the life of the Brazilian people,” and would initiate in Brazil a “radical and extensive transformation”<sup>486</sup> (Barbosa 250); it was a “heady time of unprecedented economic growth” and “exuberant optimism about Brazil’s future.” This growth led to the construction of Brasília in the interior of the country, right in the middle, along with highways to reach it, resulting in, according to Barbosa:

...the beginning of the penetration and of the civilizing process of the *sertões* of Brazil. The president of NOVACAP, Israel Pinheiro, saw this consequence, in saying, not long after the beginning of the construction of Brasília... that the *sertão* of João Guimarães

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<sup>483</sup> “You can’t establish in your idea my portion of sorrow. Even the birds, consonant to the place, are becoming quite different. Or are the times, our crossing/journey?”

<sup>484</sup> The government of Generals Goés Monteiro and Eurico Dutra began after a coup d’etat, serving from 1945 to 1951; they continued the project of modernization albeit through the opposite approach to that of Vargas, with high levels of international financial investment Washington-loyal anti-Communist creeds (375).

<sup>485</sup> The new Vargas government that followed was on a platform of industrialization and protectionism, this time including social welfare. He created Petrobrás, but faltered in his attempts to reconcile opposing groups, and committed suicide in 1954 (376).

<sup>486</sup> “*profundamente as condições materiais da vida do povo brasileiro,*” ... “*transformação radical e extensa*”

Rosa was on the verge of disappearing because of the construction of the Belo Horizonte-Brasília highway.<sup>487</sup> (246)

Though the construction of Brasília, along with its network of “highways of national unity,” was begun in 1957 and inaugurated in 1960 (Keen 377), both after *GSV* was written, the climate of change was already palpable in the early 1950s; the *sertão* was going to change, and had already begun to do so. Guimarães Rosa explains in his “Bobagens Biográficas” (“Biographical Foolery,” Rosa/Bizzarri 112; letter from 1964) the changes in his lifetime to the city of his birth, changes which were already quite apparent in the 1940s:

In 1908, Cordisburgo was a hamlet, little village. In 1940, it was made a city, as “municipality of tourism” – because there is situated the celebrated Maquiné Cave, great and marvelous limestone cavern, of which Lund (Peter Wilhem, the Danish naturalist) said he had never seen “anything so beautiful, in the dominions of art or of nature.”<sup>488</sup> (112)

His small “magical” town of his childhood has become a tourist destination, and a city. And, according to Paulo Dantas, Guimarães Rosa, quite aware of the *sertão*’s tendency to disappear, said to him in an identified moment: “The fact is, Dantas, the time of the cowherdings already passed...”<sup>489</sup> (45).

In our current context, 2011, many people are very aware of the fact that wildernesses are a limited resource; global pollution, resource strain, and other environmental factors, coupled with extensive population growth, have actually shrunk the world’s “backlands,” until those places that we always thought we could count on to inspire us with their mystery are becoming all too well mapped out, even paved over, as Joni Mitchell foretold (1970): “they paved paradise to put up a parking lot.” Global positioning systems have taken away more of the mystery, by taking away the experience of a journey, and also by making almost every place in the world actually visible from the air, the one place from which, according to *GSV*, the *sertão* could actually be known. Riobaldo meant, in that case, “above” in a natural and also metaphysical sense, but now there is no mystery in being seen from the air; the digital images *codify* and *shrink* the interior just as much as do roads, landfills, and sprawl. Contemporary generations are looking harder at the importance of land and place as part of our own internal sacred wilds, those experiential and spiritual connections that are just as important to pass on as the land itself: that awareness of “Wildness” which is the “preservation of the world” from which “nourishment and vigor” are drawn, as expressed by Thoreau (paragraph 18, “Walking,” 1862).

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<sup>487</sup> “...o início do devassamento e do processo civilizatório dos sertões do Brasil. O presidente da NOVACAP, Israel Pinheiro, enxergou essa conseqüência, ao dizer, não muito tempo depois do início da construção de Brasília (ou como Brasília já inaugurada, não me lembro bem) que o sertão de João Guimarães Rosa tendia a desaparecer por causa da construção da rodovia Belo Horizonte – Brasília”

<sup>488</sup> “Em 1908, Cordisburgo era um arraial, aldeazinha. Em 1940, foi feita cidade, como ‘município de turismo’ – porque lá se situa a célebre Gruta do Maquiné, grande e maravilhosa caverna calcárea, da qual Lund (Peter Wilhem, o naturalista dinamarquês) disse não ter visto ‘nada tão belo, nos domínios da arte e da natureza’”

<sup>489</sup> “De fato, Dantas, o tempo das boiadas já passou...”

The historical and social aspects of the *sertão* as a Brazilian region during a specific time period are also wrought in the text, through figures, themes, and historical trends, as well as explicit statements regarding the passage of time there and the *sertão*'s place in history. In *GSV*, Riobaldo speaks at times, from his armchair, of the changes in the *sertão*, and the loss they entail – the “pastness” of the *sertão*. He tells us, and *o senhor*, that the little *sertão* of his childhood is unrecognizable, for even the names have been changed:

...no sertãozinho de minha terra – baixo da ponta da Serra das Maravilhas, no entre essa e a Serra dos Alegres, tapera dum sítio dito do Caramujo, atrás das fontes do Verde, o Verde que verte no Paracatu. Perto de lá tem vila grande – que se chamou Alegres – o senhor vá ver. Hoje, mudou de nome, mudaram. Todos os nomes eles vão alterando. É em senhas. São Romão todo não se chamou de primeiro Vila Risonha? O Cedro e o Bagre não perderam o ser? O Tabuleiro-Grande? Como é que podem remover uns nomes assim? O senhor concorda? Nome de lugar onde alguém já nasceu, devia de estar sagrado.<sup>490</sup> (58)

“The name of the place where someone was already born, should be sacred” he says; and, pointing to some of the changed names, he says not that they changed, but that they “*perderam o ser*,” they “lost their being.” Other places have changed, too. The place where he first knew he loved Diadorim – where his “*destinos foram fechados*” with his “*amor mesmo amor, mal encoberto em amizade*” – no longer exists: “*A Guararavacã do Guaicuí: o senhor tome nota deste nome. Mas, não tem mais, não encontra – de derradeiro, ali se chama é Caixeirópolis; e dizem que lá agora dá febres*”<sup>491</sup> (305).

He tells *o senhor*, too, that he has come “too late” to really see the *sertão*, that customs have changed, and there is little or none of the “*legítimo leal*,” “loyal legitimate,” left over... the bands of daredevils have disbanded, the *jagunços* beg for alms, the cowboys don't wear their leather chaps into town for fear of looking like ugly yokels, and even the cattle are waning in courage, as everything in the rural areas becomes poorer, sadder:

Mas, o senhor sério tenciona devassar a raso este mar de territórios, para sortimento de conferir o que existe? Tem seus motivos. Agora – digo por mim – o senhor vem, veio tarde. Tempos foram, os costumes demudaram. Quase que, de legítimo leal, pouco sobra, nem não sobra mais nada. Os bandos bons de valentões repartiram seu fim; muito que foi jagunço, por aí pena, pede esmola. Mesmo que os vaqueiros duvidam de vir no comércio vestidos de roupa inteira de couro, acham que traje de gibão é feio e capiau. E até o gado

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<sup>490</sup> “In the little *sertão* of my land – under the tip of the *Serra das Maravilhas*, in the between this and the *Serra dos Alegres*, small abandoned farm of called *Caramujo*, behind the springs of *Verde*, the *Verde* that pours into the *Paracatu*. Near there, there is big village – that was called *Alegres* – go and see. Today, it changed name, they changed it. All of the names, they're changing. It's a sign. Wasn't *São Romão* first called *Vila Risonha*? Didn't *Cedro* and *Bagre* lose their being? The *Tabuleiro-Grande*? How is it that they can remove some names like this? Do you agree? The name of the place where someone was already born, should be sacred.”

<sup>491</sup> “The *Guararavacã* of the *Guaicuí*: you take note of this name. But, it's not there anymore, you won't find it—as of last, it's called *Caixeirópolis*; and they say that now it gives fevers there.”



no grameal vai minguando menos bravo... Sempre, no gerais, é à pobreza, à tristeza.<sup>492</sup> (41-42)

The government is also putting in highways in the magical places Riobaldo used to explore with his good friends: “*Diz-se que o Governo está mandando abrir boa estrada rodageira, de Pirapora a Paracatu, por aí...*”<sup>493</sup> (43)

However, Riobaldo is not so sure that the *sertão*'s time is over. He ends this statement with a question: “*Ah, tempo de jagunço tinha mesmo de acabar, cidade acaba com o sertão. Acaba?*”<sup>494</sup> (183) The *sertão* is still worth visiting, as he tells *o senhor*; if he were younger without his “*azias e reumatismo*” (heartburn and rheumatism), he would show the visitor all the most beautiful places: “*Lhe mostrar os altos claros das Almas: rio despenha de lá, num afã, espuma próspero, gruge; cada cachoeira, só tombos.*”<sup>495</sup> He tells of the jaguars, and the brilliant drizzle of early morning, beauties “*sem dono,*” with no owner, which Diadorim taught him to enjoy; and in *da Raizama*, ...

onde até os pássaros calculam o giro da lua – se diz – e canguçu mostra pisa em volta. Lua de com ela se cunhar dinheiro. Quando o senhor sonhar, sonhe com aquilo... Ou no Meãoemeão – depois dali tem uma terra quase azul. Que não que o céu: esse é céu-azul vivo, igual um ovo de macuco. ... Por esses longes todos eu passei, com pessoa minha no meu lado, a gente se querendo bem. ... saíam em giro as todas as cores de borboletas. Como não se viu, aqui se vê. Porque, nos gerais, a mesma raça de borboletas, que em outras partes é trivial regular – cá cresce, vira muito maior, e com mais brilho, se sabe; acho que é do seco do ar, do limpo, desta luz enorme.<sup>496</sup> (42-44)

Much of this magic is still there, even if the culture has changed and the roads are being built through the lands: “*O senhor vá lá, verá. Os lugares sempre estão aí em si, para confirmar.*” (“You go there, you’ll see. The places are always there in themselves, to confirm.”) (43). As we’ve seen before, there is a doubleness to the *sertão*: now, it is both lost and not lost.

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<sup>492</sup> “But, are you seriously trying to shallowly fathom this sea of territories, for a variety of conferring what exists? You have your motives. Now – I say for myself – you come, you came late. Time went, customs changed. Almost that, of loyal legitimate, there is little left, nor even is there anything left. The good bands of daredevils disbanded their end; many that were *jagunços*, beg around, ask for alms. Even the cowboys doubt in coming to commerce dressed in clothing all of leather, they think that a (traditional leather suit) is ugly and yokel. And even the cattle in the brush are waning in courage... Always, in the backlands, it’s towards poverty, towards sorrow.”

<sup>493</sup> “They say that the government is ordering the opening of a good highway, from Piraporta to Paracatu, over there...”

<sup>494</sup> “Ah, the time of the *jagunço* really had to end, the city finishes off the *sertão*. Does it?”

<sup>495</sup> “To show you the clear highs of the *Almas*: a river falls headlong from there, in an eagerness, prosperous foam, roars; each waterfall, only falls.”

<sup>496</sup> “where the birds calculate the turn of the moon – they say – and the monstrous *canguçu* cat steps around it. Moon which could coin money. When you dream, dream of that... Or in the *Meãoemeão* – beyond there, there is a land almost blue. As not even the sky: this is a living sky-blue, like the egg of a *macuco* bird. ... Through these distances all I passed, with my people at my side, caring for each other... there came in circles all the colors of butterflies. As has never been seen, here is seen. Because, in the *gerais* (backlands), the same race of butterflies, that in other parts is regular trivial – here grows, becomes a lot bigger, and with more brilliance, you know; I think it’s the dryness of the air, the clean, of the enormous light.”

Riobaldo is certainly nostalgic/solastalgic; he lauds the present generation for being “*bom de coração*,” at least in trivial ways, something his generation lacked; but his generation was the “real” one: “*Geração minha, verdadeira*” (“my generation, the real one”) (38).

But then, too, even though he considers his generation to be the “real” one, his past had a past, too, times that had already changed: his own attachment to the *sertão* was born of a song that his *jagunço* companions didn’t sing anymore, and the *catrumanos* are, to Riobaldo a vestige of “ancient” time, still there but *anachronistically*, with their “*peças de armas de outras idades*,” “pieces of weapons of other ages” (400). He says of them: “*Nos tempos antigos, devia de ter sido assim*,” “in the ancient times, it must have been like this” (400).

The “ancient times” and the “*verdadeira geração*” and “today” are marked by a separation of *change*; however, in *GSV* the *sertão* has both changed and it hasn’t, it is lost and not lost.

Paulo Dantas quotes his friend Guimarães Rosa as weeping for the *sertão*:

Rosa wept. ... In his weeping, the entire *sertão* wept. So immense is the evil of this world that we don’t understand, nor can we measure its size. Rosa wept because the world lacked that blessed and pure joy, that he so desired. And the world wanted to end the *sertão*. With so much devastation.<sup>497</sup> (Dantas 27)

Guimarães Rosa, according to Dantas, cried because of evil, which he explores in the work, and because the world wanted to finish with the *sertão* – a fact that the geographers, philosophers, and theologians above also mourn about sacred places in modernity.

However, *GSV*, rather than suffering in nostalgia/solastalgia for the *sertão* that is changing, *strengthens* the *sertão* in that change: it remains *dynamic, participatory, psychical*. The *sertão* exists unbounded in our connection to it: as Riobaldo tells us: “*Mesmo na hora em que eu for morrer, eu sei que o Urucuia está sempre, ele corre. O que eu fui, o que eu fui*”<sup>498</sup> (451).

This is the *sertão* that contains and accepts *everything*, as Riobaldo says of the rancher seô Habão: “*E ele era sertanejo? Sobre minha surpresa, que era. Serras que se vão saindo, para destapar outras serras. Tem de todas as coisas*”<sup>499</sup> (429). The *sertão*, in containing 1956, and Riobaldo’s youth, and the ancient archetypes of his imaginings, shows itself to be *dynamic*, just as it is “*movimentante*.” Riobaldo tells *o senhor* at one point that the “paths don’t change,” and uses landmarks that the listener might know to explain his route: “*Mas os caminhos não acabam. Tal por essas demarcas de Grão-Mogol, Brejo das Almas e Brasília, sem confrontos de perturbação, trouxemos o seu Vupes*”<sup>500</sup> (88). “Brasília” is now on the horizon, in the telling;

<sup>497</sup> “*Rosa chorava. ... No choro de Rosa, o sertão inteiro chorava. Tão imensa é a maldade desse mundo que a gente não entende, nem pode medir o seu tamanho. Rosa chorava porque ao mundo faltava aquela santa e pura alegria, que tanto desejava. E o mundo queria acabar com o sertão. Com tanta devastação.*”

<sup>498</sup> “Even in the hour in which I will die, I know that the Urucuia always is, it runs. What I was, what I was.”

<sup>499</sup> “And was he ‘sertanejan’? To by surprise, he was. Mountain ranges that go leaving, to uncover other ranges. It has everything.”

<sup>500</sup> “But the ways don’t end. Similar by these demarcations of *Grão-Mogol, Brejo das Almas, and Brasília*, without confrontations of trouble, we brought Mr. Vupes”

but the *ways* of his labyrinthine journey and its connection to his inner, spiritual one are the same, as is the *sertão*, in a great sense. Bending to historical change, as the *sertão* often does, taking things in and changing them, it won't break; and we always have access to it through the doorway that Riobaldo creates for us, through the layers of the *sertão* that are ineffable but narrated, the ineffability of the narration itself, and his own belonging both there and with us, as we listen, participate, and form our own *sertão*.

### 3.2 JOCA RAMIRO, ZÉ BEBELO:

As mentioned above, Riobaldo is torn between his appreciation for erudition and the city, and his desire to be one with the *sertão* – a struggle exacerbated by a lifelong and pervading sense of *difference* from his “sertanejan” companions – but this division of self, reflective of all the divisions in the work, has a more powerful function than the protagonist's *desassossego*: it creates a pathway for the reader, and for *o senhor*, in which Riobaldo, bridging the realms, *lets us – also “outside” – into the sertão*. This division in place is connected, too, to a division in time; Riobaldo is connected to the *sertão*'s extensive history, and to its possible futures.

Bound up in those changes in the *sertão* and the dualities of Riobaldo are the characters of Joca Ramiro and Zé Bebelo, in their juxtaposition of difference – one, a hero of an ancient way, of mythical proportions; the other, a city man, with strange vanities and urban dreams, even as he wandered the *sertão*, drawn to its mystery. And Riobaldo was somewhere in between, neither a city man nor a true *jagunço*: divided internally, and, externally, baptized as *jagunço* leader not by a *jagunço* but by the complex, destructive, yet vulnerable Bebelo.

Joca Ramiro is, to Riobaldo, a “*grande homem príncipe*”<sup>501</sup> (33). Riobaldo first sees him – “*José Otávio Ramiro Bettancourt Marins, o Chefe*” (444) – as a young man, at his godfather's estate. Mendes has invited a group of heavily armed men into his home late at night, and is looking at a man with great admiration. When Riobaldo finds out that it is the *jagunço* chief, he is overwhelmed with admiration: “*Só de ouvir o nome, eu parei, na maior suspensão*” (132). His first impression is as follows:

Drede Joca Ramiro estava de braços cruzados, o chapéu dele se desabava muito largo. Dele, até a sombra, que a lamparina arriava na parede, se trespassava diversa, na imponência, pojava volume. E vi que era um homem bonito, caprichado em tudo. Vi que era homem gentil.<sup>502</sup> (132)

Riobaldo is given the task of taking them to a “*recanto oculto*”<sup>503</sup> (133) to hide from the federal government, and he is really impressed with them, their horses, their ways, and the song of the one called Siruiz. Afterwards, his godfather insisted on taking him home; but: “*Meu coração*

<sup>501</sup> “great princely man” ... “José Otávio Ramiro Bettancourt Marins, the Chief” ... “In just hearing the name, I stopped, in the biggest suspension”

<sup>502</sup> “Joca Ramiro was with arms folded intentionally, his hat turned down very wide. Of him, even his shadow, which the lamp lowered onto the wall, transposed differently, in its imposingness, it swelled up in volume. I saw that he was a handsome man, excelling in everything. I saw that he was a noble man.”

<sup>503</sup> “hidden corner” ... “My heart remained full of restless things”

*restava cheio de coisas movimentadas*” (136). From that moment, he feels a growing admiration for the glory of the *jagunço* lifestyle.

Upon seeing Joca Ramiro again as an adult, having joined his ranks, Riobaldo is no less impressed by him. A hue and cry is raised at his approach; Ramiro’s lieutenants gallop to meet him. Diadorim gets a “*sol de alegria*” in her eyes, and hugs Riobaldo in joy: “*Parecia uma criança pequena, naquela bela resumida satisfação.*” Riobaldo feels a sort of jealousy at first, as he doesn’t yet know Diadorim’s paternity, but in her joy, and especially upon seeing the man, he is soon won over by admiration. Joca Ramiro:

A figura dele. Era ele, num cavalo branco – cavalo que me olha de todos os altos. Numa sela bordada, de Jequié, em lavores de preto-e-branco. As rédeas bonitas, grossas, não sei de que trançado. E ele era um homem de largos ombros, a cara grande, corada muito, aqueles olhos. Como é que vou dizer ao senhor? Os cabelos pretos, anelados? O chapéu bonito? Ele era um homem. Liso bonito. Nem tinha mais outra coisa em que se reparar. A gente olhava, sem pousar os olhos. A gente tinha até medo de que, com tanta aspereza da vida, do serão, machucasse aquele homem maior, ferisse, cortasse. E, quando ele saía, o que ficava mais, na gente, como agrado em lembrança, era a voz. Uma voz sem pingo de dúvida, nem tristeza. Uma voz que continuava.<sup>504</sup> (264)

Riobaldo worships him, this archetype of mature and masculine glory, handsome and strong, well-spoken, patient, and just, as well as a capable warrior. And he is not alone; all of the *jagunços* present react to their leader with awe; one even refers to him as a “*messias*,” messiah (165). When he is presented to Ramiro, Riobaldo kisses his hand, following Diadorim’s example. Diadorim introduces him to Ramiro as “*meu amigo*,” “Riobaldo” and “Tatarana”; and Ramiro gives Riobaldo the gift of his attention, his words, and a gun, with which Riobaldo is thrilled: “*minha satisfação não teve beiras*”, “my satisfaction had no bounds” (266).<sup>505</sup>

Riobaldo expresses this sense of worship often in the text; for example, when he is asked by Hermógenes, who gives him already a dark dread, to shoot with him, he thinks of Joca Ramiro in order to clear his mind, exactly like a prayer:

<sup>504</sup> “sun of joy” ... “Seemed a small child, in that beautiful brief satisfaction” ... “His figure. It was he, on a white horse – horse that looks at me from up on high. In an embroidered saddle, of Jequié, in needlework of black-and-white. The reins beautiful, thick, I don’t know of what weave. And he was a man of wide shoulders, big ruddy face, those eyes. How can I tell you? The black hair, curly? The beautiful hat? HE was a man. Smoothly handsome. There wasn’t anything else to look at. We looked, without resting our eyes. We even were afraid that, with so much harshness in life, of the *sertão*, would hurt that higher man, would injure him, cut him. And, when he left, what stayed most, in us, as a pleasure in memory, was the voice. A voice without a drop of doubt, nor sadness. A voice that was continuing.”

<sup>505</sup> “*Joca Ramiro, tornando a me ver, fraseou: ‘Tatarana, pelos bravos... Meu filho, você tem as marcas de conciso valente. Riobaldo... Riobaldo...’ Disse mais: – ‘Espera. Acho que tenho um trem, para você...’ Mandou vir o dito, e um cabra chamado João Frio foi lá nos cargueiros, e trouxe. Era um rifle reiúno, peguei: mosquetão de cavalaria. Com aquilo, Joca Ramiro me obsequiava! Digo ao senhor: minha satisfação não teve beiras.*” (265-266) “Joca Ramiro, turning to see me, expressed in phrases: ‘Tatarana, for your bravery... My son, you have the marks of a precise valiant man. Riobaldo... Riobaldo...’ He said further: – ‘Wait. I think I have an item, for you...’ He sent to bring the said item, and a fellow named João “Cold” went there in the pack-train, and brought it. It was a government rifle, I took it: a cavalry musket. With this, Joca Ramiro gifted me! I tell you, sir: my satisfaction had no bounds.”

Pensei em Joca Ramiro. Eu era feito um soldado, obedecia a uma regra alta, ... Pensei nele só, forte. Pensando: – “Joca Ramiro! Joca Ramiro! Joca Ramiro!...” A arga que em mim roncava era um despropósito, uma pancada de mar. Nem precisava mais de ter ódio nem receio nenhum.<sup>506</sup> (218)

When he finds out the Diadorim is Ramiro’s child, he at first feels jealousy, knowing he can’t compete with Joca Ramiro; but then he feels amazed, and thinks of Diadorim’s “*dura cabeça levantada, tão bonito tão sério*,”<sup>507</sup> noble as his/her father:

Joca Ramiro: porte luzido, passo ligeiro, as botas russianas, a risada, os bigodes, o olhar bom e mandante, a testa muita, o topete de cabelos anelados, pretos, brilhando. Como que brilhava ele todo. Porque Joca Ramiro era mesmo assim sobre os homens, ele tinha uma luz, rei da natureza. Que Diadorim fosse o filho, agora de vez me alegrava, me assustava.<sup>508</sup> (54)

Ramiro’s death is like that of a martyr: like Christ, he is betrayed by those in his closest circle, led to the enemy under false pretences by Hermógenes, and shot in the back by three people, so that no one person could be blamed. Riobaldo’s first reaction was, “*Joca Ramiro podia morrer?*”<sup>509</sup>, and then, slightly more rationally, “*Como podiam ter matado?*” (312). Riobaldo believes, to a great extent, that Joca Ramiro was more than a man, was representative of the *sertão* – the fact that such a being could die astounds him. Soon, they turn to vengeance.

Zé Bebelo, on the other hand, is a quite different sort of man: self-aggrandizing, overly talkative, often rude, sometimes even seeming demonic<sup>510</sup> to Riobaldo, and with “civilizing” designs on the *sertão* – and a desire to be a congressman, “*Deputado*.” His connection to Riobaldo was explained earlier; he is very much an outsider in the *sertão*, though he is deeply drawn to it nonetheless. When Riobaldo first works for him, Bebelo tells him his plan: “*depois, estável que abolisse o jaguncismo, e deputado fosse, então reluzia perfeito o Norte, botando pontes, baseando fábricas, remediando a saúde de todos, preenchedo a pobreza, estreado mil*

<sup>506</sup> “I thought about Joca Ramiro. I was made a soldier, I was obeying a higher rule, ... I thought only about him, strong. Thinking: – “Joca Ramiro! Joca Ramiro! Joca Ramiro!...” “The fury that had resounded in my was nonsense, a slap of a wave. I no longer needed to have any more hatred or fear.”

<sup>507</sup> “hard head lifted high, so lovely so serious” ... “Joca Ramiro: radiant bearing, light step, the boots Russian, the laughter, the moustaches, the good and commanding glance, the great forehead, the forelock of curly, black hairs, shining. As if he all of him shone. Because Joca Ramiro was really like that above man, he had a light, king of nature. That Diadorim was his son, now sometimes elated me, sometimes frightened me.”

<sup>508</sup> “Joca Ramiro, turning to see me, phrased: “Tatarana, for the bravery... My son, you have the marks of a concise valiant man. Riobaldo... Riobaldo...” He said more: - “Wait. I think I have an item for you...” I ordered for the said to come, and a fellow named John Cold went there in the pack-train, and brought it. It was a state soldier’s rifle, I took it: musket of cavalry. With that, Joca Ramiro gifted me! I tell you: my satisfaction had no bounds.”

<sup>509</sup> “Could Joca Ramiro die?” “How could they have killed him?”

<sup>510</sup> “*Ele não era criatura que se prende, pessoa coisa de se haver às mãos. Azougue vapor...*” “He wasn’t a creature that you bind, person thing to have in your hands. Quicksilver vapor...” (271) (*azougue*, quicksilver, can be used simply to refer to vivaciousness, but was in Riobaldo’s earlier description of the devil as “*um azougue maligno*”)

*escolas*”<sup>511</sup> (147). But instead, he becomes a *jagunço* chief twice: once, in support of the federal government, trying to lay down the law; and, again, as a free agent, apparently to avenge Joca Ramiro’s death.

When asked by the *catrumanos* where he comes from, Bebelo responds, “*Ei, do Brasil, amigo!*” “Hey, from Brazil, my friend,” indicating that he does not see the *sertão* as Brazil – and especially that lost and, by Riobaldo’s description, anachronistic part of it – since the interior lands fall outside of Brazil’s legal grasp and, too, cultural understanding.<sup>512</sup> Zé Bebelo has come from “Brazil,” he says, to apportion “*alçada e foro: outra lei*” – competence, forum, and law – to every last corner of the *sertão*. Sandra Guardini Teixeira Vasconcelos (2002) says of Bebelo also that “his” Brazil is somewhere else: “‘Brazil’, as thought of by Zé Bebelo, is, in fact, ‘other’: the desire for reform, the modernizing impulse... means, in its limit, the symbolic death of the world of the *catrumanos* and also of the *jagunços*... in which he echoes the proposals of Euclides”<sup>513</sup> (4). Indeed, he is the only one in the novel to use the word “Brazil,” but he does so always in a divisive way, holding as “Brazil” a way of life, and therefore dismissive of the *sertão* as being an integral part of the nation’s land, but in its own way. And, as shown earlier, he doesn’t really see the *sertão* as its *own* land or region; when the *jagunços* tell him he isn’t from the land of the *sertão* – “*O senhor não é do sertão. Não é da terra...*” – he responds by literalizing “land”, saying he is not from fire or air (276-7). Rather than as a complex region and “place,” he sees the *sertão* as a place that needs to be conquered. He explains his plans for the interior to anyone who will listen – in this first case, the avaricious rancher seô Habão who, according to Riobaldo, “*cobiçava a gente para escravos*” (“coveted us for slaves”) (431) for his various agricultural undertakings:

Zé Bebelo, que esses projetos ouvisse, ligeiro logo era capaz de ficar cheio de influência: excluir que assim era assim mesmo, para se transformar aquele sertão inteiro do interior, com benfeitorias, para um bom Governo, para esse ô-Brasil!<sup>514</sup> (432)

Bebelo, like a literary Sarmiento (*Facundo*) or José Hernández (*Martín Fierro*), wants to transform the *sertão* into an economically productive place with consistent legal governance, even though he finds it fascinating as it is. In response to Joca Ramiro’s charges that he came to

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<sup>511</sup> “then, established that he abolished jaguncismo, and was a congressman, then the North would shine perfectly, putting up bridges, founding factories, fixing everyone’s health, filling out poverty, inaugurating a thousand schools”

<sup>512</sup> “– ‘... *mas donde será que o senhor está servido de estando vindo, chefe cidadão, com tantos agregados e pertences?*’ / – ‘*Ei, do Brasil, amigo!*’ – Zé Bebelo cantou resposta, alta graça. – ‘*Vim departir alçada e foro: outra lei – em cada esconso, nas toesas deste sertão...*’” (403). “‘But where could it be that you, sir, are served of being coming, chief citizen, with so many men and belongings?’ – ‘Ah, from Brazil, my friend!’ – Zé Bebelo sang in reply, high wit. – “I came to apportion competence and forum: another law – in every nook, in the fathoms of this *sertão*...”

<sup>513</sup> “O ‘Brazil’, tal como pensado por Zé Bebelo, é, de fato, “outro”: o desejo de reforma, o impulso modernizador ... significa, no limite, a morte simbólica do mundo dos *catrumanos* e também dos *jagunços*... no que ecoa as propostas de Euclides”

<sup>514</sup> “Zé Bebelo, who heard these projects, smoothly soon was capable of becoming full of influence: exclaiming that it was like that really like that, to transform that entire *sertão* of the interior, with improvements, for a good Government, for this oh-Brazil!”

“*desnortear, desencaminhar os sertanejos de seu costume velho de lei...*”<sup>515</sup>, he responds: “*Velho é, o que já está de si desencaminhado. O velho valeu enquanto foi novo...*” – “Old is, what is already in itself astray. The old had value while it was new” (277). He has no respect for tradition, nor for the past.

He explains his philosophy further during his “trial” after he is brought alive to Joca Ramiro’s camp, having lost the war. He came to the North with his army for war, with great respect for – and in appreciative emulation of – men like Joca Ramiro, Joãozinho Bem-Bem, Só Candelário, and other famous leaders.<sup>516</sup> He was neither cowardly nor unjust in battle, he claims, first; and then, in his oration, he shares his purpose and his beliefs. He is not really a “government” man, he claims, but rather he wanted to enter politics to create a government that includes the *sertão*, his own government with the help of the *jagunços*, if not the one that already exists in his “Brazil,” – a government in the *sertão*.<sup>517</sup> He wanted the *sertão* to be a “national joy” of “progress” and “abundance.”<sup>518</sup> In his time there, he lost his fervor for politics; now, he wants only to leave the *sertão*, though this too is complicated: “*A gente tem de sair do sertão! Mas só se sai do sertão é tomando conta dele a dentro... Agora perdi.*”<sup>519</sup>

Since he knew now that the *sertão* was unconquerable and had conquered him, he could leave only by changing it – and he lost; but perhaps he didn’t, he adds, since he has seen that the *jagunços* have a kind of civilization of their own.<sup>520</sup> In saying that the *jagunços* are “*nossos*,” and capable of being civilized, he imposes in his oratory that national order upon them – his trial, in itself, his victory over them.

The meeting of the two men, of Joca Ramiro and Zé Bebelo, is a strange occurrence, and a meaningful one; in some respects, a dialogue between two worlds; in others, perhaps, a changing of the guard in the *sertão*. Bebelo demands a trial, “*juízo correto legal*”<sup>521</sup> (270); it is granted. The two meet as equals, even though Bebelo is a prisoner; Joca Ramiro senses the strength of his opponent, and respects him, treating him with the courtesy and nobility he is

<sup>515</sup> “to bewilder, to lead astray the *sertanejos* from their old custom of law ... ,”

<sup>516</sup> “*Sou crescido valente, contra homens valentes quis dar o combate. Não está certo?*” “I am grown brave, against brave men I wanted to give combat. Isn’t that right?”

<sup>517</sup> “*Tenho nada ou pouco com o Governo, não nasci gostando de soldados... Coisa que eu queria era proclamar outro governo, mas com a ajuda, depois, de vós, também. Estou vendo que a gente só brigou por um mal-entendido, maximé. Não obedeco ordens de chefes políticos. Se eu alcançasse, entrava para a política, mas pedia ao grande Joca Ramiro que encaminhasse seus bravos cabras para votarem em mim, para deputado...*” “I have nothing or little with the Government, I wasn’t born liking soldiers... The thing what I wanted was to proclaim another government, but with the help, then, of you, also. I see that we only fought for a misunderstanding, principally. I don’t obey orders of political chiefs. If I could achieve it, I would enter politics, but I would ask the great Joca Ramiro to direct his fierce men to vote for me, for congressman...” (294)

<sup>518</sup> “*Ah, este Norte em remanência: progresso forte, fartura para todos, a alegria nacional! Mas, no em mesmo, o afa de política, eu tive e não tenho mais... Estou preso*” “... Ah, this North in what’s remaining: strong progress, abundance for everyone, the national joy! But, really, the enthusiasm for politics, I had and no longer have...”

<sup>519</sup> “We need to leave the *sertão*! But one only leaves the *sertão* by taking charge of it inside... Now I lost.”

<sup>520</sup> “*De ter sido guardado prisioneiro vivo, e estar defronte de julgamento, isto é que eu louvo, e que me praz. Prova de que vós nossos jagunços do Norte são civilizados de calibre...*” “I’m a prisoner. Having been a guarded live prisoner, and being in front of judgment, that is what I praise, what pleases me. Proof that you our *jagunços* from the North are civilized in caliber...” (294-295)

<sup>521</sup> “correct legal judgment”

known for. Bebelo's request for a trial results in a long scene of oratory, in which many *jagunços* are bored and uncomfortable, but many more express their ideas of what it means to be a *jagunço* and to wage war – creating a verbal discourse of their previously undisclosed, implicit, and variable “law.”

Riobaldo describes the encounter: Joca Ramiro arrives “*real, em seu alto cavalo branco,*”<sup>522</sup> (270) and Bebelo is “*a pé, rasgado e sujo, sem chapéu nenhum, com as mãos amarradas atrás*” (271), but Bebelo is proud, demanding respect: “*Dê respeito, chefe. O senhor está diante de mim, o grande cavaleiro, mas eu sou seu igual. Dê respeito!*”<sup>523</sup> (271). Ramiro doesn't raise his voice; instead, astutely, he sits down on the ground, smiling, in response to Bebelo's offer to take a seat (“*Se abanquem, senhores!*” (274)). Bebelo joins him there.

It is Joca Ramiro's court; he keeps order among his people, in his quiet way: “*Meus meninos... Meus filhos...*”<sup>524</sup> and they obey (277). He asks for their opinions, first in laying out the charges against the accused, later in the verdict. Even Riobaldo speaks up in the court, raising his hand like a child in school, at first to Diadorim's dismay, and himself nervous of what Ramiro will think; but he asks for clemency for Bebelo's life, given that the man is valiant and honors his word, and doesn't kill prisoners. Killing the defeated Bebelo in such a proceeding, all the *jagunço* leaders united, would not be honorable, with which several others agree; they should make him give his word that he will go far away, “*que vai-s'embora do Estado, para bem longe*” (292) and never fight them again. Riobaldo is nervous in standing up; but he is already comfortable in his own sense of what is right – which is neither that of the *jagunços*, nor that of Bebelo. In the silence in which Joca Ramiro decides, Riobaldo says first that it is Ramiro's silence – “*O silêncio todo era de Joca Ramiro*” – but then, that it is Zé Bebelo's, too: “*Era de Zé Bebelo e de Joca Ramiro.*” (293)

And the sentence is all Ramiro's, too – “*sentença que dou vale em todo este norte*”<sup>525</sup> (296) – but the whole court was Bebelo's, his very idea, and his place of equals, of citizenry. Bebelo is exiled for as long as Ramiro lives, though Ramiro's lieutenants Hermógenes and Ricardão would prefer the sentence of death. Bebelo accepts the authority, and gives his word to follow the sentence; but he also asks in return for the lives of his men, for a horse, food, and his arms, and Joca Ramiro is the one agreeing: “*Topo. Topo.*” (297).

Joca Ramiro reigns over the *jagunços*, and, too, over the outsider, Zé Bebelo, though on Bebelo's terms. The epic leader, in a way, cedes ownership of the *sertão* to its next destiny that day; upon his death, Zé Bebelo can return, bringing with him whatever strange novelty he desired, whatever plans for the *sertão* he might have. Riobaldo says after Ramiro's death: “*Joca Ramiro morreu como o decreto de uma lei nova,*” “*Joca Ramiro died like the decree of a new law*” (314). And this is a law of sweet vengeance; but also one of *change*.

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<sup>522</sup> “royal, on his talk white horse” ... “on foot, scraped and dirty, with no hat, with his hands tied behind him”

<sup>523</sup> “Give respect, chief. You are in front of me, the great gentleman, but I am your equal. Give respect!” ... “Sit down, sirs!”

<sup>524</sup> “My boys... My sons...” “that he leaves the State, for far away” ... “The silence was of Joca Ramiro” ... “It was of Zé Bebelo and of Joca Ramiro.”

<sup>525</sup> “The sentence I give is valid in all this North.” “I consent. I consent.”



After Joca Ramiro's death, Bebelo does return, the next big thing in the *sertão* – returned not to continue the first war, but to avenge Ramiro, or so he says. The men, now the “*madeiro-vazes*” under their interim chief, but having just lost him, first hear talk of a strange man approaching. The young *vaqueirinho* who tells of his coming is very overwhelmed by the strangeness of the man, says – and repeats, several times, in his astonishment – that he came down the River Paracatu in a *buriti* raft (“*Ele desceu o Rio Paracatu, numa balsa de buriti...*” (103-104)). Then the “*homem*” fought a battle, and with only five in his company, and none of them on horseback, they frightened away thirty mounted fighters. And, most terrifying of all, he says he is going to “reform” everything: “*Homem terrível... Falou que vai reformar isto tudo!*” (104). The young man describes Zé Bebelo:

Em é mais baixo do que alto, não é velho, não é moço... Homem branco... Veio de Goiás... O que os outros falam e tratam: ‘Deputado’. Desceu o Rio Paracatu numa balsa de buriti... Ele e seus cinco deram fogo feito feras. Gritavam de onça e de uivado... Disse: vai remexer o mundo!...”<sup>526</sup> (104)

The *jagunços* know it can only be Bebelo; the next morning, he finds them, accompanied by his five armed *catrumanos*. After the pleasantries (in which he calls Riobaldo “Professor”), Bebelo explains that he has returned to collect for his friend Joca Ramiro.<sup>527</sup> Bebelo soon offers his assistance, along with a verbal token that he is no longer only a creature of order – “*Vim por ordem e por desordem*” – but he nonetheless joins them under the condition that he lead the band: “*‘Amizade e combinação, aceito, mano velho. Já, ajuntar, não. Só obro o que muito mando; nasci assim. Só sei ser chefe’*”<sup>528</sup> (106). They agree. This exchange shows that Bebelo is both changed, and unchanged; he no longer fights for the government, but goes by the name “*Deputado*”; and he has come to the *sertão* for good old-fashioned vengeance, but it is because those bandits, as well as killing the man who saved his life, dishonor the “*nome da Pátria e este sertão nacional*.” The “national *sertão*”... Bebelo has returned in strength and violence and rage for a *jagunço* purpose – but, too, as the *vaqueirinho* fears, he wants reform: “*Homem terrível... Falou que vai reformar isto tudo!... vai remexer o mundo!*”

And Riobaldo still finds him not quite worthy of his fealty, even though he remains loyal; he finds Bebelo ludicrous, though also brave. As leader, Bebelo dances and sings, cheers his people on, asks questions about everything, learns to lasso cattle and to play the guitar and to understand horses, and all in all was enthusiastic with everything, “*qual-me-quer, o que houvesse: choveu,*

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<sup>526</sup> “Terrible man... He said that he’s going to reform all of this!” ... “He’s more short than tall, he isn’t old, he isn’t young... White man... Came from Goiás... What the others say and call him: ‘Congressman’. He went down the Paracatu River in a *buriti*-palm raft... He and his five gave fire like beasts. They yelled like jaguars and howling... I said: he’s going to shake up the world!”

<sup>527</sup> “*Vim de vez!*” – *ele disse; disse desafiando, quase. ... – “Vim cobrar pela vida de meu amigo Joca Ramiro, que a vida em outro tempo me salvou de morte... E liquidar com esses dois bandidos, que desonram o nome da Pátria e este sertão nacional! Filhos da égua...” – e ele estava com a raiva tanta, que tudo quanto falava ficava sendo verdade.*” (105) “I came once and for all!” – he said; he said challenging, almost. ... “I came to collect for the life of my friend Joca Ramiro, that my life in another time he saved from death... And to liquidate these two bandits, who disgrace the name of the Nation and this national *sertão*! Children of mares ... “ – and he was so angry, that everything he said was actually true”

<sup>528</sup> “I came for order and disorder” ... “Friendship and combination, I accept, old brother. But, joining, no. I only work what I really command: I was born like this. I only know how to be chief.”

*louvava a chuva; trapo de minuto depois, prezava o sol*<sup>529</sup> (93). He appears to be on a cultural exchange, and takes to it with joyful fervor. He loves the *jagunço* lifestyle, if not in the same way that Joca Ramiro loved it – as his lifeblood – or as Riobaldo loves it – his wish in his soul. And beyond this pageantry of culture, Bebelo talks too much and gives too much advice for the “progress” of individuals and the *sertão*:

Gostava, com despropósito, de dar conselhos. Considerava o progresso de todos – como se mais esse todo Brasil, territórios – e falava, horas, horas. ...O passado, para ele, era mesmo passado, não vogava.<sup>530</sup> (93)

Though he had always liked him, Riobaldo begins to find him uninspiring, and starts testing his leadership. Then, Bebelo asks him to *write*, his outgrown role; “*o zunzum*” of the war with the *hermogenes* band surrounds them (344), and Riobaldo can’t believe he’s being asked to *write*, after how much has changed since he was “professor” – and, further, to write to a judge, a council president, a prosecutor, and even “*senhor oficial comandante das forças militares*”<sup>531</sup> (345). Always self-aggrandizing, Bebelo wants the letters long, “*A massa do volume deles também dá valor...*” and the subject matter, the following: that they send their soldiers, by the shortest route, and without losing a minute, because in the Estate of *Tucanos* they would find “*caça grossa*” of all the *jagunçada* of the *sertão*. Signed: “*Ordem e Progresso, viva a Paz e a Constituição da Lei! Assinado: José Rebelo Adro Antunes, cidadão e candidato*” (345-346). Riobaldo writes the letters, but fears treason; he brings up the subject, first, of why Bebelo doesn’t his name to letters as “Zé Bebelo Vaz Ramiro,” his “sertanejan” name; Bebelo responds that he needs to use the other because it has “*o duro legal...*” He presses; Bebelo explains that “*A gente*” will escape: “*A gente obra jeito de se escapar, no cererê da confusão...*”<sup>532</sup> Bebelo says, “*Eu tenho é a Lei*” (351), but differentiates between his and the soldiers’; this isn’t enough for Riobaldo. Bebelo’s worldview doesn’t make sense to him.

Whether or not Zé Bebelo meant to use the military forces as a tool in the war, and sought the well-being of his *own* people, this was, to Riobaldo, treason – and for good reason: Bebelo was bringing another world into a *sertanejo* war, and was living a double life. To the *jagunços*, the name you are given in battle is not something that you can take off when you go to the city; it replaces your older self. But Bebelo was quite evidently maintaining his appearances in the “Brazil” that he left, living a double life.

Riobaldo starts to want to kill him, even though he is not the kind of man you kill<sup>533</sup>, to take leadership himself; but Bebelo himself senses that his time has come. When they encounter another band with its own leader – João Goanhã – Riobaldo asks, “*Quem é o chefe?*,” “Who is

<sup>529</sup> “anything, whatever was: if it rained, he lauded the rain; a headlong minute later, he praised the sun”

<sup>530</sup> “I liked, disproportionately, to give advice. He considered the progress of everyone – as in more than this all Brazil, territories – and spoke, hours, hours. ... The past, for him, was really past, no longer prevailed.”

<sup>531</sup> “mister official commander of the military forces” ... “The mass of volume of them also gives merit...” ... “great hunt” ... “Order and Progress, long live Peace and the Constitution of the Law! Signed: José Rebelo Adro Antunes, citizen and candidate.”

<sup>532</sup> “We’ll find a way to escape, in the confusion” ... “I have the Law”

<sup>533</sup> *Ah, homem como aquele, não se matava. Homem como aquele, pouco obedecia.* “Ah, a man like that, one doesn’t kill. Man like that, one barely obeys.”

the chief?,” and Zé Bebelo solves the problem of leadership by handing the reins to Riobaldo, along with his new name as Chief: Urutu-Branco. Bebelo leaves the *sertão* again: “*Tudo estava sendo repetido. Mas, da vez dessa, o julgamento era ele, ele mesmo, quem tinha dado e baixado. Zé Bebelo ia s’embora, conseqüentemente*” (455).<sup>534</sup>

As shown by Riobaldo’s impression of him – which is all we have – Bebelo was entranced with the *sertão*, but wanted it changed; and the *sertão* didn’t want him there:

Zé Bebelo me alumiou. Zé Bebelo ia e voltava, como um vivo demais de fogo e vento, zás de raio veloz como o pensamento da idéia – mas a água e o chão não queriam saber dele.<sup>535</sup> (326)

The water, and the ground, didn’t want to know of Zé Bebelo, nor of his ideas.

Through Riobaldo, Joca Ramiro lives on, though he was a man of ancient creed, a man who seems to have already been of the past even while he existed: “*Assim era Joca Ramiro, tão diverso e reinante, que, mesmo em quando ainda parava vivo, era como se já estivesse constando de falecido*”<sup>536</sup> (326). And, so, too, does Medeiro Vaz live through Riobaldo, the leader after Ramiro, who was, like Joca Ramiro, “*homem de outras idades, andava por este mundo com mão leal, não variava nunca, não fraquejava. ... Joca Ramiro tinha sido a admiração grave da vida dele: Deus no Céu e Joca Ramiro na outra banda do Rio. Tudo o justo.... era cuma raça de homem que o senhor mais não vê; eu ainda vi*”<sup>537</sup> (50, 60-61). Riobaldo has these men in him, these men of ages past. They live inside of him just as the *sertão* does: “*Sertão: é dentro da gente*” (325). But Riobaldo is also, like Bebelo, an outsider in many respects; and, in being so, he struggles with belonging to either of them. Bebelo is an influence for Riobaldo, too; he is all of them, just as the *sertão* takes in all things.

Indeed, when Riobaldo “Professor” flees Zé Bebelo and joins Joca Ramiro, he struggles with loyalty when asked to tell secrets of Bebelo upon his arrival at Joca Ramiro’s camp. He becomes quiet, and wonders: “*Eu, quem é que eu era? De que lado eu era? Zé Bebelo ou Joca Ramiro? Titão Passos... o Reinaldo... De ninguém eu era. Eu era de mim. Eu, Riobaldo. Eu não queria querer contar*”<sup>538</sup> (207). And often, too, he feels rage against Joca Ramiro, “*feito fosse Cristo Nosso senhor,*” due to his jealousy over Diadorim; he almost stays behind with a “*feiticeira*” and her beautiful, sensual daughter just to spite Diadorim, and to be his own master: “*dono definitivo*

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<sup>534</sup> “Everything was being repeated. But, this time, the judgment was him, he himself, who had given and set down. Zé Bebelo left, consequently”

<sup>535</sup> “Zé Bebelo enlightened me. Zé Bebelo went and came, like a living creature too much of fire and wind, the strike of a fast ray like the thinking of an idea – but the water and ground didn’t want to know of him”

<sup>536</sup> “Joca Ramiro was like that, so diverse and reigning, that even when he was still alive, it was as if he were already consisting of being dead”

<sup>537</sup> “a man of other ages, he went through this world with loyal hand, he never varied, never weakened. ... Joca Ramiro had been the grave admiration in his life: God in Heaven and Joca Ramiro on the other side of the River. All just... he was of a race of man that you don’t see anymore; but I still saw.”

<sup>538</sup> “I, who was I of? On what side was I? Ze Bebelo or Joca Ramiro? Titão Passos... Reinaldo... I was of no one. I was of me. I, Riobaldo. I didn’t want to tell.”

*de mim, era o que eu queria, queria*<sup>539</sup> (54). He loves Joca Ramiro, but he still wants to be his own man. Riobaldo is somehow of both worlds, and he creates “a nova jagunçagem” (455), the new way of being a *jagunço*, with his new name, given to him by Bebelo: Urutu-Branco.

Joca Ramiro and Zé Bebelo appear in the work as rival archetypes: one, the heroic *jagunço* leader of an ancient way, a major figure in Riobaldo’s mythology, and one the strange creature of a more modern world, Zé Bebelo. Their interaction seems to be that of two worlds colliding – past, and progress – but the outcome, though unclear, seems to point to the “*sertão*” as the victor – past, and future. As Zé Bebelo discovered, it’s impossible to leave the *sertão*, because it stays with you – “[a] gente tem de sair do sertão! Mas só se sai do sertão é tomando conta dele a dentro...”<sup>540</sup> (295). The only way to leave it would be to change it – and he cannot, for it has already changed him. Bebelo went there to domesticate the *sertão* in discourse, but instead he tried on *jaguncismo*, and eventually walked away.

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Critics differ in terms of how to see Bebelo’s effect on the *sertão*, and Riobaldo’s own effect. If the judgment of Bebelo were a dialogue between the *sertão* and Bebelo’s urban “Brasil,” who won? Vasconcelos believes that Zé Bebelo did, indeed, destroy *jaguncismo*, their way of life – and with Riobaldo’s help, as the “instrument of the consecution of that destruction,” “*instrumento de consecução dessa destruição*” (4); first, Bebelo introduced law into the *jagunço* culture; then, he betrayed them at the *Fazenda dos Tucanos*, passing the baton to Riobaldo; and, then, in the battle fought between Hermógenes and Diadorim at Paredão, *jaguncismo* becomes a thing of the past for Riobaldo, and for many of his friends, as well as for those who died that day.

Proença, on the other hand, believes that the *sertão* defeated Bebelo, and sent him packing; he points to the moment when Joca Ramiro says to Bebelo: “*O senhor sabia, lá para cima – me disseram. Mas, de repente, chegou neste sertão, viu tudo diverso diferente, o que nunca tinha visto. Sabença aprendida não adiantou para nada... Serviu algum?*”<sup>541</sup> (Rosa 2001: 276). Proença says that, in this, “the *sertão* defeats him, captures him and judges him”<sup>542</sup> (Proença 44). And, that is true, too: in the end, Bebelo left, and took his dreams with him. And, the judgment itself altered Riobaldo’s approach to Ramiro and the law of the *sertão* – valid there, even if it seems crazy, and “-factive” in its very nature, a performative justice:

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<sup>539</sup> “*Você já paga tão escasso então por Joca Ramiro? Por conta duma bruxa feiticeira, e a má-vida da filha dela, aqui neste confim de gerais?! – ele baixo exclamou. E tive ira. – ‘Dou!’ – falei. Todo o mundo, então, todos, tinham de viver honrando a figura daquele, de Joca Ramiro, feito fosse Cristo Nosso senhor, o exato?! E por aí eu já tinha pitado dois cigarros. Ser dono definitivo de mim, era o que eu queria, queria.*” “‘So you already pay so little for Joca Ramiro? On account of a witch, and the bad-life of her daughter, here in this corner of wilderness?!’ – he exclaimed, low. And I felt wrath. – ‘I do!’ – I said. Did the whole world, then, everyone, have to live honoring that one’s figure, Joca Ramiro’s, made as if he were Christ Our Lord, exactly?! And thereabouts I had already smoked two cigarettes. To be the definite master of myself, was what I wanted, wanted.”

<sup>540</sup> “We need to leave the *sertão*! But one only leaves the *sertão* by taking charge of it inside...”

<sup>541</sup> “You knew, up there – they told me. But, suddenly, you arrived in this *sertão*, you saw everything different, that you had never seen. Learned knowledge didn’t help you in anything... Did it?” ... “the *sertão* defeats him, binds him, and judges him”

<sup>542</sup> “o sertão o derrota, prende-o e julga-o”

– “O que nem foi julgamento legítimo nenhum: só uma extração estúrdia e destrambelhada, doideira acontecida sem senso, neste meio do sertão...” – o senhor dirá. Pois: por isso mesmo. Zé Bebelo não era réu no real! Ah, mas, no centro do sertão, o que é doideira às vezes pode ser a razão mais certa e de mais juízo! Daquela hora em diante, eu cri em Joca Ramiro.<sup>543</sup> (301)

I believe that Bebelo neither lost nor won. Bebelo left, but he left his mark, and he won't be the last to try. And though the *sertão* sends him away, it lets him return, to send him away again – it's a revolving door, and one which modernizers will take advantage of over time. But this is the *sertão* that contains and accepts *everything*, as seen above in Riobaldo's reaction to the rancher seô Habão: “*E ele era sertanejo? Sobre minha surpresa, que era. Serras que se vão saindo, para destapar outras serras. Tem de todas as coisas*”<sup>544</sup> (429). Every mountain that seems to go, uncovers a new one. And, too, it lives inside of us, so we can never leave it. Bebelo will always have the “*sertão*” with him, never truly leaving it, since he was unable to conquer it. The *sertão* will change, but *GSV's sertão* is mutable in its very nature, and that is its strength. It is both mysterious, and our own selves.

Riobaldo, who loves the archetypal *sertanejan* but taught the other to read, says, too, that the *sertão* spat him out: “*O sertão me produz, depois me enguliu, depois me cuspiu do quente da boca...* (601).<sup>545</sup> However, Riobaldo was as *of the sertão* as an outsider can be – and, though he was “spat out,” he longs to return, and feels that he has in a way never left. Riobaldo is “*o sertão feito homem*,” Guimarães Rosa tells us (Lorenz 95-96). He, too, has a revolving door to the *sertão* – for he can never leave it, nor tame it from the inside. No one can. He carries it with him – and so will the reader, invited in. Though time has changed the *sertão*, and – through Riobaldo's own actions, perhaps, as through everyone's – the *sertão* of *GSV* is no longer that material space only... the *sertão*, like Joca Ramiro's voice, is “continuing”... *Uma voz sem pingo de dúvida, nem tristeza. Uma voz que continuava*” (“A voice without a drop of doubt, nor sadness. A voice that continued”) (264).

Lourenço's (1999) statements support this conclusion, as well. He sees the *sertão* in *GSV* as a “A metaphysical or mystical *sertão*,” with “extraordinary and voluntary *anachronism* which installs the Brazilian imaginary on the third margin of itself – to what always was and remained, if not invisible, superficially explored” (213-214).<sup>546</sup> In this, Guimarães Rosa is creating a *sertão* that, through its own *awareness* of its paradoxical nature in being a natural and cultural catalog of yesteryear and yet also a completely relevant and valid insight into human and metaphysical concern, *lasts*, and travels through barriers of time, space, and mind. Lourenço's phrase “on the

<sup>543</sup> “Which wasn't even a legitimate judgment at all: only a frolicsome and disorganized extraction, madness happened without sense, in this environment of the *sertão*...” – you will say. Well: for this in itself. Zé Bebelo wasn't guilty in reality! Ah, but, in the middle of the *sertão*, what is madness can be the most correct and discerning reason! From that hour forward, I believed in Joca Ramiro.”

<sup>544</sup> “And was he ‘sertanejan’? To by surprise, he was. Mountain ranges that go leaving, to uncover other ranges. It has everything.”

<sup>545</sup> “The *sertão* produced me, then swallowed me, then spit me out from the heat of its mouth...”

<sup>546</sup> “*sertão metafísico ou místico*” ... “*extraordinário e voluntário anacronismo que instala o imaginário brasileiro na terceira margem de si mesmo – a que sempre foi e permanecia, se não invisível, superficialmente explorada.*”

third margin of itself” refers to Guimarães Rosa’s later story, “A Terceira Margem do Rio,” “Third Bank of the River,” in which the narrator’s father goes to live in the middle of the river, never touching the banks; right there, he is nonetheless completely out of physical reach. In the story, the shores that frame the river are ignored by the man in the boat between them, who will not land; the river, with its unique reality in having shores, is the only place in which the man can live in the eternal “*travessia*” of the journey, the shore between origin and destination, and experience the unseen in *and through* the *sertão*. The river becomes our access to the *reino-reino*, not a banal material shell. Marli Fantini explains that the father in the story is in “a new margin to conceal the unsoundable,”<sup>547</sup> a “zone of shadows where universal and absolute values such as ‘logic’, ‘truth’, and ‘origin’ are relativized,”<sup>548</sup> the author’s “strategies to un-hierarchize the certainties that put marks on the nebulous frontier between sanity and insanity, dox and paradox, truth and uncertainty”<sup>549</sup> (167-168). In *GSV*, the *sertão* has these qualities: it can’t be sounded, it relativizes logic in paradox; and the *sertão*, too, is right here, even when out of physical reach. Being on the “third margin of itself,” the *sertão* exists in the freedom of possibility.

The issues shown above of temporal change/modernization and city/*sertão* identity show the land’s – and the work’s – split nature, and also, in doing so, change time and place for the *sertão* into a non-particular space, a “psychical”, experiential, social, and spiritual space. As seen in previous chapters, the land is constructed explicitly as a place of paradox and therefore possibility; and, the narrative *redemoinho* adds to the effect of taking a very real place and making of it also a very internal one, to each reader, a transcendent one, for each reader’s understanding of its metaphysical aspects.

More than only a place of logical paradox, as we have shown, the paradox of the work exists, too, in the confluence of the material *sertão* with its “hidden” reality, its physical metaphysical, immanent mysticism; the narrative contributes to this complexity, constructing its paradox and its *accessibility*. The *sertão* within is tied to past and present, to humanity; and it does so in concert with the narrative’s integration of the reader into the novel’s space, opening it up to be what is needed of it, “everything for those who know how to read [it],” “*de tudo para quem souber ler*” (Cândido “O Homem” 121).

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<sup>547</sup> “nova margem para abrigar o insondável”

<sup>548</sup> “zona de sombras onde valores universalistas e absolutos como ‘lógica’, ‘verdade’, e ‘origem’ se relativizam”

<sup>549</sup> “desierarquizar as certezas que põem marcos na nebulosa fronteira entre a sanidade e a loucura, a doxa e o paradoxo, a verdade e a incerteza”

**CHAPTER IV:  
ReDEMOInho as THEMATIC and NARRATIVE TEXTURE**

The land of the *sertão* is immortalized rather than embalmed in *GSV*, as discussed above; the novel is a participatory space, and the land in *GSV* is human; it is as much experience as it is substance, and Riobaldo's experience of it is of its transcendent nature, its metaphysical role in his life. It is this complex metaphysics of the *sertão* – in Riobaldo's spiritual experience of the place, and his confused overlays upon it – that drives the narrative: although the novel may have as its purpose the “rescuing” of the *sertão* into its being, Riobaldo's is its other purpose: his struggle with guilt and confusion about the nature of the devil, *o demo*. The nature of the *sertão*'s transcendence is something Riobaldo struggles with deeply; it colors the narrative to the extent that it could be said to be the narrative's focus. His purpose in telling his life's story may be to be heard – or to speak to himself; and it may be, too, to “exorcise” the demons that he himself created.

Both *GSV* and *PP* construct their multiple/paradoxical realms surrounding a specific theme: in both, the source of evil. In *PP*, human cruelty and corruption destroys the land and makes of it a speaking grave. In *GSV*, Riobaldo's strongest concerns in the text involve the existence of the devil in the *sertão*, a possibility that bears on his own sinful and/or violent actions and their consequences. He went through the actions of making a pact with the devil at a crossroads in order to exact his revenge, and the vengeance happened – with a price. Therefore, in telling his tale, Riobaldo moves back and forth, cyclically perhaps, between telling of his adventures and of his metaphysical concerns, returning time and time again to clarify his fears and, too, his exorcisms, his claims that there is, in fact, no *demo*.

As part of his quest for understanding, Riobaldo marks the text with a refrain, also part of the title: “*o diabo na rua, no meio do redemoinho*” – “the devil in the road, in the middle of the whirlwind.” The “*redemoinho*,” or “*redemunho*” – whirlwind – is said in folklore to house the devil himself, to be his mode of transportation. However, the wind phenomenon of the *sertão* and its local cultural associations with the devil are not the only wandering, chaotic aspect of *Grande Sertão: Veredas*: for one, the *sertão* itself is also chaotic and circuitous – and, as has been shown in the first several chapters, it is constructive of and containing of paradox, both in reference to its physical/metaphysical nature, and its multiple natures of enclosed/infinite, past/present, and many other contradictory aspects. The *redemoinho*-wind is analogous to the *redemoinho-sertão*. And these are analogous, too, to *redemoinho*-Riobaldo, with his circuitous paths, thoughts, and the circuitous and ambiguous narrative itself – perhaps, as he hopes and fears to discover, the “human” and only source of the demonic in the “reDEMOInho.”

**1. O DEMÔNIO na RUA, NO MEIO do REDEMOINHO:**

The phrase “*O diabo na rua, no meio do redemoinho...*” appears first on the title page, as a part of the name of the whole work. “*Grande Sertão: Veredas*” points to the duality of the land, its “*sertão*,” and its “*veredas*,” translated as both “paths” and the wet places near hills and rivers in

the *sertão*, the “arid and remote interior”<sup>550</sup>; “*O diabo na rua, no meio do redemoinho*,” in the meantime, points to its complexity and possible metaphysical aspects, and the connection of these to the narration. The phrase then appears 8 times in the work, pointing to the most difficult and terrible moments in his life: on pages 27, 114, 174, 262, 437, and three times on 610-611. Though whirlwind is spelled “*redemoinho*,” “*redemonho*,” and “*redemunho*” throughout the text, the phrase in the work is consistently “*O diabo na rua, no meio do redemunho*” or “*O demônio na rua, no meio do redemunho*,” always in *italics* – emphasizing its importance in interpreting the novel. It is, in fact, the refrain of a whirlwind that swirls together the narrator, his story, the *sertão*, and mankind’s existential quandaries as framed by Guimarães Rosa.

In its first appearance in the work (27), “*O diabo na rua, no meio do redemunho*” is mentioned as “*figuração minha*,” Riobaldo’s own vision and figure of speech, during a discussion of the possibility of the immanence of the devil inside humankind and all of nature, even in the earth – and the wind. The placement of the phrase here appears to point to the devil’s capacity for penetrating all things in the *sertão*:

Explico ao senhor: o diabo vige dentro do homem, os crespos do homem - o é o homem arruinado, ou o homem dos avessos... Bem, o diabo regula seu estado preto, nas criaturas, nas mulheres, nos homens. Até: nas crianças – eu digo. Pois não é ditado: “menino – trem do diabo”? E nos usos, nas plantas, nas águas, na terra, no vento... Estrumes. ... *O diabo na rua, no meio do redemunho*... Hem? Hem? Ah. *Figuração minha*, de pior pra trás, as certas lembranças. Mal haja-me!<sup>551</sup>

The “*diabo*” appears here to be a conscious force, with a “presence” inside of men, women, children, plants, animals, water, earth, and wind; the devil is an “*azougue maligno*,” a presence like pernicious quicksilver, residing within.

In its repetition, the phrase takes on depth of meaning. the second instance of Riobaldo’s phrase, now “*O demônio na rua, no meio do redemunho*” (114), is right after he mentions a different “road,” *the road of war* – “*rua da guerra*” – specifically, that of Paredão, an abandoned village that they pass through on their search for vengeance, which looks out over the fateful crossroads of his later demonic pact.<sup>552</sup> It is also the place where, at the end of the tale, he buries Diadorim. This Paredão bears some similarities to Rulfo’s Comala, as will be discussed in Part II:

Rumo a rumo de lá, mas muito para baixo, é um lugar. Tem uma encruzilhada. Estradas vão para as Veredas Tortas-veredas Mortas. Eu disse, o senhor não ouviu. Nem torne a falar nesse nome, não. É o que ao senhor lhe peço. Lugar não onde. Lugares assim são

<sup>550</sup> <<http://michaelis.uol.com.br/moderno/ingles/index.php?lingua=portugues-ingles&palavra=vereda>>; <<http://michaelis.uol.com.br/moderno/ingles/index.php?lingua=portugues-ingles&palavra=sert%E3o>> accessed 2011-01-12.

<sup>551</sup> “I explain to you: the devil is in force inside the man, the wrinkles/rough parts of the man – it is the ruined man, or the man inside out. Well, the devil regulates its black presence, in creatures, in women, in men. Even: in children – I say it. Well isn’t it a proverb: “boy – train of the devil”? And in the uses, in plants, in waters, in the earth, in the wind... Manures... *The devil in the road, in the middle of the whirlwind*... What? What? Ah. My figuration, worse the farther back, certain memories. Evil have me!”

<sup>552</sup> He admits to telling the story out of order – “*Sei que estou contando errado, pelos altos.*”



simples – dão nenhum aviso. Agora: quando passei por lá, minha mãe não tinha rezado – por mim naquele momento?

Assim, feito no Paredão. Mas a água só é limpa é nas cabeceiras. O mal ou o bem, estão é em quem faz; não é no efeito que dão. O senhor ouvindo seguinte, me entende. O Paredão existe lá. Senhor vá, senhor veja. É um arraial. Hoje ninguém mora mais. As casas vazias. Tem até sobrado. Deu capim no telhado da igreja, a gente escuta a qualquer entrar o borbolo rasgado dos morcegos. [...] E eu não revi Diadorim. Aquele arraial tem um arruado só: é a rua da guerra... *O demônio na rua, no meio do redemunho...* O senhor não me pergunte nada. Coisas dessas não se perguntam bem.<sup>553</sup>

In one breath, he mentions Veredas Mortas, Paredão, and his refrain. Paredão is a place that was ruined by the final *jagunço* war, the site of the tragic achievement of Riobaldo's vengeance, and now has but one road – the road of war. The significance of *Paradão* cannot be underestimated; as the site of the final battle between the *hermógenes* and Riobaldo's band, it is also the place where he struggles with his destiny and choices upon Diadorim's death, as is shown in a further mention of the refrain, the last. Here, Riobaldo remembers in the telling – though it hadn't happened yet in the told – that the place of his “pact” is nearby, a place that there is, and isn't: “*é um lugar*” ... “*lugar não-onde.*” Veredas Mortas is the place of his obsessive horror at himself; and the place where that “road of war” began, as he asked for vengeance in return for his soul. Thus, in this usage, his refrain takes on much deeper meaning: the “road” is not just any road, but is the road he set himself on with, perhaps, the devil's guidance. However, here, he also clarifies the role of the “devil” – no longer is there an evil will everywhere, but now, the water is “clean from the fountainhead”, implying perhaps that people, or things, aren't naturally either good or evil, but make their own decisions. This empty place is, then, a place of possibility, for good or ill, just as the *Veredas-Mortas* is; a place of *choice*. Riobaldo *chose* the devil, and *chose* war.<sup>554</sup>

The third use of this illuminating phrase is while he is speaking of Diadorim (174):

Diadorim- dirá o senhor: então, eu não notei viciice no modo dele me falar, me olhar, me querer-bem? Não, que não – fio e digo. Há-de-o, outras coisas... O senhor duvida? Ara, mitilhas, o senhor é pessoa feliz, vou me rir... Era que ele gostava de mim com a alma; me

<sup>553</sup> “Routes from there, but far below, is a place. There's a crossroads. Roads go to the Twisted Wetlands-dead wetlands. I said, you didn't hear. Don't return to speak of the name, no. That's what I ask of you. Place no where. Places like this are simple – they give no warning. Now: when I passed by there, hadn't my mother prayed for me in that moment?”

So, exploit in the *Paredão* (=high bank). But the water is only clean in the headwaters. The evil or the good, is in who does; not in the effect they give. Hearing the rest, you'll understand. The *Paredão* is there... You go, you see. It's a village. Today no one lives there anymore. The empty houses. There is even a mansion. There came to be grass on the roof of the church, we hear at any entrance the torn *borbolo* of the bats. ... And I didn't see Diadorim again. That village has only one row of houses along a road: the road of war... *The devil in the road, in the middle of the whirlwind...* Don't ask me anything. Things like this aren't well asked.”

<sup>554</sup> This brings to mind his conversation with Quelemém, in which Riobaldo imagines that, if all faithful people got together in an appropriate place in the middle of the *gerais*, and built a church and just prayed, tremendously, lauding God and asking for the glory of the pardon of the world – then, there would be no more crimes, ambition, or suffering. But – his friend Quelemém responds: “Riobaldo, the harvest is common, but the weeding is done alone” (“*Riobaldo, a colheita é comum, mas o capinar é sozinho...*” (74)).

entende? O Reinaldo. Diadorim, digo. Eli, ele sabia ser homem terrível. Suspa! O senhor viu onça: boca de lado e lado, raivável, pelos filhos? Viu rusgo de touro no alto do campo, brabejando; ..., dando febre no mato? E o senhor não viu o Reinaldo guerrear!... Essas coisas se acreditam. *O demônio na rua, no meio do redemunho...* Falo! Quem é que me pega de falar, quantas vezes quero?!<sup>555</sup>

What is it about Diadorim that brings Riobaldo back to this refrain? In one paragraph, he speaks of Diadorim's love for him as a woman to a man, which he was blind to and she didn't admit; and, too, he speaks of her ferocity in war. Diadorim is the cause of much of his internal struggle throughout the work, and is his feared "payment" to the devil for their accomplished revenge. But she, too, set love aside to concentrate on war; this telling of the refrain points to Diadorim's choice of the devil – vengeance, anger, violence – on the road of war, amidst the confusion of their hearts and minds.

“*Redemoinho... Redemonho... redemunho*” (261-262): The fourth mention of the phrase is brought on by an actual whirlwind, which is apparently a frightening phenomenon in and of itself, as well as being the home of Riobaldo's devil:

Mas, aí, meu cavalo filosofou: refugou baixo e refugou alto, se puxando para a beira da mão esquerda da estrada, por pouco não deu comigo no chão. E o que era, que estava assombrando o animal, era uma folha seca esvoaçada, que sobre se viu quase nos olhos e nas orelhas dele. Do vento. Do vento que vinha, rodopiado. Redemoinho: o senhor sabe – a briga de ventos. O quando um esbarra com outro, e se enrolam, o doido espetáculo. A poeira subia, a dar que dava escuro, no alto, o ponto às voltas, folharada, e ramaredo quebrado, no estalar de pios assovios, se torcendo turvo, esgarabulhando. Senti meu cavalo como meu corpo. Aquilo passou, embora, o ró-ró. A gente dava graças a Deus. Mas Diadorim e o Caçanje se estavam lá adiante, por me esperar chegar. – “Redemonho!” – o Caçanje falou, esconjurando. – “Vento que enviesa, que vinga da banda do mar...” – Diadorim disse. Mas o Caçanje não entendia que fosse: redemunho era d'Ele – do diabo. O demônio se vertia ali, dentro viajava. Estive dando risada. O demo! Digo ao senhor. Na hora, não ri? Pensei. O que pensei: *o diabo, na rua, rio meio do redemunho...* Acho o mais terrível da minha vida, ditado nessas palavras, que o senhor nunca deve de renovar. Mas, me escute. A gente vamos chegar lá. E até o Caçanje e Diadorim se riram também. Aí, tocamos.

Até à barra dos dois riachos, onde tem a cachoeira de escadinhas. Nem pensei mais no redemoinho de vento, nem no dono dele – que se diz – morador dentro, que viaja, o Sujo: o

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<sup>555</sup> “Diadorim – you will say: so, didn't I notice some kind of vice in the way of his speaking to me, looking at me, caring for me [lit. “loving-me-well”]? No, no – I guarantee and say. There are of– oh, other things... Do you doubt? Why, pack of dogs, you are a happy person, I'm going to laugh... It was that he liked me with his soul; do you understand? Reinaldo. Diadorim, I mean. Eh, he knew how to be a terrible man. *Suspa!* You saw a jaguar: mouth from side to side, enrageable, for its children? You saw the quarrel of bulls in the height of the fields, prickly; ..., giving fever in the thicket? And you didn't see Reinaldo wage war! ... These things are believed. *The devil in the road, in the middle of the whirlwind...* I speak! Who is it that catches me speaking, as often as I want to?!”

que aceita as más palavras e pensamentos da gente, e que completa tudo em obra; o que a gente pode ver em folha dum espelho preto; o Ocultador.<sup>556</sup>

We learn here that the whirlwind *makes itself* cloudy, “*se torcendo turvo*,” picking up the dust which turns it dark; dust that comes from the *sertão*, and from the devil, who pours himself into it along with the dirt of the *sertão*. In this moment Riobaldo is one with his horse, one in fear and body – and so, in a way, one with the *sertão* – but so is that whirlwind that combines them all. We learn, too, that the “*demo*” is “*o Ocultador*”: the “*Concealer*” of what? What is concealed, hidden in that dust, but the possibility of evil itself? For Riobaldo, it is terrible, it speaks to his very worst fears; he looks into the dark mirror of the whirlwind, and sees the devil and himself, making his own life cloudy in his confusion. The devil, in the road, in the whirlwind... Riobaldo finds in those words “the most terrible” facts of his life: either the devil, or his own guilt, or both.

The fifth instance of Riobaldo’s refrain occurs in the moment of his pact, as he faces his fears with bravado (437). He works himself up to feeling stronger than his fear of the devil, “*eu mais forte do que o Ele; do que o pavor d’Ele*,” until he feels that the devil will lick the ground for him. He stops thinking, in the nerve of the moment, feeling like a cobra that doesn’t have the time to feel: “*Cobra desfecha desferido, dá bote, se deu*.” In that moment of *decision* – “*eu estava ali, eu queria, eu podia, eu ali ficava*” – he makes himself “Him”:

eu mais forte do que o Ele; do que o pavor d’Ele ... Cobra desfecha desferido, dá bote, se deu. ... eu estava ali, eu queria, eu podia, eu ali ficava. Feito Ele. Nós dois, e tornopio do pé-devento – o ró-ró girado mundo a fora, no dobar, funil de final, desses redemoinhos: ... *o Diabo, na rua, no meio do redemunho*... Ah, ri; ele não. Aheu, eu, eu! “Deus ou o Demo – para o jagunço Riobaldo!” A pé firmado. Eu esperava, eh! De dentro do resumo, e do mundo em maior, aquela crista eu repuxei, toda, aquela firmeza me revestiu: fôlego de fôlego de fôlego – da mais-força, de maior-coragem.<sup>557</sup>

<sup>556</sup> “But, there, my horse philosophized; he refused low and refused high, pulling himself to the left-hand side of the road, by only a little he didn’t throw me on the ground. And what it was, that was frightening the animal, was a dry leaf fluttering, that could be seen almost in his eyes and ears. Oh the wind. Of the wind that came, spinning around. Whirlwind: you know – the quarrel of winds. The when one bumps another, and they coil together, the crazy spectacle. The dust rose, to make that it became dark, on high, the point of returns, foliage, and broken branches, in the crackle of pious whistles, twisting itself cloudy, moving restlessly. I felt my horse like my body. That passed, then, the *ró-ró*. We thanked God. But Diadorim and Caçanje were there in front, waiting for me to arrive. – “Whirlwind” – Caçanje said, swearing. “Wind that slants, that avenges from the coast of the sea...” Diadorim said. But Caçanje didn’t understand what it was: whirlwind was of Him – the devil. The devil was poured himself into it, traveled inside. I was laughing. The devil! I tell you. In that hour, didn’t I laugh? I thought. What I thought: *The devil, in the road, in the middle of the whirlwind*... I find the most terrible of my life, said in these words, that you should never renew. But, listen to me. We’ll get there. And even Caçanje and Diadorim laughed too. There, we’ll touch.

To the border of two streams, where there is a waterfall of little stairs. I didn’t think more in the whirlwind, nor in its master – which they say – living inside, that travels, the Dirty: the one that accepts our bad words and thoughts, and completes it all in work; what we can see in the sheet of a black mirror; the Concealer.”

<sup>557</sup> “I stronger than Him; than the fear of Him “ ... “A cobra discharges flung, gives thrust, it’s done.” ... “I was there, I wanted, I could, I stayed there.” ... “Made Him. We two, and *tornopio* of the stalk-of-wind – the *ró-ró* turning the world inside out, final funnel, of these whirlwinds: *the devil, in the road, in the middle of the whirlwind*... Ah, I laughed; not he. Aha, I, I! “God or the devil – for the bandit Riobaldo!” With firm foot. I waited, eh! From inside of the summary, and of the world in general, I grew arrogant (“*levantar a crista*” = “to grow

In the moment of creating his “pact”, Riobaldo is “*Ele*”, the devil; inside the funnel of the whirlwind – that whirlwind of his own thoughtless choices – *Riobaldo* is the one who laughed, not the devil. He grew arrogant and firm in that “wind of wind of wind” – not a physical wind, but figurative, the circuitous winds of his own thoughts, fears, pride and vengeful plans clothing him confident with its gusts. That wind provides his sense of courage: “*fôlego*,” wind, and respiration. His mind, the *sertão*, the *dust* and *demon* and, now, *self* of the whirlwind – the connection is almost explicit, as is the one-sidedness of his no-less-powerful pact.

Finally, he returns to his refrain three times during the battle with Hermógenes – the battle in which he loses Diadorim. He finds out only then, after her death, that she had loved him as a woman, and he fears that loss to be the payment for his sins (610-611).

In the moment of the final fight, Riobaldo is overcome by fear, “*o medo claro nos meus dentes*”;<sup>558</sup> unable to give an order or help, he finds he is also unable to pray, finding only his refrain in his mind, the refrain of his fears: “*Quando quis rezar – e só um pensamento, como raio e raio, que em mim. Que o senhor sabe? Qual: ... o Diabo na rua, no meio do redemunho...*” While he merely watches – “*eu estando vendo!*” – Diadorim is the one to deliver the killing blow to Hermógenes:

Diadorim foi nele... Negaceou, com uma quebra de corpo, gambetou... E eles ... dobravam para fora e para dentro, com braços e pernas rodejando, como quem corre, nas entortações. ... *O diabo na rua, no meio do redemunho...* Sangue.<sup>559</sup>

The whirlwind of the war has the “devil” in it, in the blood and bodies. Again he tries to pray, and cannot, and the refrain comes again to mind:

Sofri rezar, e não podia, num cambaleio. Ao ferreiro, as facas, vermelhas... A faca a faca, eles se cortaram até os suspensórios. ... *O diabo na rua, no meio do redemunho...*<sup>560</sup>

In that moment, he sees Diadorim “*cravar e sangrar o Hermógenes... ressurtiu o alto esguicho de sangue... porfiou para bem matar.*”<sup>561</sup> But he still cannot pray, struck mute by the battle; he wishes he could sob a sea, pray even one word:

Solução que não pude, mar que eu queria um socorro de rezar uma palavra que fosse, bradada ou em muda; e secou: e só orvalhou em mim, por prestígios do arrebatado no

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arrogant”\*), all of it, that firmness re-clothed me: wind of wind of wind – of bigger-strength, bigger-boldness.”

\*<<http://michaelis.uol.com.br/moderno/ingles/index.php?lingua=portugues-ingles&palavra=crista>>

<sup>558</sup> “the fear clear in my teeth” ... “When I wanted to pray – and only a thought, like ray and ray, that in me. Do you know: Which: “the devil in the road, in the middle of the whirlwind”... “I being seeing!”

<sup>559</sup> “Diadorim went at him... He shook, with a breaking of body, dodged... And they... doubled in and out, with arms and legs encircling, like who runs, in the spilling... *The devil in the road, in the middle of the whirlwind...* Blood.”

<sup>560</sup> “I suffered to pray, and I couldn’t, in a staggering. To the iron, the knives, red... Knife on knife, they cut each other to the suspenders... *The devil in the road, in the middle of the whirlwind...*”

<sup>561</sup> “nail and bleed Hermógenes ... a high spout of blood leapt into the air... vied to really kill”

momento, foi poder imaginar a minha Nossa-Senhora assentada no meio da igreja... Gole de consolo... Como lá embaixo era fel de morte, sem perdão nenhum.<sup>562</sup>

He is able to imagine the Virgin Mary in a church, a draught of consolation, but only in the moment that Diadorim falls (“*de repente, não vi mais Diadorim!*”<sup>563</sup>) and the sky clouds over (“*No céu, um pano de nuvens... Diadorim!*”) is he able to finally enter the fray: “*Naquilo, eu então pude, no corte da dor: me mexi,... Subi os abismos... Trespassei.*”) “I went up the abysses... I crossed over.” *Paredão* – a thick wall, it means – a place of crossing, *travessia*. Not only did he climb over a wall, but he crossed over in his religious spectrum, too, in that moment; no longer afraid, but too late, he finds religious goodness in his thoughts and is free to move.

It is this moment that defines so much of Riobaldo’s confusion and concern; it drives his retelling of his tale, his reframing of his acts and thoughts in order to understand what happened to him in the moment of Diadorim’s death – his greatest moment of loss, and due to either his own failing, or some other cosmic explanation that he cannot grasp. Did the devil stop him from saving Diadorim in order to take her as payment for the pact? Or, did Riobaldo himself fail her because of his paralyzing fears about his inability to pray?

*Paredão* is the quiet place, *tranquilo* (588), where this deeper, symbolic war also takes place. A place connected to multiple realms, as is Riobaldo’s personal *redemoinho*, connected to the paradoxical *sertão* and the paradoxically material divine through its own chaos and paradox – and creative of its own evil through its drawing up of dirt and darkness in its throes. Could it be that the *redemoinho* of which he speaks is not only a physical whirlwind in the *sertão* of Minas Gerais, but is also a narrative one – that it is through his thinking and over-thinking, his fears and feelings, that the “*demo*” became real to him in the first place? If that is so, then it becomes apparent that, to start with, the narrator’s own confused mind *is* the “*demo*” that he fears, as well as, perhaps, its solution, in the telling: the story *behind* the story happens in the telling, a metaphysical journey, uniting, through Riobaldo’s journey in the land of the *sertão*, various concepts of “place” and “space”... the conceptual “space” of cosmographies and minds, the spaces of the manifest and its non-physical origins, and, too, the space of narrative. The *inenarrable* – the paradox of the *sertão*’s symbolic/cosmological/material existence, and the author’s identity and moral status, and the narrative’s digressions and confusions, and all of these things – is possible through the consistency of chaos, “*se torcendo turvo.*”

Riobaldo’s refrain appears in moments of great terror and meaning in the text, marking it; and marking it not only with Riobaldo’s fear of the devil, but also with what the *redemoinho* in itself signifies. The labyrinthine whirlwind whirls not only the wind; it encircles Riobaldo’s struggles, the whole *sertão*, and the planes of Heaven or Hell, in Riobaldo’s mind; and, it encircles and whirls through the narrative, as well, tacking together all of these levels of mind, voice, spirituality – and place, stone, creature – through its texture. Again: The devil, the road, and the

<sup>562</sup> “A sob that I couldn’t, sea that I wanted a help of prayer even a word, shouted or mute; and it dried up: and alone drizzled in my, by the prestige of the impetuosity in the moment, was to be able to imagine my Our-Lady settled in the middle of the church... a draught of consolation... As there below it was the gall of death, without any pardon.”

<sup>563</sup> “suddenly, I didn’t see Diadorim anymore!” ... “In the sky, a cloth of clouds... Diadorim!” ... “In that, I then could, in the cutting of pain: I stirred myself... I went up the abysses... I crossed.”

whirlwind – drawing up dust in its circuitous throes – narrative and *sertão*-journey, caught in the wind with which the devil rises up from inside Riobaldo himself: the *redemoinho* become *Riobaldomoinho*.

## 2. EVIL and REDEMPTION:

As seen in the development of meaning tied to Riobaldo's refrain, his concerns about the existence of the devil are wound up in his fears about his own guilt in the consequences of his choices. The refrain and its contexts hint at the possibility that Riobaldo is creating what plagues him; that the novel is an exorcism of the "devil" as real, and evil becomes a human choice.

As has been mentioned, Riobaldo finds the metaphysical in the *sertão*; he finds there God, evil, and many places of vacillation and choice – the *travessias*, perhaps representative of all of life. The story seems to be entirely chaotic; however, in his discussions with *o senhor* about God and the devil, he returns often to some of the same ideas about God: God is – probably. Riobaldo states that “*Deus é definitivamente*” (58), and, too, God is strong, sudden, and constant: “*A força dele, quando quer – moço! – me dá o medo pavor! Deus vem vindo: ninguém não vê. Ele faz é na lei do mansinho – assim é o milagre... E Deus ataca bonito, se divertindo, se economiza.*”<sup>564</sup> (39). He compares God to the still liquid that, over time, eats away an entire blade, but leaves the horn handle;<sup>565</sup> a gentleness that destroys violence.

“Soul” also seems to be something undoubted, though in one moment it is used as a verb, with the implication that the soul can be in a state of latency or non-existence for certain men: “*ele almou?*” (“did he ensoul?”) he asks of Joé Cazuzo in the moment in which the latter knelt on the ground and claimed to have seen the Virgin Mary. Beyond this, however, the soul appears to be taken for granted as present and God's, at least insofar as anything can be in this novel: “*Se tem alma, e tem, ela é de Deus estabelecida*”<sup>566</sup> (40).

In other moments, Riobaldo wonders about the *nature* of the presence of God in the *sertão*, but he generally doesn't doubt God's existence. In what sense entirely God interacts in the world is clear – only that he does. Here, he claims that God works quietly, both *in the sertão* and *in mankind*, inherent and constant though impossible to see or expect:

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<sup>564</sup> “God is definitively” ... “The strength of him, when he wishes – man! – it gives me fear dread! God comes coming: no one sees. He does it in the law of the gentle – this is how the miracle is... And God attacks beautifully, enjoying himself, he's frugal.”

<sup>565</sup> “*A pois: um dia, num curtume, a faquinha minha que eu tinha caiu dentro dum tanque... – “Amanhã eu tiro...” – falei, comigo... Ah, então, saiba: no outro dia, cedo, a faca, o ferro dela, estava sido roído, quase por metade, por aquela agüinha escura, toda quieta. Deixei, para mais ver... Sabe o que foi? Pois, nessa mesma da tarde, aí: da faquinha só se achava o cabo... O cabo – por não ser de frio metal, mas de chifre de galheiro. Aí está: Deus... Bem, o senhor ouviu, o que ouviu sabe, o que sabe me entende...*” (“Well: one day, in a tannery, my little knife that I had fell inside a tank... – “Tomorrow I'll take it out...” – I said, to myself... Ah, then, now this: on the next day, early, the knife, the iron of it, was being corroded, almost halfway, by that dark water, all calm. I left it, to see more... Do you know what happened? Well, in that very afternoon, there: of the little knife only the handle was found... The handle – for not being of cold metal, but of the antler of a stag. There it is: God... Well, you heard, what you heard you know, what you know you understand of me...”).

<sup>566</sup> “If there is a soul, and there is, it is of God established”... “sellable” “legal obedience”

Que Deus existe, sim, devagarinho, depressa. Ele existe – mas quase só por intermédio da ação das pessoas: de bons e maus. Coisas imensas no mundo. O grande-sertão é a forte arma. Deus é um gatilho?<sup>567</sup> (359)

God in Riobaldo's *sertão* does not appear to be loving; but He is there in the people and "immense things in the world", invisible, gentle, and yet incredibly strong, like Ruysbroeck's brilliant and yet treadable stone.

## 2.1 The PACT'S EXORCISM:

"The devil," however, either does or does not exist for Riobaldo – or both. Riobaldo struggles deeply with his confusion throughout the work: "*Remanso de rio largo... Deus e o demo, no sertão*" (577)... "*ao Demo ou a Deus...*" (581)... "*Não sou do demo e não sou de Deus!*" (510).<sup>568</sup> In his telling of the pact, Riobaldo especially struggles: between the existence/non-existence of the devil, and, too, of fate.

As mentioned above, Riobaldo felt the need to make a pact with the devil because he wanted to help Diadorim to avenge her father, the *jagunco*'s much-admired leader Joca Ramiro; and, as it had been confirmed to him that the murderous traitor Hermógenes was in league with the devil<sup>569</sup>, Riobaldo believed he needed that same advantage to win. He searched for a crossroads in the *Veredas-Mortas* and worked up the courage as he waited for midnight; now, in the telling, he is terrified of mentioning the place where it occurred, the "*encruzilhada*" (113).

In his later telling of the night of the pact, Riobaldo claims that it was the marked place of his evil fate, the beginning of a torment in sin: "*redizendo o que foi meu primeiro pressentimento, eu ponho: que era por minha sina o lugar demarcado, começo de um grande penar em grandes pecados terríveis*"<sup>570</sup> (417). And he repeats the question of "fate" again, too: "*Esse menino, e eu, é que éramos destinados para dar cabo do Filho do Demo, do Pactário!*" (425).<sup>571</sup> And, too, he claims that God "let" him go, pointing again to the possibility that his actions were not his own: "*Deus me tenha!... eu subi de lá, noitinha – hora em que capivara acorda, sai de seu escondido e vem pastar. Deus é muito contrariado. Deus deixou que eu fosse, em pé, por meu querer, como*

<sup>567</sup> "That God exists, yes, slowly, quickly. He exists – but almost only by intermediary of the actions of people: the good and bad. Immense things in the world. The *grande-sertão* is a strong weapon. God is a trigger?"

<sup>568</sup> "Stillness of the long river... God and the devil, in the *sertão*" ... "to the devil or to God" ... "I'm not of the devil and I'm not of God!"

<sup>569</sup> "*Hermógenes Saranhó Rodrigue Felipes – ... Pois era – o Lacrau me confirmou – o Hermógenes era positivo pactário. Desde todo o tempo, se tinha sabido daquilo... E, veja, por que sinais se conhecia em favor dele a arte do Coisa-Má, com tamanha proteção? Ah, pois porque ele não sofria nem se cansava, nunca perdia nem adoecia; e, o que queria, arrumava, tudo... O senhor não é como eu? Sem crer, cri.*" (424) ("Hermógenes... Well he was – Lacrau confirmed it to me – Hermógenes was positively a pact-maker. For all time, they had known about that... And, see, by which signs did they know to be in his favor the art of the Bad-Thing, with such a protection? Ah, well because he didn't suffer nor did he tire, he never lost nor did he become ill; and, whatever he wanted, he was able to get, everything... Aren't you like me? Without believing, I believed.")

<sup>570</sup> "repeating what was my first presentiment, I put here: that it was for my destiny the defined place, the beginning of a long torment in big, terrible sins."

<sup>571</sup> "This boy, and I, we were destined to make an end of the Son of the Devil, the Pact-maker!"



*fui*” (434).<sup>572</sup> However, Riobaldo also admits that the place was one of choice, of resolution: “*Achado eu estava. A resolução final, que tomei em consciência*”<sup>573</sup> (434). “God or the devil?” he asks himself, attempting to choose: “*Deus ou o demo?*” – *sofri um velho pensar... às arras, tudo meu, tudo o mais – alma e palma, e desalma... Deus e o Demo!*” (437).<sup>574</sup>

He calls out to finish with Hermógenes – his request; and calls “*Lúcifer*” several times, but hears only silence in return. In that moment, he wonders about whether the devil exists, and makes several contradictory statements:

Ele tinha que vir, se existisse. Naquela hora, existia.<sup>575</sup> (437)

Então, ele não queria existir? Existisse. Viesse! Chegasse, para o desenlace desse passo. Digo direi, de verdade: eu estava bêbado de meu.<sup>576</sup> (438)

Ele não existe, e não apareceu nem respondeu – que é um falso imaginado. Mas eu supri que ele tinha me ouvido... Como que adquirisse minhas palavras todas.<sup>577</sup> (438)

The devil exists, and doesn’t; it’s imagined, but it heard him; Riobaldo was “drunk of himself,” but he spent the next years wondering if the pact had occurred. He finds proof that it did: when Diadorim asks him about his destiny, he says “...*sei não. O demônio sabe...*,” and then wonders, terrified: “*Me diga o senhor: por que, naquela extrema hora, eu não disse o nome de Deus?*” (211-212).<sup>578</sup> He also found that he couldn’t dream: “*Sonhar, só, não ... Sabendo que, de lá em diante, jamais nunca eu não sonhei mais, nem pudesse; aquele jogo fácil de costume, que de primeiro antecipava meus dias e noites, perdi pago. Isso era um sinal?*”<sup>579</sup> (440). His relationship with Diadorim seems to suffer, too; he things it is “*por meu castigo*”, for his punishment (520). The horses are frightened of him, and when he yells the name “Barzabu,” they obey him<sup>580</sup>, including one of the fiercest of them all, which he keeps and names Siruiz.<sup>581</sup>

<sup>572</sup> “God have me!... I rose from there, in the middle of the night – hour in which the capibara wakes, leaves his hiding and comes to graze. God is very contrary. God allowed me to go, on foot, as I wished, as I went.”

<sup>573</sup> “I was found. A final resolution, I made in consciousness” ... “God have me!”

<sup>574</sup> “God or the Devil? – I suffered an ancient thought... as pledge/token, all of mine, all of the rest – soul and palm, and unsoul... God and the Devil!”

<sup>575</sup> “He had to come, if he existed. In that hour, he existed.”

<sup>576</sup> “So, he didn’t want to exist? That he would exist. The he would come! That he would arrive, for the development of this step. I say and will say, really: I was drunk on myself.”

<sup>577</sup> “He doesn’t exist, and neither appeared nor responded – since he is a false imagined thing. But I filled in that he had heard me... As if he had acquired all of my words.”

<sup>578</sup> “I don’t know. The Devil knows...” “Tell me, sir: why, in that extreme hour, did I not say the name of God?”

<sup>579</sup> “Dreaming, only, no... Knowing that, from then on, I never ever dreamed again, nor could I; that easy game of custom, that I always anticipated in my days and nights, I lost paid. Was that a sign?”

<sup>580</sup> “*Dou confesso o que foi: era de mim que eles estavam espantados. ... Assim ficaram, mas murchando e obedecendo, quando, com uma raiva tão repentina, eu pulei para o meio deles: - “Barzabu! Aquieta, cambada!” – que eu gritei. Me avaliaram*” (446). (“I give confession of what it was: it was of me that they were frightened. They stayed like that, but wilting and obeying, when, with an anger so sudden, I leapt into the middle of them: “Beelzebub! Quiet, you bunch!” which I yelled. They appraised me.”

<sup>581</sup> “*E o cavalo, lão, lão, pôs pernas para adiante e o corpo para trás, como onça fêmea no cio mor. Me obedecia. Isto, juro ao senhor: é fato de verdade.*”<sup>581</sup> “And the big horse, big, big, [sounds like “lion, lion”], put its legs in

And, finally, his proof is in that Hermógenes was indeed killed – and the Liso do Sussuarão, crossed, easily the second time where it was impossible the first, something that he attributes to infernal aid, wondering how much the Devil would charge him for all that help: “*O demo! Que tanto me ajudasse, que quanto de mim ia tirar cobro?*”<sup>582</sup> (526).

After losing Diadorim to the consequences of their chosen road of war – or, perhaps, the consequences of Riobaldo’s pact with the devil – he first tries to undo that pact, as mentioned above. He flies to *Veredas-Mortas*, tragic, insane, to try to bring Diadorim back to life by making the other choice there, giving himself to God: “*Eu vim. ... Ao deusdar.*” But *Veredas-Mortas* was never there (616-617). So Riobaldo turned, then, with his *espiritista*<sup>583</sup> friend Quelemém’s guidance, to prayer: “*Reza é que sara da loucura. No geral. Isso é que é a salvação-da-alma... Muita religião, seu moço! Eu cá, não perco ocasião de religião. Aproveito de todas. Bebo água de todo rio... Uma só, para mim é pouca, talvez não me chegue... Qualquer sombrinha me refresca. Mas é só muito provisório. Eu queria rezar – o tempo todo...*” (32).<sup>584</sup> As he states, he prays to all religions, any way he can, since only one probably isn’t enough; his wife prays for him, too, and he pays others to do the same.<sup>585</sup> He also strives to believe in redemption:

Mire veja: o mais importante e bonito, do mundo, é isto: que as pessoas não estão sempre iguais, ainda não foram terminadas – mas que elas vão sempre mudando. Afinam ou desafinam. Verdade maior. É o que a vida me ensinou. Isso que me alegra, montão.<sup>586</sup> (39)

However, the prayer doesn’t set his mind at ease, nor do his momentary conclusions about his ability to change; he remains in doubt and in fear.

And so, he tells his story.

Telling it to another is like telling it to himself: “*Falar com o estranho assim, que bem ouve e logo longe se vai embora, é um segundo proveito: faz do jeito que eu falasse mais mesmo*

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front and its body behind, like a female jaguar in the highest heat. It obeyed me. This, I swear to you, sir: it’s a true fact.”

<sup>582</sup> “The devil! That so much he helped me, how much was he going to take payment?”

<sup>583</sup> “Spiritist”, religious group affiliated with Allen Kardec’s mediumistic *O Livro dos Espíritos*.

<sup>584</sup> “Prayer is what heals insanity. Generally. This is the salvation-of-the-soul... Lots of religion, young man! I here, I don’t lose any occasion for religion. I take advantage of all of them. I drink the water of every river. Only one, for me is little, perhaps isn’t enough... Any little shade refreshes me. But alone it’s still very provisional. I would like to pray – all the time...”

<sup>585</sup> He pays a woman named Maria Leôncia to pray for him every day, with a rosary on Sundays, because “*as rezas dela afamam muita virtude de poder*” (“Her prayers are famous for lots of powerful virtue”). He’s sending a message to another woman, too, who prays “*também com grandes meremências*” (... “also with great merit”), to make the same contract, and he’s hoping for more: “*Quero punhado dessas, me defendendo em Deus, reunidas de mim em volta...*” (“I want a handful of these, defending me in God, united all around me...”) (32). He adds: “*Vale, se vale.*” It’s valid, if it’s valid; he’s “covering his bases”, so he won’t get caught unprepared.

<sup>586</sup> “Look and see: the most important and beautiful, in the world, is this: that people aren’t always the same, they still weren’t finished – but they are always changing. They tune and untune. Bigger truth. That’s what life taught me. This cheers me, a lot.”

*comigo.*<sup>587</sup> He is using his narrative to search for something that he himself needs. Riobaldo gives hints as to his motives in telling, explaining – confusingly, since he, too, is confused – to *o senhor* that he is searching in his story for what “was and wasn’t,” trying to put his heart back together and find the strongest road for his memories to follow:

O senhor sabe?: não acerto no contar, porque estou remexendo o vivido longe alto, com pouco carço, querendo esquentar, demear, de feito, meu coração, naquelas lembranças. Ou quero enfiar a idéia, achar o rumozinho forte das coisas, caminho do que houve e do que não houve. As vezes não é fácil. Fé que não é.<sup>588</sup> (192)

...and, too, that he wishes he could decipher the important things in his own convoluted tale:

Eu sei que isto que estou dizendo é dificultoso, muito entrançado. Mas o senhor vai avante. Invejo é a instrução que o senhor tem. Eu queria decifrar as coisas que são importantes.<sup>589</sup>

With memory itself being tricky, and Riobaldo unsure what he is searching for – “*o que queria e o que não queria, estória sem final*”<sup>590</sup> (334) – the story becomes difficult to decipher not just for the listener, whose importance is minimal to Riobaldo in this searching speech act, but also for the teller. He continues:

...O que induz a gente para más ações estranhas é que a gente está pertinho do que é nosso, por direito, e não sabe, não sabe, não sabe! Sendo isto. Ao doido, doideiras digo.<sup>591</sup> (116)

In this explanation is a lament about how much of what is closest to us, ours, is exactly what are the least aware of, so we engage in poor choices. So: as his life has been “in folly,” what he tells us are “follies” or “madness,” “*doideiras*.” These partial explanations indicate for the perplexingly roundabout fashion of the tale explain also the purpose of the tale itself: to understand how it was that he engaged in acts that he regrets, to search for the important things in his past, to thread together a narrative that will fix what ails him in his heart.

The story is, then, an internal process, and a confession, an exorcism of evil, and, too, a revisiting of events to *redo them*, just as when he went back physically to *Veredas-Mortas* to “*deusdar*” or, in his madness, embrace the mountain, hoping to find solace.<sup>592</sup>

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<sup>587</sup> “Speaking with a stranger like this, who hears well and then goes far away, is a second advantage: it makes it as if I were speaking more with myself”

<sup>588</sup> “Do you know? I don’t hit it right in the telling, because I’m shuffling the long-ago lived, with little kernel, wanting to heat it up, to put together, really, my heart, in those memories. Or I want to thread the idea, find the strong little route of things, the way of what was and what wasn’t. Sometimes it isn’t easy. Faith that it is not.”

<sup>589</sup> “I know that what I’m saying is difficult, really interwoven/twisted. But you, sir, go forward. I enjoy you the instruction that you have. I wanted to decipher the things that are important...”

<sup>590</sup> “what I wanted and what I didn’t want, endless story.”

<sup>591</sup> “What induces us for strange, bad actions is that we are close to what is ours, by right, and we don’t know, don’t know, don’t know! Being this. In folly, follies I tell.”

<sup>592</sup> “*De volta, de volta. Como se, tudo revendo, refazendo, eu pudesse receber outra vez o que não tinha tido, repor Diadorim em vida? O que eu pensei, o pobre de mim. Eu queria me abraçar com uma serrania?... Eu vim. ... Ao*

In his narrative, Riobaldo claims over and over again that the pact wasn't real; he claims, for instance, in a semi-logical construction, that the soul is God's and not for sale, and thus the sale could not have taken place – it would have no “*obediência legal*”, just as one can't sell another man's land (40-41).<sup>593</sup> He also asks *o senhor* to confirm that if he had no soul, he couldn't love as he had done – but then tells him not to reply, fearing the response.<sup>594</sup> He makes the “*sinal-da-cruz, em respeito*” (“sign of the cross, in respect”), and asks *o senhor* whether that is what a *pactário* (pact-maker) would do, and then claims that he did it for the right reasons and is thus safe with God<sup>595</sup>. He flat-out scoffs at the idea of a pact,<sup>596</sup> and then claims that he could always make another to reverse it: “*E se eu quiser fazer outro pacto, com Deus mesmo – posso? – então não desmancha na rãs tudo o que em antes se passou?*”<sup>597</sup> (328).

However, more than anything, he claims – and asks his listener to confirm – that the devil does not exist. He shows his fear and doubt in his phrasing itself, consistently saying such things as “*O senhor aprova?*” (“do you approve?”) (26), or “*pois é não?*” (“isn't it so?”) (55), as in, “*E as idéias instruídas do senhor me fornecem paz. Principalmente a confirmação, que me deu, de que o Tal não existe; pois é não?*”<sup>598</sup> (55). And again, he asks, “*pergunto: o senhor acredita, acha fio de verdade nessa parlanda, de com o demônio se poder tratar pacto? Não, não é não? Sei que não há... Mas gosto de toda boa confirmação.*”<sup>599</sup> (40) And, “*O pacto! Se diz – o senhor sabe. Bobéia... O senhor vê, superstição parva?*”<sup>600</sup> (64).

His statements are also in themselves contradictory as well as full of doubt:

Medo tenho é porém por todos. É preciso de Deus existir a gente, mais; e do diabo divertir a gente com sua dele nenhuma existência.<sup>601</sup> (328)

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*deusdar*” (616-617). “Back, back. As if, re-seeing everything, redoing, I could receive again what I hadn't had, put Diadorim back in life? What I thought, poor me. Did I want to hug a mountain ridge? I came. To God-give.”

<sup>593</sup> “*Decisão de vender alma é afoitez vadia, fantasiado de momento, não tem a obediência legal... Se tem alma, e tem, ela é de Deus estabelecida, nem que a pessoa queira ou não queira. Não é vendível*” (40-41)

<sup>594</sup> “*O senhor me responda: o amor assim pode vir do demo? Poderá!? Pode vir de um-que-não existe? Mas o senhor calado convenha. Peça não ter resposta*” (155).

<sup>595</sup> “*E isso era de pactário? Era de filho do demo? Tanto que não; renego! E mesmo me alembro do que se deu, por mim: que eu estava crente, forte, que, do demo, do Cão sem açamo, quem era era ele – o Hermógenes! Mas com o arrojo de Deus eu queria estar; eu não estava?!*” (568). (“And was this of being a pact-maker? Was if of son-of-the-Devil? So much no; I forswear! And I even remember what happened, for me: that I was believing, strongly, that, of the Devil, of the Dog without muzzle, that who was, was he – Hermógenes! But with the daring of God I wanted to be; wasn't I?!”)

<sup>596</sup> “*Ah, pacto não houve. Pacto? ... O pacto de um morrer em vez do outro – e o de um viver em vez do outro, então?! Arrenego.*” (328) (“Ah, there was no pact. Pact? ... The pact of one dying instead of another – or of another living instead of the other, then?! I deny it.”)

<sup>597</sup> “And if I want to make another pact, with God himself – can I? – so doesn't it untaint all that happened before?”

<sup>598</sup> “And your instructed ideas provide me peace. Principally the confirmation, that you gave me, that That doesn't exist; isn't that so?”

<sup>599</sup> “I ask: do you believe, sir, do you find a thread of truth in this speech, of how one can make a pact with the Devil? No, no and no? I know that there isn't. ... But I like every good confirmation.”

<sup>600</sup> “The pact! They say – you know. Folly... You know, sir, cheap superstition?”

<sup>601</sup> I have fear that is for everyone. It's necessary of God that we exist, more; and of the Devil to divert us with his nonexistence.”

O pacto nenhum – negócio não feito. A prova minha, era que o Demônio mesmo sabe que ele não há, só por só, que carece de existência. E eu estava livre limpo de contrato de culpa, podia carregar nômima; rezo o bendito!<sup>602</sup> (485)

As seen here, many of these statements are contradictory in themselves, illogical as well as showing doubt: the devil diverts us with his non-existence, the devil knows that he doesn't exist. However, over the course of the work, Riobaldo constructs – as seen above with his refrain – an understanding not just that the devil doesn't exist, but an understanding of the true cause of evil.

Some of his illogical phrases appear to point to a kind of possible truth. “*Deus é definitivamente;*” (58) he claims, as mentioned above, but “*o demo é o contrário dele*”<sup>603</sup> (58). Does he mean the opposite of God in moral being? Or – in being vs. not being? Very likely, it is both. Riobaldo explains: “*Deus existe mesmo quando não há. Mas o demônio não precisa de existir para haver — a gente sabendo que ele não existe, aí é que ele toma conta de tudo...*” (76)<sup>604</sup> According to what Riobaldo is trying to believe or understand, then, God *exists* whether or not “He” is *present*, but the devil doesn't need to *exist* to be *present* – it is instead an insidious *concept*, taking control of people's minds and hearts even – or especially – because he doesn't exist.

Riobaldo explains this further: “*E o demo existe? Só se existe o estilo dele, solto, sem um ente próprio*”<sup>605</sup> (499): “O demo” doesn't exist, but his “style” does, without its own being; it exists as a thought, a possibility inside humankind. Paradoxically, then, it actually does exist even in not existing, because the *idea* of it exists; and in avoiding it, mankind invites it in – *creating* it by avoiding it: “*Quem muito se evita, se convive*”<sup>606</sup> (24). It is due to this (il)logic that statements like the following make sense: “*O diabo existe e não existe? Dou o dito. Abrenúncio*”<sup>607</sup> (26). The devil exists only in being believed in; his exorcism is the unbelief for which he strives. And it is thus, too, Riobaldo can both explain and deny the devil in one breath: “*Explico ao senhor: o diabo vige dentro do homem.*” ... “*...não tem diabo nenhum. Nenhum! - é o que digo... Tem diabo nenhum. Nunca vi*”<sup>608</sup> (26). There is no such thing, but nonetheless, it is inside of mankind and everything else.

Antônio Cândido, in continuing his prologue to *Tese e Antítese*, explains in a very illuminating phrase the nature of Riobaldo's fear: He is an “[h]omem que passa a vida espantado com o ente que surgiu de dentro dele...” (xiii) – “A man who passes his life frightened by the being that arose from inside of him.” This is an apt description for Riobaldo's concerns: his life has been

<sup>602</sup> “No pact – business not done. My test, was that the Devil himself knows that he isn't, only, that he lacks existence. And I was free and clean and a contract of guilt, I could carry amulets: I pray the blessed!”

<sup>603</sup> “God is definitively; the devil is his opposite”

<sup>604</sup> “God exists even when He isn't. But the devil doesn't need to exist in order to be – in our knowing that he doesn't exist, that is when he takes charge of everything...”

<sup>605</sup> “And does the devil exist? Only if the style of him exists, free, without its own being”

<sup>606</sup> “Whom you avoid a lot, you live with.”

<sup>607</sup> “The devil exists and doesn't exist? I give the aforementioned. I deny/exorcise him.”

<sup>608</sup> “I explain to you: the devil is in force inside the man,” ... “there isn't any devil. None! ... There is no devil. I never saw it.”

affected by the devil, whether or not it exists without him – whether the pact was real, or whether he simply “filled in” what was lacking.<sup>609</sup> As Riobaldo mentions during his pact-making, “*silêncio... é a gente mesmo, demais*”<sup>610</sup> (437). The silence was not the devil; it was he, himself, filling in.

Indeed, his conclusion to the whole work is the following, as mentioned above (624):

Amável o senhor me ouviu, minha idéia confirmou: que o Diabo não existe. Pois não? O senhor é um homem soberano, circunspecto. Amigos somos. Nonada. O diabo não há! É o que eu digo, se for... Existe é homem humano. Travessia.<sup>611</sup>



The conclusion to the work is, then, that the devil doesn’t exist; but in its absence, there is the “human man”. And how does the “*homem humano*” create the devil? In that very *redemoinho* of the wind: by pulling darkness from the dust of the *sertão* and from one’s own labyrinthine fears and desires. “Evil”, that “*azogue maligno*,” persisted in Riobaldo’s understanding of the world; it was in the wind itself – his wind, more than that of the land. The whirlwind makes its own darkness through its restless twisting of the dust of the *sertão*: “The dust rose, to make that it became dark, ...twisting itself cloudy” (“*A poeira subia, a dar que dava escuro, ... se torcendo turvo*”) (261). “*se torcendo turvo*”... this sounds familiar; it is what Riobaldo himself does, wandering the land in his confusion, wandering through his own narrative, lost and searching and deeply afraid. This whirlwind is indeed a mirror to Riobaldo; and the *demo* is there. In this work, Riobaldo looks the devil in the face and finds himself there, and his companions.<sup>612</sup>

Riobaldo’s exorcism is in understanding that it is the act of *believing* in the devil – not any actual devil – that allows such evil to flourish. In order to finish with evil, Riobaldo wishes that the government and all the wise and learned people could get together and proclaim that “*não tem diabo nenhum, não existe, não pode. Valor de lei!*”<sup>613</sup> (31), but he realizes that it is impossible, because:

Uma coisa é pôr idéias arranjadas, outra é lidar com país de pessoas, de carne e sangue, de mil-e-tantas misérias... Tanta gente – dá susto de saber – e nenhum se sossega: todos nascendo, crescendo, se casando, querendo colocação de emprego, comida, saúde, riqueza, ser importante, querendo chuva e negócios bons...<sup>614</sup>

<sup>609</sup> “*Mas eu supri que ele tinha me ouvido*” (438) (“But I filled in that he had heard me.”)

<sup>610</sup> “Silence... is we, ourselves, too much.”

<sup>611</sup> You heard me kindly, sir, my idea confirmed: that the devil doesn’t exist. Right? You are a sovereign, circumspect man. We’re friends. A trifle. The devil isn’t! And what I say, if that’s true... the human man exists. Crossing. ∞“

<sup>612</sup> Interestingly, this may bear on the author’s experience in Germany: Paulo Moreira (2010) claims that in an interview, “*dijo a un sorprendido poeta brasileño que él ya había mirado al diablo a la cara cuando estuvo en la Alemania de los nazis*” (445) (“he said to a surprised Brazilian poet that he had already looked the Devil in the face when he was in the Germany of the Nazis.”) He saw evil in the face of mankind; could this have led to his journey of discovery about its origins?

<sup>613</sup> “There is no devil, it doesn’t exist, it can’t. Value of law!”

<sup>614</sup> “One this is to place arranged ideas, another is to deal the a country of people, of flesh and blood, of a thousand-

In other words, we persist in complicating our own lives, living restlessly; no law will alleviate the confusion of need and misery that births our own anguish.

## 2.2 “VIVER É MUITO PERIGOSO”:

Riobaldo, his life, his story, and the *sertão* of his telling are convoluted and productive of the very things he fears. As he tells his listener many times to emphasize the difficulty of his experience, “life is perilous” in its inventiveness, its mystery, its mutability:

Viver – não é? – é muito perigoso. Porque ainda não se sabe. Porque aprender-a-viver é que é o viver, mesmo.<sup>615</sup> (601)

A vida inventa! A gente principia as coisas, no não saber por que, e desde aí perde o poder de continuação – porque a vida é mutirão de todos, por todos remexida e temperada.<sup>616</sup> (477)

Triste é a vida do jagunço – dirá o senhor. Ah, fico me rindo. O senhor nem não diga nada. “Vida” é noção que a gente completa seguida assim, mas só por lei duma idéia falsa.<sup>617</sup> (414)

The peril of life, according to this, lies in its status as mysterious process, journey, *travessia*. Other times, he simply states that fact in the midst of a tale about the devil, the *sertão*, war, Diadorim, etc: “*Viver é muito perigoso*,” “Living is very perilous” (32, 252, 41, 65, 518); “*Viver é muito perigoso, mesmo*” (285), “really,” and “*Viver é negócio muito perigoso*,” a perilous business (26). But, life is complex, as well as perilous, as shown in the following explicit contradiction: “*Viver é muito perigoso; e não é não*” – it’s perilous, and *also* not. (328). Besides being perilous, and complex, he also imparts wisdom about the “*descuido*” and “*discor*” of life: its carelessness, its discord: “*Viver é um descuido prosseguido*,” “a continuous carelessness” (86); “*A vida é muito discor dada. Tem partes. Tem artes. Tem as neblinas de Siruiz. Tem as caras todas do Cão, e as vertentes do viver*” (520).<sup>618</sup> And, in case his listener didn’t get the message about the multiplicity, paradox, peril, and unknowableness, etc. of life: “*O senhor já sabe: viver é etcétera*”<sup>619</sup> ... (110)... he either asks his listener to fill in the word of refrain, “*perigoso*,” or tells that life is everything else, too; or, both.

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and-some miseries... So many people – it frightens to know – and none of them are reassured: all being born, growing, marrying, wanting a place of work, food, health, wealth, to be important, wanting rain and good business...”

<sup>615</sup> Life – isn’t it? – is very perilous. Because we still don’t know. Because learning-to-live is what living is, really.”

<sup>616</sup> “Life invents! We initiate things, in not knowing way, and from there lose the power of continuation – because life is through help of all, by everyone mixed up and tempered.”

<sup>617</sup> “Sad the life of the *jagunço* – you will say. Ah, I’m laughing. You, don’t say anything. “Life” is a notion that we complete in continuation like this, but only by law of a false idea”

<sup>618</sup> “Life is a lot of discord (?) given. It has parts. It has arts. It has the fogs of Siruiz. It has all the faces of the Dog, and the slopes of living.”

<sup>619</sup> “You already know: living is etcetera.”

This saying and its context bring to mind the work of Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Dewulf). In the work (first published in parts 1883-1885), Zarathustra claims that life is indeed difficult, and should be, if one is to work at overthrowing the bonds of false societal systems of belief; the dangerous life is one of courage, en route to the “overman” - a creature free to be purely material and human, dancing, happily devoted to earth and body.

You say to me, “Life is hard to bear.” But why would you have your pride in the morning and your resignation in the evening? Life is hard to bear: but then do not carry on so tenderly! We are all of us handsome, load bearing jack- and jill-asses. (28)<sup>620</sup>

He accentuates the earthiness of mankind, claiming that we should not deny our bodies and earth as Christianity would ask us to do, “fly[ing] away from earthly and beat[ing] against eternal walls,” but should, instead, “[r]emain faithful to the earth,” come “back to the body and life: so that it may give the earth its meaning, a human meaning!” (57). In fact, he claims that the conjecture of God is harmful, even misanthropic, in that it convinces people that there is something wrong in being perishable, something false in what isn't everlasting (24).

These teachings relate to nature, and to the material plane experienced by humankind; but Riobaldo's world is one in which that material plane is only one side of a coin. In possible conversation with Nietzsche, he claims that life is difficult, for he struggles deeply with the existence of the devil; an undue burden, a source of disaster born of societal views. The devil, like Nietzsche's dead God, is destructive, leading people down a path of hatred in his non-existence; but the parallel stops there, for Riobaldo has no doubt that the *sertão* is more than just an earthly plane, and that his God is there. But, *life is indeed perilous*: Riobaldo has many misconceptions to overcome and mysteries to unravel, and has to survive physical as well as spiritual and emotional peril. His confusion is perilous to him, and to others; for in ignorant hatred, he and Diadorim sowed war.

### 2.3 “EXISTE É HOMEM HUMANO”:

Throughout the entire work, as mentioned above, Riobaldo struggles with the dilemma of the devil's existence and its consequences in his comprehension of his own life. The consequences involve – beyond the state of his soul as sold/unsold in possible pact – his responsibility for his own past (in)actions. Specifically, he feels an overwhelming and confused guilt over his lack of action to prevent Diadorim's death at the decisive battle of Paredão. The work entertains several possibilities: if there is a devil, then Diadorim's death is a kind of payment or punishment exacted by the devil for winning the war on Hermógenes; Riobaldo would be responsible for his pact, and would quite possibly no longer own his own soul, and though Diadorim's death would have been another's doing – that of the *Cujo* – the price would have been for something Riobaldo had requested. Or, if the devil is of Man's invention, Riobaldo is free of the pact (“*livre limpo de contrato de culpa, podia carregar nômima; rezo o bendito!*”<sup>621</sup> (485)), but is, in

<sup>620</sup> From the 2006 edition, Ed. Adrian del Caro, Robert B. Pippin. Trans. Adrian del Caro.

<sup>621</sup> “free and clear and a contract of guilt, I could carry amulets; I pray the prayer [beginning with ‘blessed’]!”



consequence, responsible for his own choices to act or not act, and responsible for the fear that paralyzed him until it was too late.

In the end, his hypothesis tends towards the latter – the existence of the devil only as a fabrication of mankind, though no less dangerous for that – even though it is uncomfortable to face his past as only his. It is to deal with and understand this guilt that he retells the story; perhaps, in some way, as he himself admits, he is hoping that in retelling it he can take something back and bring Diadorim back to life, just as when he sought to physically repeat his actions (617). But failing that, he tries to understand it, as explained above; and what he concludes is that there is a “human man” only, and no autonomous devil. There is no other evil than that spun by mankind in its own confused journeys, its own flawed, human self. In an interview, Guimarães Rosa compared Riobaldo to Raskolnikov, Dostoyevsky’s protagonist in *Crime and Punishment* who lives in torment because of his failures and crimes: “*Riobaldo é algo assim como Raskolnikov, mas um Raskolnikov sem culpa, e que entretanto deve expiá-la*” (Lorenz 96).<sup>622</sup> Guimarães Rosa explains to us in this statement, as he shows in the work, that Riobaldo lives in torment because of his “pact”, but, too, that his fear is misplaced when he believes that his guilt in making a demonic pact killed Diadorim. Riobaldo seeks to prove this fact in his epic exorcism, though he suffers doubt, and always will. For, even if there is only the “*homem humano*” and no pact, Diadorim died while he looked on; and how can he ever know the truth of what was, or could have been, even in retelling every detail?

As above with his refrains about the difficulty and peril of life, this phrase “*homem humano*” is overtly reminiscent of the title of a work by Nietzsche<sup>623</sup> (Dewulf). In *Human, All Too Human* (1878),<sup>624</sup> Nietzsche’s all-too-human human, much like Riobaldo’s “*homem humano*,” struggles constantly with the beliefs and perceptions to which he is heir as a member of a human society, especially those pertaining to “Good” and “Evil” and the existence of the divine; and in ignoring his internal nature of selfishness, he risks more harm. Nietzsche and Guimarães Rosa’s Riobaldo, then, make interesting interlocutors, as the latter is deeply concerned with his ignorance of the source of evil, and the harm that he has caused.

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<sup>622</sup> “Riobaldo is something like Raskolnikov, but a Raskolnikov without fault, and yet who must atone for it.”

<sup>623</sup> According to Daniel R. Bonomo (2010), Guimarães Rosa’s library contained several of Nietzsche’s works, including all three parts of what is known in English as *Human, All Too Human* (and in Portuguese as “*humano demasiado humano*”) (“NIETZSCHE, F. W. *Humain, trop humain*. Première partie. Vols. I e II. Tradução de A. M. Desrousseaux. Paris: Mercure de France, 1941. ... NIETZSCHE, F. W. *Le voyageur et son ombre*. Humain, trop humain. Deuxième partie. Tradução de Henri Albert. Paris: Mercure de France, 1943. »), as well as *Beyond Good and Evil* (“NIETZSCHE, F. W. *Par delà le bien et le mal*. Tradução de Henri Albert. Paris: Mercure de France, 1948.”), and a book of passages from Nietzsche’s works as selected by Henri Albert (“NIETZSCHE, F. W. *Pages choisies*. Tradução de Henri Albert. Paris: Mercure de France, 1947.”), including parts of *The Birth of Tragedy; Untimely Meditations; Human, All too Human; The Wanderer and his Shadow; The Dawn; The Gay Science; Thus Spoke Zarathustra; Beyond Good and Evil; On the Genealogy of Morality; Twilight of the Idols; The Antichrist*; and a collection of poetry (« *L’Origine de la Tragédie, Considérations Inactuelles, Humain, Trop Humain, Le Voyageur et Son Ombre, Aurore, Le Gai Savoir, Ainsi Parlait Zarathoustra, Par Delà le Bien et le Mal, La Généalogie de la Morale, Le Crépuscule des Idoles, l’Antichrist, Poésies* ») (Bonomo 24).

<sup>624</sup> Nietzsche’s *Human, All Too Human* (first published 1878, republished with a preface and two subsequent works in 1886) contains in its chapters eloquent explanations and illustrations, but more than anything it contains numbered aphorisms and maxims pertaining to life, morality, and humanity, much like those aphorisms that grace the many pages of *GSV*, giving its reader something to hold onto between chasms of confused telling.

In Chapter 2, numbers 35-36, Nietzsche uses his titular phrase,<sup>625</sup> showing that “human, all too human” is a description of the inner life of humankind, our “naked soul”: “meditating on things *human, all too human* (or, as the learned phrase goes, ‘psychological observation’) is one of the means by which man can ease life’s burden” [my emphasis] he states, and then explains that some seek to avoid the “unpleasant consequences of this art.” Such people, in believing blindly in the “goodness of human nature,” are thus averse to “dissecting human behavior,” having “a kind of shame with respect to the naked soul.” But – these are “meager excuses,” and “mankind cannot be spared” inquiry into its moral foundations. For, the result of blindness to our foundations is, he believed, *widespread error in our contemplation of the world, and therefore in our actions in all areas*:

...an erroneous analysis of so-called selfless behavior, for example, can be the basis for false ethics, for whose sake religion and mythological confusion are then drawn in, and finally how the shadows of these sad spirits also fall upon physics and the entire contemplation of the world.

Nietzsche illustrates this concern in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, too, in which the religious figure Zarathustra is an embodiment of Nietzsche’s hopes and concerns as expressed in his other works. In being both a “free spirit” in seeking to promote a mankind without false allegiances, and yet also a person who takes disciples and longs for change – an illness he must overcome – Zarathustra is the illness and its cure. At the end of Part I, Zarathustra tells his disciples to leave him in order to find themselves, since he has become yet another false compass of faith for them. This illustrates once more, through parody and irony, Nietzsche’s conviction that religion is a false and dangerous distraction from humanity’s true self, *even if that faith is in freedom from religion*:

I counsel you to go away from me and guard yourselves against Zarathustra! And even better: be ashamed of him! Perhaps he deceived you. ... You revere me, but what if your reverence falls down some day? Beware that you are not killed by a statue! ... You had not yet sought yourselves, then you found me. All believers do this; that’s why all faith amounts to so little. ... Now I bid you to lose me and find yourselves... *‘Dead are all gods: now we want the overman to live.’*” (59)

The individual, then, must reorient him/herself, overcoming both societal and personal delusions in order to be more robust at living.

Nietzsche continues in part 3 of the preface to *Human, All Too Human* (1886) to explain the process by which humans fall into that “error” of faith, and are able to – through hard work and suffering – escape. He explains that we are all bound to the posts, customs, and worship in which we were raised from our youth, but we must oppose these – not through alienation and

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<sup>625</sup> Nietzsche uses the phrase earlier in the text, too; he begins “Human, All Too Human” with a preface stating that his writings have been received with consternation by critics who find them to contain “snares” and “challenges” to “reverse... habitual estimations and esteemed habits,” and that these challenges result in “wariness,” “distrust,” “Contempt” – but also “Courage” and “Daring.” It is in reference to these critiques that he writes: “What’s that? Everything is only – *human, all too human?*” [my emphasis]. This juxtaposition indicates that Nietzsche finds in humanity all of those things: habits, distrust, contempt, and, too, courage.

hatred, which are insatiable and lonely, but through *certainty*. There is a truer freedom of the “free spirit,” he explains (part 4), in certainty of knowledge, and “self-mastery” and “discipline.” The wise “free spirit”<sup>626</sup> returns to life patient and grateful for the world, participating – but as master of his own virtues, rather than seeing them as master (part 5 preface). Freed from “For” and “Against,” he is clear-minded enough to see injustice where it is in life – everywhere that there is a perspective, and therefore *everywhere* (part 6 preface).

The “problem,” then, for Nietzsche, is society itself, which convinces humanity of falsehoods through reverence to false beliefs, and leads in turn to widespread error in thought and deed. Some of these falsehoods derive from the belief in the “goodness of human nature,” which ignores the truths of the “naked soul” with its innate injustice. The solution is achieving a “freedom” from society’s constraints, through questioning and suffering – the circumnavigation of the “inner world which is called ‘human being,’”<sup>627</sup> to find the master therein.

The relevance to *GSV* is immediately apparent – what, indeed, does Riobaldo do in *GSV*, but circumnavigate his internal world – and his external one, as well – struggling in his “*riobaldemoinho*” with his place in an inherited and confining system of moral meaning? Too, he struggles specifically with the results of an erroneous belief system that allowed him to place “evil” outside of humankind, rather than looking at the “naked soul” for the source. Many of Nietzsche’s concerns in the “problem” in fact relate to what he sees as misguided ideas of Good and Evil in Christianity and the societal results of such flaws; and such are Riobaldo’s concerns, as well.

However, though both Nietzsche and Riobaldo struggle with the need to see past the invented aspects of mankind’s moral worldview which can cause one to stumble onto an errant path, Nietzsche finds that all moral aspects are invented and restrictive, whereas Riobaldo finds that only the evil ones need be torn down and denied. What Riobaldo denies is “Evil” as an autonomous and acting being in the world; indeed, when he states that there is no devil but a human man, he is saying in a way that it is *violence* that is at the root of *evil*; and *not the other way around*. The *jagunços*’ lifestyle revolves around violence and blood; they commit, as a matter of rule, “*ruindades*”, “wickednesses,” such as “*baleando, esfaqueando, estripando, furando os olhos, cortando línguas e orelhas, não economizando as crianças pequenas, atirando na inocência do gado, queimando pessoas ainda meio vivas, na beira de estrago de sangues...*” (65).<sup>628</sup> Indeed, often in the work Riobaldo describes the grotesque smells and feels of blood, in the injuries and deaths of his companions and enemies. For instance, he tells of how, in a moment in which he tried to care for a dead friend’s body, he found that the inert weight was

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<sup>626</sup> Nietzsche includes himself as such a being: “we” he says, “we free spirits” (part 7 preface).

<sup>627</sup> We understand how we first had to experience the most numerous and contradictory conditions of misery and happiness in our bodies and souls, as adventurers and circumnavigators of that inner world which is called “human being,” as surveyors of every “higher” and “one above the other” which is likewise called “human being,” penetrating everywhere, almost without fear, scorning nothing, losing nothing, savoring everything, cleaning and virtually straining off everything of the coincidental--until we finally could say, we free spirits: “Here is a new problem! Here is a long ladder on whose rungs we ourselves have sat and climbed, and which we ourselves were at one time! Here is a Higher, a Deeper, a Below-us, an enormous long ordering, a hierarchy which we see: here--is our problem!” (preface, part 7)

<sup>628</sup> “shooting, stabbing, disemboweling, piercing the eyes, cutting tongues and ears, not sparing the tiny children, shooting the innocence of the cattle, burning people still half alive, on the bank of ruin of bloods...”

impossible, the smell was overpowering, the flies were encroaching – and his own sense of danger anesthetized his grief:

O suor vermelho... Era sangue! Sangue que empapava as costas do Garanço... Mas não se deixa um cristão amigo deitar seu sangue no capim das moitas, feito um traste roto, caititu caçado. Peguei, com meus braços: não adiantava – era corpo. Ele estava defunto de não fechar boca – aí, defunto airado. Todo vejo, o sangue dele a mofos cheirasse. Anda que vinham vôo os mosquitos chupadores, e mosca-verde que se ousou, sem o zumbo friso, perto no ar. Porque os tiros. E nem um momento de vela acesa o Garanço não ia poder ter.<sup>629</sup> (231)

And then he continues: “... *O perigo saca toda tristeza*,” “Danger takes away all sadness.” Later, approaching the final battle, he speaks of how he wished that blood could stay inside of us, like the blood of the Host, inside its tabernacle:

Só aí, revi o sangue. Aquele, em minha roupa, a plasta vermelha fétida. Do sangue alheio que grosso me breava, mal me alimpei o queixo; eu, desgostoso de sangue, mas deixava, de sinal? Ah, não, pois ali me salteou o horror maior. Sangue... Sangue é a coisa para restar sempre em entranhas escondida, a espécie para nunca se ver. Será por isso também que imensa mais é a oculta glória de grandeza da hóstia de Deus no ouro do sacrário – toda alvíssima! – e que mais venero, com meus joelhos no duro chão.<sup>630</sup> (530)

He was horrified by the violent deaths around him, by the senselessness of their loss, and the inexplicability of it, with no one to blame but themselves:

Mas, de tudo seja, também, o que gravei, aí, desse Rodrigues Peludo, foi um ter-tem de existidas lealdades. ... Assim que, então, os de lá – os judas – não deviam de ser somente os cachorros endoidecidos; mas, em tanto, pessoas, feito nós, jagunços em situação. ... Aqueles mortos – o Jósio, entortado prestes, com pedaços de sangue pendurados do nariz e dos ouvidos; o Acrísio, repousado numa agência quieta, que ele não havia de em vida; o Quim Pidão, no pormiúdo de honesto, que nunca nem tinha enxergado trem-de-ferro, volta-e-outra a perguntar como seria; e Evaristo Caitité, com os altos olhos afirmados, esse sempre sido prazenteiro no meio de todos. Tudo por culpa de quem? Dos

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<sup>629</sup> “The red sweat... It was blood! Blood that soaked Garanço’s back... But one doesn’t let a Christian friend lay down his blood in the grass of the bushes, made a broken article, hunted peccary. I took him, with my arms: it was of no use – it was a body. He was dead to the point of not closing his mouth – there, disorderly deceased. I see it all, his blood smelled of mustiness. And they came flying, the sucking mosquitoes, the green-fly that dared, without the strident bussing, near in the air. Because the gunshots. And not one moment of lit candle would Garanço be able to have.”

<sup>630</sup> “Only there, I saw the blood again. That, on my clothes, the fetid red material. Of the foreign blood that thickly tarred me, I barely cleaned my chin; I, disgusted by blood, but I left it, as a sign? Ah, no, well then a bigger horror assaulted me. Blood... Blood is the thing to remain always hidden in entrails, the species to never see. It will be because of this too that immense but it is the hidden glory of the grandness of the Eucharistic bread of God in the gold of the tabernacle – all pure! – and that I venerate the most, with my knees on the hard ground.”

malguardos do sertão. Ali ninguém não tinha mãe? ... A culpa daquele Rodrigues Peludo, por um exemplo? Desmenti. O ódio de Diadorim forjava as formas do falso.<sup>631</sup> (378-379)

The reality of battle, he has learned, is not honor or valor so much as a base ugliness... and one that people can get accustomed to. This violence, too, is humankind's own creation, not something in which we are helpless pawns of the devil. Diadorim's hatred furthered the hatred of the others, until they forgot their mutual humanity.

Riobaldo does often feel that his choices are not his own – his need to be near Diadorim, for instance, is, he claims, too strong to resist. He is held to his “destiny” by a human attachment that he feels he cannot help but choose. Indeed, Riobaldo's first response to the violence of battle in the *sertão* (in which his companions created Hell) is to flee Bebelo's forces, for something “better”; but he followed Diadorim back to the violence. He tells of Bebelo's battle:

E demos inferno. Se travou. Tiro estronda muito, no meio do cerrado: se diz que é estampido, que é rimbombo Tive noção de que morreram bastantes. Vencemos. Não descí de meu animal. Nem prestei, nem estive, no fim, como o galope se desabriu. ... Assim eu quis que o ar de paz logo revertesse, o alimpado, o povo gritando menos. Aquele dia tinha sido forte coisa. De longe e sossego eu careci, demais. Se teve pouco. ... Em certo ponto do caminho, eu resolvi melhor minha vida. Fugí.<sup>632</sup> (151)

However, on his path out of the *sertão*, he stays with a rancher whom he seeks to impress by claiming that he is not fleeing, but simply changing allegiances to Joca Ramiro.<sup>633</sup> His attachment to the glorious mythology of the *sertão* creates his circumstances: the rancher immediately arranges for him to join Ramiro, which at first frightens him, but then Diadorim enters – “O Menino,” a person whom he met when they were children and has never forgotten: “*Os olhos verdes, semelhantes grandes, o lembrável das compridas pestanas, a boca melhor bonita, o nariz fino, afiladinho... desde que ele apareceu, moço e igual, no portal da porta, eu não podia mais, por meu próprio querer, ir me separar da companhia dele, por lei nenhuma;*

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<sup>631</sup> “But, of everything being, also, what I retained, there, of that Rodrigues Peludo, was a having of existent loyalties. ... Such that, then, those over there – the judases – were probably not only the mad dogs; but, in fact, people, like us, *jagunços* in a situation. ... Those dead men – Jósio, about twisted with pieces of blood hanging from his nose and ears; Acrísio, rested in a quiet agency, that he didn't have in life; Quim Pidão, in the minuteness of honest, who had never even seen a train, and was always asking how it would be; Evariso Caitité, with the high affirmed eyes, this one was always pleasant in the middle of all of them. Of whom was the fault of it all? Of the unguarded of the *sertão*. Didn't anyone there have a mother? ... The fault of that Rodrigues Peludo, for example? I contradicted. The hatred of Diadorim was forging the forms of the false.”

<sup>632</sup> “And we gave Hell. It was joined. Shot booms a lot, in the middle of the scrubland: it's said that it's a roar, that it's a thundering. I had a notion that many died. We won. I didn't get down from my horse. I wasn't even of use, I wasn't there, in the end, as the gallop opened up... And I wanted the air of peace to return soon, the cleaned, the people shouting less. That day had been a strong thing. Far away and peace I lacked, too much. There was little. ... At a certain point on the way, I resolved better my life. I fled.”

<sup>633</sup> “*Eu disse, um pouco por me engrandecer e pôr minha prosa, que já tinha servido Joca Ramiro, e com ele conversado*” (153). “I said, a bit to make myself look greater and to put my prose, that I had already served Joca Ramiro, and conversed with him.”

*podia?*”<sup>634</sup> (154). And when he considers flight at another point, it is Diadorim again who keeps him there: “*lá eu não podia mais ficar. Onde eu tinha vindo para ali, e por que causa, e, sem paga de preço, me sujeitava àquilo? Eu iame embora. Tinha de ir embora. Estava arriscando minha vida, estragando minha mocidade. Sem rumo. Só Diadorim.*”<sup>635</sup> (197) He chooses not Joca Ramiro, not war and death, but Diadorim – and, with Diadorim, all the rest. And he knows it: “*O amor, já de si, é algum arrependimento. Abracei Diadorim, como as asas de todos os pássaros. Pelo nome de seu pai, Joca Ramiro, eu agora matava e morria, se bem*”<sup>636</sup> (50). He knows, then, that his lifestyle was *his choice*: “*ninguém nunca foi jagunço obrigado,*” “no one was ever a forced *jagunço*” (591).

Diadorim shows to Riobaldo again that our *actions* cause violence, not an external force. Diadorim may have been a force on Riobaldo, but she chooses her own destiny with her unsettling, sad bloodlust:

E ele suspirava de ódio, como se fosse por amor; mas, no mais, não se alterava. De tão grande, o dele não podia mais ter aumento: parava sendo um ódio sossegado. Ódio com paciência; o senhor sabe? E, aquilo forte que ele sentia, ia se pegando em mim – mas não como ódio, mais em mim virando tristeza. Enquanto os dois monstros vivessem, simples Diadorim tanto não vivia. ... Durante que estávamos assim fora de marcha em rota, tempo de descanso, em que eu mais amizade queria, Diadorim só falava nos extremos do assunto. Matar, matar, sangue manda sangue.<sup>637</sup> (46)

She sighs in hatred, instead of love; she speaks only of death and blood. And, sometimes, she is even terrifying:

E Diadorim? Me fez medo. Ele estava com meia raiva. O que é dose de ódio – que vai buscar outros ódios. Diadorim era mais do ódio do que do amor? Me lembro, lembro dele nessa hora, nesse dia, tão remarcado. Como foi que não tive um pressentimento? O senhor mesmo, o senhor pode imaginar de ver um corpo claro e virgem de moça, morto à mão, esfaqueado, tinto todo de seu sangue, e os lábios da boca descorados no branquiço, os olhos dum terminado estilo, meio abertos’ meio fechados? E essa moça de quem o

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<sup>634</sup> “The green eyes, similarly large, and memorable of the long lashes, the mouth better beautiful, the fine nose, delicate ... since he appeared, young man and equal, in the doorway, I couldn’t anymore, by my own wish, separate myself from his company, by any law; could I?”

<sup>635</sup> “I couldn’t stay there anymore. Where had I come from to here, and for what cause, e, without payment of price, I subjected myself to that? I was going away. I had to go away. I was risking my life, ruining my youth. Without direction. Only Diadorim.”

<sup>636</sup> “Love, even in itself, is some regret. I held Diadorim, like the winds of all the birds. In the name of her father, Joca Ramiro, I now killed and died, even.”

<sup>637</sup> “And he sighed in hatred, as if it were in love; but, in that, he didn’t change. Being so big, that [hatred] of his couldn’t grow any more: it ended up being a quiet hatred. Hatred with patience; do you know? And, that which he felt strongly, was adhering to me – but not as hatred, but in me turning into sadness. While the two monsters lived, simply Diadorim did not live. ... While we were outside the march in route, time of rest, in which I wanted more friendship, Diadorim only talked about the extremes of the issue. Killing, killing, blood orders blood.”

senhor gostou, que era um destino e uma surda esperança em sua vida?! Ah, Diadorim... E tantos anos já se passaram.<sup>638</sup> (207)

It is the hatred and violence in Diadorim, Riobaldo discovers, that “foretell” her death – not the external force of the devil taking payment due, nor, perhaps, even his own actions.

Diadorim is not purely a creature of hatred; in fact, she is the primary source of his ability to see beauty in the world, through her appreciation for nature, especially for the birds. And even when she is chastising him, he finds that her loving friendship touches his soul: “*Amizade de amor surpreende uns sinais da alma da gente, a qual é arraial escondido por detrás de sete serras?*”<sup>639</sup> (484). He shows in this phrase and in the context in which he resists her tender approach, that those seven “sertanejan” mountain ranges that hide our soul are our *own* obstructions.

Riobaldo chooses love, and ends up with both war and love – because she chooses war, and he chooses to follow. And far from accepting this as natural, he condemns hatred, violence, and war, even in his beloved and in himself. He must, then, take responsibility for his mistakes, as he mentions: “*Não estou caçando desculpa para meus errados, não*”<sup>640</sup> (137). At times he does seem to be looking for excuses; but in the end, the devil can’t take the blame.

It is in this condemnation of “evil” that Riobaldo strays far from Nietzsche’s ideal: such a condemnation of “evil” is something Nietzsche would likely believe to be erroneous and based on the false pretense of an externally operating moral code. In part 100 of “On the History of Moral Feelings,” Nietzsche writes that feeling “shame” is related to the misconception that the “whole world of inner states” or “the so-called ‘soul’” is somehow “worthy of divine origin”; therefore, Riobaldo’s entire desire for redemption based on a sense of shame or guilt would be, for Nietzsche, misplaced and based on an unwillingness to look more closely at mankind. However, Riobaldo is functioning on a deistic premise; he sees the “human man” as a being capable of producing evil, but he condemns that evil because, for him, there is God and soul.

Nietzsche argues further that humans do not have “free will,” but are driven by needs. The question of “free will” as opposed to desires or destiny is something to which Riobaldo also relates, and may be another topic of interlocution between Riobaldo and Nietzsche.

In the chapter of *Human, All Too Human* called “On the History of Moral Feelings,” Nietzsche explains that, like a thunderstorm, a human being should not be judged for any act; to do so is to make an erroneous distinction between “necessity” and “a voluntarily governing free will”

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<sup>638</sup> “And Diadorim? He frightened me. He was in sort of a rage. What is a dose of hatred – that goes to seek out other hatreds. Was Diadorim more of hatred than of love? I remember, I remember him in that hour, that day, so marked. How was it that I didn’t have a premonition? Even you, sir, you can imagine seeing a clear and virgin body of a young woman, killed by hand, stabbed, all tinted in her blood, and the lips of the mouth discolored in whiteness, the eyes of a finished style, partly open partly closed? And this young woman that you loved, that was a destiny and a mute hope in your life?! Ah, Diadorim... And so many years have already passed.”

<sup>639</sup> “Friendship of love surprises some signs of the our soul, which is a village hidden behind seven mountain ranges”

<sup>640</sup> “I’m not seeking out excuses for my errors, no.”

(section 102). Nietzsche sees the entire moral structure of human societies as a falsehood which, though it may have some positive effect, results in seriously flawed systems. Without free will, there is no responsibility; and any punishment is not “justice” for there is no deserving: “the man who is punished does not deserve the punishment: he is only being used as the means to frighten others away from certain future actions; likewise, the man who is rewarded does not deserve this reward; he could not act other than as he did.” (section 105). He then mentions a waterfall, as Riobaldo does himself<sup>641</sup>. Whereas Riobaldo mentions it in illustration of the more-than-material nature of defining such a thing, Nietzsche mentions it in reference to free will, to prove that there is none (section 106):

When we see a waterfall, we think we see freedom of will and choice in the innumerable turnings, windings, breakings of the waves; but everything is necessary; each movement can be calculated mathematically. Thus it is with human actions; if one were omniscient, one would be able to calculate each individual action in advance, each step in the progress of knowledge, each error, each act of malice. To be sure, the acting man is caught in his illusion of volition; if the wheel of the world were to stand still for a moment and an omniscient, calculating mind were there to take advantage of this interruption, he would be able to tell into the farthest future of each being and describe every rut that wheel will roll upon. The acting man’s delusion about himself, his assumption that free will exists, is also part of the calculable mechanism.

Nietzsche continues in 107 to claim that, as there is no free will, but only nature and necessity, a man cannot feel either praise or blame for any other or for himself; men do not earn merit, nor have duty, and therefore, too, “Good” and “Evil” are erroneous distinctions, for “[b]etween good and evil actions there is no difference in type; at most, a difference in degree.” In his ideal world, “[e]ven if the inherited habit of erroneous esteeming, loving, hating continues to govern us, it will grow weaker under the influence of growing knowledge: a new habit, that of understanding, non-loving, non-hating, surveying is gradually being implanted in us on the same ground.”

Riobaldo’s struggle with “free will” does indeed have to do with defining his shame; the issue comes up in relation to “the devil,” “destiny” and “love,” which he feels at times may have led him down the path he regrets, and thus may take partial blame for his errors along the way. Like the waterfall, his is a concern about where mankind lies in relation to God’s, or another’s, hand – which, though similar to Nietzsche’s human nature in its “illusion of volition” and opposition to “free will,” is nonetheless, here, a metaphysical question, not a psychological one.

As has been shown previously, the *sertão* takes on many different characteristics at many times; and, sometimes, the characteristic is that of confinement, interpreted by Riobaldo as a prison of destiny. While often seen as open, it is at times seen as closed: “*O sertão não tem janelas nem portas. E a regra é assim: ou o senhor bendito governa o sertão, ou o sertão maldito vos*

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<sup>641</sup> “*O senhor vê: existe cachoeira; e pois? Mas cachoeira é barranco de chão, e água se caindo por ele, retombando; o senhor consome essa água, ou desfaz o barranco, sobra cachoeira alguma?*” (26) (“You see: waterfalls exists; and therefore? But a waterfall is a groove of earth, and water falling through it, rumbling; if you consume this water, or undo the groove, is there any waterfall left?”)



*governa...*<sup>642</sup> (511). The *sertão* has neither windows nor doors; Zé Bebelo knew this, too: “[a] gente tem de sair do sertão! Mas só se sai do sertão é tomando conta dele a dentro...”<sup>643</sup> (295). Riobaldo feels, then, trapped in the *sertão*. He feels at times, too, that his choices happened to him, rather than being his to make – especially regarding Diadorim, as mentioned above. However, while there are many uses of “*destino*” and “*sina*” that indicate that feels his fate is chosen for him, there are also many instances in which the words are used simply to indicate the direction that his life has taken, or the choices he has made for the future. For instance, in the following passage, he speaks of feeling caught between Diadorim and Otacília, his “imprisoned feeling” for the latter, and “imprisoned destiny” with the former:

A poeira das estradas pegava pesada de orvalho. O birro e o *jesus-meu-deus* cantavam. O melosal maduro alto, com toda sua roxidão, roxura. Mas, o mais, e do que sei, eram mesmo meus fortes pensamentos. *Sentimento preso*. Otacília. Por que eu não podia ficar lá, desde vez? Por que era que eu precisava de ir por adiante, com Diadorim e os companheiros, atrás de sorte e morte, nestes Gerais meus? *Destino preso*. Diadorim e eu viemos, vim; de rota abatida. Mas, desse dia desde, sempre uma parte de mim ficou lá, com Otacília. *Destino* (214).<sup>644</sup> [my emphasis]

He obviously feels very caught between them; he feels his future “destiny” lies with Otacília, and his “feelings,” but finds himself Diadorim’s “prisoner” of “destiny.” However, he also admits these to be his choices.

Riobaldo later uses “*sina*,” “fate,” too, to talk about Diadorim’s fate as separate from his own, saying that they both knew their fates lay eventually along different paths – “*Diadorim pertencia a sina diferente*”<sup>645</sup> – because of his choice: “*eu tinha escolhido para o meu amor o amor de Otacília*” (444).<sup>646</sup> In fact, his relationship with Diadorim exists at all because of choice, as evidenced in the fact that they both felt their relationship to be uncertain: “*‘Riobaldo, eu gostava que você pudesse ter nascido parente meu...’ Isso dava para alegria, dava para tristeza. O parente dele? Querer o certo, do incerto, coisa que significava. Parente não é o escolhido – é o demarcado.*”<sup>647</sup> Relatives are a given; the two of them are not, because Riobaldo chose sweet Otacília in his heart.

Beyond his discourse on Diadorim, Riobaldo goes back and forth on “fate” in other discourses as well; at times, it seems merely a way to speak of his current place in the world, whatever may

<sup>642</sup> “The *sertão* has neither windows nor doors. And the rule is thus: either you, blessed, govern the *sertão*, or the *sertão*, damned, governs you...”

<sup>643</sup> “We need to leave the *sertão*! But one only leaves the *sertão* by taking charge of it inside...”

<sup>644</sup> “The dust of the roads was catching the weight of the dew. The *birro* and the *jesus-meu-deus* were singing. The mature tall *melosal*, with all of its purplitude, purpleness. But, the most, and what I know of, were my strong thoughts. My imprisoned feelings. Otacília. Why couldn’t I stay there, for once and for all? Why was it that I needed to keep going, with Diadorim and the companions, after luck and death, in these my *gerais*? Imprisoned destiny. Diadorim and I came, I came; of dispirited route. But, from that day, always a part of me stayed there, with Otacília. *Destino*.”

<sup>645</sup> “Diadorim belonged to a different fate.”

<sup>646</sup> “I had chosen for my love the love of Otacília.”

<sup>647</sup> “‘Riobaldo, I wish you could have been born a relative of mine...’ This gave joy, gave sadness. His relative? To want the certain, of the uncertain, that’s what it meant. A relative isn’t chosen – it’s demarcated.”

have caused it, such as when he wonders if he would have been attacked by the same *jagunços* that are now his friends, if he had had “*sina outra*,” “another fate,” that of a poor farmer instead of a good shot (423). At times, “fate” seems a prison, “fate” and “destiny” something to struggle against: “*Tanto eu tinha um aperto de desânimo de sina, vontade de morar em cidade grande*”<sup>648</sup> (262). And when he speaks of Veredas Mortas, the place of his pact, he feels that even the buriti trees were prisoners to their fate - “*Até os buritís, mesmo, estavam presos.*” (417). And his “fate” made it a marked place for him, the beginning of terrible sins:

E ali, redizendo o que foi meu primeiro pressentimento, eu ponho: que era por minha sina o lugar demarcado, começo de um grande penar em grandes pecados terríveis. Ali eu não devia nunca de me ter vindo; lá eu não devia de ter ficado.<sup>649</sup> (417)

However, even in this statement that appears to indicate that fate is external and controls his life, he gives a hint of choice when he says that he shouldn’t have come, and shouldn’t have stayed. He puts a hole in “destiny”; he shows that he could have *chosen* otherwise, and wishes he had. Therefore, though he complains about being held to a “sertanejan” destiny that he didn’t ask for, he did, in fact, choose it, and he knows he did – he *chose* to follow his love for Diadorim, even when it was just a fascination with the green eyes of Reinaldo. “Fate,” or “*sina*,” is not necessarily an inescapable pre-written path, but some combination of chance and choice. He feels “imprisoned” when his feelings are so strong that he struggles against them; but he knows that he followed Diadorim out of love.

When he’s speaking of his errors, he does mention that he is in a way a “prisoner” to the actions he takes without thinking: “*as bestas coisas em que a gente no fazer e no nem pensar vive preso, só por precisão, mas sem fidalguia*”<sup>650</sup> (260). But he admits, too, to mistaking thoughtlessness for “fate,” in the following quote. He speaks first of a bird that would flee his approach only to land ten fathoms further on down the same road. “*Bobice dele – não via que o perigo torna a vir, sempre?*”<sup>651</sup> But then he applies it to himself:

Digo tudo, disse: matar-e-morrer? Toleima. Nisso mesmo era que eu não pensava. Descarecia. Era assim: eu ia indo, cumprindo ordens; tinha de chegar num lugar, aperrar as armas; acontecia o seguinte, o que viesse vinha; tudo não é sina? Nanja não queria me lembrar, de nenhum, nenhuma.<sup>652</sup> (220)

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<sup>648</sup> “I had such a pressure of dejection of fate, a will to live in a big city”

<sup>649</sup> “And there, repeating what was my first presentiment, I put: that it was for my fate the marked place, the beginning of a great torment in big and terrible sins. There I should never have come; there I should never have stayed.”

<sup>650</sup> “Sometimes, I asked him to sing the verses for me, the ones I never forgot, formal, the song of Siruiz. Advanced verses. And, while listening, I felt like playing with them. My mother, she was the one who could have sung that for me. The gentleness of placing to be forgotten a portion of things – the stupid things in which in doing and in not even thinking we live imprisoned, only in need, but without nobility.”

<sup>651</sup> “What silliness of his – didn’t he see that the danger keeps coming, always?”

<sup>652</sup> “I say everything, I said: killing-and-dying? Nonsense. Exactly that is what I didn’t think about. I didn’t need it. It was like this: I was going, following orders; I had to arrive in a place, cock the arms; the next happened, what would come came; isn’t it all fate? Never did I want to remember anything.”

The belief in “fate” is something that Riobaldo struggles with, perhaps because it also represents a simplistic worldview that he *wishes* he could accept, rather than thrashing his way through his own circuitous and tortured logic in an attempt to understand the world not more clearly, but more deeply. At one point in the text he mentions a companion’s simplistic worldview and wonders why he can’t see things just as black-and-white:

Mas Jõe Bexiguento não se importava. Duro homem jagunço, como ele no cerne era, a idéia dele era curta, não variava. – “Nasci aqui. Meu pai me deu minha sina. Vivo, jagunceio...” – ele falasse. Tudo poitava simples. Então – eu pensei – por que era que eu também não podia ser assim, como o Jõe? Porque, veja o senhor o que eu vi: para o Jõe Bexiguento, no sentir da natureza dele, não reinava mistura nenhuma neste mundo – as coisas eram bem divididas, separadas.”<sup>653</sup> (237-238)

Riobaldo longs for the comfort of never questioning, but that isn’t his nature; his nature is to delve into personal and shared delusions, and to seek out separating what is “true” from what isn’t. As a result, his concerns about free will are mostly different from Nietzsche’s. Riobaldo does argue at one point that he is free of guilt for the pact just as when a jaguar eats a man’s leg, it is the fault of neither: “*Digo ao senhor: remorso? Como no homem que a onça comeu, cuja perna. Que culpa tem a onça, e que culpa tem o homem?*”<sup>654</sup> (328) This speaks to Nietzsche’s argument that there is no such thing as fault, not because of “the devil” or “destiny,” but because of human nature and self-gratification, like that thunderstorm that is natural and has no blame. Riobaldo, however, though he finds evil inherent in human nature, does not appear to consider this argument long-term, since he does not doubt “soul” or “God,” only the devil, as a construction to be freed from even if it is uncomfortable. Riobaldo continues to say that there is evil, yes, and also good, in everyone; and though God may wish something of us, we have choices, and are both responsible for our sins and capable of redemption (328-329):

O que há é uma certa coisa – uma só, diversa para cada um – que Deus está esperando que esse faça. Neste mundo tem maus e bons – todo grau de pessoa. Mas, então, todos são maus. Mas, mais então, todos não serão bons? Ah, para o prazer e para ser feliz, é que é preciso a gente saber tudo, formar alma, na consciência; para penar, não se carece: bicho tem dor, e sofre sem saber mais porquê. Digo ao senhor: tudo é pacto. Todo caminho da gente é resvaloso. Mas; também, cair não prejudica demais – a gente levanta, a gente sobe, a gente volta! Deus resvala? Mire e veja. Tenho medo? Não. Estou dando batalha. É preciso negar que o “Que-Diga” existe. Que é que diz o farfal das folhas? Estes gerais enormes, em ventos, danando em raios, e fúria, o armar do trovão, as feias onças. O sertão tem medo de tudo. Mas eu hoje em dia acho que Deus é alegria e coragem – que

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<sup>653</sup> “But Jõe Bexiguento didn’t care. A hard *jagunço* man, he was in the pith, his idea was short and didn’t vary. – “I was born here. My father gave me my fate. I live, I *jagunceio*...” – he would say. He anchored everything simply. So – I thought – why was it that I couldn’t be like that, like Jõe? Because, see, sir, what I saw: for Jõe Bexiguento, in the feeling of his nature, there reined no mixture in this world – things were well divided, separated.”

<sup>654</sup> “I tell you, sir: remorse? Like the man that the jaguar ate, whose leg. What fault does the jaguar have, and what fault has the man?”

Ele é bondade adiante, quero dizer. O senhor escute o buritizal. E meu coração vem comigo. Agora, no que eu tive culpa e errei, o senhor vai me ouvir.<sup>655</sup>

In this moment, he shows as much clarity as he ever can: a firm belief “today” that God is good and expects good things from humanity, and that the devil doesn’t exist but still confuses us into failing. Further, humanity has both good and evil inherent, makes choices, and can be redeemed. And – he himself is responsible for his failures, and no other.<sup>656</sup>

Riobaldo and Nietzsche both seek joy, but Nietzsche seeks “joy” in mankind’s embracing life; Riobaldo seeks it in “God.” They both seek to dismantle the “devil,” but Nietzsche seeks to tear down the delusion of morality as a whole; Riobaldo seeks to be on the side of “Good.” They both struggle with “free will,” but Riobaldo finds that it exists in the face of perceived “destiny”/“fate,” and with the blessing and hope of “God,” whereas Nietzsche sees it as a false paradigm for a need-driven material human. Nietzsche makes for an interesting interlocutor, for Riobaldo puts many of those questions to himself; but comes up with quite different answers.

Daniel Bonomo (2010) explains that Guimarães Rosa’s religiosity is well known, and therefore his careful reading of Nietzsche’s works in French has in it “*uma dose de conflito*” a dose of conflict, which Guimarães Rosa himself expressed in several notes of disagreement in the margins. For instance, Bonomo explains that next to aphorism 129 (“Forbidden generosity. There is not enough love and kindness in the world to permit us to give any of it away to imaginary beings.”), Guimarães Rosa wrote “*erro!*” (Bonomo 167). In 226, Nietzsche writes that the faithful are “bound spirits” who assume their positions “not for reasons, but out of habit.” The Christian, he claims, did not chose based on insight, but as a given, and “as someone who was born in wine country becomes a wine drinker... The habit of intellectual principles without reasons is called faith.” Guimarães Rosa underlined this last phrase, and wrote: “False. See my case at 14 years old. See Saul of Tarsus. There is faith at first sight” (Bonomo 167-168).<sup>657</sup> Bonomo explains that Guimarães Rosa had a personal faith episode, an apparition, and thus doesn’t believe faith to be habit, but to be something one can obtain through revelation. However, Bonomo continues to say that Guimarães Rosa was not universally opposed to Nietzsche: “But the utilization of Nietzsche by Guimarães Rosa isn’t done only in the observation of refusals. It’s still possible to identify a sort of pruning of the thought of the

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<sup>655</sup> “But, fear, I have; somewhat. Fear I have, that is however, for all. It’s necessary of God that we exist, more; and of the devil to divert us with his nonexistence. What there is, is a certain thing – one only, different for each one – that God is hoping that this one does. In this world there are bad and good – every grade of person. So, then, they’re all bad. But, however, aren’t they all also good? Ah, for pleasure and to be happy, is that it’s necessary for us to know everything, form a soul, in the consciousness; to suffer, doesn’t lack: a creature has pain, and suffers without knowing why. I tell you: everything is a pact. Every path of ours is slippery. But; also, falling doesn’t hurt too much – we get up, we climb, we return! Does God fall? Look and see. Am I afraid? No. I’m giving battle. It’s necessary to deny that the devil exists. What is it that the rustle of the leaves says? These enormous *gerais*, in winds, hurting in lightning rays, and fury, the arming of thunder, the ugly jaguars. The *sertão* is afraid of everything. But I today think that God is joy and courage – that He is goodness onward, I mean to say. Listen to the *buritizal*. And my heart comes with me. Not, in what I did have fault and erred, you will hear me.”

<sup>656</sup> Regarding freedom, after witnessing the Russian Revolution, Berdyaev was disappointed to find that: “Dostoevsky was right! Freedom is a burden of which many would rather be relieved. But... they cease to be human” (Nucho 15).

<sup>657</sup> “*Falso. V. m% caso aos 14 anos. V. Saulo de Tharso. Há a fé à primeira vista*”

philosopher for the end of clarifying more intimate notions of the Rosian universe” (168).<sup>658</sup> For instance, next to aphorism 99 – in which Nietzsche writes on the “Innocence of so-called evil actions,” saying that “The individual can, in conditions preceding the organized state, treat others harshly and cruelly to intimidate them, to secure his existence through such intimidating demonstrations of his power.” – Guimarães Rosa writes, “*Cangaceiros*”<sup>659</sup> (168). Bonomo continues: “The transfer of a thought like this is, nevertheless, only one of the indices that give testimony to the diversity of the dialogues that take place in the creative process of a writer like Guimarães Rosa.”<sup>660</sup> Riobaldo appears to be in *conversation* with Nietzsche – at times in agreement, such as in relation to the confused and human aspect of “evil” and the “devil”; but it is a conversation, not a parallel with the self-professed “enemy and challenger of God.” Riobaldo is not Nietzsche’s “free spirit,” but he is, in many ways, Nietzsche’s “human, all too human”: dangerous in superstition, believing in an external source of evil, he fails to look within himself to find its origins there. It is through “dissecting human behavior” in its “naked soul,” following in narrative the *redemoinho* that created his pain, that he discovers that violence begets evil and not the other way around. Riobaldo’s “human man” contains the seeds of his own downfall; however, beyond Nietzsche’s, he makes the choices that bring him there, and he condemns them in concern for his eternal soul.

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Riobaldo’s testimony shows that there are evils lurking inside of men, and though he thought he saw them in the nature of the *sertão* itself, his evils are in fact of his own making; he had a choice. In the end, the *sertão* that “traps” him, his love that “traps” him, his “fateful” pact-taking motion, are only a part of the *sertão* that contains all things – including, at times, itself as his individual prison, whereas in reality it holds and is all the world. In the end, most of his description of the *sertão* supports *choice*. It’s a place that accepts everything, loses and finds everything, has all names and possibilities. The *sertão* is the world, and life itself. Riobaldo’s “*homem humano*,” then, is a questioning one, a challenging one, but is also, in Guimarães Rosa’s construction of him, a metaphysical human man – one that exists in a confused soul, and an earthy plot, but a plot that is both a material stratum, and one of meaning and purpose. This “*homem humano*” is a human man whose follies create the hatred and violence that he would blame on the devil, but who exists in a mysterious and transcendent world. The devil on the road is his confused “experiential” overlay on the land, constructed in his whirlwind of violence with Diadorim, his whirlwind through the *sertão*. But the land that he wandered, as he concludes, is much more than what he lent it in his confusion: it is, in the work, as we have seen, materially mystical, a physical, psychical, and spiritual place: “*Deus é urgente sem pressa. O sertão é dele.*”

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<sup>658</sup> “Mas o aproveitamento de Nietzsche por Guimarães Rosa não se faz apenas da observação de recusas. Ainda é possível identificar uma espécie de recorte no pensamento do filósofo a fim de esclarecer noções mais íntimas do universo rosiano.”

<sup>659</sup> Bandits in the *sertão*

<sup>660</sup> “A transferência de um pensamento assim é, contudo, apenas um dos indícios que dão testemunho da diversidade dos diálogos que têm lugar no processo criativo de um escritor como Guimarães Rosa.”

## CONCLUSIONS to PART I

### 1. In CONVERSATION with the REGIONAL/UNIVERSAL DIALECTIC:

Guimarães Rosa's work *Grande Sertão: Veredas* participates in the literary construction of the Brazilian *sertão* through both large symbolic strokes and long-researched local minutiae, as has been shown; and the two are connected, for the specificity of the *sertão* that connects it to humanity – “place” – is what allows it to become, in the work, a space open to being the “*reino-reino*.” Also connected is the narrative form: as *redemoinho*, it is tied to Riobaldo and his metaphysical concerns; and, too, as *redemoinho* and ambiguous, unreliable narrative in general, it offers up the *sertão* as an obligatorily participatory space to the reader.

However, this work, often considered one of the most important in Brazil in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has been received according to many other criteria: as a work about the *sertão*, it forms a part of the historical literary dialogue about region and identity in Brazil. The work, too, has been deemed “universal” due to its formal innovations, which may or may not be affiliated with modernist works such as that of Joyce and thus perhaps a “universal” literary moment. Beyond the issue of technique, too, the work goes beyond national identity concerns to focus on questions of love, war, evil, being, grace, and God, forming for some a part of what has been termed a “universal” canon, insofar as its human and mystical themes may be influenced by, or may seek relevance to, those not intimately familiar with the region in question or even with Brazil.

The discourse surrounding the “regional” and “universal” nature of literary works has been prevalent in Brazilian letters, and generally looks at the two as mutually exclusive, with the “regional” being incapable of formal innovation. Bosi (1970), for example, looking historically at *sertanismo*, an early Brazilian regionalism, claims that most of this early regionalism “lost itself in the extremes of precious or banal”<sup>661</sup>, and what didn't suffer from banality or excessive picturesqueness was valuable only in its mimetic descriptions, wherein even one of the most important of the period, Afonso Arinos, was merely “one of the good ‘describers’ of the Brazilian story” (234) – a good *describer*. The works become “a *crônica*,” according to Bosi, with picturesque scenes and vague politics, “the folkloric story,” and “a report” (481). Lourenço, too, finds flaws in the regionalisms he describes; in the “*segundo sertão*,” “second *sertão*,” literature suffered from the banality of its epic descriptions and its revolutionary intent (209). These conceptualizations of regionalism claim it to be limited by being documentary rather than creative, placing mimesis above characterization and plot; and geographical rather than literary.

Even the famous Brazilian author Machado de Assis criticized – a century earlier – the use of flat characters and picturesque descriptions in literature, claiming that his colleagues, in pursuing Romanticism or Naturalism, were following a poor literary doctrine that resulted in excessive portraiture of nature or customs and, as a result, characters that are “inert souls” and lack relevance or literary quality. In “*Notícia da atual literatura brasileira, instinto de nacionalidade*” (“News of the current Brazilian literature, instinct of nationality” (1873), he writes that he finds literature to be “*estragando*,” “spoiling,” in that the writers are seeking Brazilian literary identity

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<sup>661</sup> “*perdeu-se nos extremos do precioso ou do banal*” ... “*um dos bons “descritores” do conto brasileiro*” ... “*a chronicle*” ... “*o conto folclórico*” ... “*a reportagem*”

in the local-exotic, seeking “among the defeated tribes the titles of our literary personality”<sup>662</sup> (802) and trying to “dress themselves in the colors of the country” (801), and the critics are lauding only those works with “national touches” (801) due to a general desire for a further Independence from Europe. While it is not wrong to speak of local patrimony in literature, he explains – and indeed such themes should not be excluded<sup>663</sup> – in order for the works to be *literary* they require “analysis of passions and characters” (805)<sup>664</sup>, through which that ambiguous and ineffable “intimate feelings” (804) of nationality will come through naturally once not forced. Hand in hand with this lack of depth in characterization, he claims, is Brazilian literature’s lack of aesthetic development: “between a social aspiration and an aesthetic concept there is a difference; what is needed is an aesthetic definition”<sup>665</sup> (“*A Nova Geração*” (1879), 812). Romanticism and Naturalism alike were “excesses”,<sup>666</sup> “agents of corruption” in having as characters beings with “inert soul” (“*Eça de Queirós: O Primo Basílio*” (1878), 905), and, too, a lack of aesthetics.

Antônio Cândido, who, as will be seen below, lauded Guimarães Rosa’s *Sagarana* for its animation of the picturesque through an interior movement and grace, lauded Machado de Assis as well for combining the “two general processes of our literature,”<sup>667</sup> namely, “the search for spiritual values, in a universal plane” and “the knowledge of local man and society.” He continues: “A vertical axis and a horizontal axis, whose coordinates mark, for the great novelist, a space no longer geographical nor social, but simply human, which embodies and transcends those” (*Formação* Vol. II 115).<sup>668</sup> Cândido extrapolates in the introduction to *Formação da Literatura Brasileira*, saying that Brazilian literature is a synthesis of universalist and particularist tendencies, in which the particularism in search of an “literary incarnation of the national spirit”<sup>669</sup> results in “prejudice or disorientation, under the aesthetic aspect” (28).<sup>670</sup>

*Sagarana* (1946) – considered the first of Guimarães Rosa’s regionalist works, as it took place in Minas Gerais – opened in its initial reception the debate on the critical dialectic of “regional/universal” as pertaining to Guimarães Rosa’s works. The 1946 writings of Álvaro

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<sup>662</sup> “entre as tribos vencidos os títulos da nossa personalidade literária” ... “vestir-se com as cores do país” ... “toques nacionais”

<sup>663</sup> For instance, he lauded Alencar’s *Iracema* in 1866 for bringing nobility to *indianismo*; and he himself wrote *indianista* poems in his early career with the poems “*Americanas*” (1875) (Kristal and Passos 5)

<sup>664</sup> “análise de paixões e caracteres” ... “sentimento íntimo”

<sup>665</sup> “...entre uma aspiração social e um conceito estético vai diferença; o que se precisa é uma definição estética”

<sup>666</sup> “excessos”... “agente[s] da corrupção,” ... “alma inerte”

<sup>667</sup> “dois processos gerais da nossa literatura” ... “a pesquisa dos valores espirituais, num plano universal,” ... “o conhecimento do homem e da sociedade locais.”

<sup>668</sup> “Um eixo vertical e um eixo horizontal, cujas coordenadas delimitam, para o grande romancista, um espaço não mais geográfico ou social, mas simplesmente humano, que os engloba e transcende.”

<sup>669</sup> “encarnação literária do espírito nacional” ... “prejuízo e desnorsteio, sob o aspecto estético”

<sup>670</sup> For further exploration of the development of regionalism in the eyes of Brazilian literary criticism, see, for example: Denise Mallmann Vallerius’ article “*Regionalismo e crítica: uma relação conturbada* (Regionalism and criticism: a troubled relationship),” in *ANTARES*, n° 3 (Jan/jun 2010), pages 63-80, in which she analyzes how Brazilian literary criticism “helped to make up a negative aspect as to the regional literary production, seen as an anachronic phenomenon with a low artistic profile.” (63). Also see: Ligia Morais Leite Chiappini’s article “*Velha praga? Regionalismo literário brasileiro*,” printed in Ana Pizarro (org) *América Latina. Palavra, literatura e cultura*, Vol. 2: *A emancipação do discurso* (São Paulo: Unicamp, 1994. p. 665 – 702).

Lins, Oscar Mendes, and Antônio Cândido establish “regionalism” in Brazil as something that is 1) tied to a specific region, and, 2) generally limited to the documentary description of that region, lacking in aesthetics or global relevance. For instance, Lins describes the genre of regionalism as the “conventional literary regionalism” with its “photographic reproductions” and its “rudimentary rusticness of exterior picturesqueness and of the simply descriptive” (Lins, in van Dijck 45).<sup>671</sup> Mendes comments on this widely-held view, explaining that regional literature was not necessarily always limited, but that it had until that point been perceived as such: “A concept of regionalism was created that was in fact very strict. For many, a regionalist writer is merely the one who writes using a rustic dialect to tell stories of very little importance and very restricted interest.”<sup>672</sup>

*Sagarana*, however, was perceived as somehow different by the critics mentioned above, and surely others; it contained both the “universal” and the “regional.” For Lins, though it still creates “the physical, psychological and sociological portrait of a region in the interior of Minas Gerais”<sup>673</sup> Guimarães Rosa was no longer the “prisoner of regionalism”<sup>674</sup> because he implemented “universal” expression, becoming the “ideal of Brazilian literature in the regionalist form: the national thematic in a universal expression” (Lins, in van Dijck 45).<sup>675</sup> For Mendes, *Sagarana* did not “escape” regionalism, but only escaped its limited factions, and rather took the genre with it to its new heights:

But the true regional writer in our view, is that who, in a special characteristic scenery, unique at times, knows how to make a universal drama of the human condition. He can use regional terms for bigger picturesque and local color, but only as a stylistic recourse and better force of characterization. (...) From the reading of the book of Mr. Guimarães Rosa I didn't get the impression of a regionalism of that limited kind”.<sup>676</sup> (*O diário*, July 1946; in van Dijck 46)

Antônio Cândido also formed a part of this public discussion in 1946 with a similar discussion of Guimarães Rosa's regionalism as being more “authentic” than others, no longer limited to the picturesque, but still regionalism – an improved regionalism<sup>677</sup>:

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<sup>671</sup> “convencional regionalismo literário” ... “reproduções fotográficas” ... “elementar caipirismo do pitoresco exterior e do simplesmente descritivo”

<sup>672</sup> “Criou-se um conceito de regionalismo na verdade muito estreito. Para muitos, escritor regional é apenas aquele que escreve usando termos de linguajar caipira ou matuto para contar casos de muito pouca importância e de interesse muito restrito”

<sup>673</sup> “o retrato físico, psicológico e sociológico de uma região do interior de Minas Gerais” ... As compared with *Os Sertões*: “... com uma descrição da natureza, tão monumental nas proporções e tão orquestral no jogo dos vocábulos, que logo faz lembrar, involuntariamente, a maneira euclidiana.”

<sup>674</sup> “prisioneiro do regionalismo”

<sup>675</sup> “ideal da literatura brasileira na feição regionalista: a temática nacional numa expressão universal”

<sup>676</sup> “o verdadeiro escritor regional a nosso ver, é aquele que, num cenário característico especial, único por vezes, sabe fazer viver o drama universal da condição humana. Poderá usar termos regionais para maior pitoresco e cor local, mas apenas como um recurso estilístico e maior força de caracterização. (...) Da leitura do livro do sr. Guimarães Rosa não me veio a impressão dum regionalismo daquela espécie limitada”

<sup>677</sup> According to van Dijck, Cândido began with this article the critical discussion about regionalism and literary nationalism, saying that in a context of “sabor de terra” created by Gilberto Freyre, among others, Guimarães Rosa created of Minas Gerais an “art region” (*região da arte*), not just a geographical one.



Guimarães Rosa constructed very authentic and lasting regionalism, because he created a total experience in which the picturesque and the exotic are animated by the grace of an interior movement in which the relations of subject and object are undone to make the work of art like the total integration of experience.<sup>678</sup>

Cândido continues in that article to say that “*Sagarana* was born universal, in its reach and in its coherence of manufacture” (VG 135). *Sagarana* then is, like Machado’s, in that realm of crossing of those literary vertices, wherein the universalism and particularism, the spiritual value and local social knowledge, encounter one another.

Lins, Mendes, and Cândido are all utilizing a view of a pre-existing “limited” regionalism as a tool for comparison to Guimarães Rosa’s *new* “regionalism,” which for Cândido and Mendes appears to still be of that genre but “truer” or more “authentic,” and for Lins, exceeds the genre, breaking free of its bonds. Their criteria for this change or novelty differ somewhat, but revolve around the dichotomy of regional/universal. For Lins, the “regional” is basically associated with setting/themes, and the “universal” with expression; more specifically, he considers “regionalism” analogous to “barbarism,” and believes “universal expression” to be “civilized”<sup>679</sup>, adding yet another layer of discourse<sup>680</sup> to the dialectic. For Mendes, on the other hand, *Sagarana* raised the genre to new heights – to a true ideal – with its universal *nature*, not just its expression: the “universal drama of the human condition.” For Cândido, the improvement lies in both aesthetics and themes, in its artistic construction and its reach. This was not a universally held view; others found the work to be completely regional in scope as well as in setting. However, the “regional” and “universal” dialectic held true even for many of those, such as Sérgio Milliet (May, July, 1946), who agreed that a regional writer can transcend regionalism through universal appeal, but felt that *Sagarana* did not deliver.<sup>681</sup>

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<sup>678</sup> Cândido, July 21, 1946 article in Rio de Janeiro’s *O jornal*, “*Sagarana*,” in van Dijk 47. “*Guimarães Rosa construiu um regionalismo muito mais autêntico e duradouro, porque criou uma experiência total em que o pitoresco e o exótico são animados pela graça de um movimento interior em que se desfazem as relações de sujeito e objeto para ficar a obra de arte como integração total de experiência*”.

... “*Sagarana nasceu universal, pelo alcance e pela coesão da fatura*”

<sup>679</sup> “*o mundo ainda bárbaro e informe do interior valorizado por uma arte civilizada e por uma técnica aristocrática de representação estética*” (“the world still barbarous and unformed of the interior given value by a civilized art and by an aristocratic technique of aesthetic representation”)

<sup>680</sup> This hints at an uncomfortable but commonly held dialectic, canonized by works such as Sarmiento’s *Facundo: Civilización y barbarie*. This duality has represented, for many Americans, the “rural” vs. “urban,” as well as the “local” or New World vs. the “global” or Old World, in which Europe defined the norms, and America was peripheral and secondary, lacking in culture. This trope has been repeated often in Latin American letters. However, sometimes the American interiors were seen also as a brash, though perhaps powerfully unique, outlier. The trope continued into modernism and beyond; see, for example, Retamar, “Para la historia de Calibán” (1971), and Mário de Andrade’s *Macunaima* (1922), and Oswald de Andrade’s *Manifesto Antropófago* (1924) and *Pau Brasil* (1924), all of which write an American rebellious towards Europe, accepting of a position on the global periphery but taking a different power of authenticity, a different voice, in this status – audacious, barbarian, adolescent, and authentically assimilative. Calibán learns Próspero’s language to spite him; the *antropófagos* eat Próspero up.

<sup>681</sup> Milliet claimed that “*um escritor de assuntos regionais transcende o regionalismo quando esse pode comunicar ao estranho, comovendo-o, toda a essência de sua ‘terra’*” (“a writer of regional issues transcends regionalism when he can communicate to the stranger, moving him, the whole essence of his ‘land’”) – something that Guimarães Rosa *doesn’t* do: “*o que eu sinto em Guimarães Rosa é exatamente uma incapacidade de interesse ao*

*GSV* appeared, then, against a backdrop of regionalism that many considered to be inherently limiting as a genre, but in a context in which his work was already seen to somehow – paradoxically – be both “regionalist” and yet contain thematic and aesthetic qualities that regionalism had previously been incapable of obtaining. This is not the place for an exhaustive analysis of the history of regionalism in Brazil, nor for a critical analysis of the parameters of genre; nonetheless, the commentary about “regional” and “universal” attributes of the work frame much of its critical discourse.

*GSV* and its sibling *Corpo de Baile* made a similar critical splash to *Sagarana*, and similarly many reviews were concerned with its regional, universal, or aesthetic value. Like Milliet on *Sagarana*, some found the work to be lacking in stylistic virtues; according to Barbosa, “A lot of people rejected and condemned it: most of it rebuking it as unintelligible. ... Adonias Filho classified *GSV* as “a mistake”<sup>682,683</sup> (249). However, many more concentrated on the works within the regional/national vs. universal debate.

The reviews of *GSV* were mixed in terms of how they viewed the regional or national character of the work as opposed to its universality. Most agreed that it had universal attributes, but opinions about the implications of that were varied. For instance, Barbosa Lima Sobrinho<sup>684</sup> saw in the work evidence of global literary influence, but made the leap from “imitation of Joyce” to “artificial literature”: “*Grande Sertão: Veredas* is an imitation of *Ulysses* by Joyce, and suffers, consequently, of the ills of every imitation. For us, we can’t stop considering it as an artificial literature” (Coutinho Viegas 60).<sup>685</sup> According to Ana Cristina Coutinho Viegas, “After Independence, any literature that didn’t have a practical end or didn’t sing the local nature was

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*leitor não brasileiro*” (what I feel in Guimarães Rosa is exactly an incapacity of interest to the non-Brazilian reader”) since it is “*mais formal que de fundo*” (“more form than depth”) in its language, “*quase sempre feliz mas cansativo*” (“almost always felicitous but tiring”) Milliet’s conclusions are based, in part, on his concept expressed in his earlier article “Sagarana” (May 19<sup>th</sup> 1946) that the writing in *Sagarana* is a “*brilho*” (“shine”) that “*ofusca*” (“obfuscates”), an “*excesso de originalidade*” (“excess of originality”) in the rich language that “*desvia o nosso julgamento*” (leads our judgment astray”). Francisco de Assis Barbosa also saw the work as regionalist plain and simple in documentary exactitude, but otherwise simply grammatically incorrect: “*O interior de Minas está inteirinho nas suas novelas, escritas com uma técnica verdadeiramente notável*” (“The interior of Minas is whole in his novels, written with a truly notable technique”) but “*não estaremos nós narcotizados por tanto desleixo, por tanta incorreção gramatical?*”) “aren’t we narcotized by such negligence, by such grammatical incorrectness?” (van Dijk 45).

<sup>682</sup> It was in fact in reference to *Corpo de Baile* that Filho made these comments in 1956: “*O novo livro de Guimarães Rosa ... constitui um equívoco literário que necessita ser imediatamente desfeito... exagerou de tal modo o veículo de expressão que, os invés de transmitir um mundo em uma trama, isola as novelas em uma espécie de fatigante divertimento verbal...*” (“The new book by Guimarães Rosa ... constitutes a literary mistake that needs to be immediately undone... exaggerated in such a way the vehicle of expression that, instead of transmitting a world in a plot, it isolates the novels in a kind of fatiguing verbal diversion”) Also, according to Alexandre Amorim (2008), poet Ferreira Gullar claimed in 1958 to be unable to read past the first 70 pages of *GSV* because it turned into “*uma história de cangaço contada para linguístas,*” a story of highway robbery told for linguists.

<sup>683</sup> *Muita gente o rejeitou e condenou: a maior parte increpando-o de ininteligível. ... Adonias Filho classificou Grande Sertão: Veredas como “um equívoco”*

<sup>684</sup> “Barbosa Lima Sobrinho et al. “Escritores que não Conseguem Ler *Grande Sertão: Veredas*”, *Revista Leitura*, Rio de Janeiro, 3 jul.-dez. 1958. pp. 50 A-58 A.” (Coutinho Viegas 60).

<sup>685</sup> “*Grande Sertão: Veredas é uma imitação do Ulysses de Joyce, e sofre, conseqüentemente, dos males de toda imitação. Para nós, não podemos deixar de considerá-lo como uma literatura artificial*”

seen as an empty rhetoric, turned toward the literary models of the metropolis”<sup>686</sup> (59), so perhaps such a leap was not strange. Assis Brasil, on the other hand, as Coutinho Viegas indicates, compares *GSV* to international works – and refers to it as “universal” in order to elevate it to the level of a classic, which, it is implied, a non-“universal” work would not attain: “Guimarães Rosa realizes, in the national plane, of particular universal meaning, in what it says with respect to the thematic-linguistic association, a work of the same force and significance as those of Pound, Joyce, Faulkner [...] The mineiran writer... as a new Joyce...”<sup>687</sup>

Adolfo Casais Monteiro (1958) also compares Rosa to Joyce, in a comparison of equals, an act that in itself places *GSV* into a global literary tradition. He applies the second assumption mentioned above – that regionalism cannot be expanded, only transcended – to *Grande Sertão: Veredas* in the aptly titled “*Guimarães Rosa não é Escritor Regionalista*” (“Guimarães Rosa is not a Regionalist Writer”) (1958), in which he claims that this work is no longer regional at all, but *only* universal, bypassing that limited genre of “regionalism” entirely. He writes:

The worst injustice that can be done to Guimarães Rosa is to call him a regionalist author, since this definition, in meaning anything, can only be that, pampering an author with it, one aims to refuse him universal value, shut him within the limits of his region, as little more than its memorialist. Not being like this, it would be the same as calling James Joyce a regionalist, “shutting” him in Dublin...<sup>688</sup>

Casais Monteiro’s definition of “regionalism” is, as seen above in the reception of *Sagarana*, as a category innately limited, in which the writer “describes with exactitude that which is peculiar to a region, men, beasts and things; and that tells stories, with the language in which a resident of the region would tell it; and doesn’t go beyond this, and doesn’t interest except in the manner in which we are interested in the region...”<sup>689</sup> It has its own value, “albeit limited” but is something beyond which many writers “don’t pass.”

The universal, on the other hand, is “human authenticity,” and, when attained, it eclipses both the “picturesque” of setting, *and* the “*peculiaridades*” of style:

From the moment in which the location becomes secondary, more general values increase, and instead of picturesque it passes to have human authenticity, it seems to me absurd the designation, if with it you want to say that the author expresses the character

<sup>686</sup> “Após a independência, toda literatura que não tivesse um fim prático ou não cantasse a natureza local era vista como uma retórica vazia, voltada para os modelos literários da metrópole”

<sup>687</sup> Assis Brasil, “Guimarães Rosa e a Literatura Universal”, *Jornal do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro, 6 jan. 1957. In Coutinho Viegas 60. “Guimarães Rosa realiza, no plano nacional, de particular sentido universal, no que diz a respeito à associação temático-lingüística, obra da mesma força e significação das de Pound, Joyce, Faulkner [...] O escritor mineiro ... qual um novo Joyce...”

<sup>688</sup> “A maior injustiça que se pode fazer a Guimarães Rosa é chamar-lhe autor regionalista, pois que esta definição, a significar alguma coisa, só pode ser que, mimoseando com ela um autor, se pretenda recusar-lhe valor universal, fechá-lo nos limites da sua região, como pouco mais que seu memorialista. Não sendo assim, seria o mesmo que chamar regionalista a James Joyce, “fechando” em Dublin...”

<sup>689</sup> “descreve com exatidão aquilo que é peculiar duma região, homens, bichos e coisas; e que conta casos, com a linguagem em que os contaria um morador dela; que não vai além disso, e não interessa senão na medida em que nos interessa a região....” ... “embora limitado”... “não passam”

of a region, since it's always necessary that this happen: men live "in" a place, "in" an environment; no one lives without bringing with him this shell, and trying to paint human situations "in the air" is completely incompatible with the novelistic expression. The error was (and is) supposing that man could be an "expression" of his medium, and literature too, since like that nothing will be understood. ... Until the human makes us forget the picturesque, there is nothing more to say about regionalism.<sup>690</sup>

Casais Monteiro argues that all literature takes place *somewhere*, since it's irrelevant to make designs in the air; but the best literature ends there, causing the reader to look beyond the picturesque to the deeper message. This, he claims, is what Guimarães Rosa achieves in *GSV*; in *Sagarana*, he had "one foot in the regional and the other in the universal"<sup>691</sup>, but in *GSV*: "He turns his *jagunços* and his *Grande Sertão* in such a way alive like emotive authenticity that only for the necessities of textual analysis is understood by the discrimination of "regional". What interests, notwithstanding, to the reader, is Guimarães Rosa, that is, a vision, a world that his books create." Guimarães Rosa, for Casais Monteiro, has achieved greatness in moving beyond the regional to the universal.

Others argue, much as for *Sagarana*, that *GSV* is *within* regionalism but *changes* it through its universal attributes. Adonias Filho, though critical of Guimarães Rosa's work in 1958 especially in its linguistic component, admits in 1969 that it is "renovating" ("*[r]enovador*"). The key words for Filho seem to be "renovation" and "subvert," for Filho considers that work to be part of the tradition of regionalism, but *changing* it, *overthrowing* it, and from *within*. It has the "living material – the land, the people, the regional speech"<sup>692</sup> in their "purity," but is also revolutionary for the genre: it "...penetrates into the regionalism to, accepting it in its traditions, subvert it in its literary consequences" (18). It is, according to Filho, both renewed, and in touch with the past, in which Guimarães Rosa is "attentive to the matrices and to the earlier books of the thematic movement" (17), and in fact: "it wouldn't be revolutionary, as a matter of fact, without these ties to its origins" (13). Filho, though mostly concerned with technical aspects of the work in his analysis of its novelty, mentions, too, that beyond just renewing regionalism through the liveliness of its local detail, the work "begins a regionalist revolution" in which: "above all the technical contributions, of all the elements of renovation, of all the weight of the

<sup>690</sup> "autenticidade humana," ... "Desde o momento que a localização se torna secundária, avultam valores mais gerais, e em vez de pitoresco passa a haver autenticidade humana, parece-me absurda a designação, se com ela se pretende dizer que o autor exprime o caráter duma região, pois é sempre necessário que isso aconteça: os homens vivem "nalgum" lugar, "nalgum" meio; nenhum vive sem levar consigo essa casca, e tentar pintar situações humanas "no ar" é de todo incompatível com a expressão romanesca. O erro foi (e é) supor que o homem seja "expressão" do meio, e a literatura também, pois assim não se vai entender nada. ... Desde que o humano nos faz esquecer o pitoresco, não há mais que falar em regionalismo."

<sup>691</sup> "um pé no regional e outro no universal" ... "Ele torna os seus jagunços e o seu Grande Sertão de tal maneira vivos como autenticidade emotiva que só por necessidades de análise textual se compreende a discriminação do 'regional.' O que interessa, porém, ao leitor, é Guimarães Rosa, ou seja, uma visão, um mundo que os seus livros criam."

<sup>692</sup> "material vivo – a terra, a gente, a fala regional" ... "pureza" ... "... penetra no regionalismo para, aceitando-o em suas tradições, subvertê-lo em suas conseqüências literárias" ... "atento às matrizes e aos livros anteriores do movimento temático," ... "Revolucionário não seria, aliás, sem êsses vínculos com as origens..." ... "[c]omeça uma revolução regionalista," ... "acima de todas as contribuições técnicas, de todos os elementos de renovação, de toda a carga do processo revolucionário, o que há de estranho poder em Guimarães Rosa é a compreensão pela criatura no destino e na condição."

revolutionary process, what there is of strange power in Guimarães Rosa is the comprehension for the creature in his destiny and his condition” (Filho 21-22).

By consensus, *GSV*'s *sertão* is something other than the traditional *sertões* of regionalist literature – something other than the typical tedious norms and archetypes. Whether or not it is “regionalism” is a matter for genre studies; but what is apparent here is that many views of the work concentrate on its ability to move beyond the limits of regionalism into aesthetic and thematic “universalism.”

Here, however, we have shown that the narrative, themes, and setting of *GSV* are in no way mutually exclusive; the *sertão* is in no way separate from the other elements and qualities of the work, let alone limiting to them.

The author conceived of *GSV* as his masterwork, and something for which *Sagarana* served as preparatory reading, as, too, did *Corpo de Baile*, published in the same year as *GSV* to less acclaim:

Although the full exegesis of so orchestral and complex a work remains to be done, the certain is that *Corpo de Baile* constitutes, like *Sagarana*, important preparatory reading for a better apprehension of the thought essential in this *Grande Sertão: Veredas* – a book different, terrible, consoling and strange.<sup>693</sup> (Guimarães Rosa, handwritten in the inside cover of *GSV* for Condé, Barbosa 248)

A different work, terrible, consoling and strange, *GSV* is a work of paradox and complexity, of the development of “place” in the mind, and of a “coalescence,” or “mitigated dualism,” a dichotomy of “immanence and transcendence” – a paradoxical physical/metaphysical *sertão*, fully accessible by its reader through the protagonist’s own chaotic identity and narrative. In the *redemoinho*, Riobaldo creates the devil, and his pain; for his narrative is *redemoinho*. But he is also on a quest to find redemption, and he thinks he may have found it in that very fact. The work isn’t about completely resolving spiritual issues, but yes about developing them, and, more than anything, developing a timeless space in which they can be played out – not an imaginary space, but a real one, which in every detail both *is* a region and *is* a symbol.

It isn’t just Guimarães Rosa and his character Riobaldo that *both* are and aren’t limited to being materially regional; it is the *sertão* itself:

I repeat again: not from a philological point of view and yes from a metaphysical one, in the *sertão* is spoken the language of Goethe, Dostoyevsky and Flaubert, because the *sertão* is the land of eternity, of solitude, where “Inside and Outside are to be separated no more,”<sup>694</sup> according to the West-Eastern Divan.<sup>695</sup> In the *sertão*, man is the “I” who

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<sup>693</sup> “Se bem que esteja ainda por se fazer a plena exegese de obra tão orquestral e complexa, de sentido profundo, o certo é que *Corpo de Baile* constitui, assim como *Sagarana*, importante leitura preparatória para uma melhor apreensão do pensamento essencial deste *Grande Sertão: Veredas* – livro diferente, terrível, consolador e estranho”

<sup>694</sup> Phrase originally in German, translated by Coutinho: “ ‘O interior e o exterior já não podem ser separados.’ Citação em alemão por Guimarães Rosa” (“ ‘The interior and the exterior can no long be separated.’ Citation in German by Guimarães Rosa”) (Lorenz 86; footnote by Coutinho; my English translation)

still hasn't found a "you"; because of this there the angels or the devil still handle the language... The sertanejan, you yourself wrote this, "lose his innocence on the day of creation and still didn't know the force that was produced by original sin." He is still other than Heaven and Hell, *segundo o Westöstlicher Divan*.<sup>696</sup> (Lorenz 86)

In the *sertão*, man has access to the brightest and darkest aspects of the metaphysical; and he searches for them. It is the primordial space that it was for other writers, previously; but in a different way, a space that is waiting, open to eternity and possibility, open to the recesses of the human being's mind and soul; an in-between place, a place of paradox.

The "paradox" in the *GSV* is not the impossibility of the existence of aesthetic or thematic "universal" tendencies in a "regionalist" work; rather, the "paradox" is the counter-logical, but intuitive, existence of the "(meta)physical" *sertão* as a place for thematic discovery, produced in *confluence* with its narrative devices, and with the reader.

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<sup>695</sup> "O Divã Oriental-Occidental, *uma das principais obras de Goethe*." (The Oriental-Occidental Divan, one of Goethe's principal works") (Lorenz 86, footnote Coutinho, my English translation)

<sup>696</sup> "[T]orno a repetir: não de ponto de vista filológico e sim do metafísico, no sertão fala-se a língua de Goethe, Dostoievski e Flaubert, porque o sertão é o terreno da eternidade, da solidão, onde Inneres und Ausseres sind nicht mehr zu trennen, *segundo o Westöstlicher Divan*. No sertão, o homem é o eu que ainda não encontrou um tu; por isso ali os anjos ou o diabo ainda manuseiam a língua. O sertanejo, você mesmo escreveu isso, 'perdeu a inocência no dia da criação e não conheceu ainda a força que produz o pecado original.' Ele está ainda além do céu e do inferno."

## 2. CONCLUSION

Riobaldo's questionable self, his questionable pact with the devil, and his metaphysical wanderings throughout the text, are all experienced, by him, through the *sertão* – as a land of the oneiric and the bitterly real, a setting for his transcendental quandaries, a unifying metaphor, and as our “psychical geography” in which to “dwell.” It is a space of testing, and also of rest and clarity. As Dantas told his friend, “*Seu chão é metafísico,*” “your ground is metaphysical” (Dantas 1975: 26); the author was a man “grounded” in the metaphysical, and his ground, too, the land he gave to Riobaldo, is the metaphysical “substrate.” In *GSV*, in the incoherence itself, in the uncertainty of Riobaldo and the dynamism of the *sertão* – tied to humanity's imagining and need – that “substrate” of the “consubstantiate” *sertão* is unveiled.

The materially “real” can burn or be bulldozed in time, as it has been, in part; but the space of metaphor, the springboard to preoccupation and hope, will persist, underlining the importance of our sense of territory to our sense of self. Beautiful and joyful and terrible, the *sertão* is something that appears to exist both in the “real” world, and in the mystical world hidden in/through that “real,” and inside the subject himself, and inside of us. The metaphysics interwoven through the very real regionalism of the work, plus the narrator's own complex belonging therein and complex narration, lead to a kind of openness, with earth as the medium that allows for higher explorations.

Beyond the *sertão* as place and (meta)physical space, the interactions between the narrative, the themes, and the (meta)physical landscape within the novel revolve around Riobaldo's preoccupation with the devil and his own sense of his role in his guilty past. That is the motive for the telling; but the *telling* in itself *becomes* Riobaldo, *becomes* the *sertão*. Riobaldo's *redemoinho* is shown to be not only a refrain, but a *description* – a description, first of all, of the narrative itself – second, of the multiple and paradoxical and spatial *sertão* – and, third, of the origins of the devil in the confusion of his journey through the *sertão* in life. Narrative, landscape, themes: one. Riobaldo's mind and heart produced *o demo* when he needed it in the *sertão*, in the “*redemoinho*” of his own uncertainties and wandering paths, and his telling repeats it to hint at the conclusion which Riobaldo is hoping that he can come to agree with it in the end: that in God's *sertão*, in which mankind sees his own reflection, the *demo* is a figment of a battered and ignorant mind. In a way, the work is an exorcism: Riobaldo finds, through his whirlwind of narration, that he has been creating what plagues him; and he seeks to understand how evil is human, just as the *sertão* is human as well. The story itself is his exorcism: in the face of the ineffable, he retreads his paths to *solvitur ambulando*, to solve by walking, in the (meta)physical *sertão*, in memory, in narrative.

This place of his walking provides a lot of options for interpretation – and, interpret it we must, for the narrative causes our participation and integration into its space. Riobaldo tells *o senhor* that he will perhaps find more in the story than what Riobaldo himself does – “*Narrei ao senhor. No que narrei, o senhor talvez até ache mais do que eu, a minha verdade. Fim que foi*” (616).<sup>697</sup> – and this is true; for the listener, the reader, *must* interact with the text. It reaches out to us on multiple levels: through characterization, through narrative, and through the fundamentals of the

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<sup>697</sup> “In what I narrated, you might find more than I do, my truth. End that was.”

human relationship to space. The character both belongs and doesn't, therefore carrying our empathy with the "outsider" deep into the *sertão*, and trapping us there with him; and, in our relationship to space, we must then carry that *sertão* within us, too, our "psychical geography" of that amazing place. In fact, the narrative itself traps us into interaction: we must fill in the blanks, accept the paradoxes, engage with its intuitive nature, and, ultimately, "dwell" in the *sertão*, even in spite of ourselves; and thus it becomes the literary space, of the (meta)physical space, of the *sertão*, of the human interior.



**PART II:**

**The IMMANENCE of PAST SUFFERING in *PEDRO PÁRAMO***

## INTRODUCTION to PART II:

The novel *Pedro Páramo* (hereafter *PP*), today considered to be one of Latin America's most classic works, blurs many boundaries in its pages. Among its explicit and readily apparent "paradoxes," shadows and silence have sounds, voices are felt rather than heard, and, in the most apparent paradox of all in the work, the dead speak and act like the living, and the living can cross into death as easily as through a change of perspective or a patch of fog. These binaries are no longer opposites, but are intrinsically united in the work, returned to the primordial stuff of ambiguity.

Also united in the work are the rural Jaliscan landscape, the work's narrative effects, and its themes: the narrative opens a path for the reader into the work, wherein we must accept the (meta)physical landscape of ghosts and connection to earth – and too, wherein we can face the issues of violence that the work entails. *PP*, like *GSV*, is often considered to hold a paradoxical and shifting place between "regionalism" and the aesthetic novelty of the "*nueva novela*"; however, also like *GSV*, it can be seen to in fact unite its elements – the context of region, the experimental text, the themes on society, morality, and memory – in a harmonious literary pursuit.

The earth of Comala, in its regional specificity, plays a central role in the work's innovative blurring of boundaries, just as does the *sertão* in *GSV*. It is *tierra* as land, earth, ground, and soil; and yet, too, it is many other types of land – physical, and apparently metaphysical; present, and past – and is quite salient in creating a space of flux in the work. The land is Jalisco,<sup>698</sup> real, but it is also not, imaginary. It is a place to live and belong, a place to sow and from which to reap profit, and *cacique* Pedro Páramo does reap that profit. The land is also a place to bury the dead; and its space becomes so connected to its dwellers that they stay there after death to relive their despair, denied absolution from a priest who lost his connection to God. The concept of space in *PP* is, then, multiple: the land itself is a major element thematically, whether it be as property, deeded or otherwise inalienable, divisible or no; as damp, real, physical earth, as fruitful, acidic, or arid; or as the liminal space between the walking beings and buried ones, a sort of frontier of earth as surface, broken down in blurred boundaries. Space is also what is created through the conceptual-epistemological proliferation of flux in the work; a space free of the particulars of historical moment, a timeless space, in which old and new voices are coexistent. It is a self-renewing and participatory space of immanent past suffering.

This purgatory-like realm is not separate from the earth, but of it; the earth participated in Comala's moral crumbling, and participates even now in sustaining its new existence. When apparently living narrator Juan Preciado spends the night with a woman who is dead, perhaps even existent only in his mind, he awakens to find her dissolving into mud; and from then on, he has no air to breathe, having crossed into the realm of the suffering souls of Comala by believing them to be real. Thus begins his conversation with Dorotea, the turning point in the book in which it is discovered that Juan Preciado never left Comala and told his story, or wrote it down; there is no such convenient narrative device to explain the work's origins. He died there, and is telling his story now, in this oral writing, this placeless narrative that is its own place.

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<sup>698</sup> Jalisco is a state on the Western coast of Mexico; its capital city is Guadalajara.

The reader, like Juan Preciado and the *murmillos*, believes Juan Preciado to be alive, and then finds that he isn't, that he is instead one more of those fatally powerful *murmillos*; Juan Preciado's death appears the most real to the reader, the most "present," and the most shocking: *we* were the ones hearing ghosts and thinking they were real, intimately privy to the voices of history that won't be silent. Where *GSV* places the divine realm in intimate co-existence with the *sertão*, *PP* places the voices of past injustice into Comala's soil, no longer silent, but intimate.

This life/death division of the narrator is but one of the narrative techniques with which Rulfo draws the reader in to Comala, and aids in its construction as a liminal and psychical space. The fragmentation of the text itself allows for the reader to be "co-author" to the work, and furthers Comala's existence in its flexibility: it is a different Comala for every reader, constantly renewed.

Like *GSV*, *PP* has a circuitous and paradoxical narrative, and paradoxical and divided narrator, even more divided, as there are many; he, the author, and the reader are united in belonging and not belonging to Comala, and drawn in by that bridge. The work has a paradoxical use of land, as both material and spiritual, intensely united to the narrator and, through him, to the reader, who hearing the voices of the dead must surely join them. All of these levels are, in *PP*, one, tied together by their textures, their nature of paradox. And the result has to do with the land in this novel, too; a space is created, but here it is not an open and outward and forward space, though it is nonetheless freed from time; it is a location that reveals, hidden in there, not a strata of existential meaning, but one of history, in which the religious element is tied to the issue of redemption and guilt.

Chapter I explores Comala as regional setting, looking at the landscape, history, and culture as presented in the work, and, too, at the author's biography in relation to the regional world of Jalisco. It then looks at the ambiguity and paradox inherent in both the author's conception of his work and himself, and also inherent in the work's connection to a geographically locatable "reality." Chapter II explores the various other uses of "land" beyond that of regional location and setting, leading to the various places and spaces of Comala: as a land in connection to humanity, materially and experientially; and, too, as a (meta)physical space in which the ghosts of violence past continue to imbue the landscape and entrap those who descend into it. Chapter III looks at the narrative techniques that aid in the construction of the multiplicity of Comala's (meta)physical space, and its immortalizing relationship to the reader. These include the paradoxes apparent in the work's narration, from the immediate antitheses to the more complex contradictions and developments surrounding the supposed dichotomy of life and death; and, too, its fragmentary and non-linear construction as well as its narrator's inviting duality.

Chapter IV looks at the thematic construction of Comala's "purgatory" and its dissidents, and its possible purpose in interpretation. And finally, in the conclusion, a conversation is opened up with theorists of "regional" and "universal" works, and *PP* is shown in its persistent and purposeful place of creative ambiguity: an innovative narrative force for opening the (meta)physical realm in its pages to the reader's participation and integration, thus furthering the impact of its messages about the persistence of violence in the very memory of the land.

**CHAPTER I:  
The “REALITY” of LANDSCAPE, HISTORY, AUTHOR**

*PP*, with all of its paradox and complexity, is built on a strong foundation of reality. The work contains a rich, though as always scarcely worded, descriptive backdrop of societal roles, rules, and mores, cultural manifestations, agricultural and other economic factors, and the natural environment of the region, all of which, together, *place* it firmly in a region of Mexico. The work also contains historical references that situate it in time, including reference to the Mexican Revolution and some of its leaders, and reference to the Cristero Rebellion in Mexico.<sup>699</sup> These aspects of the work have led it to be characterized by some as a novel of the Mexican Revolution, a well-developed and common genre of the area, and one that the work reflects in its depiction of a *cacique* and his suffering town, and mention of the strife of the war.

However, this landscape is more than “setting”; and it is not enough to say that the setting is transcended, because, more than that, the “setting” is transcended *in and by the setting*. In other words, as in *GSV*, the novel *PP* uses the earth itself as a means for producing meaning that lifts the work out of literary specificity and into a metaphysical and conceptual space. The work is a physical metaphysics, an apparent paradox of a metaphor – land, as metaphysical – that refers to itself – the metaphysical, in land. Its (meta)physical multiplicity as Comala past/present/future, Comala living/dead, and Comala material/spiritual, would not be possible without the physicality of the earth, the reality of the work’s geographical and social setting in “reality”, and its subsequent connection, deep and abiding, to its human residents.

**1. DOCUMENTARY SPECIFICS:**

**1.1. The RURAL MEXICAN SCENE:**

Like *GSV*, *Pedro Páramo (PP)* contains a careful and reliable documentation of the region in which his work is based. As confirmed by several scholars, the plants, animals, and other material evidence place the work firmly in Jalisco and Mexico, as do many other aspects of the work, including its vocabulary, its archetypal characters, and their relationships, acts, and beliefs. One work is agrarian, the other in the wilds; but they both contain in their foundation a precise and thoughtful representation of the details of the land in question, including its creatures and, too, its societies, their cultures, and their rule of law.

The novel takes place in a *Páramo*, a kind of wasteland or “bleak plateau” (Wilson 233), local to a place with identifiably Mexican geography, language, and customs. Indeed, according to critics, the novel’s references to crops, food and drink, household items, systems of belief and custom, roles and identities, and linguistic regionalisms all portray Comala as being in Mexico. Although the town is not a direct representation of a real town, Jalisco – with all of its “attendant

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<sup>699</sup> After the Revolution, was also a smaller war in 1926-1929, the “Cristero War,” an armed conflict led by Catholics who protested the anti-clerical nature of the reforms realized through the new Constitution. The conflict was ended diplomatically (Castro Leal 25).

imagery and mythical narratives” (Lefebvre 230), its “felt value” (Tuan 4), its “symbolic and imaginary investments” (Carter et al. xii), its “stories-so-far” (Massey 10)<sup>700</sup> – is in the work.

Fares (1994), for instance, finds in the work “The telluric influence... typical themes of the Mexican farming world, of the transcription of idiomatic idioms, of the presentation of the historical circumstances of the Mexican revolution and of the Cristiada, of descriptions of the place, Jalisco, and its customs”<sup>701</sup> (Fares 16). The work is “geographically locatable”<sup>702</sup> (19). César Valencia Solanilla also studies many of these aspects in depth in *Rumor de voces: la identidad cultural en Juan Rulfo* (“Sound of Voices: Cultural Identity in Juan Rulfo”) (1989/1992).<sup>703</sup> His analysis contains a detailed account of the ways in which the work is reflective of Mexican landscape and culture through its “Natural Scene”<sup>704</sup> and “Historical Reality.” According to Solanilla, the “Natural Scene” in the work places Comala in rural Mexico through the specificity of geography, agriculture, and custom, all representative of Rulfo’s “profound knowledge of his people, of his geography, of the climate and of their customs”<sup>705</sup> (15). Although, as Solanilla describes, it is difficult to prove an exact origin of the landscape, flora, and fauna, or of the ways of life, he claims that despite any ambiguities, the descriptions as a whole nonetheless place Comala in Mexico.<sup>706</sup>

Comala is, according to Solanilla, an imaginary town in a rural area characterized by heat. It is on a plain, surrounded by mountains, and is linked to the exterior by several paths; it has “hillocks, hills, and a plain”<sup>707</sup> (25). The Mexican nature of the work is revealed in this climate and landscape, he claims; and also in its habits and ways of life: “its climate, its crops, the same as the customs, the habits and the ways of life that the men and women of the said regions lead”<sup>708</sup> (25). Such “*Mexican components* of the physical environment”<sup>709</sup> include the crops and other plants and the animals of the region. Solanilla lists the flora and fauna of the work which tie it to rural México:

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<sup>700</sup> See Works Cited for Part I for the place/space philosophers

<sup>701</sup> “*La influencia telúrica... temas típicos del agro mexicano, de la transcripción de modismos idiomáticos, de la presentación de las circunstancias históricas de la revolución mexicana y de la Cristiada, de descripciones del lugar, Jalisco, y de sus costumbres*”

<sup>702</sup> “*localizable geográficamente*”

<sup>703</sup> The work’s general thesis is that *PP* is about national, not just regional, identity (thus implying that its regional identity is apparent) (7).

<sup>704</sup> “*Cuadro Natural*” ... “*Realidad Histórica*”

<sup>705</sup> “*profundo conocimiento de su pueblo, de su geografía, del clima y de sus costumbres*”

<sup>706</sup> “...es muy difícil hacer la comprobación exacta en torno a la pertenencia concreta de cada uno de los componentes del ambiente y del paisaje (flora y fauna) lo mismo que de las formas de vida (bebidas, comidas, utensilios y enseres, etc.) a la zona específica (local) del medio rural de la novela” (23) (“...it’s very difficult to make the exact verification pertaining to the concrete belonging of each of the components of the environment and of the landscape (flora and fauna) the same as of the forms of life (drinks, foods, utensils and household goods, etc.) to the specific zone (local) of the rural medium of the novel”)

<sup>707</sup> “*lomas, cerros, y una llanura*”

<sup>708</sup> “*su clima, sus cultivos, lo mismo que las costumbres, los hábitos y las formas de vida que llevan los hombres y las mujeres de dichas regiones.*”

<sup>709</sup> “*componentes mexicanos del medio físico*”

As far as the *flora*, the existing vegetation of the natural scenery of the lands of Comala (and its neighboring regions) indicate the existence of plants characteristic of the country: the *capitana*, the *milpa*,<sup>710</sup> the corn, the agave, the cinnamon, the rosemary, the thyme, the grass of *pará*,<sup>711</sup> etc.”<sup>712</sup> (26)

The fauna are equally indicative of Mexico, for although they may not be animals that are limited to Mexico, being rather more generally rural, such as oxen and horses, they are often referred to by Mexican names:

...the animals of the novel equally illustrate the rural environment, and although some are not typically Mexican (like the oxen, the horses, etc.) others are designated at least with their own Mexican name: roadrunners, hummingbirds, toucans, thrushes, ticks, vulture, etc.<sup>713</sup> (27)

Solanilla looks, too, at the food and drink of the people described in *PP*, also indicative of Mexican origin, such as the local drinks “*atole*,” “*canelas*,” and “*pulque*,” and the foods “*cecina*,” “*tortilla*,” “*chocolate*,” “*frijoles*,” and “*gorda con chile*” (28-29).<sup>714</sup> He looks, too, at the tools used, with their Mexican names: “*costal*,” “*equipal*,” “*jerga*,” “*nixtenco*,” “*otate*,” “*pochote*” (29).<sup>715</sup> Like Guimarães Rosa placing *GSV* firmly in the *sertão*, Juan Rulfo placed his work firmly within Mexico with, among other things, linguistic care in reproducing local attributes.

The people in the work are, too, representative of a culture and a social and economic structure that, if not unique to Mexico, are representative of Mexico. Regarding Catholicism, for instance, Magdalena González Casillas (1998) finds Mexico in the cultural manifestations and types of Catholicism in the work, its references, sacraments, etc., even as the work’s “God” appears to be as mercenary as his priests, and inaccessible (89, 107). Solanilla claims also that the characters in the work show their Mexican identity in “a way of being, some forms of thinking, believing and speaking”<sup>716</sup> (9). They are, further, “*campesinos*,” peasants, mostly living in poverty, and working the lands of a *cacique*, Pedro Páramo; they are represented in the work with identifiable

<sup>710</sup> field of maize or other crops; from nahuatl *milli* (sowing) and *pa* (in) (Solanilla 286)

<sup>711</sup> A grain imported from South America and planted principally in Tabasco

<sup>712</sup> “*En cuanto hace a la flora, la vegetación existente en el cuadro natural de las tierras de Comala (y de sus regiones vecinas) indican la existencia de plantas propias del país: la capitana, la milpa, el maíz, el maguey, el paraíso, el romero, el tomillo, la yerba de pará, etc.*”

<sup>713</sup> “...los animales de la novela ilustran el medio rural igualmente, y aunque algunos no son típicamente mexicanos (como los bueyes, los caballos, etc.) otros sí son designados por lo menos con su nombre propio de México: correcaminos, chuparrosas, pico feo, tordos, turicatas, zopilote, etc.”

<sup>714</sup> *atole*: hot drink made of cornmeal dissolved in water and flour (Solanilla 265, all my translation), *canelas*: cinnamon tea with fruit liquor (268), *pulque*: alcoholic beverage from fermented *maguey*, *cecina*: salted dried meat (269), *tortilla*, chocolate, beans, *gorda con chile*: “a particular Mexican way of combining spice (chili) and corn” (29).

<sup>715</sup> *costal*: woven fiber carpet (274), *equipal*: a rustic chair made of woven sticks with a leather seat and back (279), *jerga*: woven wool cloth with stripes (283), *nixtenco*: place where nixtamal (cooked maize) is cooked (288), *otate*: from náhuatl *otatl*, a kind of grass or cane used for baskets etc. (289), *pochote*: from Aztec *pochotl*; a tree that produces a cotton-like substance used to fill pillows (292).

<sup>716</sup> “*una manera de ser, unas formas de pensar, creer y hablar*”

archetypes and, also, representative of Mexico in many of their underlying beliefs and customs, subtly displayed throughout the work (29).<sup>717</sup>

Pedro Páramo is a fictional landowner in a rural Mexican town, and the eponymous novel begins in his childhood and continues beyond his death. Besides don Pedro, there are many other characters in the work as well, a complex and complete rural Mexican community. The reader first meets Juan Preciado, the first narrator, Pedro Páramo's legitimate son but raised by his mother at her sister's home in a kind of exile. We hear from Dolores his mother, the suffering wife who struggled daily to meet Pedro's needs with no appreciation, until she broke and fled from him. Juan Preciado meets Abundio, illegitimate son of Pedro, and mule driver; Eduviges Dyada, who made her living by renting out a spare room for visitors, who gave of herself to anyone who asked and then committed suicide, and who claims she could always hear the dead with her "sixth sense" (83); and Damiana Cisneros, the housekeeper at the Media Luna *hacienda*.

Later in the work the household becomes clear: beyond Damiana there are other servants, such as the housemaid Margarita, most recent lover to the "don," and on the ranch there are also those Pedro can count on for violence, such as Damasio "el Tilcuate." There is an administrator, Fulgor Sedano, who manages the agricultural aspects as well as aiding in Pedro's acquisition of others' lands. There is, too, a lawyer, Gerardo Trujillo, who like Fulgor had faithfully served Pedro's father don Lucas. Gerardo saves Pedro and Miguel from countless accusations of rape, murder, and theft. The family at the *hacienda* includes don Lucas, who passed away, and Pedro's mother and grandmother, told of in his memories; don Pedro, his son; and Miguel, Pedro's favorite son, a spoiled child whose violent acts of rape and murder cause him no consequences. Susana San Juan is Pedro's lifelong love, a woman he idolizes as much as he objectifies the others; she is later installed at the house with her servant Justina, but she is insane, and merely raves and thinks Pedro is Florencio, her dead husband.

In the town, there are other characters mentioned, including Dorotea, Juan Preciado's interlocutor in their shared grave, a woman who suffered in life from being barren but desired a child so much that she imagined one. She also, for a fee, found girls for Miguel to sleep with. The priest, Father Rentería, also plays a large role in the work, struggling with the knowledge that don Pedro has corrupted his parish with his own permission, and unable to find absolution for himself. Besides these, there are many others, as well, an archbishop, shopkeepers, farm laborers and their families and other employees of the *hacienda*, such as the "amansador" (tamer of foals) Inocencio Osorio, who told fortunes and slept with many women. There are the *indios* from nearby who come to sell and to work, speaking of their native drinks and customs (142-143); according to Solanilla, they are important "to point out the elements that integrate a regional identity regarding their dresses, customs, foods and the rest already described"<sup>718</sup> (66).

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<sup>717</sup> "Los hombres y las mujeres que habitan en Comala son campesinos que trabajan las tierras del cacique Pedro Páramo, viven casi todos en la pobreza, y se identifican como mexicanos gracias a varios factores, tales como sus creencias religiosas, sus vestidos, sus comidas, sus utensilios y enseres, sus hábitos y costumbres." (29) ("The men and the women who live in Comala are peasants who work the lands of the *cacique* Pedro Páramo, they almost all live in poverty, and they are identified as Mexicans thanks to various factors, such as their religious beliefs, their clothing, their foods, their utensils and goods, their habits and customs.")

<sup>718</sup> "para señalar los elementos que integran una identidad regional en cuanto a sus vestidos, costumbres, alimentos y demás ya descritos"

There are also other landowners, a group of revolutionaries, and many unnamed voices. In fact, the town appears to be a complete picture of a rural town of that era, with a role for everyone and all in their place, making *PP* a documentary novel in that respect even though they are all dead.

Many of these characters fit archetypal roles, and Pedro Páramo, though he suffers for his love of Susana and may have had motives unknown to the reader, appears to fit an archetype as well. His activities and attitudes betray a ruthless and greedy approach to the land and its people, treated as his feudal subjects; even as a child, he chafed at authority, saying “*yo no estoy para resignaciones*,” “I am not for resignations” (82). He fits then, or perhaps even exaggerates, an archetype of the abusive “*patrón*” or “*hacendado*,” perhaps even of the “*cacique*,” though not in the political sense.<sup>719</sup> That term is often ascribed to him, as in the work of Solanilla in which he explains that Pedro Páramo is representative of a *cacique*<sup>720</sup> and “*caciquismo* is Latin America’s own institution”<sup>721</sup> (50), and Peter Beardsell (1989), who remarks upon the work’s portrayal of the “Mexican socio-political phenomenon known as *caciquismo*” (76). Pedro Páramo exercises an abusive power, one born of his inherited land-holdings and his ruthlessness in extending those holdings and keeping the townspeople of Comala under his personal control through fear and influence. Indeed, the town of Comala itself is indicated in the work as being a part of his dominion, as is pointed out by Solanilla: “Abundio describes to the young Juan Preciado the extension of the lands of Pedro Páramo, which contain, according to what is said, the town of Comala itself”<sup>722</sup> (20).

## 1.2 The *CACIQUE* in CONTEXT:

### CROPS, LABOR, POWER:

In his appendices to *PP*, José C. González Boixo (2004), while he acknowledges that the work is “a <story> whose fragmentation is essential to its artistic value”<sup>723</sup>, and also “doesn’t offer any concrete date,” he nonetheless also offers an “plausible hypothesis” of a chronology, “basing

<sup>719</sup> Although Claudio Lomnitz-Adler (1992) defines a *cacique* as a position of power that mediates between the state and the peasants/workers – a position which can pertain to union bosses or wealthy rancheros, and can be that of “benign patriarch” or “arch-macho” and “fear-inspiring” (296-297) – a “*cacique*” also has a local and land-power association beyond the political one and can, according to the Real Academia Española<sup>719</sup>, be simply a “[p]ersona que en una colectividad o grupo ejerce un poder abusivo” (“person that in a community or group exercises an abusive power,”) (“*cacique*, ca.” *Real Academia Española: Diccionario de la Lengua Española*. 22<sup>nd</sup> Edition. <[http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltConsulta?TIPO\\_BUS=3&LEMA=cacique](http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltConsulta?TIPO_BUS=3&LEMA=cacique)> Web. 11. March. 2011.)

<sup>720</sup> “*Su carácter autoritario, su origen social (hijo de un antiguo terrateniente, Lucas Páramo), su riqueza (basada en la posesión de inmensas propiedades), su alianza impuesta a la Iglesia (padre Rentería), muestran un personaje que encaja perfectamente en la caracterización del cacique.*” (Solanilla 61-62) (“His authoritarian character, his social origin (son of an old landowner, Lucas Páramo), his wealth (based on the possession of immense property), his imposed alliance with the Church (father Rentería), show a character who fits the characterization of the *cacique* perfectly”)

<sup>721</sup> “[e]l *caciquismo* es una institución propia de Latinoamérica,”

<sup>722</sup> “Abundio describe al joven Juan Preciado la extensión de los terrenos de Pedro Páramo, que contienen, conforme se dijo, el propio pueblo de Comala.”

<sup>723</sup> “una <historia> cuya fragmentación es esencial en su valoración artística” ... “no ofrece ninguna fecha concreta” ... “un hipótesis verosímil” ... “basándose en las referencias históricas que la novela presenta, así como en deducciones que pueden realizarse a partir de los propios acontecimientos relatados”



itself on the historical references that the novel presents, as well as on deductions that can be realized from the related occurrences themselves” (181). Among other dates, González Boixo places the birth of Pedro Páramo and Susana San Juan in 1865; Juan Preciado’s birth in 1886, the year after his mother’s marriage to Pedro; Miguel’s death in 1910, along with Susana’s return to Comala; her death in 1914; and Pedro Páramo’s death in 1927 (González Boixo 181-182). Solanilla also places the work in a similar timeframe: “La cronología de *Pedro Páramo* contiene un período de unos 50 años, comprendidos entre la última década del siglo XIX y finales de la segunda década del siglo XX” (45). Much of the story, then, takes place during the “*Porfiriato*” (the years in which Porfirio Díaz ruled Mexico: 1876-1910), as Solanilla indicates as well<sup>724</sup>, and during his lifetime Pedro Páramo also saw both the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) and the Cristero Rebellion (1926-1929).

Friedrich Katz (1974) explains that the labor systems in Mexico at that time were complex and variable. Preceding the *Porfiriato*, there were “*peones acasillados*” (housed laborers) or “*gañanes*” (farmhands) who were permanent residents of haciendas,<sup>725</sup> temporary workers, migrant and local,<sup>726</sup> sharecroppers,<sup>727</sup> and “debt peons.”<sup>728</sup> The situations of many of these workers worsened during the era of the *Porfiriato*, as Katz explains; the *Porfiriato* was marked in the Mexican countryside by the “expropriation of the lands of communal villages, and the decrease in real wages paid to laborers on haciendas,” as well as the laborers’ loss of rights (1-2). Katz points out that he is only indicating trends, since “[v]ery little research has been done up to now about conditions prevailing on individual haciendas to allow for any kind of serious synthesis” (3). Indeed, less data is available about the Porfirian period,<sup>729</sup> this may be due to the fact that the papers often remained in the *hacendados*’ possession, and “there was no reason for them... to put them at the disposal of historians” (12). (Indeed, Pedro Páramo is happy to destroy his papers in the book<sup>730</sup>). However, Katz was able to use various resources<sup>731</sup> to create

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<sup>724</sup> “*puede inferirse que los treinta años señalados corresponden más o menos al gobierno y dictadura de Porfirio Díaz, que estuvo en el poder desde 1876 hasta 1911*” (46) (“it can be inferred that the thirty years indicated here correspond more or less to the government and dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, who was in power between 1876 and 1911”)

<sup>725</sup> Their obligation was to “work the *hacendado*’s lands or tend his cattle whenever called upon to do so,” as well as to “perform servant’s duties” and even “fight for the haciendas” (4). Levels of privilege varied among haciendas, in which some received rations and others no.

<sup>726</sup> The temporary workers, some migratory and some local, were paid in land access or cash (4-6).

<sup>727</sup> Sharecroppers paid for their land in harvest shares, labor, or in cash (4-6).

<sup>728</sup> The “debt peons” were forced to work to pay back debt that was often accrued through exploitative costs at the “company store” (2, 6, 9).

<sup>729</sup> This is despite the fact that “[s]uccessful agrarian revolutions generally tend to produce a large literature describing conditions on estates prior to revolution” (11).

<sup>730</sup> He offers to send them with his retiring lawyer, but Gerardo responds: “...*Ciertas irregularidades... Digamos... Testimonios que nadie sino usted debe conocer. Pueden prestarse a malos manejos en caso de llegar a caer en otras manos. Lo más seguro es que estén con usted.*” (“Certain irregularities... Let’s say... Testimonies that no one but you should know. They might be useful for bad schemes in the case that they were to fall in other hands. The safest is that they stay with you.”). At this point, the papers are only a liability, since they are “irregular”. Pedro replies that he will burn them, since no one will dispute his claims: “—*Dices bien. Gerardo. Déjalos aquí. Los quemaré. Con papeles o sin ellos, ¿quién me puede discutir la propiedad de lo que tengo? / — Indudablemente nadie, don Pedro. Nadie.*” (“— You say well, Gerardo. Leave them here. I will burn them. With papers or without them, who can dispute the ownership of what I have? / — Undoubtedly no one, don Pedro. No one.”) (158)

an approximation of the era, and describe the variations in workers' roles and workers' rights and the decline of the latter.

During the era of Porfirio Díaz, the center of Mexico "relied mainly on the domestic market," and had a "labor surplus" with "a large class of landless peasants," a new "landless proletariat, which the limited industry in most parts of central Mexico could not absorb" (24, 29). The majority of the *haciendas* in Jalisco, as in the rest of the center of the country, produced "maize, wheat, and *pulque*," and produced these without mechanization due to the low cost of labor.<sup>732</sup> The workers would have been in misery: "During the Diaz period real wages paid to hacienda laborers fell sharply," and thus so did those of the sharecroppers, often worsened by a practice of advancement and debt<sup>733</sup> (24-25).

Representative of that time, Pedro Páramo showed that he was willing to take advantage of the practically free labor arrangements in Comala, and to further abuse his power whenever possible, expropriating the lands of even his legally land-owning neighbors. People he didn't know were not his concern, and frankly neither were the ones he did know. There is no specific mention of the practice of "advancement and debt" at the Media Luna, nor indeed any specific mention of the category of workers employed there, but the character of treatment of farm laborers in general in the time and place of *PP* implies that don Pedro's willingness to hurt others in order to allow his *hacienda* to flourish may have been common.

In fact, according to Solanilla, the history of Comala is the history of Pedro Páramo,<sup>734</sup> and that joint history closely reflects, in parallel, that of Mexico and Porfirio Díaz:

the vision of a tranquil, almost idyllic world of Comala in its beginnings, corresponds with the apparent return to the past, to the establishment of the science and progress of the government of Díaz in its beginnings, as Octavio Paz sustains in his book.<sup>735</sup> (47)

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<sup>731</sup> Katz found his data through journalists' and reformers' accounts (often censored), parliamentary debates (there were few on hacienda conditions), historical and anthropological surveys, and foreign diplomats' reports, often Germans such as Karl Kaeger (12-13)

<sup>732</sup> "This tendency was further encouraged by difficulties in securing credit for maize and wheat production, high tariffs protecting inefficient Mexican *hacendados* from outside competition, and the possibility of expanding production at practically no cost through the expropriation of Indian lands. / Mechanization might have induced many haciendas to replace tenantry and sharecropping arrangements by demesne. The lack of it contributed to preventing any large-scale disappearance of such arrangements." (24)

<sup>733</sup> Many of the sharecroppers were "advanced" seeds and money, which were then bought from them at harvest time for a lower price, keeping many of them in debt and with "an absolute lack of security" (25). Such advances, though in a way "an expression of traditional forms of paternalism" (30), nonetheless often impoverished the workers more.

<sup>734</sup> "*la historia de Comala es el mismo tiempo la historia del cacique*" (47). ("the history of Comala is at the same time the history of the *cacique*")

<sup>735</sup> "...*la visión de un mundo tranquilo, casi idílico de Comala en sus inicios, corresponde a la aparente vuelta al pasado, a la instauración de la ciencia y el progreso del gobierno de Díaz en sus comienzos, como sostiene Octavio Paz en su libro.*"

Solanilla explains, too, that the *cacique*'s cruel actions, and the complicit collaboration of Father Rentería, are also reflective of the landowning class and the Church during the time leading up to the Revolution, and are historically representative of the roots of the uprising (51).<sup>736</sup>

The town's response is representative, too. According to Katz, even after the village lands were absorbed and many villagers forced to work as temporary laborers at the local or other haciendas, most of them becoming "at least partly dependent on the hacienda for their livelihood," nonetheless "the great majority of these villagers continued to live in their own villages" (31). This was also evidently the case in Comala; many stayed there in their miserable poverty, even after death. When Pedro Páramo crossed his arms and allowed the hacienda to die, some of the town packed up and left, but many died with it, tied inextricably to the fate of the rich landowner's property in death as in life.

Comala, the Media Luna hacienda, and Pedro Páramo appear to be a likely scenario in Porfirian Jalisco, though with irregularities and exaggerations. Indeed, in keeping with its time and place, the Media Luna hacienda produced corn, as indicated in the novel, and also raised cattle. There are also mentions of lemons and orange trees on the patio, and *espigas*, or ears of grain, possibly wheat, on the property where Susana grew up before her mother died (133-134).

### The LAW of the LAND:

The very corn serves as a window into the development of Pedro Páramo's power in the work. The readers first learn of the corn upon hearing of little Pedro's chores: his mother asks him, "*¿Por qué no vas con tu abuela a desgranar maíz?*" and his grandmother tells him, "*Vete, pues, a limpiar el molino*"<sup>737</sup> (75). It is, here, shown as part of family and daily life. The corn is mentioned again frequently throughout the work, ideally as an aspect of the beauty of the region, as for Dolores, who speaks of the "*llanura verde, algo amarilla por el maíz maduro*"<sup>738</sup> (66).

Later, however, while Comala flourishes in fertility but under tyranny, the corn is both beauty and wealth, as when Fulgor wanders the fields admiring the corn, feeling its heat in the barns, measuring it, admiring its fullness (124). Then, corn is mentioned, too, as an economic tool, a

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<sup>736</sup> "En cuanto al fenómeno de la revolución... esta figura está encarnada en Pedro Páramo, amo brutal de la Media Luna y de Comala, que ha consolidado su poder gracias a la violencia y el terror, y a la callada pero cómplice colaboración de la iglesia, representada en la figura del padre Rentería. / Pedro Páramo... es el representante de esta casta social que ... tuvo un papel muy importante en los tiempos de la revolución... La riqueza y el poder de Pedro Páramo contrastan visiblemente con la pobreza y miseria de los demás habitantes de Comala, que constituyen el pueblo. Esta honda diferencia de clases ilustra también la existente en México durante el período de la revolución y fue una de las principales causas del alzamiento general" (Solanilla 51). ("Regarding the phenomenon of the revolution... this figure is incarnated in Pedro Páramo, brutal owner of the Media Luna and of Comala, who has consolidated his power thanks to violence and terror, and to the quiet but complicit collaboration of the church, represented in the figure of father Rentería. / Pedro Páramo... is the representative of this social caste that ... had a very important role in the times of the revolution... The wealth and power of Pedro Páramo contrast visibly with the poverty and misery of the rest of the inhabitants of Comala, who constitute the town. This deep difference of classes illustrates also that existent in Mexico during the period of the revolution and was one of the principal causes of the general uprising.")

<sup>737</sup> "Why don't you go with your grandmother to de-kernel the corn?" ... "Go, then, to clean the mill" (75)

<sup>738</sup> "green plain, somewhat yellow due to the mature corn"

method of payment – payment for the silence of the oppressed. Here, for instance, it is employed in smoothing over the effects of the liberties taken by the Páramo men. This conversation between Fulgor and Pedro is remembered by Fulgor in thought (as indicated by the « and »):

- «“La culpa de todo lo que él haga échamela a mí.”»  
 » — Miguel le dará muchos dolores de cabeza, don Pedro. Le gusta la pendencia.  
 » — Déjalo moverse. Es apenas un niño. ... Es todavía una criatura, Fulgor.  
 » — Será lo que usted diga, don Pedro; pero esa mujer que vino ayer a llorar aquí alegando que el hijo de usted le había matado a su marido, estaba de a tiro desconsolada. Yo sé medir el desconsuelo, don Pedro. Y esa mujer lo cargaba por kilos. Le ofrecí cincuenta hectolitros de maíz para que se olvidara del asunto; pero no los quiso. Entonces le prometí que corregiríamos el daño de algún modo. No se conformó.  
 » — ¿De quién se trataba?  
 » — Es gente que no conozco.  
 » — No tienes pues por qué apurarte, Fulgor. Esa gente no existe.<sup>739</sup> (123)

This part of the text both shows how corn can be used to bribe the workers to forget injury, and, too, it shows where Pedro Páramo’s priorities lie: “*Esa gente no existe*” (“Those people don’t exist”), he says, of the people that they don’t know; that relates to his treatment of those who work the land. In this case, the man murdered was unknown; and Miguel suffered no consequences. Neither does he suffer any legal consequence for his other crimes, although he does die from his own high-flying lifestyle as Fulgor warned he would.<sup>740</sup>

Katz (1995) explains that critics often argue the question of whether during the *Porfiriato* the “*hacendados*” were “mainly feudal landlords thinking above all in terms of power or prestige” or they were “‘capitalists’ seeking to maximize their profits and taking economically rational decisions” (Katz “Mexico...”, 382). In Pedro Páramo’s case, he certainly shows an entrepreneurial spirit in devising solutions to lead to maximized profit and expansion, but also maximum *power*, as will be shown here below; and he works completely outside the legal economic system.

Pedro Páramo uses his power and will to steal land from others, ruining many families in the process. When Pedro Páramo first inherits the estate, he allows its wealth to slip between his fingers, as shown in this conversation between Fulgor and the young Pedro, now “don.” Fulgor begins:

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<sup>739</sup> “«’The fault for everything that he does, throw it onto me.’» / » — Miguel will give you a lot of headaches, don Pedro. He likes conflict. / » — Let him move. He’s only a boy. ... He’s still a child, Fulgor. / » — It will be as you say, don Pedro; but this woman who came yesterday to cry here alleging that your son had killed her husband, was absolutely inconsolable. I know how to measure grief, don Pedro. And this woman carried kilos of it. I offered her fifty hectoliters of corn so that she would forget about it; but she didn’t want them. So I promised her that we would correct the damage in some way. She wasn’t content. / » — Whom was it about? / — It’s people I don’t know. / » — You don’t have a reason to worry, Fulgor. Those people don’t exist.” (123)

<sup>740</sup> “*es tan violento y vive tan de prisa que a veces se me figura que va jugando carreras con el tiempo. Acabará por perder, ya lo verá usted.*” (123) (“but he is so violent and he lives in such a rush that sometimes it seems to me that he’s in a race against time. He will end up losing, you will see.”)

— ...No queda nada. Hemos vendido el último ganado.  
 Comenzó a sacar los papeles para informarle a cuánto ascendía todavía el adeudo. Y ya iba a decir: “Debemos tanto,” cuando oyó:  
 — ¿A quién le debemos? No me importa cuánto, sino a quién.  
 Le repasó una lista de nombres. Y terminó:  
 — No hay de dónde sacar para pagar. Ése es el asunto.  
 — ¿Y por qué?  
 — Porque la familia de usted lo absorbió todo. Pedían y pedían, sin devolver nada. Eso se paga caro. Ya lo decía yo: “A la larga acabarán con todo”. Bueno, pues acabaron. Aunque hay por allí quien se interese en comprar los terrenos. Y pagan bien. Se podrían cubrir las libranzas pendientes y todavía quedaría algo; aunque, eso sí, algo mermado.<sup>741</sup>  
 (96)

The “family” used up their wealth; Pedro Páramo, however, is unwilling to consider selling his lands, or even succumbing to any kind of mediocrity at all. His question – “¿A quién le debemos? No me importa cuánto, sino a quién” (“— To whom do we owe? It doesn’t matter to me how much, but to whom”) (96) – hints at a strong will and a willingness to cross boundaries of law, property, and morality. He doesn’t plan to pay back his debts, but to pressure those to whom he is indebted, and many others, using Fulgor as his messenger.

Their conversation continues, touching first on the debt he owes to Dolores (“Lola”) Preciado, the new owner of the Enmedio ranch. Pedro plans to marry her; he will pay the priest after he takes her wealth in matrimony:

— Mañana vas a pedir la mano de Lola... La pedirás para mí. Después de todo tiene alguna gracia. Le dirás que estoy muy enamorado de ella. Y que si lo tiene a bien. De pasada, dile al padre Rentería que nos arregle el trato. ¿Con cuánto dinero cuentas?  
 — Con ninguno, don Pedro  
 — Pues prométeselo. Dile que en teniendo se le pagará. Casi estoy seguro de que no pondrá dificultades. Haz eso mañana mismo. ... Arregla por de pronto lo de la Lola. ... Le dirás a la Lola esto y lo otro y que la quiero. Eso es importante. De cierto, Sedano, la quiero. Por sus ojos ¿sabes?<sup>742</sup> (96-97)

<sup>741</sup> “— ... Nothing remains. We have sold the last cattle. / He began to pull out the papers to inform him as to how high the debt was. And he was already going to say: “We owe so much,” when he heard: — To whom do we owe? It doesn’t matter to me how much, but to whom. / He went over a list of names. And he finished: — There is nowhere to take from to pay. This is the problem. / — And why? / — Because your family absorbed everything. They were asking and asking, without returning anything. That is paid dearly. I was already saying it: “In the long run they will finish with everything”. Well, they did. Although there are those around who are interested in buying the lands. And they pay well. They could cover the unresolved bills and there would still remain something; something, that is, somewhat reduced.” (96)

<sup>742</sup> “Tomorrow you are going to ask for Lola’s hand... You will ask for me. After everything she does have some grace. You will tell her that I am very much in love with her. And if she finds it good. On passing, tell Father Rentería to arrange the agreement. How much money do you have? / — None, don Pedro. / — Well, promise it to him. Tell him that in having it, it will be paid to him. I’m almost sure that he won’t cause difficulties. Do this tomorrow... Arrange quickly about Lola... You’ll tell her this and that and that I love her. This is important. Truly, Sedano, I love her. For her eyes, you know?” (96-97)

Pedro doesn't care for her, but is happy to play with her feelings and entire future with his ruse in order to gain her property. Indeed, he treats her terribly, demanding her and ignoring her in turns, as Eduvigés reveals to Juan Preciado, Dolores's son:

» — Ella siempre odió a Pedro Páramo. “¡Doloritas! ¿Ya ordenó que me preparen el desayuno?” Y tu madre se levanta antes del amanecer. ... iba de aquí para allá... “¡Doña Doloritas!” ... ¿Cuántas veces oyó tu madre aquel llamado? “Doña Doloritas, esto está frío. Esto no sirve.” ¿Cuántas veces? Y aunque estaba acostumbrada a pasar lo peor, sus ojos humildes se endurecieron. ... Entonces comenzó a suspirar.<sup>743</sup> (81)

Dolores tells her friend, “*Quisiera ser zopilote para volar a donde vive mi hermana,*”<sup>744,745</sup> and then, taking Eduvigés's advice, she goes, leaving the Media Luna forever (81). Pedro Páramo does not seek her there, as he tells Eduvigés: “*Quería más a su hermana que a mí. Allá debe estar a gusto. Además ya me tenía enfadado. No pienso inquirir por ella,*<sup>746</sup> *si es eso lo que te preocupa*” (81).<sup>747</sup> In his mind, she has served her purpose in alleviating his debt. It is this treatment that frames the story: Dolores' charge to her son, on her deathbed, is to return to Comala – which he does, and tells us the tale – to get what was due to him from his father: “«...El abandono en que nos tuvo, mi hijo, cóbraselo caro»”<sup>748</sup> (81).

Second on Pedro Páramo's list is the Aldrete land. This is not a matter of debt, but of property, as Fulgor explains: “— *Cuestión de límites. Él ya mandó cercar y ahora pide que echemos el lienzo que falta para hacer la división.*” Pedro's response is that there are no fences: “— ...*No te preocupen los lienzos. No habrá lienzos. La tierra no tiene divisiones. Piénsalo, Fulgor, aunque no se lo des a entender*”<sup>749</sup> (97). Pedro Páramo is acting upon his own law, and recognizes no other property claims, and, indeed, no fences. He doesn't plan to help the Aldretes build a wall between their properties, because he doesn't plan to respect the boundary. He enacts this law through threats and violence, through his pawn Fulgor. “Which laws?” Pedro asks his administrator, “The law from now on we're going to make ourselves”:

<sup>743</sup> “» — She always hated Pedro Páramo.: “Doloritas! Have you ordered that them to prepare my breakfast?” And your mother gets up before dawn... went here and there... “Doña Doloritas!”... How many times did your mother hear that call? “Doña Doloritas, this is cold. This is no good.” How many times? And even though she was accustomed to going through the worst, her humble eyes hardened. ... Then she started to sigh.” (81)

<sup>744</sup> “I would like to be a buzzard to fly to where my sister lives”

<sup>745</sup> Her choice of the *zopilote*, a buzzard/turkey vulture, is based upon seeing one in the sky over Comala at that moment; but it also seems to be a kind of omen, wishing to be a carrion bird rather than a dove, sparrow, even hawk.

<sup>746</sup> When her sister Gertrudis in Colima asked her why she doesn't return to her husband, Dolores responded that she wouldn't return unless he sent for her (82).

<sup>747</sup> “She loved her sister more than me. She must be at her ease there. Plus she already had me annoyed. I don't plan to inquire after her, if that's what concerns you.” ... “« ... The abandonment in which he had us, my son, charge him dearly for it.»” (81)

<sup>748</sup> “The abandonment in which he had us, my son, charge him dearly for it” (Italicized in the Spanish text)

<sup>749</sup> “ — Question of boundaries. He already ordered fencing and now he asks that we throw up the wall that's lacking to make the division.” “ — ... Don't worry about walls. There will be no walls. Land has no divisions. Think about it, Fulgor, although you shouldn't give him to understand it.” (97)

— La semana que entra irás con el Aldrete. Y le dices que recorra el lienzo. Ha invadido tierras de la Media Luna.

— Él hizo bien sus mediciones. A mí me consta.

— Pues dile que se equivocó. Que estuvo mal calculado. Derrumba los lienzos si es preciso.

— ¿Y las leyes?

— ¿Cuáles leyes, Fulgor? La ley de ahora en adelante la vamos a hacer nosotros. ¿Tienes trabajando en la Media Luna a algún atravesado?

— Sí, hay uno que otro.

— Pues mándalos con el primer Aldrete. Le levantas un acta acusándolo de “usufructo” o de lo que a ti se te ocurra. Y recuérdale que Lucas Páramo ya murió. Que conmigo hay que hacer nuevos tratos.<sup>750</sup> (100)

Fulgor does just this, but Toribio Aldrete sees immediately that the act is illegal:

— Con ese papel nos vamos a limpiar usted y yo, don Fulgor, porque no va a servir para otra cosa. Y eso usted lo sabe. En fin, por lo que a usted respecta, ya cumplió con lo que le mandaron, y a mí me quitó de apuraciones; porque me tenía usted preocupado, lo que sea de cada quien. Ahora ya sé de qué se trata y me da risa. Dizque «usufruto». Vergüenza debía darle a su patrón ser tan ignorante.<sup>751</sup> (95)

The ignorance is, however, Aldrete's. They end up in Eduvigés's house; Fulgor asks her to borrow the corner room. She asks if his men will stay to sleep; he says, only one, and to leave him the key. Toribio's next words against Pedro Páramo are his last; then, only screams, and a door forever locked behind them. This is, in fact, the same room in which Juan Preciado stays years later, hearing screams that aren't sound. In Damiana's words: “— *Tal vez sea algún eco que está aquí encerrado. En este cuarto ahorcaron a Toribio Aldrete hace mucho tiempo. Luego condenaron la puerta... No sé cómo has podido entrar, cuando no existe llave para abrir esta puerta.*”<sup>752</sup> (94). As will be explored, the screams are Toribio Aldrete's, both here and gone; the door, both locked and unlocked.

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<sup>750</sup> “— Next week you will go to Aldrete. And you will tell him to look over the wall. He has invaded lands of the Media Luna. / — He did his measurements well, I'm certain. / — Well tell him that he made a mistake. That it was calculated wrong. Demolish the walls if it's necessary. / — And the laws? / — Which laws, Fulgor? The law from now on we're going to make ourselves. Do you have some malicious person employed at the Media Luna? / — Yes, there are a few. / — Well order them with the first Aldrete. Raise a record to him accusing him of “usufruct” or of whatever occurs to you. And remind him that Lucas Páramo died already. That with me it's necessary to make new deals.” (100)

<sup>751</sup> “— You and I are going to wipe ourselves with this paper, don Fulgor, because it isn't going to serve for anything else. And you know this. Well, in respect to you, you already completed what they ordered you to do, and it took away my concerns; because you had me preoccupied, like anyone. Now I know what it's about and it makes me laugh. So-called «usufruit». It must give your boss shame to be so ignorant.” (95)

<sup>752</sup> “— Perhaps it is some echo that's locked up in here. In this room they hung Toribio Aldrete a long time ago. Then they condemned the door... I don't know how you have been able to enter, when there doesn't exist a key to open this door.” (94)

When don Pedro asks Fulgor if the Toribio Aldrete issue has been “taken care of” (*arreglado*), he responds: “*Está liquidado, patrón*” (101). Pedro replies: “*Nos queda la cuestión de los Fregosos*”<sup>753</sup> (101). Aldrete was the first of many. Besides the Preciados, he owes money also to the Fregosos and the Guzmanes. The next words in the book after Pedro’s declaration that the issue of the Fregosos remains are the words of Damiana cited above, “— Este pueblo está lleno de ecos.” This juxtaposition illustrates the continuation of the violence, and its consequences; beyond Aldrete’s soundless screams, there are others. After a few cases like Aldrete’s, people knew not to resist, as seen in Galileo’s case. But, too, as in Galileo’s case and Aldrete’s, the acts of injustice remain ingrained in the town’s walls and earth.

In another case, just one of those many more, a farmer named Galileo is trying to pay his debt to his brother-in-law in a promise of corn, but he learns that the land he has been working is no longer his. He never sold it to Pedro Páramo, but the *hacendado* claims it, and no one will argue. This is not a directly narrated conversation, but one of *murmillos*, the voices of past injustices still speaking in Comala and overheard by Juan Preciado in his dantesque journey. The dialogue is introduced with the phrase “*Y las voces*,” “And the voices,” and begins with one voice telling the other that if this year’s corn turns out well, he will pay; the other responds by asking how he will pay when he is working someone else’s lands:

- No te exijo... Pero la tierra no es tuya. Te has puesto a trabajar en terreno ajeno.
- ¿De dónde vas a conseguir para pagarme?
- ¿Y quién dice que la tierra no es mía?
- Se afirma que se les ha vendido a Pedro Páramo.
- Yo ni me le he acercado a ese señor. La tierra sigue siendo mía.
- Eso dices tú. Pero por ahí dicen que todo es de él.
- Que no me lo vengan a decir a mí.
- Mira, Galileo, yo a ti, aquí en confianza, te aprecio. Por algo eres el marido de mi hermana. Y de que la tratas bien, ni quien lo dude. Pero a mí no me vas a negar que vendiste las tierras.
- Te digo que a nadie se las he vendido.
- Pues son de Pedro Páramo. Seguramente él así lo ha dispuesto. ¿No te ha venido a ver don Fulgor?
- No
- Seguramente mañana lo verás venir. Y si no mañana, cualquier otro día.
- Pues me mata o se muere; pero no se saldrá con la suya.
- Requiescat in paz, amén, cuñado. Por si las dudas.<sup>754</sup> (104)

<sup>753</sup> “It’s settled, sir.” ... “The matter of the Fregosos remains.”

<sup>754</sup> “— I’m not demanding... But the land isn’t yours. You’ve started working on someone else’s land. Where are you going to get the means to pay me? / — And who says that the land isn’t mine? / — It’s being affirmed that you’ve sold them to Pedro Páramo. / — I haven’t even approached that gentleman. The land remains mine. / — That’s what you say. But around there they say that everything belongs to him. / — Well they shouldn’t come to say it to me. / — Look, Galileo, I, here in confidence, I appreciate you. For something you’re the husband of my sister. And that you treat her well, no one doubts. But you are not going to deny to me that you sold the lands. / — I tell you that I haven’t sold them to anyone. / — Well they belong to Pedro Páramo. Surely he has arranged it like that. Hasn’t don Fulgor come to see you? / — No. / — Surely tomorrow you’ll see him coming. And if not tomorrow, any



Fulgor hasn't even come to see Galileo yet; he and Pedro have merely circulated the rumor that Galileo's lands were sold to Pedro Páramo, and no one is willing to contradict them. "*Se afirma*," "it's being affirmed," claims his brother-in-law. If Galileo has the courage to stand up for his rights, he will die; his brother-in-law, after giving his blessing, tells Galileo goodbye, and that he won't come to dinner: "*No me gustaría contar después: «Yo estuve con él la víspera»*"<sup>755</sup> (104). There could be many more like Galileo underground, telling their tale of lost land out of earshot of Juan Preciado, our portal.

The Media Luna ranch is now a wealthy hacienda due to Pedro and Fulgor's diligent intimidation of the community. Returning to Fulgor's day appreciating the corn:

La puerta grande de la Media Luna rechinó al abrirse, remojada por la brisa. Fueron saliendo primero dos, luego otros dos, después otros dos y así hasta doscientos hombres a caballo que se desparramaron por los campos lluviosos.

— Hay que aventar el ganado de Enmedio más allá de lo que fue Estagua, y el de Estagua córranlo para los cerros de Vilmayo — les iba ordenando Fulgor Sedano conforme salían—. ¡Y apriétenle, que se nos vienen encima las aguas!

Lo dijo tantas veces, que ya los últimos sólo oyeron: «De aquí para allá y de allá para más allá.» Todos y cada uno se llevaban la mano al sombrero para darle a entender que ya habían entendido.<sup>756</sup> (121)

The estate is now so large that the administrator tires of explaining it; the lands of others, incorporated, become simply "here" and "there" and "beyond there" – all Comala, all Pedro Páramo's land.

Pedro Páramo relies on others to do his intimidation, but thanks no one for their help in realizing his estate's revival. When revolutionaries kill Fulgor, Pedro is unconcerned, for the man has already outlived his usefulness, just as did Dolores: "*No le preocupaba Fulgor, que al fin y al cabo ya estaba "más para la otra que para ésta". Había dado de sí todo lo que tenía que dar; aunque fue muy servicial...*"<sup>757</sup> (150) Then, when his trusted family lawyer Gerardo Trujillo retires, hoping for some kind of pension, Pedro gives him almost nothing, and that at the man's ashamed request. Here we can see Gerardo's disbelief at hearing only "Go with God" in response to his retirement:

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other day. / — Well he kills me or he dies; but he won't get what he wants. / — Requiescat in peace, amen, brother-in-law. Just in case." (104)

<sup>755</sup> "I wouldn't want to say later: «I was with him the night before [he died]»"

<sup>756</sup> "The big door of the Media Luna squeaked on opening, soaked by the breeze. They were going out first two, then another two, then another two and thus up to two hundred men on horseback who scattered into the rainy fields. / — You need to push the cattle from Enmedio beyond what was Estagua, and those from Estagua run them to the hills of Vilmayo — Fulgor Sedano was ordering them as they left—. And push, since the waters are coming on top of us! / He said it so many times that the last ones only hear: «From here to there and from there to beyond there.» They all and every one put their hands to their hat to give to understand that they understood."

<sup>757</sup> "He wasn't concerned about Fulgor, who in the end was already "more for the other than for this." He had given of himself all that he had to give; though he was very obliging..."

- Me voy, don Pedro. A Sayula. Allá volveré a establecerme.  
 [...]
 — Ve con Dios, Gerardo.  
 — ¿Qué dijo usted?  
 — Digo que Dios te acompañe.<sup>758</sup> (157-158)

Gerardo leaves the office slowly, hoping to be stopped, to hear his name and the offer of some gift, thinking to himself that he expected compensation, even though his wife told him that morning that don Pedro would give him nothing... “*La verdad es que esperaba una recompensa. ... La verdad es que esperaba una compensación. Una retribución grande y valiosa...*”<sup>759</sup> (158) After all, he has served don Lucas and then don Pedro in all legal matters, and for the latter he has served in illegal matters as well, especially as pertaining to his son Miguel. He freed the boy from prison fifteen times or more, covered for him even for the crime of murdering the priest’s brother, and paid off the victims of rape, telling them they were at least lucky to have fair babies.<sup>760</sup>

Though he feels ashamed for having to ask, the lawyer returns to don Pedro, to ask first to continue serving him, and then for some small amount to help him in his move, still hoping to receive gratitude and support for everything that he did for the family, even things he was ashamed of. But though neither he nor his father have ever even paid the lawyer’s fees in full, Pedro gives him what is apparently a small amount, judging by the lawyer’s disappointment, and does even this reluctantly (159-160):

- Aquí tienes, Gerardo. Cuídalos muy bien, porque no retoñan.  
 Y él que todavía estaba en sus cavilaciones, respondió:  
 — Sí, tampoco los muertos retoñan — y agregó — : Desgraciadamente.<sup>761</sup>

Pedro Páramo, Mexican *cacique*, has created his own law of the land, and he now has hundreds of *vaqueros* herding all the cattle that used to belong to others. However, he has alienated many

<sup>758</sup> “— I’m going, don Pedro. To Sayula. There I will reestablish myself. / [...] / — Go with God, Gerardo. / — What did you say? / — I say may God go with you.” (157-158)

<sup>759</sup> “The truth is that he expected a recompense... The truth is that he expected compensation. A large and valuable compensation...” (158)

<sup>760</sup> “...Miguel su hijo: ¡cuántos bochornos le había dado ese muchacho! / Lo libró de la cárcel cuando menos unas quince veces, cuando no hayan sido más. Y el asesinato que cometió con aquél hombre, ¿cómo se apellidaba? Rentería, eso es. El muerto llamado Rentería, al que le pusieron una pistola en la mano. Lo asustado que estaba el Miguelito, aunque después le diera risa. Eso nomás ¿cuánto le hubiera costado a don Pedro si las cosas hubieran ido hasta allá, hasta lo legal? Y lo de las violaciones ¿qué? Cuántas veces él tuvo que sacar de su misma bolsa el dinero para que ellas le echaran tierra al asunto: «¡Date de buenas que vas a tener un hijo güerito!», les decía.” (159-160) (“Miguel his son: how many embarrassments that boy had given him! He freed him from jail at least some fifteen times, if not more. And the murder that he committed with against that man, what was his name? Rentería, that’s it. The dead man named Rentería, in whose hand he had put a pistol. How scared little Miguel was, although later he was laughing. Only that, how much would it have cost Pedro if those things had gone beyond, to the legal? And what about that of the rapes? How many times he had to take from his own pocket the money so that they would bury the issue: «Count yourself lucky that you’re going to have a blonde baby!», he told them.”)

<sup>761</sup> “— Here you go, Gerardo. Care for them well, because they don’t sprout. / And he was still in his ponderings, answered: / — Yes, and neither do the dead sprout — and he added — : Unfortunately.” (159-160)

who were loyal to him and all who weren't, and though Gerardo believes that the dead – like his meager coins – won't sprout and grow from the earth, in Comala, they do.

### WIVES and LOVERS:

Pedro Páramo doesn't only kill for land; he kills, too, for love, and he is willing to hurt others for his lust. His lust for women began at a young age, as Gerardo knows, and as Father Rentería can also attest to. Father Rentería recalls in thought how many women over the years have confessed to him that Pedro Páramo slept with them or their daughters: “«'Me acuso, padre, que ayer dormí con Pedro Páramo.' 'Me acuso, padre, que tuve un hijo de Pedro Páramo.' 'De que le presté mi hija a Pedro Páramo.'»”<sup>762</sup> (128). Pedro, however, has never confessed to anything. He treats all women as conquests, and the servants in his home are also his lovers. Some of Juan Preciado's murmurs tell their story in earshot of Juan Preciado. They see a man following them, Filoteo Aréchiga, and though at first they are disappointed when he turns away, they soon remember the rumors that he collects girls for Pedro Páramo:

- Después de todo estuvo hasta mejor. Dicen por ahí los díceres que es él que se encarga de conchavarle muchachas a don Pedro. De la que nos escapamos.
- ¿Ah sí? Con ese viejo no quiero tener nada que ver.
- Mejor vámonos.
- Dices bien. Vámonos de aquí.<sup>763</sup> (103)

Pedro has a man to find women for him, and he finds many for himself, too, including his servants. Damiana, jealous in her old age, sees him wandering through the servants' quarters late at night:

Los campos estaban negros. Sin embargo, lo conocía tan bien, que vio cuando el cuerpo enorme de Pedro Páramo se columpiaba sobre la ventana de la chacha Margarita.

— ¡Ah, qué don Pedro! — dijo Damiana — . No se le quita lo gatero. Lo que no entiendo es por qué le gusta hacer las cosas tan a escondidas; con habérmelo avisado, yo le hubiera dicho a la Margarita que el patrón la necesita para esta noche, y él no hubiera tenido ni la molestia de levantarse de su cama.

Cerró la ventana al oír el bramido de los toros. Se echó, sobre el catre cobijándose hasta las orejas, y luego se puso a pensar en lo que le estaría pasando a la chacha Margarita. ... en lo feliz que sería a estas horas la chacha Margarita.<sup>764</sup> (161)

<sup>762</sup> “«'I confess, Father, that yesterday I slept with Pedro Páramo.' 'I confess, Father, that I bore a child of Pedro Páramo's.' 'That I lent my daughter to Pedro Páramo.'»”

<sup>763</sup> “After everything it was actually better. The rumors say that he's in charge of hiring/getting [with illicit and class connotations] girls for don Pedro. From which we escaped. / Oh really? I don't want anything to do with that old man. / Let's go. / You say well. Let's get out of here.”

<sup>764</sup> “The fields were black. Nevertheless, she knew it so well, that she saw when the enormous body of Pedro Páramo was swinging over the window of the housemaid Margarita. / — Ah, what don Pedro! — said Damiana — . The *gatero* (womanizer of servants) in him never leaves. What I don't understand is why he likes to do things so undercover; if he had informed me, I would have told Margarita that the boss needed her this night, and he wouldn't have had even the inconvenience of getting out of bed. / She closed the window on hearing the bellowing of the

He came to Damiana's room once, years ago, but she didn't open the door, and he stalked the house in anger. Regretting her action, she left her door open and lay there naked the following night, but he never returned to her.

In fact, no one woman can satiate him, nor can many. He tears through them madly, but desiring only one, Susana San Juan. And in order to obtain her, he exercises all of his influence and power, even though he is, in Bartolomé's words, "*casado y ... ha tenido infinidad de mujeres*"<sup>765</sup> (141):

»...¿Cuántas veces invité a tu padre a que viniera a vivir aquí nuevamente, diciéndole que yo lo necesitaba? Lo hice hasta con engaños.

»Le ofrecí nombrarlo administrador, con tal de volverte a ver. ¿Y qué me contestó? 'No hay respuesta — me decía siempre el mandadero—. El señor don Bartolomé rompe sus cartas cuando yo se las entrego'. Pero por el muchacho supe que te habías casado y pronto me enteré que te habías quedado viuda y le hacías otra vez compañía a tu padre.

Luego el silencio.<sup>766</sup> (139)

He loses her for a while, but constantly searches: "» — *No repares en gastos, búscalos. Ni que se los haya tragado la tierra*"<sup>767</sup> (139). Finally his men find Bartolomé and Susana in a distant hovel near abandoned mines. Bartolomé says then that due to the rumors of bands of armed men, he will agree to bring his daughter nearer to a populated area. Pedro rejoices: "» *Sentí que se abría el cielo. Tuve ánimos de correr hacia ti. De rodearte de alegría. De llorar. Y lloré, Susana, cuando supe que al fin regresarías*"<sup>768</sup> (140).

The *cacique* is rejoicing, but even with Susana, he is still a cruel and destructive force on the town and even on the landscape itself. Pedro Páramo has told Bartolomé that he cares nothing for what Bartolomé can offer, he is only interested in Bartolomé's daughter, "*su mejor trabajo*," "your best work"<sup>769</sup>; and then, as Bartolomé tells his daughter, "*en cuanto sale a relucir tu nombre, cierra los ojos. Es, según yo sé, la pura maldad. Eso es Pedro Páramo*" (141).

Bartolomé knows that he is expendable, as shown in the narrative: "*Bartolomé San Juan, un minero muerto. Susana San Juan, hija de un minero muerto en las minas de La Andrómeda. Veía*

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bulls. She threw herself down, over the folding bed covering herself up to the ears, and then she started thinking about what must be happening to the housemaid Margarita. ... about how happy the housemaid Margarita must be right now."

<sup>765</sup> "married and ... he has had an infinity of women" (141)

<sup>766</sup> "»...How many times did I invite your father to come and live here again, telling him that I needed him? I did it even with deceptions. / I offered to name him administrator, to see you again. And what did he reply to me? 'There's no answer — the messenger always told me—. Mr. Bartolomé tears up your letters when I give them to him.'" But through the boy I found out that you had gotten married and then soon I found out that you had become a widow and were giving company to your father again. / Then silence." (139)

<sup>767</sup> "» — Spare no expense, look for them. It isn't like the earth has swallowed them." (139)

<sup>768</sup> "»I felt like the sky had opened. I wanted to run to you. To surround you with joy. To cry. And I cried, Susana, when I found out that you would finally return" (140)

<sup>769</sup> "when your name comes up, he closes his eyes. It is, according to what I know, pure evil. That is Pedro Páramo" (141).

claro. «Tendré que ir allá a morir», pensó.<sup>770</sup> (141). And he is right, for don Pedro plans to make Susana an orphan so he can take her in without impediment:

— ¿Sabías, Fulgor, que ésa es la mujer más hermosa que se ha dado sobre la tierra? Llegué a creer que la había perdido para siempre. Pero ahora no tengo ganas de volverla a perder. ¿Tú me entiendes, Fulgor? Dile a su padre que vaya a seguir explotando sus minas. Y allá ... me imagino que será fácil desaparecer al viejo en aquellas regiones adonde nadie va nunca ... ¿No lo crees? ... Necesitamos que sea. Ella tiene que quedarse huérfana. Estamos obligados a amparar a alguien ¿No crees tú?<sup>771</sup> (141)

Fulgor is concerned that she will find out, but don Pedro asks him, “¿Quién se lo dirá?”<sup>772</sup> Fulgor says, “Estoy seguro que nadie,” at which point Pedro levies a veiled threat against his old servant: “Quítale el «estoy seguro que». Quítaselo desde ahorita y ya verás como todo sale bien” (142). Susana is a strange force in the novel, as will be discussed; she is for Pedro, like Diadorim was for Riobaldo, an impossible love, though in the case of Susana it is because in her madness she doesn’t see don Pedro, and in truth he doesn’t see her either, only his ideal woman.

Miguel Páramo – Pedro’s only recognized son, although he is illegitimate – follows in his father’s footsteps with regards to using women – and, too, regards to following them to his death. Pedro has in fact many children whom he ignores, including Abundio Martínez, who lives a life of misery as a mule driver and loses his wife to illness, unable to afford care. Pedro also ignores his legitimate son Juan Preciado, since he married Juan Preciado’s mother Dolores only for her property. However, Miguel is the one whom he takes in, and – either because of an innate shared character, the cause of his legitimization, or because of his upbringing in that terrible household – Miguel, like his father, is guilty of murder and rape (murder of the priest’s brother; rape of his niece, among others) before his death still in his teens, seeking out the one woman he idealizes but cannot have – or, perhaps, cannot have and, therefore, idealizes.

The priest knows more than many of the boy’s violent and controlling deeds, his desire to take everything, though not from Miguel who, like his father, rejects confession. Father Rentería knows from his niece Ana that it was Miguel Páramo who killed her father and raped her. And he knows from Dorotea’s confession that she provided girls for Miguel, just as Filoteo does for his father:

— Ya que no puedo causarle ningún perjuicio, le diré que era yo la que le conseguía muchachas al difunto Miguelito Páramo. ... Desde que él fue hombrecito. Desde que le agarró el chincual... Pos que yo era la que le conchavaba las muchachas a Miguelito.

<sup>770</sup> “» — Bartolomé San Juan, a dead miner. Susana San Juan, daughter of a miner dead in the mines of The Andrómeda. He saw clearly. «I will have to go there to die», he thought.” (141)

<sup>771</sup> “— Did you know, Fulgor, that that is the most beautiful woman who has ever existed on the earth? I came to believe that I had lost her forever. But now I don’t feel like losing her again. Do you understand me, Fulgor? Tell her father to go continue working his mines. And there... I imagine that it will be easy to disappear the old man in those regions where nobody ever goes... Don’t you think? ... We need it to be. She has to become an orphan. We are obligated to shelter someone, don’t you think?” (141)

<sup>772</sup> “Who will tell her?” ... “I’m sure no one,” ... “Take away the «I’m sure». Take it away right now and you will see how everything turns out well.” (142)

- ¿Se las llevabas?  
 — Algunas veces, sí. En otras nomás se las apalabraba. Y con otras nomás le daba el norte. Usted sabe: la hora en que estaban solas y en que él podía agarrarlas descuidadas.  
 — ¿Fueron muchas? ...  
 — Ya hasta perdí la cuenta. Fueron retেমuchas.<sup>773</sup> (131-132)

The boy was capable of unspeakable acts, and, because of his rank, the opportunities were provided to him without consequence just as to his father. Pedro Páramo fits – and exaggerates – the mold of the Mexican *cacique* of his era in his ill treatment of his workers, his land-grabbing feudal power, and, too, his mistreatment of women. González Casillas writes of the gender-specific norms and roles in rural Mexico of the Porfirian era, and claims that Rulfo's works are “keeping alive” the “composition of the social structure in that rural world of the South of Jalisco” (10).<sup>774</sup> Specifically, she finds that the Mexican approach to property is in the works (25)<sup>775</sup>, the vendettas and victims represent Mexico's state of justice (37, 56)<sup>776</sup>, and the combination of multi-generational and unicellular families with *macho* men, negative views of paternity, objectified women, and submissive servants is that of the Mexican society (57, 88)<sup>777</sup>. Fulgor, Gerardo, and Damiana are all submissive; and all of the women in Pedro Páramo's life are objectified. González Casillas continues to say that with regards to sexuality, both Rulfo's works and Mexican society show a lack of friendship between genders and a lack of explicit homosexuality (109); and women are oppressed in a male-dominated society, subjugated, resigned, both in Mexico and the works, as shown by Dolores, who expects her husband to loathe her but is still grateful to be married (132).

In fact, the system of *caciquismo* went hand in hand with a characteristic misogyny, as explained also by Solanilla and Anderson (2002):

Abandoned, solitary, sad, fatal beings, the women of Comala show at the same time a national identity that is critically shown by the author when he represents in the novel the

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<sup>773</sup> “— Now that I can't cause him any harm, I'll tell you that it was I who obtained girls for the dead Miguelito Páramo. ... Since he was a little man. Since he was taken by the *chincual* (an agitatedly sexual life (González Boixo's notes, 131))... Well that I was the one that hired/got [with illicit and class connotations] girls for Miguelito. / — Did you bring them to him? / — Sometimes, yes. Others I only agreed with. And with others I just gave him the way. You know: the hour in which they were alone and in which he could grab them unwatched. / — Were there many? ... / — I already lost count. They were really a lot.” (131-132)

<sup>774</sup> “*composición de la estructura social en ese mundo rural del sur de Jalisco*”

<sup>775</sup> “*El mexicano se presenta como un propietario innato, que ama, protege y conserva lo que tiene... Aun en estos hombres del cosmos rulfiano, tan llenos de carencias, encontramos que sus posesiones, las que sean, son altamente valoradas*” (25) (The Mexican presents himself as an innate owner, who loves, protects and conserves what he has... Even in these men of the Rulfian cosmos, so full of wants, we find that their possessions, whatever they are, are highly valued”)

<sup>776</sup> “*Una sociedad de carencias múltiples para muchos y holguras vastas para muy pocos... Una sociedad...la nuestra*” (56) (“A society of multiple lacks for many and vast affluence for very few... A society... ours”)

<sup>777</sup> “*la familia mexicana que Rulfo y la realidad nos presentan, no es homogénea, pues va desde la unicelular hasta la policelular*”... “*macho*” ... “*mujer...cosificada*” ... “*criados...sumisos*” (88) (“the Mexican family that Rulfo and reality present us, is not homogenous, since it goes from the unicellular to the polycellular”... “*macho*”... “*objectified... woman*” ... “*submissive... servants*”)

affective and economic dependence of the woman, her secondary role in social life and as general aspect, her role as victim.<sup>778</sup> (Solanilla 95)

In this world women are chattel and ranch-owners can forcibly populate the countryside with bastard children by asserting feudal rights to the bodies of peasant women living on their lands. (Anderson)

The society in Comala shows women who have very few options in their lives, and very few rights; only Susana is free to be her own independent person, and her liberty of thought and sensuality comes with the price of insanity. The novel places Pedro Páramo's Comala squarely in Jalisco, and points, though with no explicit judgment, to the social injustices – the evil – caused there by the entrenched feudal landowning system.

### 1.3 The HISTORICAL MOMENT in *PEDRO PÁRAMO*:

#### REVOLUTION and REBELLION:

As shown above in González Boixo's analysis, Pedro Páramo and the Media Luna ranch experience both the Mexican Revolution and the Cristero Rebellion. These are indicated in the text with references to the revolutionary activity. However, though don Pedro may have been among the worst of the *hacendados* in the region, the rebellions touch the Media Luna but leave it unharmed. Katz (1974) states that many landowners were able to escape revolutionary activity due to "maintaining a staff of loyal *acasillados*" who then "refused to join the revolutionary movement... and remained loyal to the haciendas" (31). In Pedro Páramo's case, he does just that: he chooses the most violent of those retainers and offers them compensation for "joining" the local arm of the uprising while he finances it, again working outside the system for his own gain.

The first appearance of revolutionary activity occurs when the "Tartamudo" (Stutterer) arrives at the Media Luna wishing to speak directly with the *patrón* on a matter of great urgency:

— Pues, nanada más esto. Mataron a don Fulgor SeSedano. Yo le hacía compañía. ... A mí ni me totomaron en cuenta. Pero a don Fulgor le mandaron soltar la bestia. Le dijeron que eran revolucionarios. Que venían por las tierras de usted. ¡Cocórrale! — le dijeron a don Fulgor — . ¡Vaya y dígame a su patrón que allá nos veremos! Y él soltó la cacalda, despavorido. No muy de prisa por lo pepesado que era; pero corrió. Lo mataron, cocorriendo. Murió cocon una pata arriba y otra abajo.<sup>779</sup> (150)

<sup>778</sup> "*Seres abandonados, solitarios, tristes, fatales, las mujeres de Comala muestran al mismo tiempo una identidad nacional que es vista críticamente por el autor cuando representa en la novela la dependencia afectiva y económica de la mujer, su papel secundario en la vida social y como aspecto general, su papel de víctima*"

<sup>779</sup> "—Well, nonothing more than this. They killed don Fulgor SeSedano. I was with him. ... They didn't nonotice me. But they let the beast out at don Fulgor. That they were coming for your lands. 'Run!' they told don Fulgor. 'Run and tell your patron that we'll see him there!' and he let go, terrified. Not very quickly for being so heheavy; but he ran. They killed him, rurunning. He died wiwith one foot up and other other down."

The revolution already appears in a unique light, in that it is spoken of unclearly; as will be seen through the rest of the work, this may be indicative of an opinion on the Revolution's own lack of clarity in focus and pursuit. The message is lost in the telling.

Pedro Páramo replies by ordering the "Tartamudo" to tell the revolutionaries to come to see him, and to bring Damasio "el Tilcuate" to him.<sup>780</sup> Unconcerned with the death of his administrator, as mentioned above, Pedro thinks to himself: "*De todos modos, los 'tilcuatazos' que se van a llevar esos locos*"<sup>781</sup> – and so they did, subjected to cultural hegemony from within by his henchman (151). The revolutionaries come to him fighting for leadership amongst them<sup>782</sup> and without a united sense of purpose or identity:

— Como usted ve, nos hemos levantado en armas.

— ¿Y?

— Y pos eso es todo. ¿Le parece poco?

— ¿Pero por qué lo han hecho?

— Pos porque otros lo han hecho también. ¿No lo sabe usted? Aguárdenos tantito a que nos lleguen instrucciones y entonces le averiguaremos la causa. Por lo pronto ya estamos aquí.

— Yo sé la causa dijo otro. Y si quiere se la entero. Nos hemos rebelado contra el gobierno y contra ustedes porque ya estamos aburridos de soportarlos. Al gobierno por rastrero y a ustedes porque no son más que unos móndrigos bandidos y mantecosos ladrones. Y del señor gobierno ya no digo nada porque le vamos a decir a balazos lo que le queremos decir.<sup>783</sup>

Pedro Páramo feeds them, and responds with: "— *¿Cuánto necesitan para hacer su revolución? ... — Tal vez yo pueda ayudarlos.*"<sup>784</sup> (153). He offers them money (a gift) and men (on loan), and dismisses them easily with apparent respect, calling them "sir": "*Está bien así? / — Pero cómo no. / — Entonces hasta dentro de ocho días, señores. Y he tenido mucho gusto en conocerlos.*"<sup>785</sup> (154). Pedro then sends his own man, Damasio "el Tilcuate," to "lead" them, giving him a small ranch of his own in payment for his duty, though the man would be happy enough to create mayhem without recompense: "— *¿Quién crees tú que sea el jefe de éstos? — le preguntó más tarde al Tilcuate. ... — Damasio, el jefe eres tú. ¿O qué, no te quieres ir a la*

<sup>780</sup> "Tilcuate" is a type of snake.

<sup>781</sup> "In any case, the blows from the *Tilcuate* that these crazies are going to receive."

<sup>782</sup> "— *¿Usted es el dueño de esto? — preguntó uno abanicando la mano. / Pero otro lo interrumpió diciendo: / — ¡Aquí yo soy el que hablo!*" (153) "—Are you the owner of this? – asked one fanning his hand. / But another interrupted saying: –Here I am the one who speaks!"

<sup>783</sup> "—As you see, we have risen up in arms. / –And? / –And well that's all. Does it seem little to you? / –But why have you done it? / –Well because others have done it too. Don't you know? Wait a little until we get instructions and then we'll check on the cause. For now we're already here. / –I know the cause –said another. And if you want I'll inform you. We have rebelled against the government and against you all because we are fed up with supporting you. The government for being despicable and you because you're nothing more than bandit wretches and greasy thieves. And of the gentlemen in government I won't say any more because we're going to tell him with bullets what we want to say."

<sup>784</sup> "—How much do you need to make your revolution? ... –Perhaps I can help you."

<sup>785</sup> "Is that alright? / –Well how not. / –So until within eight days, sirs. And I have really enjoyed meeting you."



*revuelta*?<sup>786</sup> (154). His orders: to distract the revolutionaries from the Media Luna Ranch, but not lead them too far afield, so that no other revolutionaries will approach: “*procura no alejarte mucho de mis terrenos, por eso de que si vienen otros que vean el campo ya ocupado. Y venme a ver cada que puedas o tengas alguna novedad*”<sup>787</sup> (154).

In historical context, this section appears to refer to the first part of the revolution, in which numerous revolutionary forces rose up around the country to protest the political and socio-economic power structures that led to corruption and poverty. In brief summary of its beginnings, the revolution was a response to, among other factors, the continued and constitution-altering “re-elections” of *caudillo* Porfirio Díaz, over decades of public protest. He was “re-elected” in 1910 for the eighth time, but Francisco I. Madero took leadership in rebellion. The *maderistas* fought for six months, finally achieving Díaz’ flight and Madero’s possession of power with a treaty in Ciudad Juárez on May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1911 (Castro Leal 1972: 18-19). The revolutionaries in *PP* were not explicitly *maderistas*, nor anything else, to begin with; they appear to be an undisciplined and unfocused group who has taken up arms in anger and frustration at the government and all systems of power and wealth in Mexico.

Several pages later, Pedro hears the rumor that the Tilcuate was defeated by the “*villistas*.”<sup>788</sup> Damasio explains that his men fired a few shots at an approaching squad, who turned out to be a powerful army from the North called “*villistas*,” but following Pedro Páramo’s orders – “*hay que estar con el que vaya ganando*”<sup>789</sup> – Damasio and his men are now “*villistas*,” too. Damasio asks for more money so they can eat something other than poached meat; but Pedro sends him out with orders to assault towns and other ranches instead (162-163).

Later, after Susana’s death and Pedro Páramo’s accompanying loss of interest in his town’s prosperity, el Tilcuate returns again, saying “— *Ahora somos carrancistas. ... — Andamos con mi general Obregón*”<sup>790,791</sup> (171). He continues to say that they are free now – “*Allá se ha*

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<sup>786</sup> “—Who do you believe to be the boss of those? —he asked the Tilcuate later. ... —No, Damasio, the boss is you. Or what, don’t you want to join the uprising?”

<sup>787</sup> “Seek to not go too far from my lands, so that if other come they will see the countryside already occupied. And come to see me whenever you have some news.”

<sup>788</sup> These would be the followers of Pancho Villa. Madero’s presidential heroism was short-lived; other social and economic issues remained, and the judicial and legislative branches and military remained loyal to Díaz. He didn’t act, and further revolutionary forces rose up against him and the government, groups later called “*constitucionalistas*” led by, among others, Emiliano Zapata in the South, a son of peasants fighting for agrarian reform to aid the dispossessed and topple the feudalistic system; and *guerrero* Francisco “Pancho” Villa in the North (Comala, if in Jalisco as generally assumed, is Central). Meanwhile, reactionary forces rose under Bernardo Reyes, Manuel Mondragón, Porfirio’s nephew Feliz Díaz, and Victoriano Huerta, among others, and the U.S. government supported Huerta, representative of the old “*porfirismo*,” as the new President, aiding in his assumption of power in 1913, and Madero’s subsequent death under the pretext of his flight from prison; however, a week after the murder, Woodrow Wilson became president, and supported those who fought for a Constitution, though his misguided efforts did not aid them (Castro Leal 19-20).

<sup>789</sup> “you have to be with the one who’s winning”

<sup>790</sup> “—Now we are followers of Carranza. ... We’re with my general Obregón.” ... “There peace has been made. We’re wandering loose.”

<sup>791</sup> Huerta’s rise to power resulted in a further proliferation and growth of revolutionary forces, including those of coronel Alvaro Obregón, and Venustiano Carranza, former governor of Coahuila. These groups were supported by “*sufridos indios del campo, desamparados obreros de las ciudades, empleados, estudiantes, maestros de escuela,*

*hecho la paz. Andamos sueltos*” – but Pedro Páramo asks him not to disarm, since peace won’t last. Damasio mentions Padre Rentería’s cause:

- Se ha levantado en armas el padre Rentería. ¿Nos vamos con él, o contra él?
- Eso ni se discute. Ponte al lado del gobierno.
- Pero si somos irregulares.<sup>792</sup> Nos consideran rebeldes.
- Entonces vete a descansar:
- ¿Con el vuelo que llevo?
- Haz lo que quieras, entonces.
- Me iré a reforzar al padrecito. Me gusta cómo gritan. Además lleva uno ganada la salvación.
- Haz lo que quieras.<sup>793</sup> (171-172)

It is implicit here that the Cristero Rebellion has begun; the priest has decided to fight for the place of the Church in the new Mexico, and “el Tilcate” will join him to save his soul. At this point, Damasio has done his duty; Pedro Páramo doesn’t care for whom his man fights, as long as it doesn’t affect his property.

The presence of historical references to the Revolution and Rebellion appears to enter the text casually, contextually, but also critically, and in doing so it reveals more of Pedro Páramo’s character, and, too, more of the extensive violence spreading through the land due to the land-ownership system which, as seen in the novel, is generally perpetuated by the *caciques* and condoned by the Catholic Church. The novel appears to be critical of all of them: the ruthless *cacique*, the corrupt priest, and, too, the devastating revolutionaries.

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*funcionarios, periodistas, escritores, médicos, ingenieros, abogados...*” (20) These forces, and Zapata’s, under Carranza as “*Primer Jefe del Ejército Constitucionalista*,” ousted Huerta in 1914, after which Carranza took executive power of the nation, opposed by Villa and Zapata. In a Convention for peace, Villa, Zapata, and Obregón installed Eulalio Gutiérrez as interim; but then Obregón backed Carranza’s return, and the rivalry became violent. The U.S.A. supported Carranza, as well, and Villa’s violence in New Mexico, now as a bandit, brought American general Pershing into the fray as a “Punitive Expedition,” allowing Carranza to return while Villa was distracted, though Carranza protested the U.S. acting in Mexico without Mexican consent. Carranza was declared president for the 1916-1920 period by the 1916-elected senators, and drafted the Constitution of 1917. However, the bloodshed between the factions continued, and much of the nation was outside Carranza’s control, even after Carranza’s forces killed Zapata in an ambush; Carranza was killed in 1919, also in an ambush. Then, after the temporary government of Adolfo de la Huerta, elections in November of 1920 brought Obregón to power, and general stability ensued, with some leaders exiled, some pardoned, and some retired, though struggles continue even in 1972, when Castro Leal wrote his history of Mexican revolutionary literature (Castro Leal 20-25) – and today, with the EZLN (*Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*), a guerrilla force in Chiapas supporting indigenous land rights and fighting against the “contradictions of capitalism” (as explained at ezln.org).

<sup>792</sup> It remains unclear why the forces are considered rebels, when they are “with my general Obregón,” who obtained power in 1920 and retained it through his successor during the next term. Obregón’s reelection and subsequent assassination occurred in 1928, after the death of Pedro Páramo, so it seems probable that Obregón was in power at this moment in the text, especially given that the Cristero war was already beginning (1926). Perhaps the changing loyalties of this particular group made them “irregular”.

<sup>793</sup> “–Father Rentería has risen in arms. Should we go with him, or against him? / There’s no discussion. Join the side of the government. / –But we’re irregular. They consider us rebels. / –So go and rest. / –With the flight that I carry? / –Do what you want, then. / –I’m going to reinforce the dear Father. I like how they yell. Also one wins salvation. / –Do what you want.”

**SOCIAL COMMENTARY:**

As has been shown in this chapter, *PP* is a work with a concrete basis in geographical and historical reality, and a critical component towards many aspects of that reality. The social structure of a Porfirian-Age *cacique*-dominated town is clearly referenced and shown in a stark violence that endures long after the acts have occurred, reverberating in the soil. As many have pointed out, the work, no matter the intent, appears to criticize the socioeconomic structure and its adherents, especially the *cacique* and the priest who tacitly approves of him, and the *capataces* and *caporales* who, through ignorance or ill-will, kept the *peones* in poverty. Rulfo's novel, then, was critical of the social situation of injustice and violence that precipitated the Revolution. However, as is shown above, the work is at the same time critical of the unfocused violence of the Revolution itself, portrayed as a powerful force engaged in indiscriminate destruction and easily manipulated by those it sought (albeit justly) to unseat. The work is, too, critical of the Cristero Rebellion.

Solanilla explains that, "the author has known how to put forth a critical vision of the said period"<sup>794</sup> (43) and that, although the Porfirian dictatorship, the Mexican Revolution and the Cristero Rebellion "only appear as a great background set" (49), the presence of these events in Rulfo's novel nonetheless "fulfill a function clearly revelatory of his critical attitude towards his country." Indeed, the novel does appear to be critical; and, as shown above here, the protests that rose to violently fight that criticized system of violence and power are also shown in a critical light in *PP*. Solanilla indicates that the relationship between the armed *campesinos* and Pedro Páramo was mirrored across the nation at the time, and posits that the lack of a focused plan among the revolutionary forces in the novel, and the *cacique's* astute management of them, are both historically realistic and are, in the work, criticized. The uprising was historically, according to Solanilla, a result of frustration and affective reasoning rather than a political project.<sup>795</sup> He relates that without a concrete political project or ideological apparatus, the uprising was in reality, as in the Comalan microcosm, easily corrupted and its power usurped by the very landowners and *caciques* against whom the war was being waged.<sup>796</sup>

The work *PP* shows this confusion and its usurpation and betrayal clearly; as illustrated earlier, the group comes to Pedro Páramo intending to attack him, but when he treats them with offers of

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<sup>794</sup> "el autor ha sabido plantear una visión crítica de dicha etapa" ... "[s]ólo aparecen como gran decorado de fondo" ... "cumplen una función claramente reveladora de su actitud crítica frente a su país"

<sup>795</sup> "...la falta de un proyecto político concreto y de una explicación ideológica coherente de los líderes de la revolución (con la excepción ejemplar de Emiliano Zapata con su Plan de Ayala de 1913), y como es de suponer, de los campesinos que en ella participaron" (52) ("...the lack of a concrete political project and of a coherent ideological explanation from the leaders of the revolution (with the exemplary exception of Emiliano Zapata with his Plan of Ayala of 1913), and as it can be assumed, of the peasants/agricultural workers who participated in it")

<sup>796</sup> "la participación utilitarista que en la Revolución tuvo esa casta social ya enunciada, los caciques. ... el cacique demuestra su astucia, aprovechándose de la ignorancia de aquel, para controlar no sólo a los hombres sino también a los otros que le solicitan ayuda. ... engaña a todos... el cacique consolida aún más su prestigio social." (54) ("the utilitarian participation what this mentioned social caste, the *caciques*, had in the Revolution, ... the *cacique* demonstrates his astuteness, taking advantage of the ignorance of that one, to control not only the men but also the others who ask for their help. ... he deceives everyone... the *cacique* consolidates even more his social prestige.")

aid, they are easily quieted. They are unsure of their cause; for some, they have risen in arms because others have as well, and when asked why, they respond that they will find out; for now, being risen in arms “*es todo*,” and it’s enough. The one who does know the cause has as his only plan the communication of anger through violence. The result of this confusion, and especially of its usurpation and betrayal<sup>797</sup>, was excessive and continued violence. They are easily bought; and they change leadership and affiliation on a whim. In the end, though they are “*carrancistas*” and “their” general Obregón is in power, they are considered “irregular,” and join the next rebellion with the priests.

Other critics, too, have emphasized the critical gaze on the Revolution in *PP*. For instance, Norma Klahn (1996) writes: “With Rulfo is lost the epic vision of the Revolution. In his narrative the glorification of the brute power is demystified and destroyed”<sup>798</sup> (425). Felipe Garrido (1979/1992) writes about Rulfo’s 1950s moment of writing, claiming that Rulfo was sensitive to his society’s loss of illusion about the Revolution:

Dispelled the dream that had been generated by the regenerative effervescence that followed the Revolution, disappointment survived: the nation stayed subjected to a new equilibrium of forces, a new modality of servitude... For a sensitive spirit like Rulfo’s, this couldn’t remain concealed by the development’s glitz... Over the character of the work weighs the circumstance of this more as much or more than that of his childhood years.<sup>799</sup> (Garrido 755)

Anderson (2002), too, writes that in the 1950s, Mexico was still experiencing a kind of haunting from the revolution; it is undergoing a “fitful... modernity” and a “deruralization,” in which many living in urban centers are haunted by the countryside, by the real ghost towns left behind, as well as by the fact that the “uneven and unequal social order in the present” was connected to that past that wasn’t really past. In fact, he states, “[h]istorians have debated extensively and heatedly whether the Mexican civil war of 1910-1920 was a genuine ‘peasant revolution’ as

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<sup>797</sup> “*Al revelar el autor las motivaciones más esenciales del campesino en la revuelta y demostrar cómo en su inocencia y falta de una verdadera consciencia política fue engañado, Rulfo expresa también su enorme descontento en la usurpación que de la “revolución” han hecho sus dirigentes. O más concretamente, de la traición que tuvo el pueblo una vez conquistado el poder, ante la falta de un aparato ideológico que la sostuviera. Los campesinos, en la novela, combaten por muchos motivos, casi todos afectivos: porque les gusta la bulla, porque otros se han levantado, porque quieren pelear, y ... nadie sabe realmente por qué combate; sólo se conoce la urgencia de la lucha y nada más”... “Rulfo cuestiona la ‘otra’ historia de su pueblo” (53-54) (“Upon revealing the author the most essential motivations of the peasant in the revolt and demonstrating how in his innocence and lack of a true political consciousness he was deceived, Rulfo expresses also his enormous discontent with the usurpation that of the “revolution” its leaders have done. Or more concretely, of the betrayal that the people had once the power was conquered, before the lack of an ideological apparatus that would sustain it. The peasants, in the novel, fight for many reasons, almost all affective: because they like the ruckus, because others have also risen up, because they want to fight, and ... no one really knows why he fights; only the urgency of the fight is known and nothing more” ... “Rulfo questions the ‘other’ history of his people”)*

<sup>798</sup> “*Con Rulfo se pierde la visión épica de la Revolución. En su narrativa se desmitifica y se destruye la glorificación de la fuerza bruta*”

<sup>799</sup> “*Desvanecido el sueño que había generado la efervescencia regeneradora que siguió a la Revolución, sobrevino el desengaño: el país quedó sujeto a un nuevo equilibrio de fuerzas, una nueva modalidad de servidumbre... Para un espíritu sensible como el de Rulfo, esto no podía quedar disfrazado por los oropeles desarrollistas... Sobre el carácter de su obra pesa tanto o más la circunstancia de este momento que la de sus años infantiles*”

embodied in figures such as Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata or whether it was more a ‘bourgeois revolution’; it appears to be a complex issue. Wilson (2005), too, writes, “Rulfo wrote his fiction at a time when the official version of the unique Mexican Revolution had turned into a stereotype and a lie. All his work must be read against this optimistic backdrop,” and that, specifically, “[t]he novel gives details as to how landownership during the *Porfiriato* stayed in the hands of the few, the oligarchs like Pedro Páramo. The proposition was that so much bloodshed and sacrifice had been worthwhile.” (Wilson 234-235). *PP*, then, was written in a historical/epistemological context in which Mexico had been dealing with a series of ideological changes including *caudillos*, progressivism, agrarian reform, revolution, social conservatism, and complex relations with foreign powers such as the USA. There were contradictions and hypocrisies between rhetoric and reality, and there were also new narratives of “progress” and “modernity,” in which it was deemed possible to create new infrastructures and forget the past, in spite of continued misery in the margins. In this context, the work *PP* rearticulates the direction of Mexico and the position of the past, specifically looking at the failures of both the landowning system itself, *and* the revolution that sought to topple it; as Wilson proposes, it is a “withering but oblique attack on Mexican rural mentality” (236) – all of its strata, all who inflicted that violence that was never worthwhile. The novel shows that Mexico can’t create new infrastructures over the old without first facing its ghosts.

Indeed, Rulfo expressed to Ruffinelli in 1977 that the revolution only changed the size of the *cacique*-dominated plots of land, not the power system in itself:

Before the revolution, every state had an owner... and all the land belonged to him... What the revolution did was to dismember a bit those *latifundios*... But *caciquismo* was not eliminated, on the contrary, it was pulverized. Then smaller *caciques* subsisted...<sup>800</sup> (Ruffinelli 470)

The Revolution, in *PP*, is destructive but powerful; these critics believe that its narrative demystifies the glory of the Revolution, and the illusion that it solved the nation’s problems as related to the institutionalization of *caciquismo* and other forms of socioeconomic dominance.

In the novel’s portrayal of the Cristero Rebellion, too, “affective reasons” and systematic manipulation motivate fighters for that uprising just as for the Revolution: el Tilcuete tells Pedro Páramo that he will fight alongside the “*padrecito*” because “*lleva uno ganada la salvación,*” one wins salvation (172). Solanilla indicates that this – “the salvation of their souls”<sup>801</sup> – was “the motivation that surely thousands of men had who participated in the uprising” (58). In fact (as he also points out), Rulfo himself spoke of this phenomenon to Elena Poniatowska (1992), insofar as he experienced it in his childhood:

...the woman made the *Cristeada* because she obligated the man to go to fight, her husband, her children. She spurred them on: “If you don’t go it’s because you aren’t a

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<sup>800</sup> “*Antes de la revolución, cada estado tenía un dueño, ... y toda la tierra le pertenecía... Lo que hizo la revolución fue desmembrar un poco esos latifundios... Pero no se eliminó el caciquismo, al contrario, se lo pulverizó. Entonces subsistieron caciques más pequeños...*”

<sup>801</sup> “*la salvación de sus almas*” ... “*la motivación que seguramente tuvieron miles de hombres que participaron en el alzamiento*”

man,” and in Jalisco telling a man that he isn’t a man is the worst offense. ... The priest used [the women], incited them in mass, one sermon after another; like this he fomented the cause; he said that it was necessary to do and fight, he said it in all the tones, I think it was almost all the he said, that one had to fight for Christ, kill for Christ. ... I was anti-Cristero, it always seemed like a stupid war to me, as much on one side as on the other, the government and the clergy.<sup>802</sup> (818)

The author’s explicit statement that he was against the Cristero war, while it shouldn’t be taken as the only way in which to interpret the novel, certainly illuminates the glimpses of that uprising that the readers are given. Again, violence led to violence, and people went to war without a clear idea of cause, manipulated and used. *PP* is critical of the system in place and, too, of those who fought to change it, both bloodying the landscape as they went. The town appears to be haunted by Mexico’s social history, scarred in its psyche in a way that won’t be ignored. The town contains its history of, as Anderson states, the country’s “quasi-feudal social order, violent revolutions, and... dramatic exodus.” He claims, too, that it contains the “dying but not quite dead traditional Mexico looming just out of sight... no longer present, not yet past.” It is therefore a reality that cannot be ignored in the face of present “progress,” that “rapidly urbanizing Mexico of the 1950s” behind which “rural Mexico” and “folk Catholicism” *appeared* to recede. The novel makes all of this present and relevant, as perhaps it truly is, according to the author’s views.

There are further possibilities for regional and national symbolic interpretation of the novel, as well. Well-known Mexican author and critic Carlos Fuentes writes in “Rulfo, el tiempo del mito” (1992) that, though multi-intentional as a novel, *PP* contains an archetype of the classical Greek “*Búsqueda del padre*” (“Search for the father”) myth, which is then easily expanded from Juan Preciado’s individual search to the identity of the entire nation of Mexico. Fuentes explains how Juan Preciado loses his mother, who had been abused then abandoned and disowned by his father, and then goes in search of his father at the place of his origins. He finds instead substitute mothers: Eduvigis, who claims she was almost his mother, and Damiana, the next “*madre sustituta*” (“substitute mother”), (826) who knew him as a baby, and, finally, Dorotea la Cuarraca, who together, as “*Virgilio con faldas*” (“Virgils in skirts”), teach the young man about his father’s past (825). Pedro Páramo is “The Jaliscan version of the patrimonial tyrant whose portrait we have evoked in the novels of Valle Inclán, Gallegos and Asturias,”<sup>803</sup> Fuentes claims, and he proceeds in Comala “as Machiavelli recommended and as Cortez did” (826). More than a regional symbol, then, the *cacique* becomes an international (mythical) and a national (colonial) one.

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<sup>802</sup> “...la mujer hizo la Cristeada porque obligaba a los hombre a ir a pelear, al marido, a los hijos. Los acicateaban: «Si tú no vas es que no eres hombre », y en Jalisco decirle a un hombre que no es hombre es la peor ofensa. ... El cura las utilizaba a ellas, las azuzaba en misa, un sermón tras otro; así fomentaba la causa; decía que había que ir a pelear, lo decía en todos los tonos, creo que era casi lo único que decía, que había que pelear por Cristo, matar por Cristo. ... Yo fui antiCristero, me pareció siempre una guerra tonta, tanto de un lado como de otro, del gobierno y del clero.”

<sup>803</sup> “la versión jalisciense del tirano patrimonial cuyo retrato hemos evocado en las novelas de Valle Inclán, Gallegos y Asturias” ... “como lo recomendó Maquiavelo y como lo hizo Cortés”

In *PP*, there is no romantic foundational family for Mexico, as literature sometimes provides for its nations, marrying conquistadors to native princesses as a symbolic story of Adam and Eve to cover the cruelty of conquest.<sup>804</sup> Instead, in the novel, intertwined with the miasma of poverty and destruction and power is a “lack” in the town’s generational and family structure. All sons are Pedro Páramo’s, created through violation. Dorotea’s baby is created of her illusions. There is also Abundio’s patricide, and the barren incest of Donis and his sister, trying to re-found the village. There is no positive “foundational” family for Mexico here; all generations coexist even after death, for there is nowhere for anyone to go, and no new life to reinvigorate Comala. This anti-family based on incest, patricide, rape and delusion may indeed be seen as a critical foundational metaphor following *la Malinche*, an origin story in Mexico based on the physical and emotional violation of the indigenous woman by Cortés, and the larger metaphorical rape of the Conquest. Nobel-winning Mexican author Octavio Paz has explored this story in *El laberinto de la soledad* as a national metaphor to explain the nation’s struggle to find an identity and to maintain non-abusive power structures, calling his fellow Mexicans, in a kind of battle-cry, “*hijos de la Chingada*” (82), “sons of the *Chingada*,” in which the *Chingada* – literally, the one who has been acted upon in sexual violence – is the *Malinche*, the defamed, humiliated, and suffering mother of the nation, and a secret wound still felt by every Mexican: “The strange permanence of Cortés and the Malinche in the imagination and in the sensibility of the current Mexicans reveals the they are something more than historical figures: they are symbols of a secret conflict, that we still haven’t resolved”<sup>805</sup> (95) (See “Los hijos de la Malinche,” chapter of *El laberinto de la soledad*).

Mexican author and critic Carlos Fuentes continues with this metaphor to say that Pedro’s human failing of loving Susana undoes his power, and therefore “Pedro Páramo is not Cortés”<sup>806</sup> (Fuentes 827), but have taken Paz’s national metaphors further. Solanilla picks up the mythology of the “*Búsqueda del Padre*” (among others<sup>807</sup>) and claims Juan Preciado’s situation as a metaphor for the Mexican identity as torn between “the invocation of the indigenous tradition sullied by the Conquest; and on the other hand the pretension of reconstructing history as a legacy of New Spain, forgetting or minimizing the indigenous past”<sup>808</sup> (76). Specifically, “only Death witnesses a lost identity. Dolores represents the indigenous mother, Pedro Páramo the Conquistador”<sup>809</sup> (70). In between the abused Aztec mother and abusive Spanish father, Juan

<sup>804</sup> See: *Caramuru* by Fr. José de Santa Rita Durão, and *Iracema* by José de Alencar, as well as the story of Pocahontas. They create a tales of a union in a new Eden between conquerors and pre-colonial cultures, in which the devoted native woman gives herself, and ultimately sacrifices herself, for the love of the European man.

<sup>805</sup> “*La extraña permanencia de Cortés y de la Malinche en la imaginación y en la sensibilidad de los mexicanos actuales revela que son algo más que figuras históricas: son símbolos de un conflicto secreto, que aún no hemos resuelto*”

<sup>806</sup> “*Pedro Páramo no es Cortés*”

<sup>807</sup> “*Some of Greek origin...la Redención de la Madre, Edipo y Yocasta, el Mito Femenino; otros pertenecen a la tradición judeo-cristiana, como los de la Caída, el Pecado Original, la Pérdida del Paraíso, la Pareja Primordial*” (Solanilla 70) (“the Redemption of the Mother, Oedipus and Jocasta, the Feminine Myth; others belong to the Judeo-Christian tradition, like those of the Fall, the Original Sin, the Loss of Paradise, the Primordial Pair”)

<sup>808</sup> “*la invocación de la tradición indígena mancillada por la Conquista; y por otro lado la pretensión de reconstruir la historia como un legado de la Nueva España, olvidando o minimizando el pasado indígena*”

<sup>809</sup> “*solo la Muerte testimonia una identidad perdida. Dolores representa la madre indígena, Pedro Páramo el conquistador*”

Preciado is “the reflection of the solitary Mexican man”<sup>810</sup> (70), as described by Octavio Paz in *El laberinto de la soledad*. *PP*, then, lends itself to an interpretation as a documentarily specific and socially critical novel of the time of the Revolution, and even as national allegory. In fact, even its preoccupation with death may be Mexican: Beardsell finds in the work what he refers to as the Mexican’s culture’s “preoccupation with death and eschatology” (76), and Ruffinelli’s states regarding the author’s sense of humor: “Without doubt, the inspiration of this humor is profoundly popular. It is found in the Mexican mortuary celebrations, in the “skulls” of the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November, in the peculiar macabre celebration”<sup>811</sup> (466). The author in fact agrees: when asked if death is a Mexican characteristic, he responds that indeed the “relationship between the Mexican and death is very interesting” in that death is both feared and mocked.<sup>812</sup> Mexico is present in *Pedro Páramo* in its regional specifics and, too, in its elemental themes.

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*Pedro Páramo* contains, has been shown here, what is in many ways a faithful representation of Jalisco during a specific historical period, just as *GSV* does the *sertão*; it contains the corn, creatures and landscape, the town with its many characters and archetypes. It contains too, the worst incarnation of the archetypal *cacique* – with his own law enforced in fear, his submissive servants and objectified women, claiming all as his dominion. The work also contains many indicators of its placement in a specific time in history, and with its references to the Mexican Revolution and the Cristero Rebellion goes an implicit criticism of these violent efforts, just as of the violence of Pedro Páramo’s bloody reign. With these characteristics, the novel could easily be placed into that telluric genre of the “Novel of the Mexican Revolution,” though its conclusions on uprising differ; however, as will be shown, the novel *is* much more than what it *contains*.

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<sup>810</sup> “*el reflejo del hombre mexicano solitario*”

<sup>811</sup> “*Sin duda, la inspiración de este humor es profundamente popular. Se encuentra en las celebraciones mortuorias mexicanas, en las «calaveras» del 2 de Noviembre, en la peculiar celebración macabra.*”

<sup>812</sup> “— *¿Coincide con Onetti cuando afirma que la muerte es una característica esencial de los mexicanos? / — Efectivamente. En México se le teme a la muerte, pero al mismo tiempo el pueblo se burla de ella. El día de los muertos se hacen calaveras de azúcar y la gente se las come. Esta relación del mexicano con la muerte es muy interesante.... resulta de la mezcla del español con el indígena.*” (González 107-108) (“— Do you coincide with Onetti when he affirms that death is an essential characteristic of Mexicans? / — Effectively. In Mexico death is feared, but at the same time the people mock it. The day of the dead they make skulls of sugar and the people eat them. This relationship between the Mexican and death is very interesting... it results of the mix of the Spanish and the indigenous.”)



## 2. BIOGRAPHICAL FRAMING: JUAN RULFO of JALISCO

Rulfo's biography and self-framing of that biography further show the relevance of his Mexican context – in place and history – to his expressed worldview. Unlike Guimarães Rosa, Rulfo's childhood, though also rural and filled with books, was defined by violence and loss instead of the excitement of discovery. Rulfo tells his family's story in his own words in his conversation with Poniatowska, used as the basis for her 1983 article “¡Ay vida, no me mereces! Juan Rulfo, tú pon la cara del disimulo” (“Oh life, you don't deserve me! Juan Rulfo, put on the face of disguise”):

My father died when I was six years old, my mother when I was eight. When my parents died I only made pure zeros, pure little balls in my school notebook, pure zeros I wrote. I was born May 16<sup>th</sup> 1918 in Sayula, but then they took me to San Gabriel. I am the son of Juan Nepomuceno Rulfo and of María Vizcaíno. I am called by many names: Juan Nepomuceno Carlos Pérez Rulfo Vizcaíno. ... My parents were ranchers, one had a *hacienda*: San Pedro Toxin, and the other Apulco, that was where we spend our vacations. Apulco is on a hill and San Pedro on the banks of the river Armería. Also in the story *El llano en llamas* this river of my childhood appears. ... It was full of bandits there, unpleasant people who joined the revolution and who remained with the will to continue fighting and sacking. They burned our *hacienda* in San Pedro like four times, when my dad was still alive. They murdered my uncle, they hung my grandfather up by his big toes and he lost them; there was a lot of violence and they all died at thirty-three years of age. Like Christ, yes. So it is that I am the son of people with money who lost everything in the revolution.<sup>813</sup> (Poniatowska 816)

In this paragraph, Rulfo reveals that his family owned several properties, one by the side of the “river of his childhood” and one on a hill, but that the violence related to the revolution destroyed his family and their wealth. His autobiography does not begin with “I was born...,” but with “My parents died.” His only connections with his parents and ancestry are his own memories, and his name, in which all of his ancestors are present, named, as he told Gómez Gleason in their 1966 interview:

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<sup>813</sup> “Mi padre murió cuando tenía yo seis años, mi madre cuando tenía ocho. Cuando mis padres murieron yo sólo hacía puros ceros, puras bolitas en el cuaderno escolar, puros ceros escribía. Nací el 16 de mayo de 1918 en Sayula, pero me llevaron luego a San Gabriel. Yo soy hijo de Juan Nepomuceno Rulfo y de María Vizcaíno. Me llamo con muchos nombres: Juan Nepomuceno Carlos Pérez Rulfo Vizcaíno. ... Mis padres eran hacendados, uno tenía una hacienda: San Pedro Toxin, y otro Apulco, que era donde pasábamos las vacaciones. Apulco está sobre una barranca y San Pedro a las orillas del río Armería. También en el cuento *El llano en llamas* aparece ese río de mi infancia. ... Estaba lleno de bandidos por allí, resabios de gente que se metió en la revolución y a quienes les quedaron ganas de seguir peleando y saqueando. A nuestra hacienda de San Pedro la quemaron como cuatro veces, cuando todavía vivía mi papá. A mi tío lo asesinaron, a mi abuelo lo colgaron de los dedos gordos y los perdió; era mucha la violencia y todos morían a los treinta y tres años. Como Cristo, sí. Así es de que soy hijo de gente adinerada que todo lo perdió en la revolución.”

They piled on me all the names of my paternal and maternal ancestors, as if I were the offspring of a cluster of plantain trees, and although I feel preference for the verb ‘to cluster’, I would have liked a simpler name.<sup>814</sup> (Gómez Gleason 150)

This is interesting to note; the weight of a long name is analogous to the weight of a long line of ancestors, many of whom died young: “In the Pérez Rulfo family, there was never much peace; everyone died young, at the age of 33 years and all were killed by the sword. Only David, victim of his fondness, was killed by a horse” (Gómez Gleason 151).<sup>815</sup> David died much like Miguel; the rest died like Christ, a curious reference for a man critical of religion. These voices were crowded in his own familial name, which he simplified publicly to “Juan Rulfo.” With his weight of names, his ancestors were with him always, just as they are in Comala.

Garrido (1979/1992) explains that Rulfo spent the first eight years of his life on the *hacienda* in San Gabriel, “which he considers as his true place of origin”<sup>816</sup> (753). This ended when “In 1925 his father was killed by a peasant on the farm,” and following that, “on the breaking out of the Cristero War, in 1926, one by one his uncles were dying and the children were sent to Guadalajara, where he was in various schools.” His mother died when he was 12, in 1930; he and his siblings remained in the custody of his grandmother, a “devoted and almost illiterate old woman who tried in vain to awake in him a religious vocation” (753).

The violence of the Cristero Rebellion, as Rulfo himself explained, then uprooted him yet again, shutting down the local school and causing the children to be sent to an orphanage where even their grandmother didn’t visit them. Due to the Cristiada, there were no longer schools, because the nuns left their posts; there was nothing but violence, and people abandoned the land: “there was no possibility of being there and people began to leave, to abandon the towns, to abandon the earth”<sup>817</sup> (Poniatowska “¡Ay vida...” 817). Rulfo and his siblings were sent to an orphanage: “it was a kind of horrible prison. ... in Guadalajara, no one saw us anymore. My grandmother María Rulfo Navarro stayed in San Gabriel...”<sup>818,819</sup> (818).

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<sup>814</sup> “*Me apilaron todos los nombres de mis antepasados paternos y maternos, como si fuera el vástago de un racimo de plátanos, y aunque sienta preferencia por el verbo arracimar, me hubiera gustado un nombre más sencillo*”

<sup>815</sup> “*En la familia Pérez Rulfo, nunca hubo mucha paz; todos morían temprano, a la edad de 33 años y todos eran asesinados por la espalda. Sólo a David, víctima de su afición, lo mató un caballo*”

<sup>816</sup> “*que él considera como su verdadero lugar de origen*” ... “*En 1925 su padre fue asesinado por un peón de la finca*” ... “*al desencadenarse la guerra cristera, en 1926, uno por uno fueron muriendo sus tíos y el niños fue enviado a Guadalajara, donde estuvo en varias escuelas*” ... “*una anciana devota y casi analfabeta que intentó en vano despertar en él la vocación religiosa*”

<sup>817</sup> “*no había ninguna posibilidad de estar allí y la gente empezó a salirse, a abandonar los pueblos, a abandonar la tierra.*”

<sup>818</sup> “*era una especie de prisión horrible. ... en Guadalajara, ya nadie nos vio. Mi abuela María Rulfo Navarro se quedó en San Gabriel...*”

<sup>819</sup> “*En San Gabriel hice parte de la primaria y cuando la Cristiada nos venimos a Guadalajara porque ya no había escuelas, ya no había nada; era zona de agitación y revuelta, no se podía salir a la calle, nomás oías los balazos y entraban los Cristeros a cada rato y entraban los Federales a saquear y luego entraban otra vez los Cristeros a saquear, en fin, no había ninguna posibilidad de estar allí y la gente empezó a salirse, a abandonar los pueblos, a abandonar la tierra* (Poniatowska 817). ... *En San Gabriel – repite Rulfo – hice parte de la primaria con unas monjitas francesas josefinas que usaban unos bonetes muy largos, blancos, almidonados y manejaban el colegio del pueblo, pero a raíz de la Cristiada quitaron el colegio y entonces ya no hubo ni colegio, ni monjas, ni maldita la cosa y por eso me mandaron con mis hermanos a Guadalajara, a un orfanatorio, allí entré a tercero de primaria y*

The *Cristiada*, then, like the Revolution, formed him in violence and loss. He spoke to Poniatowska of seeing corpses of those he knew, hanging along the road, drying in the sun “*como pellejos sin curtir*,” “like un-tanned hides,” eaten by vultures from the inside out (818). It is believable that this experience of the destruction of his town and its forced abandonment may have planted the seed of Comala in his mind, just as his own name and family history, keeping that violence close, may have contributed to the vividness and *presence* of Comala’s history.

Strangely, though it uprooted him and soured his feelings for the Church, the *Cristiada* formed Rulfo in education, too; in a window of time after his hometown priest left San Gabriel and before he, too, was forced to leave, he devoured the priest’s library:

When he went to the *Cristiada*, the priest of my town left his library in the house because we lived in front of the parish converted in barracks... there were many more secular books than religious ones, the same ones which I sat down to read, the novels of Alexander Dumas, those of Victor Hugo, Dick Turpin, Buffalo Bill, Sitting Bull. All this I read at ten years old, I passed the whole time reading, you couldn’t go out into the street because a bullet could hit you.<sup>820</sup> (Poniatowska 818)

It is due to this, explains Harss (1969/2003),<sup>821</sup> that the priest can be said to be the “one to blame” for Rulfo’s literary vocation (256). Rulfo’s connection with religion was, then, from a young age, mixed; he had a traditional Catholic upbringing, but the priests and nuns abandoned him and, in his view, manipulated others for their cause and committed atrocities themselves, as mentioned above. Religion appears to have been, then, foundational but also violent and uprooting. Above here, he uses the Catholic framework to frame his own loss, referring to his dead loved ones as “like Christ” in their unnecessary martyrdom; this, and the profoundly Catholic framework of the novel, indicate the presence of a Catholic identity that, if shaken in

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*allí comíamos y era una especie de prisión horrible. ... en Guadalajara, ya nadie nos vio. Mi abuela María Rulfo Navarro se quedó en San Gabriel*” (818) “In San Gabriel I did part of primary school and when the *Cristiada* came we came to Guadalajara because there were no longer any schools, there was no longer anything; it was a zone of agitation and revolt, one couldn’t go out into the street, we only heard the gunshots and the *Cristeros* entered every once in a while and the *Federales* entered to plunder and then the *Cristeros* entered again to plunder, in sum, there was no possibility of being there and people began to leave, to abandon the towns, to abandon the earth. / ... / In San Gabriel – Rulfo repeats – I did part of primary school with some little French Josephine nuns who used long, white, starched birettas, and managed the school of the town, but as a result of the *Cristiada* they left the school and then there was no school, nor nuns, nor any damned thing and because of that they sent me with my siblings to Guadalajara, to an orphanage, there I entered the third grade and there we ate and it was a kind of horrible prison. ... in Guadalajara, no one saw us anymore. My grandmother María Rulfo Navarro stayed in San Gabriel.”

<sup>820</sup> “*Cuando se fue a la Cristiada, el cura de mi pueblo dejó su biblioteca en la casa porque nosotros vivíamos frente al curato convertido en cuartel... había muchos más libros profanos que religiosos, los mismos que yo me senté a leer, las novelas de Alejandro Dumas, las de Víctor Hugo, Dick Turpin, Buffalo Bill, Sitting Bull. Todo eso lo leí yo a los diez años, me pasaba todo el tiempo leyendo, no podías salir a la calle porque te podía tocar un balazo.*”

<sup>821</sup> Harss explains, too, that this reading occurred at his grandmother’s farm: “his grandmother, a pious lady who could hardly read anything outside her prayer book, ... but whose house contained a small library belonging to the local parish. The priest had left it there in safekeeping when the government troops turned his house into an army barracks... Rulfo had the books all to himself. ‘So I read all of them’” (256).

faith in the institution and perhaps also in the deity, nonetheless persists, albeit with a kind of irony, as a foundational worldview for the author.

His experience of the revolution was of its repercussions; in fact, all of the childhood memories that he shares are of loss, even the loss of nuns and priests. However, Rulfo continued to pursue education and independence. In 1933 he tried to attend the University of Guadalajara, but they were on strike (Fell “Chronology,” 408, Garrido 753), so he went to Mexico City, where he was able to attend classes as Colegio San Ildefonso, though only as an auditor<sup>822</sup>. It was then that he began work in the Oficina de Migración, leading a quiet office life, though it was interrupted by the arrival of European immigrants after World War II. It was in this office, tucked away with a few coworkers, that he began to write after hours, apparently because he was lonely: “In reality I was alone in the city... I didn’t know anyone, so after work hours I stayed to write. It was a kind of dialogue that I made with myself”<sup>823</sup> (Garrido 754; origin of quote from Rulfo not indicated).

Rulfo first began work on a novel called *El hijo del desaliento*, of which the only published portion is a text called “Un pedazo de noche,” “A piece of night,”<sup>824</sup> published much later in 1959. Rulfo said of this early, work, as Guimarães Rosa did of his own first stories, “*La novela no me gustó*,” “I didn’t like the novel” (Garrido 754). However, though it is an urban tale and, like for Guimarães Rosa, unrelated to his later works, the story is nonetheless compellingly “Rulfian” in several qualities. The fragment is told from the point of view of a prostitute; in order to earn her place on the street, she has to pass through an initiation of sorts – “*dejar me tronar la nuez*” (Rulfo “Un pedazo,” 311)<sup>825</sup> – which she refuses to explain. She has learned to control her fear – or perhaps it has abandoned her before she could relegate it to its own solitude<sup>826</sup> – when she is approached in her trade by a man with a child in his arms, a child that has malicious adult eyes. She agrees to go with him – them – for a high price, though she is uncomfortable, and feels that the child might be “*el puro reflejo de nuestros vicios*,” (312) “the pure reflection of our vices.” It is the child of his drunken friend; they wander the streets together far from her “zone,” they eat at a *tortería*, and he tells her that he is an undertaker. He had seen her many times on the street corner and dreamed about her. He appears to have hoped to find in her a kindred spirit, assuming that she must hate people like he does; just as she has buried fear, he has buried pity and sorrow. The dead are “*Los seres más buenos de la tierra*” (315).<sup>827</sup> He tells her, “*me gustas más cuando te sueño*,” but then he sits by while she sleeps. Later, they marry; he waits for her, but even when she comes home they are in solitude: “*Me ha dicho muchas veces que no soy yo la que llega a estas horas, que nunca acabaremos por*

<sup>822</sup> His *Preparatoria* degree was not recognized and he failed an entrance exam (Fell 408, Garrido 753).

<sup>823</sup> “*En realidad yo estaba solo en la ciudad... Yo no conocía a nadie, así que después de las horas de trabajo me quedaba a escribir. Era una especie de diálogo que hacía conmigo mismo*”

<sup>824</sup> <http://www.sololiteratura.com/rul/rulunpedazodenoche.htm>

<sup>825</sup> “let me ‘break the nut’”

<sup>826</sup> “*...se me desterró el miedo. Al cabo de dos o tres semanas ya no lo sentí, como si se hubiera dado cuenta de que conmigo salía sobrando. ...procuraba esconderse ... tal vez y seguramente por miedo a que lo mandara a vivir solo, porque el miedo es la cosa que más miedo le tiene a la soledad*” (311) (“my fear banished itself. After two or three weeks I didn’t feel it anymore, as if it had realized that with me it was superfluous. ... it sought to hide itself ... perhaps and surely for fear that I would send it to live alone, because fear is the thing that has the most fear of solitude”)

<sup>827</sup> “The beings that are the most good on the earth” ... “I like you more when I dream you”

*encontrarnos: -...o tal vez sí -dice-; quizá cuando te asegure bajo tierra el día que me toque enterrarte*<sup>828</sup> (315). But she only wants him to let her sleep, and indeed had made him promise so before they married, because: “*de otra manera acabaría por perderse entre los agujeros de una mujer desbaratada por el desgaste de los hombres...*” (316). In a twist reminiscent of Susana San Juan, Claudio wants to have Olga/Pilar as she is in his dreams, but can’t even have her in reality, on earth, because she is already worn away; only in death might he know her. This story is urban, but it contains many of the themes of his later work: solitude, human connection and disconnection, sin, exhaustion, death, and earth. These people struggle to find redemption, hope, or home just as those of Comala do, in life and posthumously.

Like Guimarães Rosa, then, Rulfo’s first stories were not about his childhood homeland, rural Mexico, but about more cosmopolitan themes; and, like Guimarães Rosa, he hated his first work: “It was a conventional sort of book... it wasn’t convincing” ... “That wasn’t the way I wanted to say things”<sup>829</sup> (Harss and Dohmann 256). However, Rulfo’s were nonetheless based on themes close to him: loneliness in the city of Mexico, which he felt as a worker in the Migrations office; and loneliness that he had felt for years: “I was trying to find a way out of the solitude I’d been living in, not only in Mexico City but for many years, since my days in the orphanage”<sup>830</sup> (256). The work was, even though he didn’t like it, already written from a deep inner place, and already about illusions, death, and the earth. As Garrido says of him, “Rulfo is one of those writers who don’t write to entertain themselves nor to obtain a reputation among intellectuals nor to make a bureaucratic career; if he wrote it’s because he felt the urgency of bringing to completion this work of exploration of the human condition that is every great work of literature (Garrido “*Pedro...*” 753).”<sup>831</sup> He appears to have always written about what feels close to him, something he feels he needs to say. He claims, in fact, that he never felt the need to exile himself to some foreign city in order to find himself, or to find his homeland; he was perfectly capable of being exiled within Mexico, and finding it there.<sup>832</sup>

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<sup>828</sup> “He has told me many times that I am not the one that arrives at those hours, that we never end up finding each other: -... or perhaps yes –he says-; perhaps when I secure you below the earth the day that it’s my turn to bury you.” ... “in another way he would end up losing himself among the holes of woman ruined by the wearing away of men...”

<sup>829</sup> From its Spanish version, perhaps closer to the author’s words: “*Era una novela un poco convencional... No convenía*” ... “*No era lo propio como yo quería decir las cosas*” (Harss 71).

<sup>830</sup> “*quería desahogarme por ese medio de la soledad en que había vivido, no en la ciudad de México, pero desde hace muchos años, desde que estuve en el orfanatorio*” (Harss 71).

<sup>831</sup> “*Rulfo es uno de esos escritores que no escriben por divertirse ni por obtener una reputación de intelectuales ni para hacer una carrera burocrática; si él escribió es porque sintió la urgencia de llevar al cabo esa tarea de exploración en la condición humana que es toda gran obra de literatura*”

<sup>832</sup> “— ...*Yo no necesito moverme de México. No me pasa la necesidad de Carlos Fuentes —necesidad auténtica— de tomar perspectiva, distancia con los hechos. Lo mismo ha sucedido con Julio Cortázar que, en su exilio en Francia, terminó por comprender a Latinoamérica. No niego que México para mí es extraña. Pero allí «establecí» mi exilio. En algunos momentos — mientras escribía — viví en la soledad más absoluta. ... mis distancias materiales, esos lejanos mundos, o ciudades distintas — no sé por qué —, yo lo consigo sin moverme de México. Esto ni me alegra, ni me entristece.*” (González 114) (“I don’t need to move away from Mexico. I don’t have the necessity of Carlos Fuentes — authentic necessity— to take perspective, distance from events. The same has happened to Julio Cortázar who, in his exile in France, ended up understanding Latin America. I don’t deny that Mexico is strange for me. But there I «established» my exile. In some moments — while I was writing — I lived in the most absolute solitude. ... my material distances, those distant worlds, or different cities — I don’t know why—, I obtain them without leaving Mexico. This neither gives me joy, nor saddens me.”

Soon after working on this largely unpublished novel, he turned to stories, and returned to rural Mexico in his author's eye. Rulfo's coworker Efrén Hernández was a writer, and he noticed Rulfo writing and helped him to make it publishable, choosing the best work from his pile of papers and helping Rulfo to find his literary voice (Poniatowska 819).<sup>833</sup> At his friend's insistence, Rulfo began to participate in literary journals, including *Americana* and *Pan*, publishing some stories there that would later be reunited in *El Llano en llamas*. (Fell 409, Garrido 754). Over the next few years, he changed jobs to work selling tires, and he married Clara Aparicio in 1947, with whom he had four children. In 1954 he was promoted to publicity for the tire company, and the next year he wrote *Pedro Páramo*, which was initially received with mixed reviews, especially given that he was expected to be a short story writer, but was later widely canonized as a classic (see Zepeda), and has been subsequently read in schools across the country and the world, and translated into German (1958), English (1959), Norwegian (1961), Italian (1963), Polish (1966), Portuguese (1969), Russian (1970), and more (Fell 411). Following the publication of *PP*, Rulfo began to work in film, and in the 1960s, he traveled with the Comunidad Latinoamericana de Escritores, organizing the meeting in Mexico in 1967, and participating in Chile in 1969, and in a similar capacity he traveled in 1974 with the official delegation of the Mexican president to prepare meetings among Latin American authors. That same year, he went to Europe, invited by universities there. He was elected to the *Academia Mexicana de la Lengua* in 1976, joining in 1980.<sup>834</sup> Rulfo was much invited, appreciated, and acclaimed, but was always reserved and humble. He passed away in 1986.

Like Guimarães Rosa, Rulfo grew up a landowner's son near a river he knew as home, read avidly with the help of a cleric, and left his small hometown at a young age to study in a bigger city. Then, like Guimarães Rosa, he wrote, married, and traveled the world. However, Rulfo's family lost their lands in the revolution, and that cleric "helped" by leaving his library at the boy's home while he went to war, taking young Rulfo's school and support system with him. The boy left for a bigger city not because he had outgrown his beloved hometown's academic offerings, but because he had nowhere else to go. He lost his parents, he lost his teachers, and then he had to leave his land too, abandon the *earth* that he knew as home, as did those around him. He wrote, but not in grandiosity, only out of a clear and momentary sense of urgency; and he traveled, but not as a career.

Guimarães Rosa appeared humble, but was in many ways extremely self-confident; Rulfo, on the other hand, mumbled and spoke of himself as a "poor devil,"<sup>835</sup> and as "all depressed and marginalized" (Poniatowska "Ay vida," 814). Guimarães Rosa's speech on his induction into

<sup>833</sup> "Efrén Hernández y yo trabajábamos en Migración allá por 1936, 1937. Y un día me dijo: «Qué está usted haciendo allí con todos esos papeles escondidos?» «Pues esto». Y le enseñé unas cuartillas... Efrén parecía un pajarito pero con unas enormes tijeras de podar, me fue quitando toda la hojarasca, hasta que me dejó tal como me viste en 1954, en pleno Llano en llamas hecho un árbol escueto. Creo que en mi lucha por apartarme de las complicaciones verbales he ido a dar a la simpleza" "Efrén Hernández and I worked in Migration around 1936, 1937. And one day he said to me: "What are you doing there with all of those hidden papers?" "Well this". And I showed him some sheets of paper... Efrén looked like a little bird but with some enormous pruning shears, he took away all the dead leaves, until he left me as you saw me in 1954, in full *Llano en llamas* made a plain tree. I think that in my fight to separate myself from verbal complications I have come to turn to simplicity"

<sup>834</sup> See "historia" at <http://www.academia.org.mx/anuario.php>

<sup>835</sup> "pobre diablo" ... "todo deprimido y marginado"

the Academia Brasileira fills more than ten pages of print and remarks on the magical nature of the world, while Rulfo's speech on receiving the Premio Nacional de Literatura in 1970 was concise and humble, containing the following:

I don't remember right now who said that man is a pure nothing. Not something, not anything, but a pure nothing. And I feel like this in this instant; perhaps because knowing the weakness of my limitations I never elaborated a spirit of confidence; I never believed in self-respect.<sup>836</sup> (Poniatowska "Ay vida," 815)

The child who wrote zeros in his notebooks negated himself, and continued to do so as an adult.

These experiences and worldviews, while not necessarily completely formative of the works nor the prisms through which those works should be exclusively seen, do appear to parallel the works' outlooks. One author stands on metaphysical dreams to engage in philosophical creation, seeking divinity and the answers to large questions through land and humankind, effervescent in language even while his protagonist struggles with regrets and the damaging power of belief systems. The other, though also couching the creative work in metaphysical terms and also struggling with regret and belief systems, sees the entire institution of the Catholic church as a symptom of violence, and creates a literary realm not of mysticism, but of the endless cost of violence and injustice, a realm of lost souls. The exuberance of the one, and its creation of a space of often positive and spiritual identity, are in contrast with the sparseness of the other, its creation of a space equally powerful and self-sufficient but of eternal regret and suffering. Garrido describes Rulfo as "a thin and cautious man, austere, with passion for the essential, careful with what he says, of nervous and penetrating gaze, discrete to the point of timidity," and continues, pointing out: "he lives with a sharp consciousness of the finitude of the human" (Garrido "Pedro..." 753).<sup>837</sup> Even while both novels create a metaphysical realm attached to the physical one and explore human guilt and possibility there, Guimarães Rosa's realm points to the presence of the spiritual on Earth, whereas Rulfo's realm, a Purgatory on Earth, concentrates on the *finiteness* of humanity, its failings, its very negation.

The authors share, however, in many other regards: for instance, though Rulfo's childhood appears as a dark shadow of Guimarães Rosa's, ironically parallel but tragic, the two nonetheless shared in their experience of the importance of land. For Guimarães Rosa, the magic of his homeland stayed with him always, and he returned to it in thought and words, when not in reality, to frame his worldview in its terms. For Rulfo, too, his homeland stayed with him always; its power was etched into him at a young age as he experienced its virtues, and then it was darkened in violence and stolen away. The boy whose family names were piled into him guarded his lost family and identity, and remembered the tragedy of leaving the *earth* behind.

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<sup>836</sup> "No recuerdo por ahora quién dijo que el hombre era una pura nada. No algo, ni cualquier cosa, sino una pura nada. Y yo me siento así en este instante; quizá porque conociendo lo flaco de mis limitaciones jamás elaboré un espíritu de confianza; jamás creí en el respeto propio"

<sup>837</sup> "un hombre delgado y cauteloso, austero, con pasión por lo esencial, cuidadoso con lo que dice, de mirada nerviosa y penetrante, discreto hasta la timidez" ... "vive con una aguda conciencia de la finitud de lo humano"

### 3. AMBIGUITY and SYMBOL:

#### 3.1 The UN-FRAMING of the AUTHOR:

Juan Rulfo can be placed in the time of history and the space of Mexico, for he suffered its consequences. However, like Guimarães Rosa, he nonetheless remains ambiguous. As Felipe Garrido (1979/1992) points out, “[m]any critics have wanted to explain to themselves the character of the works of Rulfo based on the fact that the childhood of the author happened during the last years of the Revolution and those of the Cristero War, which had for him a special corollary of violence” (755).<sup>838</sup> However, Garrido indicates next that “[i]n principle, Rulfo has opposed himself to such a class of interpretations,”<sup>839</sup> quoting Rulfo from his interview with Sommers (1974):

Well, in reality I have never used, neither in the stories nor in *Pedro Páramo*, anything autobiographical. There are no pages there that have to do with my person nor with my family. I never use direct autobiography. It isn't because I have something against this novelistic mode. It's simply because known characters don't give me the reality that I need, and the imagined characters do give it to me.<sup>840</sup> (Sommers 19, also in Garrido 755)

Rulfo, then, claims to write from his imagination, not from his life, family, or memories; not because he disapproves of personal literature, but because imagined characters give him the *reality he needs*. Rulfo continues, however, in response to Sommers' statement: “But one supposes that a novel reflects the vision of the world that the author has”: “Perhaps deep down there is something that isn't planned in a clear form on the surface” (19-20).<sup>841</sup>

In another interview, he claims, apparently contradictorily, that the novel is *both* related to every moment of his childhood, *and* that he lied/invented all of it, to the extent that anyone searching for a connection between his biography and his work will be frustrated. He then repeats his notion that literature is a true lie; not a falsehood, but in being a lie, truer than the truth:

— Can you relate *Pedro Páramo* in any way with some moments of your childhood?  
 — With all of the moments of my childhood. I think that the childhood is the most permanent thing in mankind. I carry with me certain memories of the towns that I knew, though they are not very firm...  
 ...I have never gone back. Nonetheless, professors who have studied my work have gone over there. They have gone to those towns I mention to find the relationships. They

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<sup>838</sup> “[m]uchos críticos han querido explicarse el carácter de las obras de Rulfo a partir del hecho de que la infancia del escritor transcurrió durante los últimos años de la Revolución y los de la guerra cristera, que tuvo para él un especial corolario de violencia”

<sup>839</sup> “En principio, Rulfo se ha opuesto a tal clase de interpretaciones”

<sup>840</sup> “Bueno, en realidad nunca he usado, ni en los cuentos ni en *Pedro Páramo*, nada autobiográfico. No hay páginas allí que tengan que ver con mi persona ni con mi familia. No utilizo nunca la *Autobiografía directa*. No es porque yo tenga algo en contra de ese modo novelístico. Es simplemente porque los personajes conocidos no me dan la realidad que necesito, y que sí me dan los personajes imaginados.”

<sup>841</sup> “Pero se supone que una novela refleja la visión del mundo que tiene el autor”: “Tal vez en lo profundo haya algo que no esté planeado en forma clara en la superficie”



haven't found anything. It's that there isn't anything. They have asked my brothers who live near there: and this town, where is it? And this character, with whom do you identify it? But my brothers answer them: he — I — is a liar.

— Do you think that literature is a lie to tell the truth?

— You have said it very well and I am absolutely in agreement. One must be a liar to make literature. Now: there is a difference between a lie and a falsehood. When one falsifies facts, one immediately notes the artificialness of the situation. On the other hand, when one is telling a lie, one is recreating a reality on the basis of lies. One reinvents the same town that still exists and naturally... one is telling lies."<sup>842</sup> (111)

Rulfo claims that the works have to do with every moment of his childhood; however, he claims also that there is nothing autobiographical in them, and there is nothing in the town of his youth – to which he has never returned – to help in their interpretation.

Rulfo has in fact been cited as saying many contradictory things. In *Autobiografía armada*<sup>843</sup> (1973), Reina Roffé quotes Rulfo as saying that the novel, though gestating inside him for years, was finally given voice when he went back to his hometown – the same one he said he had never returned to, above:

*Pedro Páramo* came since before. It was already, one can almost say, planned. Well, like some ten years before. I hadn't written a single page, but it was turning around in my head. And there was something that gave me the key to get it out, that is to say to unthread that still woolly fiber. It was when I returned to the town where I had lived, 30 years before, and I encountered it uninhabited. It's a town that I had known, of some seven thousand, eight thousand. It had 150 inhabitants, when I arrived. Those immense houses – it's one of those really big towns, the stores there were counted by doors, they were stores of eight doors, ten doors – and when I arrived the houses had padlocks. The people had gone, like that. But it had occurred to someone to sow the streets of the town with *casuarina* trees. And I had to stay there one night, and it's a town where the wind blows a lot, it's at the foot of the *sierra madre*. And in the nights the *casuarinas* bellow, howl. And the wind. Then I understood that solitude of Comala, of that place. The name doesn't exist, no. The town of Comala is a progressive, fertile town. But the derivation of *comal* – *comal* is a recipient of clay, that is placed over the coals, where tortillas are

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<sup>842</sup> “— ¿Puede relacionar de alguna manera *Pedro Páramo* con algunos momentos de su infancia? / — Con todos los momentos de mi infancia. Creo que la infancia es lo más permanente en el hombre. Llevo conmigo ciertos recuerdos de los pueblos que conocí, pero no son bien firmes... / ...Nunca he vuelto. Sin embargo, hasta allá se han movilizad profesores que han estudiado mi obra. Han ido a esos pueblos que menciono para hallar las relaciones. No han encontrado nada. Es que no hay nada. A mis hermanos que viven por allá les han preguntado: y este pueblo ¿dónde está? Y este personaje ¿con quién lo identifica? Pero mis hermanos les contestan: él — yo — es un mentiroso. / — ¿Cree que la literatura es una mentira para decir la verdad? / — Lo ha dicho muy bien y estoy absolutamente de acuerdo. Hay que ser mentirosos para hacer literatura. Ahora bien: hay una diferencia entre la mentira y la falsedad. Cuando se falsean los hechos, se nota inmediatamente lo artificioso de la situación. En cambio, cuando se están contando mentira, se está recreando una realidad a base de mentiras. Se reinventa el mismo pueblo que aún existe y naturalmente... se están diciendo mentiras.”

<sup>843</sup> In this work, Reina Roffé collects many of the author's autobiographical statements from interviews, speeches, etc. and arranges them in the chronological order of his life. The sources of individual fragments are not cited.

heated – , and the heat that there is in that town, is what gave me the idea of the name. Comala: place over the coals.<sup>844</sup> (60-61)

This indicates that at the least, one experience in his hometown as an adult was inspirational to Rulfo and allowed him to give shape to his novel and begin to write; this doesn't mean, however, that San Gabriel "is" Comala, as the phrase is interpreted by, for instance, Beardsell, who claims based on this same passage in *Autobiografía armada* that Rulfo has "always insisted that his fictional town is based not on the real Comala but on San Gabriel" (83).

Rulfo was also ambiguous in that, like Guimarães Rosa, he conceded few interviews<sup>845</sup>; however, though both authors expressed a wish to remove themselves from the interpretation of their own work, leaving it to speak for itself and remain open to the reader's interaction with it, Guimarães Rosa also refused interviews because he felt no one was a strong enough interlocutor; he didn't want to explain his works to an unprepared listener, and so the few interviews he did

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<sup>844</sup> "Pedro Páramo venía desde antes. Estaba ya, casi se puede decir, planeado. Pues, como unos diez años antes. No había escrito una sola página, pero me estaba dando vueltas en la cabeza. Y hubo una cosa que me dio la clave para sacarlo, es decir para desenhebrar ese hilo aún enlanado. Fue cuando regresé al pueblo donde vivía, 30 años después, y lo encontré deshabitado. Es un pueblo que he conocido yo, de unos siete mil, ocho mil habitantes. Tenía 150 habitantes, cuando llegué. Las casas aquellas inmensas – es uno de esos pueblos muy grandes, las tiendas ahí se contaban por puertas, eran tiendas de ocho puertas, diez puertas – y cuando llegué las casas tenían candado. La gente se había ido, así. Pero a alguien se le ocurrió sembrar de casuarinas las calles del pueblo. Y a mí me tocó estar allí una noche, y es un pueblo donde sopla mucho el viento, está al pie de la sierra madre. Y en las noches las casuarinas mugen, aúllan. Y el viento. Entonces comprendí yo esa soledad de Comala, del lugar ése. El nombre no existe, no. El pueblo de Comala es un pueblo progresista, fértil. Pero la derivación de comal – comal es un recipiente de barro, que se pone sobre las brasas, donde se calientan las tortillas – , y el calor que hay en ese pueblo, es lo que me dio la idea del nombre. Comala: lugar sobre las brasas"

<sup>845</sup> The interviews he did grant include, among others,: 1) An interview with María Teresa Gómez Gleason in 1966, titled "Juan Rulfo y el mundo de su próxima novela, *La cordillera*" and printed in the "*La Cultura en México*" supplement of *¡Siempre!*, no. 228, 29 June 1966, p. VI. (reprinted in *Recopilación de textos sobre Juan Rulfo*. La Habana, Cuba: Centro de Investigaciones Literarias, Casa de las Américas, 1995. 150-154.). Though ostensibly about his coming work, the interview mostly touches on his biography.

2) "Con Rulfo desde Madrid," an interview with Juan E. González in *Sábado*, supplement de *Uno más Uno*, 29 Sept. 1979, reprinted as "Entrevista con Juan Rulfo" in *Revista de Occidente*, núm. 9, Madrid, Oct./Dec. 1981, 105 -114.

3) An interview with Elena Poniatowska in 1980 (roughly; she places it as 26 years after 1954), included in part in her article "*¡Ay vida, no me mereces! Juan Rulfo, tú pon la cara del disimulo*" (in *Inframundo*, Ed. del Norte, 1983, 41-52, and reprinted in *Toda la obra*, Rulfo, Fell 814-824)

4) An interview with Luis Harss entitled "Juan Rulfo o la pena sin nombre" (in Luis Harss, *Los nuestros*, 1969, and *La ficción de la memoria*, org. Federico Campbell, 2003-.

5) An interview with Joseph Sommers, called "Los muertos no tienen tiempo ni espacio (un diálogo con Juan Rulfo)," first published in *Siempre* in 1973, republished as an introduction to Sommers' anthology: *La narrativa de Juan Rulfo. Interpretaciones críticas*. Joseph Sommers (ed.). Secretaría de Educación Pública, México, 1974. 17-22.,

6) A dialogue with Venezuelan university students called "Juan Rulfo examina su narrativa" [diálogo con estudiantes de la Universidad Central de Venezuela, 13 de marzo de 1974]. (in *Toda la obra*. Rulfo, Fell. 873-881.

7) Nepomuceno, Eric. "Entrevista con el maestro Juan Rulfo". In *Juan Rulfo: imagen y obra escogida*. México, D.F. : Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1984. (Originally in *Sábado de Uno más uno* 17 de junio de 1982, p. 1)

8) A 1977 conversation with Jorge Ruffinelli recorded in "La leyenda de Rulfo: Cómo se construye el escritor desde el momento en que deja de serlo". in *Toda la obra*. Rulfo, Fell. 447-470.

9) An interview with Juan Carlos González Boixo in Madrid, April 1983, while González Boixo was putting together the first Cátedra edition of *Pedro Páramo*. in: *Pedro Páramo*. Madrid: Cátedra, 2004. 247-251.

allow were with people he considered worthy, or with family and friends. Rulfo, on the other hand, never expressed a sense of ownership or of pride in his work, and was painfully nervous about public speaking, a much different reason for avoiding interviews.

Due to his laconic nature, the interviews that he did grant were special, and had their own unique rhythm. María Teresa Gómez Gleason interviewed Rulfo in 1966, but he did not respond to her questions, and she learned not to ask; the only way to get anything out of him, she claims, was to let him find his own way out of his interiority:

One can't press Rulfo with questions, because he doesn't answer any nor does he allow one to write anything down; it's necessary to let him speak of what he wants and let his thoughts flow freely, in words of dry wind and of green and bitter smoke, so that he forgets that eternal obstinacy of being with his eyes focused inward.<sup>846</sup> (152)

Poniatowska similarly compares Rulfo to the fields of Comala: “regarding interviews Rulfo is like the myrtles and orange trees that grow in Comala”<sup>847</sup> (815), and to the root of the “chinchayote”:

To benefit from Rulfo it's necessary to dig a lot, like looking for the root of the chayote. Rulfo doesn't grow up but towards the inside. More than speaking, he pondered his incessant monologue quietly, chewing the works well to impede them from coming out. However, sometimes they do come out.

Rulfo himself has a lot of the lost soul, and only speaks in his own time, in his time of serious and quiet writer, so different from all those who don't let escape the least opportunity to be intelligent. Rulfo doesn't like to talk about himself because he has given himself entirely to the voices of his people, to the murmurs of Comala that every day open a path in him, laboriously and clumsily, because Rulfo barely helps them express themselves.<sup>848</sup> (“Ay vida,” 814-815)

Poniatowska brings up reasons other than shyness for his laconism; and Solanilla echoes her opinion that his reticence to speak stems from something other than shyness. Where Poniatowska believes Rulfo is channeling his people, Solanilla believes his silence to be because the deciphering of his own literary work is beyond him: “the direct interview with the author regarding the theme of his work was not possible due to the classic reticence that Rulfo always

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<sup>846</sup> “A Rulfo no hay que apremiarlo con preguntas, porque no contesta ninguna ni permite anotar nada; hay que dejarlo que hable de lo que él quiera y que discurra su pensamiento libremente, en palabras de viento seco y de humo verde y agrio, para que olvide esa eterna obstinación de andar metido ojos adentro”

<sup>847</sup> “de las entrevistas Rulfo es como los arrayanes y los naranjos que se dan en Comala”

<sup>848</sup> “Para sacarle provecho a Rulfo hay que escarbar mucho, como para buscar la raíz del chinchayote. Rulfo no crece hacia arriba sino hacia adentro. Más que hablar, rumia su incesante monólogo en voz baja, masticando bien las palabras para impedir que salgan. Sin embargo, a veces salen. ...

El propio Rulfo tiene mucho de ánima en pena, y sólo habla a sus horas, en esas horas de escritor serio y callado, tan distinto de todos aquellos que no dejan escapar la menor oportunidad de ser inteligentes. A Rulfo no le gusta hablar de sí mismo porque se ha dado por entero a las voces de su pueblo, a los murmullos de Comala que todos los días se abren paso en él, trabajosa y torpemente, porque Rulfo apenas les ayuda a expresarse.”

had in this sense, to keep himself in the silence of his poetry and of his fantastical world, profound questionings that even he himself could not decipher” (10).<sup>849,850</sup>

Other critics also speak of Rulfo’s silence, surmising about its origins:

Along with the recognitions and the studies Rulfo has also been the object of a clamor of varying intensity that reproaches him for the silence that he has kept so fully/scrupulously since the apparition of his novel, *Pedro Páramo*. ... perhaps silence could be Rulfo’s favorite vocation; ... even when he writes one could say that Rulfo is quiet...<sup>851</sup> (Garrido “*Pedro...*” 753)

His reticence to speak about his work or even at all could be a mirror of his reticence to speak *in* the work, as well. Whatever the cause, Rulfo was always quiet, and claimed that his whole family was quiet, too:

In my house we didn’t speak, no one talked with anyone, neither I with Clara nor she with me, nor my children either, no one speaks, this isn’t used, plus I don’t even want to communicate, what I want is to explain to me what happens to me and every day I dialogue with myself, ... I go dialoguing with myself to unburden myself, I speak alone. I don’t like to speak with anyone.<sup>852</sup> (Poniatowska 819)

Poniatowska claims that, before becoming famous after the publishing of his novel, Rulfo was more carefree, that “one didn’t see sadness on any side of him... on the contrary, he laughed even with the dog that passes by. ... That’s how Rulfo was walking, chatting and chatting by the

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<sup>849</sup> “*la entrevista directa con el autor acerca del tema de trabajo no fue posible por la reticencia clásica que siempre tuvo Rulfo en ese sentido, para guardarse en el silencio de su poesía y de su mundo fantástico, profundos interrogantes que ni siquiera él mismo pudo descifrar*”

<sup>850</sup> Interestingly, both of these sentiments mirror those Guimarães Rosa applied to his own writing. He claimed that he was channeling the rural characters of the *sertão*: “*Os caboclos “baixaram” em mim... Só escrevo altamente inspirado, como que “tomado,” em transe.*” and that he wrote his works in an “*efervescência de caos, trabalho quase “mediúmnico” e elaboração subconsciente*”. (“The *caboclos* (mixed-race people) “came down” [“*baixar*” is parapsychological terminology for spirits becoming manifest, channeled, or incorporated] into me... I only write highly inspired, as if “taken,” in trance”. ... “effervescence of chaos, a work almost “mediumnic” and subconscious elaboration”)

He expressed, too, that his own works became much more than what he himself could fathom or explain: “*Mirrado pé de couve, seja, o livro fica sendo, no chão do seu autor, uma árvore velha, capaz de transviá-lo e de o fazer andar errado, se tenta alcançar-lhe os fios extremos, no labirinto das raízes. Graças a Deus, tudo é mistério*”. (“Be it a stunted stand of greens, a book ends up being, in the soil of the author, an ancient tree, capable of corrupting him/her, of leading him/her astray, if he/she tries to reach its furthest fibers, its labyrinth of roots. Thanks be to God, all is mystery.”)

<sup>851</sup> “*Junto con los reconocimientos y los estudios Rulfo ha sido también objeto de un clamor de varia intensidad que le reprocha el silencio que tan cumplidamente ha guardado después de la aparición de su novela, Pedro Páramo. ... tal vez el silencio sea la vocación predilecta de Rulfo; ... incluso cuando escribe podría decirse que Rulfo calla...*”

<sup>852</sup> “*En mi casa no hablábamos, nadie habla con nadie, ni yo con Clara ni ella conmigo, ni mis hijos tampoco, nadie habla, eso no se usa, además yo ni quiero comunicarme, lo que quiero es explicarme lo que me sucede y todos los días dialogo conmigo mismo, ... voy dialogando conmigo mismo para desahogarme, hablo solo. No me gusta hablar con nadie.*”

rivers of the Cuauhtémoc colony”<sup>853</sup> (816). However, that changed; and, too, even in that moment in which Rulfo was “*gordito*,” “chubby,” and laughed, he was already silent:

When I asked him the first question in January of 1954, I stayed a half hour waiting for the response. He looked at me pitifully like how those dogs look when one pulls a thorn from their paw. And finally I started to hear the voice of those who cultivate a piece of earth dry and hot like a *comal*, harsh and hard like a cowhide.<sup>854</sup> (816)

During dinners in his honor, Rulfo was quiet and terse, negative. An admirer asked, “ ‘Mr. Rulfo, and what do you feel when you write?’<sup>855</sup> and almost without lifting his eyes Rulfo grumbled, “Remorse.” In another, Alberto Moravia remarked to Rulfo that they hadn’t heard his voice; he responded, “You should know, there in Comala they are digging up the cadavers of the horses”<sup>856</sup> (Poniatowska 816).

Rulfo appeared to be, in sum, an extreme introvert, which accounts in part for his own reticence to be interviewed; he says of himself, “I am a man very alone, alone among the rest. The only one I speak with is my solitude” (Poniatowska 819).<sup>857</sup> And, once written, he no longer wished to communicate about them, nor to learn of their reception: “I never read what the critics say nor do I know what they say” (819).<sup>858</sup> He didn’t appreciate his fame: “he became famous and he didn’t like it even a little, because fame stuns”<sup>859</sup> (816). Fernando Benítez (1983) echoes this, claiming that he has seen his friend study architectural plans of hotels and “evade the pack by taking hidden passage-ways or service elevators” (14).

More than this, Rulfo has sometimes lied in order to deal with his public-speaking nerves. He tells the story to Juan E. González in Madrid (1981):

— ...one day Ángel Rama convinced me to go to the Central University of Venezuela to chat with the students. I saw myself in front of 1,500 students. I am panicked by these things; so the condition was that they make questions beforehand... Ángel... passed them to me, but suddenly I heard myself speak. I answered all of the questions with lies. I didn’t use at all the truth of the events... I invented that a man was the one who told me all my stories and that this character had died and that, since then, I hadn’t returned to writing stories because I didn’t have anyone to tell them to me... and more, more things.<sup>860</sup> (111-112)

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<sup>853</sup> “*no se veía por ningún lado la tristeza... al contrario, se reía hasta con el perro que va pasando. ... Así caminaba Rulfo, platique y platique por los ríos de la colonia Cuauhtémoc*”

<sup>854</sup> “*Cuando le hice la primera pregunta en enero de 1954, me quedé media hora esperando la respuesta. Me miraba lastimosamente como miran esos perros a quienes se les saca una espina de la pata. Y al fin comencé a oír la voz de los que cultivan un pedazo de tierra seca y ardiente como un comal, áspera y dura como un pellejo de vaca.*”

<sup>855</sup> “*Señor Rulfo, ¿y qué siente usted cuando escribe?’ y casi sin levantar los ojos Rulfo gruñó: ‘Remordimientos’*”

<sup>856</sup> “*Saben ustedes, allá en Comala están desenterrando los cadáveres de los caballos*”

<sup>857</sup> “*soy un hombre muy solo, solo entre los demás. Con la única que platico es con mi soledad*”

<sup>858</sup> “*Yo nunca leo lo que dicen los críticos ni sé lo que dicen.*”

<sup>859</sup> “*se hizo famoso y eso ya no le gustó ni tanto, porque la fama ataranta*”

<sup>860</sup> “— ...un día Ángel Rama me convenció que fuera a la Universidad Central de Venezuela a platicar con los

He also joked, in that interview, “that he cut out so much that even he couldn’t understand it” (Wilson 240).<sup>861</sup> So, how can we know if he is ever truthful in an interview? Like the novel, his other words are also ambiguous.

These anecdotes show him as unpredictable and, too, they show him with a sense of humor, again making him an ambiguous character himself. Indeed, no person is singly identifiable in one mood; several times, the same Rulfo who is so often characterized as laconic and sad has been mentioned as a humorist. For instance, in the article based on his interview with Gómez Gleason, she remarks:

When he speaks, he says lies that are so atrocious they make one laugh, and then he refutes them with ease. Sometimes I think that he even forgets me and just keeps talking, talking. I don’t know if he is telling a real occurrence or inventing a story. On occasions, his words, like the head of an arrow, hit the target, sprinkled with irony and even humor, although always sparing the laugh; ... his long fingers playing nervously in his hands; he enters and leaves time, plays with the living and the dead; he himself seems taken from the dantesque Luvina or Comala.<sup>862</sup> (152)

Humor, satire, irony; this is another side to Rulfo, one also apparent in the work. But, too, the talkative and witty Rulfo is the one who holds back laughter, twitches his fingers nervously, and, more than anything, appears to be talking to himself, as he has said he prefers to do... the one who flees public speaking, “*rehúye hablar*” (152), and whose mouth is like the slot of a piggy bank, a fissure that struggles to give back what it takes in (150).<sup>863</sup> His “interlocutor” is listening to his internal monologue, out of time, from which he occasionally emerges.

Felipe Garrido, in “La sonrisa de Juan Rulfo” (2003) (“Juan Rulfo’s smile”), writes that although there are supposedly only three laughs in Rulfo’s entire opus, nonetheless Rulfo “knew how to exploit in his texts the eccentric perspective that humor offers. Sarcasm, irony, hyperbole, word play, double meanings wisely spice his writings” and “bestow greater vigor” to the other aspects of the work<sup>864</sup> (242-243). Garrido cites Manuel Durán as well; Durán wrote of the “ironic

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*alumnos. Me vi frente a 1.500 estudiantes. Yo le tengo pánico a esas cosas; entonces la condición fue que hicieran preguntas previas.. Ángel ... me las pasaba, pero de pronto me escuché hablar. Contestaba todas las preguntas con mentiras. No utilicé para nada la verdad de los hechos... Inventé que un señor era el que me contaba a mí los cuentos y que este personaje había muerto y que, desde entonces, yo no había vuelto a escribir cuentos porque no tenía quién me los contara... y más, más cosas.”*

<sup>861</sup> “...dicen que les cuesta trabajo leerlo. No sé, a mí no me cuesta trabajo. Me costó al principio mucho trabajo pero, como les digo, ya a la tercera vez lo entendí, ya más o menos le agarré el hilo...” (“...they say they have trouble reading it. I don’t know, I don’t have trouble. It cost me a lot of work at first but, as I tell you, already the third time through I understood it, I more or less caught the thread of it.”) (“Juan Rulfo examina...” 875)

<sup>862</sup> “*Cuando platica, dice mentiras tan atroces que hacen reír, y luego las desmiente con desenfado. A veces creo que hasta se olvida de mí y sigue hablando, hablando. No sé si estará contando un hecho real o inventado una historia. En ocasiones, sus palabras, como puntas de flecha, van a dar en el blanco, salpicadas de ironía y hasta de humor, aunque siempre regateando la risa; ... los dedos largos jugueteando nerviosamente en sus manos; entra y sale del tiempo, juega con los vivos y los muertos; parece él mismo sacado de las dantescas Luvina o Comala”*

<sup>863</sup> “*la boca apenas una hendedura de alcancía*”

<sup>864</sup> “*supo explotar en sus textos la perspectiva excéntrica que ofrece el humor. El sarcasmo, la ironía, la hipérbole, los juegos de palabras, los dobles sentidos salpican sabiamente sus escritos”... “otorgan mayor vigor”*

counterpoint” and “unexpected comic effects” of the work in his article “Juan Rulfo, cuentista: la verdad casi sospechosa” (“Juan Rulfo, storyteller: the almost suspect truth”) (2003) (Garrido 243, Durán 95), and of its ability to oppose humor and tragedy in its labyrinth of mirrors (Durán 89, 115). Ruffinelli<sup>865</sup> also writes of Rulfo’s unique brand of humor:

The succinct prose and the personal and almost proverbial laconism of Rulfo barely allowed one to see that there was in him a great sense of humor... The personal humor of Rulfo was sarcastic, ironic, sometimes simply playful, others devastating. It is time to reread his work, too, as an exercise in ‘noir’ humor, tragic and dense in moments, light other times.<sup>866</sup> (466)

Beardsell agrees that the work can be read with humor: “The whole book is based on a potentially macabre situation: a dialogue of the dead. But instead of a morbid or gruesome atmosphere we have a combination of mystery, fear, naturalness and humour” (Beardsell 89). The quiet and depressed Rulfo appears to be echoed in his spare and death-filled work; as, too, the author’s experience with tragedy appear to be portrayed in a context intrinsically tied to Mexican history and society. However, even that dark novel of despair, guilt, and criticism can be read as a work of humor, as Rulfo himself could be read as a humorous man, complicating further any simple categorization of author or of work.

In yet another twist on Rulfo, the laconic/humorous and otherwise contradictory man, the author, though seldom granting interviews, used one of those interviews to “clarify” the work – though, as shown above, with an unknown truth quotient – and in that one interview he appears to lay many critical debates to rest at once, without hesitation. In his interview with González Boixo in 1983 (“Aclaraciones de Juan Rulfo a su novela «Pedro Páramo»”), he frankly and directly tells his interlocutor – among other “clarifying” details – that:

- 1) The couple that Juan Preciado encounters in his visit to the town is “a hallucination that he has inside the terror itself... it’s absurd... They are hallucinations that precede death... and this woman who is converted into mud; this indicates that the guy is totally insane” (González Boixo 248).<sup>867</sup>
- 2) Pedro Páramo’s statement “¿y a ti quién te mató, madre?” (“and who killed you, Mother?”) is from the older Pedro, not the one who is seeing his mother in the room, and

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<sup>865</sup> Ruffinelli writes of humor in Rulfo’s works as it appears in criticism; he mentions Garrido’s article on the “provocative” theme of humor and the absurd in the works, such as Abundio’s statement that the town is so hot that its souls, when sent to Hell, return to Comala for their blankets, or the moment when the townspeople joke about Miguel womanizing beyond the grave and Pedro authoritatively telling his son to stay buried, as well as many other darkly ironic moments or creative or popular expressions (Ruffinelli 466). He points to Gleason, above, and, too, to Mario Benedetti’s 1955 article “*Juan Rulfo y las posibilidades del criollismo*”<sup>865</sup>, which remarks on Rulfo’s use of humor, especially black humor, in the works (Ruffinelli 446).

<sup>866</sup> “*La prosa escueta y el laconismo personal y casi proverbial de Rulfo apenas dejaban entrever que había en él un gran sentido del humor... El humor personal de Rulfo era socarrón, irónico, a veces simplemente lúdico, otras devastador. Es hora de releer su obra, también, como un ejercicio de humor «noir», trágico y denso por momentos, ligero otras veces.*”

<sup>867</sup> “*una alucinación que tiene dentro del terror mismo... es absurdo... Son alucinaciones que preceden la muerte... y esa mujer que se le convierte en lodo; eso indica que el tipo está totalmente loco.*”

that the juxtaposition should have been clarified in the text; his mother dies later: “The fact is that the mother dies later” (249).<sup>868</sup>

- 3) Susana was never married, and never saw the sea: “this is also a dream. That guy who married her never existed. They’re ravings, they’re fantasies. She never knew the sea, she never married anyone, she always lived with her father” (250).<sup>869</sup>
- 4) There is no incest with Bartolomé. When asked about the incestuous relationship, he answers: “Apparently, but there isn’t. The father wanted to have her always with him” (250).<sup>870</sup>

And when asked why these facts are not sufficiently clear in the novel, he says: “It’s that the novel had three hundred pages, it had its lucubrations, it had digressions, it had explanations” (250).<sup>871</sup> In short, he cut out so much that what was left was at times unclear.

Rulfo wrote the book, and then later, in interviews, he explained his intentions, what was “really” true even though it is unclear in the novel. This is all very interesting, and should surely be taken into account; however, he has built a contradictory world around his own statements that frees him from truth-telling – and, in the end, this must be an analysis of the *novel we read*, not of Rulfo’s opinion of it after publishing or even before, or of a previous draft that was more “clarifying.” Although his claimed intentions are interesting to note, many of these underlying facts that he claims to have held as true while he wrote the work are *not in it*... the novel doesn’t express Florencio or Donis and his sister as pure illusion, for even Pedro Páramo’s servant who went in search of her knew of the husband; and the work does truly hint at incest. It also does not clarify that the statement “And who killed you, Mother?” is a later one, nor mention when the mother “really” died. The author’s statements simply emphasize the ambiguities and limitations inherent in accepting the author’s perspective as any more true than the reader’s. It may have been clear in his mind, but the published book, famous and appreciated as it is, is another matter; many debate the extent to which an author can interpret or explain his/her own work, but for now, the analysis of the author’s intentions is for another exploration.

And in fact, though he has “clarified the novel,” Rulfo has also stated that the magic of his work comes from the fact that he *lets the characters, and the book, go* after creating them: “[The character] has his own life, and my work becomes simplified at this point from not having anything else to do, but to follow him. ... In no moment did I force him... I didn’t intervene... / — Do you think your magic is due to that? / — There are no doubts” (González, “Entrevista,” 106).<sup>872</sup> The author, though he apparently has sure opinions of what the work is really about, places us, the readers, as coauthors, having deliberately taking as many opinions as he could out the work:

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<sup>868</sup> “*El hecho es que la madre muere después*”

<sup>869</sup> “*eso es también un sueño. Ese fulano que se casó con ella no existió nunca. Son locuras, son fantasías. Nunca conoció el mar, nunca se casó con nadie, siempre vivió con su padre.*”

<sup>870</sup> “*aparentemente, pero no la hay. El padre la quería tener siempre con él.*”

<sup>871</sup> “*Es que la novela tenía trescientos páginas, tenía sus elucubraciones, tenía divagaciones, tenía explicaciones*”

<sup>872</sup> “[*El personaje*] [*t*]iene vida propia, y mi tarea se simplifica a ese extremo de no tener otra cosa que hacer, más que seguirlo... En ningún momento lo forcé... No intervine yo... / — ¿Cree que su magia se deba a eso? / — No caben dudas.”



- Returning to his work as writer, on which side do you situate the reader?
- As re-creator. As co-author.
- Did you have this preoccupation when you structured *Pedro Páramo*?
- I always have this concern. Regarding the structure of *Pedro Páramo*, I varied it. Originally it had a lot of digressions. Lucubrations of the author. I fell into error, the most common of all writers: believing myself an essayist. I had put in a whole need to opine and, naturally, the novel had these aberrant digressions, interferences and explanations. When I changed the structure I took all of this out. I made *Pedro Páramo* 150 pages, taking into account the reader as co-author.<sup>873</sup> (González 108)

Rulfo lives that “paradox” that Guimarães Rosa so appreciated, as shown in Part I. He is depressed and funny, laconic and talkative, truth-telling and lying; his novel is based on his life, and not based on it; a slave to the author’s explanation of their “truth,” and dependent on the reader as coauthor; etc. Both author and work are complicated by being deeply ambiguous, having one foot in intention and one in reception, one in reality/”truth” and one in fiction and imagination or, more than fiction, a place out of time, out of specificity, co-authored, created, and therefore *even more real*.

### 3.2 The UN-FRAMING of the WORK:

The work also contains, as Rulfo does, specificity: the specificity of being in Mexico through its portrayal of landscape and customs, and indeed in being near specific towns. Besides the fictitious Comala, the nearby towns of Contla, Apango, where the *indios* live, Sayula, where Juan Preciado passes through, and Colima, where he was raised, are mentioned in the text; according to Solanilla, Apango, Contla, and Sayula are geographically locatable towns (Solanilla 19). However, Comala is never placed with precision. It is instead left ambiguous: “The geographical placement of the town is not clearly determined, even though the novel supplies some hints to situate it in a manner that is general and at the same time ambiguous” (Solanilla 19).<sup>874</sup> In fact, it is not even necessarily in Jalisco; the land’s characteristics place it in a geographical *zone*, according to Solanilla, rather than in a specific region or state. The work is often placed in Jalisco since Jalisco contains such a zone, but as Solanilla explains, Jalisco’s climate as a whole is varied and the geographic zone crosses it<sup>875</sup> (21-22). Indeed, the author

<sup>873</sup> “— *Volviendo a su tarea de escritor, ¿de qué lado sitúa al lector? / — Como recreador. Como coautor. / — ¿Tenía esta preocupación mientras estructuraba a Pedro Páramo? / — Siempre tengo esa preocupación. En cuanto a la estructura de Pedro Páramo, la varié. Originariamente había muchas divagaciones. Lucubraciones de autor. Caí en un error, el más común en todos los escritores; crearme ensayista. Había volcado toda una necesidad de opinar y, naturalmente, la novela tenía esas divagaciones, intromisiones y explicaciones aberrantes. Cuando cambié la estructura quité todo eso. Hice de Pedro Páramo 150 páginas, teniendo en cuenta al lector como coautor.*”

<sup>874</sup> “*La ubicación geográfica del pueblo no está claramente determinada, aunque la novela suministra algunos indicios para situarla de una manera general y al mismo tiempo ambigua.*”

<sup>875</sup> “*Este medio geográfico... corresponde... a la Tierra Caliente, una extensa zona... que atraviesa el Estado de Jalisco, razón por la cual algunos comentaristas de Rulfo consideran que su novela se centra allí (Estado de Jalisco). Sin embargo, es más preciso hablar de una zona geográfica en Pedro Páramo que de un Estado de México propiamente dicho, ya que el Estado de Jalisco tiene una conformación orográfica y climatológica muy variada*” (21-22) (“This geographical environment... corresponds... to the Hot Lands, an extensive zone... that

himself, when asked what Comala is, describes its *zone*, not its location, even though he has mentioned (above) that it was based in part on his hometown of San Gabriel, and that it took place in Jalisco (because it had to take place somewhere):

P: What is Comala?

J.R.: Well, Comala is a symbol. It's a wheel of clay where tortillas are heated. They put these wheels on coals. The *comal* and the *pretil* are always together. In Mexico... many know what a *comal* is. ... It's a symbol of the heat that there is in the place in which the story is developed. This story is developed in the Hot Lands not on the coast of any sea but in a region called precisely the Hot Lands that is between the high plateau of the Mexican high plateau, and the Western Sierra Madre. There, there is a large belt that almost spans the whole country and that is called the Hot Lands. It is very hot and Comala is in the middle of that region. This means that it is over the coals. There they say that it is as if it were on the coals of Hell. In reality it's a very hot place.<sup>876</sup> (“Juan Rulfo examina su narrativa” 875-876)

Comala has, then, like the *sertão* in *GSV*, both specificity in its regional setting, and an ambiguity within that region that opens it up to the possibility of symbolic meaning. The *Tierra Caliente* and its natural and cultural specificity provide both a *plausible setting*<sup>877</sup> for the story, and a *grounding* for its establishment of much deeper messages through an association of humanity and the soil.

The work contains, too, the specificity of being associated with specific historical events in Mexican history, as have been mentioned above here. This is referred to by Solanilla as the “Historical Reality”<sup>878</sup> aspect of the work, consisting of: a) the presence of a concrete “historical time” for the narration in that it contains the Mexican Revolution and the Cristero Rebellion<sup>879</sup>,

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crosses the State of Jalisco, reason for which some commentators of Rulfo consider that the novel is centered there (the State of Jalisco). However, it is more precise to talk of a geographical zone in Pedro Páramo than of a Mexican State properly said, given that the State of Jalisco has a very varied orography [relating to mountains] and climatology.”)

<sup>876</sup> “P: *Qué es Comala?* / J.R.: *Bueno, Comala es un símbolo. Es una rueda de barro donde calientan las tortillas. Ponen esas ruedas sobre unas brasas. El comal y el pretil están juntos siempre. En México, ... muchos saben qué es un comal. ... Es un símbolo del calor que hace en el lugar donde se desarrolla la historia. Esta historia se desarrolla en la Tierra Caliente no en la costa de ningún mar sino en una región que se llama Tierra Caliente precisamente, que está entre la altiplanicie del México del altiplano, y la Sierra Madre Occidental. Allí hay una faja muy grande que casi abarca todo el país y que le dicen la Tierra Caliente. Hace mucho calor y Comala está en medio de esa región. Esto significa que está sobre las brasas. Allí dicen que como si estuviera en las brasas del infierno. En realidad es un lugar muy caluroso.*”

<sup>877</sup> As Solanilla explains, “*Lo más importante, ... consiste en la recuperación de todos estos vocablos que designan lo auténtico mexicano, para ofrecer así una visión de un universo (o una realidad) posible. Un Cuadro Natural propio, rural, mexicano, con hombres y mujeres mexicanos, con costumbres y hábitos mexicanos.*” (30) (“The most important, ... consists in the recuperation of all of these terms that designate the authentically Mexican, to offer thus a vision of a possible universe (or reality). It's own Natural Scene, rural, Mexican, with Mexican men and women, with Mexican customs and habits.”)

<sup>878</sup> “*Realidad Histórica*” ... “a representation of this same structure in the Mexican nation for the period”

<sup>879</sup> “*los dos grandes fenómenos históricos de la novela (que pueden ser los dos grandes momentos históricos de comienzos de siglo para México)*” (Solanilla 16) (“the two great historical phenomena of the novel (that may be the two great historical moments of the beginnings of the century for Mexico)”)

and, too, b) a faithful representation of the social structure of rural Mexico in Comala.<sup>880</sup> Solanilla feels that Rulfo has created a synthesis of the rural Mexican town: “On creating a town of the nature of Comala, the author has realized a well achieved synthesis of the rural Mexican towns, with the particularities on the economic and social levels” (67),<sup>881</sup> including *caciquismo*, and that the novel actively seeks to criticize “the disastrous social effects of said institution” (67).<sup>882</sup>

However, this connection to history is, as shown above, as ambiguous as Comala’s connection to geography; the link is there, the historical setting plausible, but there are no specific dates to neatly frame the work in reality.

Also, as much as critics want to apply “*caciquismo*” to Pedro Páramo, the author also says, as recorded in *Autobiografía armada*, that:

The character Pedro Páramo, I don’t know where he came from... I don’t consider him of easy classification. I think that he is the *cacique*. But... I don’t know if there was a *cacique* that made his own revolution to defend himself from the revolution. He forms... part of a consciousness, of a way of thinking, of a mentality that perhaps exists. But I don’t manage to localize it well.<sup>883</sup> (65)

Then, when asked by Ruffinelli, too, in 1977, whether Pedro Páramo is based on a real anecdote, Rulfo responds with the following, indicating that while he didn’t purposefully base his character or setting on real people/places, since he doesn’t want to write history or other reports, he nonetheless acknowledges that the work bears a strong resemblance to aspects of reality:

...I didn’t want to make either history or chronicle... the places that appear named... exist, but neither did I copy the reality of those places, ... On the other hand, there are people who come and tell me: “I saw Pedro Páramo...” It isn’t strange that they point it out to me. Pedro Páramo is a *cacique* and in Mexico we are full of *caciques*... everything is *caciquismo*...<sup>884</sup> (Ruffinelli 470)

Many named places are real places; but he didn’t concentrate on their reality. He doesn’t know where Pedro Páramo came from, and isn’t willing to easily classify him as a *cacique*; but isn’t surprised that people see him in Mexico, *since he is a cacique*... the author’s approach to the

<sup>880</sup> “una representación de esa misma estructura en la nación mexicana para el período” (16).

<sup>881</sup> “Al crear un pueblo de la índole de Comala, el autor ha realizado una bien lograda síntesis de los pueblos campesinos mexicanos, con las particularidades en el nivel económico y social” ... “sees to revealing critically” ... “the disastrous social effects of the said institution”

<sup>882</sup> “se encarga de revelar críticamente” ... “los desastrosos efectos sociales de dicha institución”

<sup>883</sup> “El personaje Pedro Páramo no sé de dónde salió... Yo no lo considero de fácil clasificación. Creo que es el *cacique*. Pero... yo no sé si hubo un *cacique* que hizo su propia revolución para defenderse de la revolución. Forma... parte de una conciencia, de un modo de pensar, de una mentalidad que tal vez existe. Pero no la logro localizar bien.”

<sup>884</sup> “...yo no quise hacer ni historia ni crónica... los lugares que aparecen nombrados... existen, pero tampoco he calcado la realidad de esos lugares, ... Por otro lado, hay gente que viene y me dice: “Vi a Pedro Páramo,...” No es extraño que me lo señalen. Pedro Páramo es un *cacique* y en México estamos repletos de *caciques*... todo es *caciquismo*...”

work does not provide an easy source for its explanation. He is also cited in Roffé as saying “Pedro Páramo is the representative case of the average landowner that existed in Jalisco...”<sup>885</sup> but then he claims, much like Guimarães Rosa about *GSV*, that this placement was merely an unfortunate accident of familiarity: “If I located *Pedro Páramo* in Jalisco, it was simply because that’s what I know best. I have the unfortunate tendency to place certain imaginary characters in specific geographical surroundings. I like to give the atmosphere of the place.”<sup>886</sup> (Harss and Dohmann 266). He also mentions – though it is in the student dialogue of which, later, he says he lied the whole time – that he only writes “rural” literature because the people in the countryside talk so simply that he could handle it; and, in fact, his own tendency to speak but little was as a *result* of his writing, and not its cause.<sup>887</sup> This, from the same man who considers himself truly “from” a rural town – and in the same interview: “I lived in a village called San Gabriel. I really consider myself to be from there”<sup>888</sup> (Harss and Dohmann 249). It is and isn’t a regional novel; Jalisco is and isn’t important to Rulfo; the work is and isn’t representative of a time or a place, and is and isn’t about *caciquismo*. He continues:

Pedro Páramo wasn’t situated in a time, it was placed in a region. It’s hard to know in what era it occurred. But, yes, there are a few facts, there, more or less... In reality it wasn’t trying to involve any time period, or revolution, or anything. None of those material things. Simply to involve the occurrences that had happened there. And never is a date mentioned.<sup>889</sup> (Roffé 64-65)

In this passage (in Roffé, again of unspecified origin), he claims that the work is not related to the Revolution nor indeed to any historical era, even though there are a few historical occurrences here and there indicated in the work. Thus, it both is and isn’t about the revolution.

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<sup>885</sup> “*Pedro Páramo es el caso representativo del hacendado mediano que existía en Jalisco*”

<sup>886</sup> Spanish versions: “*que yo haya situado Pedro Páramo en Jalisco fue sencillamente debido a que la conozco. Yo tengo la desgraciada tendencia de situar geográficamente a ciertos personajes imaginarios. Me gusta ubicar geográficamente al personaje. En el ambiente de la zona.*”<sup>886</sup> (Roffé 64/Harss 80).

<sup>887</sup> “*traté efectivamente de ejercitar un estilo, de hacer una especie de experimento; tratar de evitar la retórica, matar al adjetivo, ... y debido a eso es que a mí me han llamado un escritor ru... ¿cómo se llama?, rural. Sí, rural, porque escogí para esto, personajes muy sencillos, de vocabularios muy pequeño, muy reducido, para que se me facilitara la forma y no complicarme con personajes que hablaran con palabras difíciles. Por eso es que en la mayor parte de las historias, de los cuentos, están intencionalmente escogidos personajes campesinos o pueblerinos.... escogí a esta gente, que aparte de ignorante casi no habla, pero lo curioso es que se me pegó tanto, influyó tanto este estilo... que yo también yo dejé de hablar y hablo muy poco.*” “(“Juan Rulfo examina su narrativa” 879) (“I tried effectively to exercise a style, to make a kind of experiment: to try to avoid rhetoric, kill the adjective, ,, and it is due to this that they have called me a ru... what is it? rural writer. Yes, rural, because I chose for this, very simple characters, with small vocabularies, very reduced, so that the form would be easier for me and not complicate me with characters who spoke with difficult words. This is why in most of the histories, the stories, rural or town characters are intentionally chosen... I those that people, who besides being ignorant almost don’t speak, but the curious thing is that it stuck with me so much, influenced me so much... that I also stopped speaking and speak very little”)

<sup>888</sup> In the Spanish (original) version: “*Yo viví en un pueblo que se llama San Gabriel. En realidad yo me considero de ese lugar.*” (Harss 63).

<sup>889</sup> “*Pedro Páramo no estaba situado en una época, estaba ubicado en una región. Es difícil saber en qué época sucede. Pero, sí, hay ciertos hechos, ahí, más o menos... En realidad no era tratar de involucrar ninguna época, ni revolución, ni nada. Ninguno de esos materiales. Simplemente involucrar los hechos que habían pasado allí. Y nunca se menciona una fecha.*”

Also, as much as critics may want to view Pedro Páramo as the central focus of the work, whether or not he is historically or culturally representative, such can not be inferred from such a detail as the title alone: though the work is called *Pedro Páramo*, it was first called *Los murmullos*. Though aware that “the title changes the perspective of a work: it depends on the one you choose that the accent falls on one or another aspect of the book,”<sup>890</sup> Rulfo changed the title because he *had* to: “I wanted to title it *The murmurs [Los murmullos]* but in the end I couldn’t do it because García Cantú was writing a book with the same title” (Ruffinelli 470). Other contradictions abound as well in relation to the work’s central focus, among other aspects. For instance, when asked who the main character of the novel is, he says both: “It’s about a novel in which the central character is the town. One must note that some critics take Pedro Páramo to be the central character. In reality it’s the town”<sup>891</sup> (Sommers 19), and “Susana San Juan was always the central character” (Roffé 65-66). However much critics may want to impose a sense of autobiographical or historically critical purpose to the work, that is simply an interpretation, and one that the author himself refuses to give, both by giving contradictory statements of the work’s origins or intended meanings, and, too, by being somewhat reticent to speak about it at all.

Above, Juan Rulfo stated that he has never consciously used autobiography in his works, nor based anyone on a real person, since imaginary characters grant him the *reality* that he needs *more so than a real person could*. He has also stated the following in reference to the possibility of real “things” in the texts, as well as of real people:

I am a person who can’t write about what I see. I am not a reporter... I can only write about things that I imagine. I am an intuitive writer. They are apparently real things, but they aren’t based in reality. There aren’t even parallel situations. At least, in my case, what works is the imagination. Recreations of the reality that feeds from imaginary reality.<sup>892</sup>

So what does the “reality” of setting mean in the novel? As shown above here, the novel’s geographical and cultural landscape certainly reflects, or appears to very concretely reflect, a connection to the Mexican historical/geographical reality. The novel documents natural, economic, social and cultural phenomena in an attributable fashion, pointing the knowledgeable reader towards a region of Mexico and a moment in history, and towards a specific type of land-ownership and its associated ills. Other critics, like Solanilla, have found the landscape in the work to be that of a real regional space; even Fuentes (1992) claims that the novel tells a

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<sup>890</sup> “el título cambia la perspectiva de un libro: depende del que elijas para que caiga el acento en uno o en otro aspecto del libro” ... “Yo quería titularlo *Los murmullos* pero al final no pude hacerlo porque García Cantú estaba escribiendo un libro con ese mismo título”

<sup>891</sup> “Se trata de una novela en que el personaje central es el pueblo. Hay que notar que algunos críticos toman como personaje central a Pedro Páramo. En realidad es el pueblo”... “Susana San Juan fue siempre el personaje central”

<sup>892</sup> Interview with Eric Nepomuceno, *Sábado* of *Uno más uno* 17 June 1982, p. 1; in Klahn 423. “Soy una persona que no puede escribir sobre lo que veo. No soy reportero... sólo puedo escribir sobre cosas que imagino. Soy un escritor intuitivo. Aparentemente son cosas reales, pero no están basadas en la realidad. Ni siquiera hay situaciones paralelas. Por lo menos, en mi caso, lo que funciona es la imaginación. Recreaciones de la realidad que se alimenta de una realidad imaginada.”

“‘realistic’ political and psychological story”<sup>893</sup> although that reality is “*movimentante*,” in movement (826) (as Riobaldo claimed of the *sertão* (533)). And Beardsell claims the landscape is that of “local identity” and “setting” (Beardsell 75), and that the work indicates historical context, and “reflects local idiom in carefully modified form” (75). However, as is apparent in the interview with González,<sup>894</sup> the desire to present a regionally specific social archetype is hedged between other, and contradictory, desires:

— The character, first I have to imagine him, then gestate his characteristics... how he will express himself. When I have concluded all of this..., I place him in a certain region... and I leave him in liberty. From this moment on I only dedicate myself to observing him. He has his own life, and my work becomes simplified at this point from not having anything else to do, but to follow him.<sup>895</sup> (106)

He tells González that Pedro Páramo was born thus; first imagined in characteristics and self-expressions, then placed and set free. He was: “an intuitive thing and a product purely of the imagination... The only thing I did was follow him... I didn’t intervene...”<sup>896</sup> He claims, in fact, if there were such a person as Pedro Páramo in real life, he could never have written the book, being incapable of writing from “real situations or characters.”

However, when González asks him “— If we leave the character and go to the novel, do you think you have given a lot more things through it: a view of Mexico and of the world, for example?”<sup>897</sup>, the author responds by saying that if that is true, the novel must have opened its own way into universality,<sup>898</sup> because he intended to create a *cacique* of the type specific to the South Jalisco:

— ...In principle, I wanted to present a cacique, which is a characteristic thing of Mexico. Because there exists there a *caciquismo* both of regional and state types... It abounds —and more in past times—, and Pedro Páramo is a cacique, which predominates in a certain region of a nation: in Mexico, concretely.

— In which?

— In the south of Jalisco.<sup>899</sup> (106)

<sup>893</sup> “una historia política y psicológica «realista»”

<sup>894</sup> “Entrevista con Juan Rulfo” (Con Rulfo, desde Madrid)

<sup>895</sup> “— ...Al personaje, primero tengo que imaginarlo, luego gestar sus características... cómo habrá de expresarse. Cuando todo esto haya concluido..., lo ubico en una determinada región... y lo dejo en libertad. A partir de ese momento sólo me dedico a observarlo. Tiene vida propia, y mi tarea se simplifica a ese extremo de no tener otra cosa que hacer, más que seguirlo.”

<sup>896</sup> “una cosa intuitiva y producto puramente de la imaginación... Lo único que hice fue seguirlo... No intervine yo”

<sup>897</sup> “— Si salimos del personaje y vamos a la novela, ¿cree haber dado a través de ella muchas cosas más: una cosmovisión de México y del mundo, por ejemplo?”

<sup>898</sup> “Si eso lo tiene, será porque se habrá abierto camino hacia terrenos de universalidad.”

<sup>899</sup> “— ...Yo, en principio, quise presentar un cacique, que es una cosa característica de México. Porque allá existe un caciquismo tanto de tipo regional como estatal... Esto abunda —y más en tiempos pasados—, y Pedro Páramo es un cacique, que predomina en cierta región de un país: de México, concretamente. / — ¿En cuál? / — En el sur de Jalisco.”

Rulfo continues to explain that the landscape of Jalisco in the novel reflects its reality, and, when his interviewer points out his contradictions, he gives a vague reply:

— Does it possess all those characteristics that you emphasize in the novel, or does the landscape also escape from reality?

— Yes. It's a moor: there exist there thousands of hectares that in other times were fertile and productive lands. In actuality, they are totally eroded. The towns that existed there were abandoned by their inhabitants because they didn't have anything to live on.

...

— Don't you think there is a contradiction? On the one hand, you affirm that to write you should dispense with reality, but, at the same time, you recognize that there is a specific zone with the characteristics that you emphasize in your novel.

— I'll see how to clarify that. The reality is there. I know it. I have knowledge of it, but to write I need to imagine it. Redefine it to myself, serving myself of imagination.<sup>900</sup> (106-107)

Though above Rulfo claims the work to be intuitive and imaginary, when asked if the work is national or universal in nature, Rulfo responds that if it is about a very specific social phenomenon that exists in nature, and places it very specifically in the South of Jalisco. His explanation for the contradiction is: "I have knowledge of [reality], but to write I need to imagine it." *PP* is, then, a specifically regional, entirely imaginary novel.

In fact, like Guimarães Rosa, Rulfo *does* write both about region and about its imaginary. Like *GSV*, *PP* contains sure and technical description and characterization of the author's home region and its archetypes, and is about that, and yet is – paradoxically – nonetheless *also not about that*, an idea supported in the work and also in the author's own interviews. Rulfo used his work to take issue with much more than an abusive agrarian culture and the erosion of farmland, and yet he also does so *through* that farmland, and his narrative techniques – far from threatening to "obscure" the story – are its sure and creative voice.

Many have pointed to the evidence in the work of time and place and directed criticism, as shown above here. It is generally agreed that there is some component of apparent realism in the work, even if it is, as Rulfo claims, accidental<sup>901</sup>; but what appears to be in question in many of these critical texts is the *balance* of that "reality" and other dimensions of the work. It is, yes, a regional novel, on an identifiable physical plane. But what is the role of that plane? Beardsell calls the landscape a "backcloth" for the story, but it is clearly more. He sees some of that "more" in his work, and continues to say that the landscape in Rulfo's works "enhances moods," "heightens ideas," and "precipitates and determines human behavior" in the work. This is

<sup>900</sup> "— ¿Posee todas esas características que destaca en la novela, o también el paisaje escapa de la realidad? /— Sí. Es un Páramo: allá existen miles de hectáreas que en otros tiempos fueron tierras fértiles y productivas. En la actualidad, están totalmente erosionadas. Los pueblos que existían han sido abandonados por sus habitantes porque no tienen de qué vivir. ... /— ¿No cree que existe una contradicción? Por una parte, usted afirma que para escribir se debe prescindir de la realidad, pero, al mismo tiempo, reconoce que existe una zona determinada con las características que destaca en su novela. /— Veré como aclarar esto. La realidad está allí. Yo la conozco. Tengo conocimiento de ella, pero para escribir necesito imaginarla. Replanteármela, sirviéndome de la imaginación."

<sup>901</sup> "tal vez en lo profundo haya algo que no esté planeado en forma clara en la superficie"

apparent; however, even more than that, the people in the work actually precipitate and determine nature and the land. The landscape is more than “backdrop”: it is *protagonist*, the source of the work’s (meta)physical and literary spaces, and the product of its narratives.

\*

The author is and isn’t many things, and he claims the same for his works. Critics have found – and I have – many cultural, historical, biographical, and critical references in *PP*; but nonetheless, Rulfo – though not the definitive source on his work, as no author is – says of the characters that they aren’t real. He claims that “the imagined characters” ... “give me the reality that I need,”<sup>902</sup> and of the work, that “they are apparently real things, but they aren’t based on reality.” It seems paradoxical that there could be reality and the imagined all at once in the same landscape, and in many ways it is paradoxical; however, it is that “platypus-paradox” (See Introduction), the combination of elements that are counterintuitive and yet are one. Comala is both real and imagined, and it is only *because it is both* that the reader can find therein, in that strange multiplicity, the “reality that we need.”

In a land that is both specific and ambiguous in time and in place – much like Riobaldo’s *sertão* with its “real” landmarks and elements and its openness to the “realm-realm” – it becomes possible both to 1) take advantage of the real human connection to that space to create of it a “place” that reflects our own morality and perspective, and then 2) open up that place to the possibility of being both its specific self in time and place, and its other temporal selves and its reflected spiritual realms, in order to 3) illustrate the ineffable: the true impact of violence, and the humanity of evil. The land of the *sertão* was, for Guimarães Rosa, a “place” with identity, history, and divinity, a place of “felt value” and of the possibility for perceiving the transcendent as Matter, in Matter. It was, too, a place that echoes and forms mankind’s thoughts, even when those are of evil and violence; though Riobaldo could find God in the *sertão*, he concludes that the devil there was his own reflection, the construction of his confused labyrinthine journey and the whirlwind breath of his telling. The land is, in *PP*, also a “place” deeply connected to humanity as our origin and resting place, our sustainer and a tool for profit or ruin, and indeed as our entire earthly experience. Our memories are the archive of its seasons, while it is the archive of our lives. Blood shed on the earth remains there, and will not be forgotten. The fact of a geographically and culturally real setting in Jalisco provides an entry into the work as a plausible and reachable place, while the ambiguity of that space frees it to take the reader to further realms of meaning: a purgatory of reliving cruelty, wrought by a violent *cacique* and a corrupt religion.

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<sup>902</sup> “los personajes imaginados” ... “me dan la realidad que necesito” ... “Aparentemente son cosas reales, pero no están basadas en la realidad.”



**CHAPTER II:  
BEYOND yet WITHIN the RURAL SCENE**

**1. ABOVE-, UNDER-, and –GROUND: FARMLAND AS...**

According to Ángel Rama (2007), one's "hinterlands" of origin leave their "cultural peculiarities"<sup>903</sup> on even the most well traveled author, "the profound mark with which their regional culture has molded them" (108-109). He claims of the two authors here: "João Guimarães Rosa is not uprootable from his Minas Gerais... nor is Juan Rulfo from Jalisco" (110). Indeed, as has been shown here, both authors expressed a connection to, in turn, the wild *sertão* and agrarian Jalisco, albeit a complex connection. Their works are just as connected to the land – and just as complexly so.

We have seen Comala's farmland described as agricultural property, to be gained and to be farmed, and we have seen that it is an accurate landscape for a Mexican hacienda in the historical period of the *Porfiriato*, Revolution, and *Cristiada*, and that the figures and their power struggles appear to be realistic as well. The text is placed in a historical setting, with mention of true figures and events to bracket it, albeit somewhat vaguely. The "land," then, is a setting for a story, as the *sertão* was for *GSV*. However, as in *GSV*, the land in *PP* is many other things, too. It is both fertile and acidic, in relation to its inhabitants; it is home; it is a graveyard, and the dust we are made of and return to; it is a "place" in every regard and a symbolic space, and, too, a liminal space, a space of recurrent and present memory, and more. It has already been mentioned above that the ambiguity in the work's placement creates room for symbolism. Like *GSV*, *PP* constructs a parallel narrative of land as a historically, culturally, and geographically plausible setting, and, too, of the same land as a grounded symbol and symbol of ground. The fact that the town cannot be placed firmly on a map, and yet is nevertheless completely "Mexican," is just one of the ways in which Comala takes on other qualities than that of physical setting and becomes the work's primary protagonist, mode of expression, and message.

**1.1 ...AGRICULTURE, NATURE, PROPERTY, HOME:**

The agricultural aspect of the land has already been described here; the worked land is also, as has been mentioned, a place of beauty and meaning for many of the characters. For Juan Preciado's mother, Comala is a dear and beautiful place, her home. She tells her son Juan Preciado of the beauty of the farmland and nature. Her nostalgic memories as imparted to her son Juan Preciado show a *beautiful* Comala:

*«Llanuras verdes. Ver subir y bajar el horizonte con el viento que mueve las espigas, el rizar de la tarde con una lluvia de triples rizos. El color de la tierra, el olor de la alfalfa y del pan. Un pueblo que huele a miel derramada»*<sup>904,905</sup> (80)

<sup>903</sup> "peculiaridades culturales" ... "la marca profunda con que los ha moldeado su cultura regional" ... "João Guimarães Rosa es indarraigable de su Minas Gerais... o Juan Rulfo de Jalisco"

<sup>904</sup> « Green plains. To see the horizon go up and down with the wind that moves the ears, the rippling of the afternoon with a rain of triple ripples. The color of the earth, the smell of the alfalfa and of the bread. A town that smells of spilt honey.» (80)

... and Comala as her home, which she is nostalgic for:

Yo imaginaba ver aquello a través de los recuerdos de mi madre; de su nostalgia, entre retazos de suspiros. Siempre vivió ella suspirando por Comala, por el retorno; pero jamás volvió. Ahora yo vengo en su lugar. Traigo los ojos con que ella miró estas cosas, porque me dio sus ojos para ver: «Hay allí, pasando el puerto de Los Colimotes, la vista muy hermosa de una llanura verde, algo amarilla por el maíz maduro. Desde ese lugar se ve Comala, blanqueando la tierra, iluminándola durante la noche.»<sup>906</sup> (66)

In memory, Comala is an idyllic vision of bucolic peace.

Susana, as indicated previously, also appreciates the beauty of the landscape. Alone in her tomb, she still remembers it: “*los limones... El viento... las nubes... los gorriones... las hojas... el aire... luz azul... la yedra... las lomas... las espigas... los jazmines*”<sup>907</sup> (134). And she connects the fertile earth with her own sensuality... “*y mis manos temblaban tibias al tocar mis senos.*”<sup>908</sup>. Nature’s muse, she causes others to think on the beauty of the land, too, in speaking to her. Her father speaks to her of her appreciation of it: “*»Allá, de donde venimos ahora, al menos te entretenías mirando el nacimiento de las cosas: nubes y pájaros, el musgo, ¿te acuerdas?*”<sup>909</sup> (140) Pedro also speaks of its beauty to Susana, who appears to be his muse just as Diadorim is to Riobaldo, showing him the beauty of nature:

«Pensaba en ti, Susana. En las lomas verdes. Cuando volábamos papalotes en la época del aire. Oíamos allá abajo el rumor viviente del pueblo mientras estábamos encima de él, arriba de la loma, en tanto se nos iba el hilo de cáñamo arrastrado por el viento. “Ayúdame, Susana”. Y unas manos suaves se apretaban a nuestras manos. “Suelta más hilo”.

»El aire nos hacía reír, juntaba la mirada de nuestros ojos, mientras el hilo corría entre los dedos detrás del viento, hasta que se rompía con un leve crujido como si hubiera sido trozado por las alas de algún pájaro. Y allá arriba, el pájaro de papel caía en maromas arrastrando su cola de hilacho, perdiéndose en el verdor de la tierra.

<sup>905</sup> Her words appear italicized in the work. It is unclear whether they are her voice remembered by Juan Preciado, or her voice heard by him “now” after her death. At one point, such an italicized phrase, with the same punctuation, is bracketed by “*Me acordé de lo que me había dicho mi madre*” and “*mi madre... la viva*” (70). Elsewhere in the book, too, though the “ » “ is used to indicate a paragraph continuation of one side of dialogue, the “« »” are used only to indicate thoughts. Are these his memories of her voice, then? Or, with the italics differentiating them from thoughts, are they something else? As much else, it is unclear.

<sup>906</sup> “I imagined seeing that through the memories of my mother; her nostalgia, between remnants of sighs. She always lived sighing for Comala, for the return; but she never returned. Now I come in her place. I bring the eyes with which she looked at these things, because she gave me her eyes to see: «*There is there, passing the door of the Colimotes, the very beautiful view of a green plain, somewhat yellow due to the mature corn. From this place one can see Comala, whitening the ground, illuminating it during the night.*»” (66)

<sup>907</sup> “the lemons... the wind... the clouds... the sparrows... the leaves... the air... blue light... the ivy... the hillocks... the ears... the jasmines.”

<sup>908</sup> “my hands trembled warm on touching my bosom”

<sup>909</sup> “»There, from where we came now, at least you were entertained looking at the birth of things: clouds and birds, the moss, do you remember?”

»Tus labios estaban mojados como si los hubiera besado el rocío.»<sup>910</sup> (74)

He speaks to her in thought. He is in the toilet, and his mother is telling him to leave it,<sup>911</sup> in a sign of Rulfo's humor; but even so, Pedro speaks to Susana in that privacy of nature's beauty, and hers: a vivacity of youth and plenty in land and humanity both. And while he does so, the nature outside is indeed beautiful, and fruitful; while Pedro is a child, sitting in the lavatory and thinking about Susana, the rain and wind make brilliant drops that fall to the earth, and the land is nourished, beautifully, in sound and color:

El agua que goteaba de las tejas hacia un agujero en la arena del patio. Sonaba: plas, plas, y luego otra vez plas, en mitad de una hoja de laurel que daba vueltas y rebotes metida en la hendidura de los ladrillos. Ya se había ido la tormenta. Ahora de vez en cuando la brisa sacudía las ramas del granado haciéndolas chorrear una lluvia espesa, estampando la tierra con gotas brillantes que luego se empañaban. . . . Al recorrerse las nubes, el sol sacaba luz a las piedras, irisaba todo de colores, se bebía el agua de la tierra, jugaba con el aire de la mañana.<sup>912</sup> (73-74)

For Pedro Páramo, however, the landscape becomes something other than beauty to muse upon; it is his conquest, for power and financial gain, as mentioned earlier here. For Pedro Páramo, the landscape can be *owned*, delineated not through legal means but through possession. Abundio explains to Juan Preciado that everything they see upon approaching the town is their father's: "*Bueno, pues eso es la Media Luna de punta a cabo. Como quien dice, toda la tierra que se puede abarcar con la mirada. Y es de él todo ese terrenal.*"<sup>913</sup> (68) It appears significant, however, that he should use the term "*terrenal*," "earthly," often opposed to "celestial"; Pedro Páramo has taken for himself all that the eye can see, all "*tierras de la Media Luna*," but there is much to Comala that one can't see, and that one can't purchase. However, for the lives and livelihoods of many, don Pedro's concept of ownership is everything; "*la tierra no es tuya*," Galileo's brother-in-law tells him; and he is lost.

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<sup>910</sup> «I was thinking of you, Susana. In the green hills. When we were flying kites in the epoch of air. We heard there below the living murmur of the town while we were above it, above the hill, while the hemp string was dragged by the wind. "Help me, Susana". And some soft hands tightened on our hands. "Release more string". / »The air was making us laugh, it joined the gaze of our eyes, while the string ran between our fingers behind the wind, until it broke with a light rustle as if it had been cut by the winds of some bird. And there above, the paper bird fell in tumbles pulling its tail of rags, losing itself in the greenness of the land. / »Your lips were wet as if the dew had kissed them.» (74)

<sup>911</sup> "*Te he dicho que te salgas del escusado, muchacho.*" ("I've told you to leave the toilet, boy.")

<sup>912</sup> "The water that was dripping off of the tiles made a hole in the sand of the patio. It sounded: plas, plas, and then again plas, in the middle of a laurel leaf that was spinning and bouncing in the crack of the bricks. The thunderstorm had gone. Now the breeze was occasionally shaking the branches of the pomegranate tree making a think rain pour, stamping the ground with brilliant drops that were then steaming. Upon the traveling away of the clouds, the sun brought out light to the stones, iridescing everything in colors, it drank the water from the earth, played with the air of the morning."

<sup>913</sup> "Well, so this is the Media Luna from tip to end. As they say, all the land that you can cover with your eyes. And all of this earthliness is his."

Fulgor the hacienda's administrator ("*Fulgor Sedano, hombre de 54 años, soltero, de oficio administrador...*"<sup>914</sup> (94)), though the perpetrator of much of that "possessing," feels more than anything a kind of love for the hacienda, a beauty in the farmland and its fertility, and a sense of belonging there:

Fulgor Sedano sintió el olor de la tierra y se asomó a ver cómo la lluvia desfloraba los surcos. Sus ojos pequeños se alegraron. Dio hasta tres bocanadas de aquel sabor y sonrió hasta enseñar los dientes.

— ¡Vaya! — dijo—. Otro buen año se nos echa encima." Y añadió: "Ven, agüita, ven. ¡Déjate caer hasta que te canses! Después córrete para allá, acuérdate que hemos abierto a la labor toda la tierra, nomás para que te des gusto."

Y soltó la risa. (121)

[...]

Llegó a las trojes y sintió el calor del maíz. Tomó en sus manos un puñado para ver si no lo había alcanzado el gorgojo. Midió la altura: "Rendirá — dijo—. En cuanto crezca el pasto ya no vamos a requerir darle maíz al ganado. Hay de sobra."

De regreso miró el cielo lleno de nubes: "Tendremos agua para un buen rato." Y se olvidó de todo lo demás.<sup>915</sup> (124)

In the midst of the dubious and violent errands that Pedro sends him on, Fulgor finds a great joy in the earth, the rain, and his crops. He does appreciate the land's economic properties, and is happy to see it expand, but he thinks of it as *home*, too:

Y ahora esto. De no haber sido porque estaba tan encariñado con la Media Luna, ni lo hubiera venido a ver. Se habría largado sin avisarle. Pero le tenía aprecio a aquella tierra; a esas lomas pelonas tan trabajadas y que todavía seguían aguantando el surco, dando cada vez más de sí ... La querida Media Luna ... Y sus agregados: «Vente para acá tierrita en En-medio.» La veía venir. Como que aquí estaba ya. Lo que significa una mujer después de todo. «¡Vaya que sí!» dijo. Y chicoteó sus piernas al trasponer la puerta grande de la hacienda.<sup>916</sup> (98)

<sup>914</sup> "Fulgor Sedano, man of 54 years, single, administrator by trade"

<sup>915</sup> "Fulgor Sedano felt the smell of the earth and he looked out to see how the rain deflowered the furrows. His small eyes gladdened. He took up to three puffs of that flavor and smiled until he showed his teeth. / — Go! — he said —. Another good year comes upon us." And he added: "Come, little water, come. Let yourself fall until you tire! Then run over there, remembering that we have opened all the earth for work, only to give you pleasure." / And he let out a laugh (121). / [...] / He came to the barns and felt the heat of the corn. He took a fistful in his hands to see if the weevil had not reached it. He measured the height: "It will give good results" — he said—. As soon as the grass grows we will no longer have to give corn to the cattle. There's an abundance." / On his return he looked at the sky full of clouds: "We will have water for a good while." And he forgot about all the rest." (124)

<sup>916</sup> "And now this [in reference to Pedro's proposal to Lola]. If he hadn't been that he was so fond of the Media Luna, he wouldn't have come to see him [Pedro, after Lucas's death; Lucas warned him to leave and not serve Pedro]. He would have left without telling him. But he had an appreciation for that land; for these bald hillocks so worked and that still bore the rut, giving always more of themselves... The dear Media Luna... And her additions: «Come here little land of En-medio.» He saw her coming. As if she were already here. What a woman signified after all. «Really, yes!» he said. And he whipped his legs on passing through the big door of the estate." (98)

The land is, to Fulgor, as a woman; Pedro's marriage brings him more land to work, love and appreciate. Also, his appreciation of the Enmedio ranch lands is compared, in subtext, to a female conquest as well as a fertile plot of earth. The Media Luna is to Fulgor a home, a dear place, a beautiful place, his to physically appreciate in sight and sound, smell and taste, and one that he is dependent on for his survival. It is specific, meaningful, connected... it is, then, for Fulgor, Susana, Dolores, even Pedro, and many others, a meaningful place, a dwelling and a reflective counterpart.

Rulfo's other form of artistic expression was photography; Benítez describes the work as "retain[ing] the mystery" of his literary works... "A poetry of desolation and solid humanity expresses a world beyond the landscape and its people, made of black and white, and with great economy and nobility. It is what his eye observed that the writer brought to the page" (15). The author showed in this hobby a further connection with the landscape.

## 1.2 ...PLACE:

The topics explored in the discussion of "Place" in Part I have, then, their applications here as well, and quite strongly – even literally. Returning to some of the points made there, "places" are described as being spaces that have been *named*, which have "symbolic and imaginary investments," and to which "meaning has been ascribed" (Carter xii).<sup>917</sup> Places have "attendant imagery and mythical narratives," and experiential "sediments" (Lefebvre 230). Places "ground identification" (Carter xii) and are "significant centres of our immediate experiences of the world" (Relph 141). All of these statements apply to Comala as described in the work. In life, the town and its surrounding farmland were meaningful spaces to their permanent inhabitants, named spaces of work, beauty and belonging. Comala has generations of memories and experiences attached to it, experiences of joy and misery and the rest of life, but also of work, of generations of feet treading the soil and hands planting it to obtain a livelihood.

Yi-Fu Tuan speaks of places as "the focus of human experience, memory, desire and identity," with "identity" and "aura" and "felt value," even for "nonhuman animals" (*Space and place...* 1977, 4). Indeed, Comala is not only haunted by those people whose lives were marked there; it is haunted, too, by Miguel's horse Colorado. Tuan continues, using the word "topophilia" to denote "all of the human being's affective ties with the material environment," including "aesthetic," "tactile," "because it is home," and, too, because it promises "support and fulfillment in the context of their lives' purposes" (Tuan 1990: 93, 120). Those who work with the land feel a "topophilia" that is "compounded of this physical intimacy, of material dependence and the fact that the land is a repository of memory and sustains hope" (97). The worked land in Comala is in fact a "repository of memory" in *much more literal* ways than Tuan likely imagined; as will be discussed later here, the hopes and fears of those interacting with it are inscribed into it so fully that the town's returning son cannot extricate himself from their embrace. It is a metaphor that, as Rulfo mentioned, is more real than reality could portray.

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<sup>917</sup> See Works Cited for Part I for place/space philosophers

Cosgrove (15) explains that we humans *inscribe* the geography we occupy (and, I would add, also the geography we are merely aware of) with both our hands and our imaginations, creating a place reflective of our intentions and expectations. Others, too, write about our *inscription* of place, and the definition of “place” or “space” (when no distinction is made) as that which has been so meaningfully inscribed. Massey, for example, describes space as a “simultaneity of stories-so-far” (Massey 9-10). This description, too, is apt for Comala on multiple levels: as a realistic “place,” a town and its associated landscape, it is meaningful to its residents for all of their personal associations with it, and dependence upon it. Also, in Comala, all of those stories are still occurring, simultaneously: a true, *literal* and *palpable* “simultaneity of stories-so-far,” just as it is a true “repository of memory.”

Riou explains, too: “Social forces manifest themselves in space. They inscribe themselves on the landscape, the plan and the map. Space is the place where history inscribes itself...” (37). He continues to say, “geography should be the analysis of that which dwells and is born there” (37). This remark indicates that the process of inscribing landscapes happens through *dwelling*, residing in a place, abiding there, and that something is *born* in the process. “Dwelling” brings to mind the term as used by Heidegger, as an inscriptive and constructive act, not a mere presence. As Padrutt explains, mentioned earlier, Heidegger used a term ‘being-in-the-world’ which comes from the German *bin*, “dwelling,” and which is far different from “a thing’s simply being present in a container” (17). Padrutt further explains that to Heidegger, “mortals dwell ‘insofar as they rescue the earth’,” wherein the term “rescuing” is, in an old sense of the word, “ ‘freeing something into its own way of being [unfolding; *Wesen*]’ ” (17). The mortals in *PP* have this deep connection to their space in a real sense; their experience of the land in which they  *dwell* is marked there forever. But, as the mortals were not free themselves in life, the land mirrors them there as well, and there they continue to  *dwell*, lingering with it, striving for that freedom.

Foucault’s concept of “heterotopia” is also as easily brought to bear on Comala as on Guimarães Rosa’s *sertão*, and with interesting results. A “heterotopia” is a “counter-site” in which “the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (“Of Other Spaces” 23). It contains “superimposed meanings” and a juxtaposition of “spaces,” often linked to “slices of time,” and presupposing “a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable” (25-26). They “have a function in relation to all the space that remains,” possibly to “create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory” (27). Foucault wrote about “heterotopias” in relation to rest homes, psychiatric hospitals, brothels, prisons, gardens, museums, fairgrounds, and cemeteries, places that exist in our infrastructure but with the symbolic effects mentioned above. However, the term can just as easily be applied to the context of the fictional setting of *PP*, which has its real-life archetype but also has many more “superimposed meanings,” a juxtaposition of realms of space and “slices of time,” and it is both accessible and inaccessible: Juan Preciado accessed it on foot, but listening and participating in it closed the door behind him; now, the reader has access through him... do we have a door back? Perhaps we don’t; once we enter Comala, it lives in our minds. It is a psychical topology, a reading experience of mental/external space. Just as Lefebvre explains the “space” of human experience as being “qualified (and qualifying) beneath the sediments left behind by history, by accumulation, by quantification” (230), those “sediments” in Comala are

not just earthly, but human, in combination. Its earth is a space of human experience, and remains so, and always will.

The inscribed geography of “places” consists of physically determinable attributes as well as associated perceptions and applied meanings, and thus the “place” always has a counterpart: the mental space, the one we take with us when we leave, or create when we have never been there at all. This is its psychical geography, the realm inside the mind, co-constructive with the descriptive or experiential input; and in Comala, it is not just in the observer’s mind, but is a physical, even lethal, reality.

### 1.3 ...HUMANITY, in VERDURE and BITTERNESS:

As shown above, Comala is responsive to its dwellers; it consists of *them* as much as it does of its physical composition. It consists of their bodies, as will be discussed in a moment, but it consists especially of a connection with living humanity. In its identity it consists of Susana and Dolores, and their visions of its beauty, in nostalgia or sensuality; it consists of Fulgor, with his appreciation for its food offerings. It consists, too, of Pedro and Miguel: Pedro is the rock on which Comala rests, thrives or falls; and Miguel aids in its falling. Don Pedro can create Comala, and be of it; and he can destroy it, as he does.

#### The LAND:

The land in *PP* reflects the vitality of the people there. When they are happy, it is green and fertile; but Pedro Páramo’s nature destroys it. Some in the work call him “evil,” like Bartolomé (“*la pura maldad. Eso es Pedro Páramo*” (141)) and some only insinuate that he is so, like Father Rentería. In any case, when he reaches out his arms to take everything that the eye can see, he destroys it. Wilson comments on this connection by saying that “we can read landscape into soulscape,” and that “[t]he outer objective world of Jaliscan geography reflects the inner mental world of his characters... they “are” the poverty and cruelty of the landscape” (Wilson 234). As indicated in the citation, Wilson concentrates on the poverty and cruelty of a sinister landscape, and he claims that Dolores’ memories of Comala are “false” (242). The land in Comala appears to be capable of being cornucopian, as well as “sinister”; it is only through human actions that it darkens.

Bartolomé, bringing Susana to Comala, feels that the town is “*desdichado*,” unhappy, unlucky, or cursed; it has a yellow and acidic smell (140). He tells his daughter, “—*Hay pueblos que saben a desdicha. Se les conoce con sorber un poco de su aire viejo y entumido, pobre y flaco como todo lo viejo. Éste es uno de esos pueblos, Susana*” (140).<sup>918</sup> He continues, speaking both of the tender things that his daughter loves, and of their need for salvation (from sins unknown), which is not something they will find in Comala:

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<sup>918</sup> “— There are towns that taste of misfortune. They are known by sniffing a little of the old and numb air, poor and thin like all that’s old. This is one of those towns, Susana.” (140)

»Allá, de donde venimos ahora, al menos te entretenías mirando el nacimiento de las cosas: nubes y pájaros, el musgo, ¿te acuerdas? Aquí en cambio no sentirás sino ese olor amarillo y acedo que parece destilar por todas partes. Y es que éste es un pueblo desdichado; untado todo de desdicha... aquí no tendremos salvación ninguna. Lo presiento.<sup>919</sup> (140)

Father Rentería also describes the land's acidity and its connection to salvation in a conversation with his superior in another town. The "*señor cura*" explains:

— Ese hombre de quien no quieres mencionar su nombre ha despedazado tu Iglesia y tú se lo has consentido... No, padre, mis manos no son lo suficientemente limpias para darte la absolución. Tendrás que buscarla en otro lugar.

[...]

— Son ácidas, padre — se adelantó el señor cura la pregunta que le iba a hacer— . Vivimos en una tierra en que todo se da, gracias a la Providencia; pero todo se da con acidez. Estamos condenados a eso.<sup>920</sup> (129-130)

Rentería responds:

— Tiene usted razón, señor cura. Allá en Comala he intentado sembrar uvas. No se dan. Sólo crecen arrayanes y naranjos; naranjos agrios Y arrayanes agrios. A mí se me ha olvidado el sabor de las cosas dulces. ¿Recuerda usted las guayabas de China que teníamos en el seminario? Los duraznos, las mandarinas aquellas que con sólo apretarlas soltaban la cáscara. Yo traje aquí algunas semillas. Pocas; apenas una bolsita... . después pensé que hubiera sido mejor dejarlas allá donde maduraran, ya que aquí las traje a morir.

— Y sin embargo, padre, dicen que las tierras de Comala son buenas. Es lástima que estén en manos de un solo hombre. ¿Es Pedro Páramo aún el dueño, no?

— Así es la voluntad de Dios.

— No creo que en este caso intervenga la voluntad de Dios. ¿No lo crees tú así, padre?

— A veces lo he dudado; pero allí lo reconocen.

— ¿Y entre éstos estás tú?

— Yo soy un pobre hombre dispuesto a humillarse, mientras sienta el impulso de hacerlo.<sup>921</sup> (130)

<sup>919</sup> “»There, from where we came now, at least you were entertained looking at the birth of things: clouds and birds, the moss, do you remember? Here on the other hand you will feel nothing but this yellow and acid smell that seems to ooze everywhere. And it’s that this is an unhappy town; everything smeared in misfortune... here we won’t have any salvation. I sense it.” (140)

<sup>920</sup> “— This man whose name you don’t want to mention has torn your Church to pieces and you have consented... No, Father, my hands are not clean enough to give you absolution. You’ll have to look for it somewhere else. / [...] / — They are acidic, Father. — the [respected/his superior] priest cut off the question that he was going to ask— . We live in a land in which everything grows, thanks for Providence; but it grows with acidity. We are condemned to this (129-130).

<sup>921</sup> “— You are right, Father, sir. There in Comala I have tried to sow grapes. They don’t grow. Only myrtles and orange trees grow; bitter oranges. And bitter myrtle. I have forgotten the taste of sweet things. Do you remember the guavas from China that we had in seminary? The peaches, those mandarins that with only squeezing them the



Their conversation juxtaposes the priest Rentería's shame at giving in to Pedro Páramo's will, his friend's unwillingness to pardon him given that he himself isn't clean enough to do so, the understanding between them that Pedro Páramo's reign is not the will of God, and the observations of both of them that the earth itself has become acidic, giving fruit that looks perfect but is bitter. This juxtaposition points to cause between the shame and corruption of the town's moral foundation, and the bitterness of its fruit.

The earth also appears to be connected to humanity in a more visceral way, beyond its fecundity or lack thereof. In pages 162-164, there are several mentions of the earth grinding, boiling, and trembling; the human activities on those pages are don Pedro's sexual predation of a young maid, and the visit of a troupe of revolutionaries under Damasio's leadership, now apparently "villistas." First, Damiana, the night that don Pedro takes the *chacha* Margarita to bed, feels that the earth outside is acting strangely in itself, boiling as if curling with worms after a rainfall:

Otra vez abrió la ventana y se asomó a la noche. No veía nada; aunque le pareció que la tierra estaba llena de hervores, como cuando ha llovido y se enchina de gusanos. Sentía que se levantaba algo así como el calor de muchos hombres. Oyó el croar de las ranas; los grillos; la noche quieta del tiempo de aguas. Luego volvió a oír los culatazos aporreando la puerta.<sup>922</sup> (162)

It turns out that the visitors are revolutionaries; perhaps the earth is boiling in response to them, to their strength of numbers, or their anger at the corrupt system and government. Don Pedro feels them, too, trembling the earth itself with their horses, their sweat, their dust, but nonetheless one with the darkness of the night:

Pedro Páramo miró cómo los hombres se iban. Sintió desfilar frente a él el trote de caballos oscuros confundidos con la noche. El sudor y el polvo; el temblor de la tierra. Cuando vio los cocuyos cruzando otra vez sus luces, se dio cuenta de que todos los hombres se habían ido. Quedaba él, solo, como un tronco duro comenzando a desgajarse por dentro.<sup>923</sup> (163)

After they leave, he thinks again of Susana, and his recent terrified conquest in her place; and the earth is rusty on its hinges, grinding as it turns to dump out the darkness:

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peel came off. I brought some seeds here. A few; just a little bad. ... then I thought it would have been better to leave them there where they would have grown, since I brought them here to die. / — Nevertheless, father, they say that the lands of Comala are good. It's too bad they're in the hands of only one man. Pedro Páramo is still the owner, no? / — Thus is the will of God. / — I don't think that in this case the will of God intervenes. Don't you believe thus, Father? / Sometimes I have doubted; but there they recognize him. / — And are you among them? / — I am a poor man disposed to humiliate himself, while feeling the impulse to do it" (130).

<sup>922</sup> "She opened the window again and looked out at the night. She saw nothing; but it seemed to her that the earth was full of boilings, like when it has rained and it curls with worms. She felt that something like the heat of many men rose up. She heard the croaking of the frogs; the crickets; the calm night of the time of waters. Then she heard the kicks beating on the door." (162)

<sup>923</sup> "Pedro Páramo watched how the men left. He felt parading in front of him the trot of dark horses confused with the night. The sweat and the dust; the trembling of the earth. When he saw the fireflies crossing their lights again, he realized that all of the men had gone. He alone remained, like a hard trunk beginning to split on the inside." (163)

Pensó en Susana San Juan. Pensó en la muchacha con la que acababa de dormir apenas un rato. Aquel pequeño cuerpo azorado y tembloroso ... Y se había abrazado a ella tratando de convertirla en la carne de Susana San Juan...

En el comienzo del amanecer, el día va dándose vuelta, a pausas; casi se oyen los goznes de la tierra que giran enmohecidos; la vibración de esta tierra vieja que vuelca su oscuridad.

— ¿Verdad que la noche está llena de pecados, Justina?

— Sí, Susana.

[...]

— ¿Y qué crees que es la vida, Justina, sino un pecado? ¿No oyes? ¿No oyes cómo rechina la tierra? ... Te asombrarías. Te digo que te asombrarías de oír lo que yo oigo.<sup>924</sup>  
(164)

Susana, with her usual odd acuity, cuts through the symbolism to its core; the night is full of sins. These sins are connected to the earth itself, to its movement through time, its ability to shed darkness and be hopeful again. Susana, disconnected from societal norms and complexities, hears these struggles in their core.

The symbolism of these passages certainly connects the acts of the living to nature in a large sense; but their specific messages are, as often in the work, unclear. The boiling, creaking, vibrating, and trembling of the earth, and Susana's interpretation of sin, are juxtaposed with the revolutionaries, on the one hand, and Pedro Páramo's sexual act with a terrified girl, on the other. Are they both the sins to which Susana refers? The revolutionaries are a force; that is clear. It is also made clear in the work that the system is corrupt and could use a change; Pedro Páramo should be their target for reform. But the revolutionaries are shown in the work to be both immensely powerful and easily misled or corrupted in their purpose, an errant or capricious force of violence and disruption. Meanwhile, Pedro Páramo's sexual act is at the root of his own reign of terror over Comala. He takes lands and women with the same fervor, born of his indomitable nature and his frustrated desires for the one woman who, even in his grasp, doesn't even know he exists. This, too, could be the cause of the earth's boiling and trembling, its groaning hinges trying to turn the darkness of night, that time of sin and judgment, into day once more.

### **WIND, RAIN, STARS:**

Solanilla summarizes some of the connections between nature and human actions, showing how the town's state of emotional and social wellbeing is reflected in its fertility but also in its

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<sup>924</sup> "He thought about Susana San Juan. He thought about the girl that he had just slept with only a little while ago. That small body, alarmed and trembling, .... And he had embraced her trying to convert her into the flesh of Susana San Juan... / In the beginning of the dawn, the day is spinning, in pauses; you can almost hear the hinges of the earth that turn rustily; the vibration of this old land that tips out its darkness. / — Isn't it true that the night is full of sins, Justina? / — Yes, Susana. / [...] / — And what do you think life is, Justina, but a sin? Don't you hear? Don't you hear how the earth grinds? ... You would be astonished. I tell you that you would be astonished to hear what I hear."

weather and, especially, the “natural elements”<sup>925</sup> of “air, wind, rain, noises” (32). There is first an idyllic Comala: “to the dawns of Comala correspond a time in which the air, the wind and the rain confuses themselves with the joy of nature” (31). Then, the natural elements slowly begin to decompose as Comala’s situation changes under the tyrant; Solanilla refers to this stage a that of “the flowering of Pedro Páramo as *cacique* (time of the most production of the lands of Comala, but of correlating impoverishment of the rural society)” (32),<sup>926</sup> and this coincides with “the first transformation of the environment (the wind rarefies, the rains begin to fall, the noises invade the town), indicate the flowering of the *cacique* and the consequent misfortune of the peasants” (31).<sup>927</sup> In this period, Pedro Páramo’s violence and astute manipulation of others in order to accumulate his power result in:

...something like a secret announcement of what will happen later: the water begins to fall more intensely, there are strange signs in the sky (shooting stars, black sky of starts, clouds unmaking themselves)... Comala is in full productions, its fields are fertile, but there above the air, the wind and the rain begin to undo themselves: premonitions of death.<sup>928</sup> (34)

The stars indeed mark dark moments in the novel. The stars are swollen, and the moon hides its face, on the night, mentioned above, in which Pedro – like a bull, like the Devil taking souls to Hell – takes one more girl against her will, the child he called “*Puñadito de carne*,” the “fistful of flesh” whose tiny body trembled so hard it seemed her heart would go out through her mouth (Rulfo 163):

Faltaba mucho para el amanecer. El cielo estaba lleno de estrellas, gordas, hinchadas de tanta noche. La luna había salido un rato y luego se había ido. Era una de esas lunas tristes que nadie mira, a las que nadie hace caso. Estuvo un rato allí desfigurada, sin dar ninguna luz, y después fue a esconderse detrás de los cerros.

Lejos, perdido en la oscuridad, se oía el bramido de los toros.

«Esos animales nunca duermen — dijo Damiana Cisneros—. Nunca duermen. Son como el diablo, que siempre anda buscando almas para llevárselas al infierno.»

...el cuerpo enorme de Pedro Páramo se columpiaba sobre la ventana de la chacha Margarita.<sup>929</sup> (160)

<sup>925</sup> “elementos naturales” ... “aire, viento, lluvia, ruidos” ... “a los albores de Comala corresponde una época en que el aire, el viento y la lluvia se confunden con la alegría de la naturaleza”

<sup>926</sup> “[e]l florecimiento de Pedro Páramo como cacique (época de la mayor producción de las tierras de Comala, pero de empobrecimiento correlativo de la sociedad rural)”

<sup>927</sup> “las primeras transformaciones del medio (el viento se enrarece, las lluvias empiezan a caer, los ruidos invaden el pueblo), indican el florecimiento del cacique y la consecuente desgracia de los campesinos”

<sup>928</sup> “...algo así como un secreto anuncio de lo que ocurrirá después: el agua comienza a caer más intensamente, en el cielo hay signos extraños (estrellas fugaces, cielo negro de estrellas, nubes deshaciéndose)... Comala está en plena producción, sus campos son fértiles, pero allá arriba el aire, el viento y la lluvia comienzan a descomponerse: presagios de muerte”

<sup>929</sup> “There was long to go before dawn. The sky was full of stars, fat, swollen with so much night. The moon had come out for a short time and then it had gone. It was one of those sad moons that no one looks at, that no one pays attention to. It was a short time there disfigured, giving no light, and then it went to hide itself behind the hills. / Far away, lost in the darkness, the bellowing of the bulls was heard. / «Those animals never sleep — said Damiana

Father Rentería, too, wanders the night with shooting stars, in fear and guilt following his corrupt blessing of Miguel:

Llegó hasta el río y allí se entretuvo mirando en los remansos el reflejo de las estrellas que se estaban cayendo del cielo. Duró varias horas luchando con sus pensamientos, tirándolos al agua negra del río.<sup>930</sup> (127)

...and remembering how he had pardoned the murderer/rapist Miguel, but refused to pardon Ediviges because her sister couldn't pay:

Había estrellas fugaces. Las luces en Comala se apagaron.  
Entonces el cielo se adueño de la noche.  
El padre Rentería se revolcaba en su cama sin poder dormir:  
«Todo esto que sucede es por mi culpa — se dijo— .

...  
Qué le costaba a él perdonar, cuando era tan fácil decir una palabra o dos, o cien palabras si éstas fueran necesarias para salvar el alma. ...

Salió fuera y miró el cielo. Llovía estrellas. Lamentó aquello porque hubiera querido ver un cielo quieto.<sup>931</sup> (91-93)

The night doesn't give the priest the calm that he needed for comfort; the heavens are not calm, for they are reflecting a Comala in moral turmoil. The others who witnessed those stars that fell "*como si el cielo estuviera lloviendo lumbre*"<sup>932</sup> interpreted them as either a celebration of the evil boy's death, or, more probably, a bad omen, a "*mala señal*" (90).

Solanilla interprets this scene as representative of "certain type of Mexican beliefs: the intimate relationship that the rural man establishes between the exterior changes in nature (the sky, the sun, the stars) and their own life" (36),<sup>933</sup> this cultural connection is quite possible. González Casillas (1998) also writes about Mexican culture and relationship to land: "In this agricultural cosmos, of settlements and small towns, nature enters in such direct contact with mankind that it seems to vibrate with his same emotional cords" (163).<sup>934</sup> She claims that in Mexican folklore,

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Cisneros—. They never sleep. They are like the Devil, who is always going in search of souls to bring to Hell». ... the enormous body of Pedro Páramo was swinging over the window of the housemaid Margarita"

<sup>930</sup> "He arrived to the river and there he occupied himself with looking in the pools at the reflection of the stars that were falling from the sky. He spent several hours fighting with his thoughts, throwing them into the black water of the river."

<sup>931</sup> "There were shooting stars. The lights of Comala went out. / Then the sky took charge of the night. The priest Rentería rolled around in his bed unable to sleep: «All of this that happens is my fault» he said. ... / What did it cost him to pardon, when it was so easy to say a word or two, or a hundred words if these were necessary to save the soul. ... / He went outside and looked at the sky. It was raining stars. He lamented that because he would have liked to see a calm sky."

<sup>932</sup> "as if the sky was drizzling light."

<sup>933</sup> "*cierto tipo de creencias mexicanas: la íntima relación que el hombre del campo establece entre los cambios exteriores de la naturaleza (el cielo, el sol, las estrellas) y su propia vida*"

<sup>934</sup> "*En este cosmos agrícola, de rancherías y pueblos pequeños, la naturaleza entra en contacto tan directo con el hombre que parece vibrar con sus mismas cuerdas emocionales*"

the land is “a prolongation of mankind. His habitat penetrates and conformed his essence... The stars, the moon and the rain, mold or reflect their states of mind and their ways of being... He is immersed in his geography and through it he explains and justifies himself” (González Casillas 141).<sup>935</sup> Those critical descriptions could also apply to many descriptions of relationship to “place”; Comala, however, shows these relationships in their complete reality, more than in their felt reality. Whether its origins are in local cultural belief systems or in the author’s poetic worldview or both, however, what is apparent is that nature and the lives of Comala’s inhabitants are completely intertwined. Specifically, as shown here in the citations from the work, Pedro’s own violence has repercussions in *nature*, destroying it with his own violence and corruption, as well as, according to his own sense of guilt and cosmic punishment, the repercussion of his son’s death: “— *Estoy comenzando a pagar. Más vale empezar temprano, para terminar pronto*” (126).<sup>936</sup>

Beyond these instances of elemental connection, the rain serves also as an indicator of the health of Comala. After Pedro Páramo orders Susana’s father killed, the next fragment shows a strange rain in the town, a strangely light one, but consistent enough to be destructive: “*Una lluvia menuda, extraña para estas tierras que sólo saben de aguaceros*”<sup>937</sup> (142). The *indios* have come from Apango on Sunday with rosaries of chamomile, rosemary, and bunches of thyme, and wait under shelter of archways to sell their herbs. Where they come from, the rain is so strong that the *ocote* herb is too wet, and their men didn’t come with them because they are striving to protect the new corn plants by making new paths for the water. The land is *anegada*, flooded. The women wait, and they feel that something is wrong; they fear it: “*Sienten que es un mal día. Quizá por eso tiemblan debajo de sus mojados gabanes de paja; no de frío, sino de temor. Y miran la lluvia desmenuzada y al cielo, que no suelta sus nubes*”<sup>938</sup> (143). The town is empty, but for Justina Díaz, disappointed that for ten cents she got barely enough rosemary to smell. On their way home, the *indios* laugh and gossip. What this passage communicates is that the weather has changed; it is unnatural, even a cause for fear. Comala is unnaturally quiet; those who leave it feel relief. Susana feels the same rain in her room: “*Allá afuera se oía el caer de la lluvia sobre las hojas de los plátanos, se sentía como si el agua hirviera sobre el agua estancada en la tierra*”<sup>939</sup> (145). Compare these waters to the ones that glorified Comala in Pedro’s youth. The juxtaposition of this destructive, stagnant water with don Pedro’s act of murder again points to symbolism in the work, and to humankind’s bilaterally formative connection to nature.

One of the strongest indicators of the power mankind has over the land is the moment in which Pedro Páramo crosses his arms and condemns Comala to die, and the landscape not only ceases to provide due to his destruction of it, but it also takes into itself all of the cruelty of that moment: “— *Me cruzaré de brazos y Comala se morirá de hambre. Y así lo hizo.*” Dorotea

<sup>935</sup> “*una prolongación del hombre. Su habitat lo penetra y conforma su esencia... Las estrellas, la luna y la lluvia, moldean o reflejan sus estados anímicos y sus maneras de ser.... Está inmerso en su geografía y a través de ella se explica y se justifica*”

<sup>936</sup> “— I’m starting to pay. It’s better to start early, to end soon.”

<sup>937</sup> “A slight rain, strange for these lands that only know of downpours”

<sup>938</sup> “They feel that it is a bad day. Perhaps that is why they tremble under their wet straw overcoats; not from cold, but from fear. And they look at the shredded rain and at the sky, that doesn’t release its clouds.”

<sup>939</sup> “There outside was heard the falling of the rain on the leaves of the plantain trees, and it was felt as if the water were boiling on the water stagnant on the earth.”

explains the occurrence to Juan Preciado, as they lie in the earth entombed. After Susana dies, he causes all the bells in the surrounding region to ring, day and night, for days. People go deaf from the noise. Drawn to the “constant pealing” comes a pilgrimage of musicians and even a circus, which leads to revelry.<sup>940</sup> Pedro swears to take his vengeance on Comala for this; he swears that he will cross his arms and Comala will die of hunger, and he does. Afterwards, he spends his days in a leather chair looking down the path where they had taken Susana away to the cemetery.

Desalojó sus tierras y mandó quemar los enseres. [...] Desde entonces la tierra se quedó baldía y como en ruinas. Daba pena verla llenándose de achaques con tanta plaga que la invadió en cuanto la dejaron sola. De allá para acá se consumió la gente.<sup>941</sup> (137)

Some say he is tired; others, disillusioned. He evicts the farm workers and sharecroppers and burns the equipment, laying waste and inviting plague and famine. Many of the men leave to look for other places to work and live. They leave hoping to return, but instead give up hope; they send for the families, and those families never return. Some stay because they have nowhere to go, like Dorotea; those who stay hoping to inherit are disappointed, because he stays alive for years and years, “*como un espantapájaros frente a las tierras de la Media Luna,*” a scarecrow in front of the lands of the Media Luna. He guards its demise, and watches over the disappointed hopes of its people, and the tragic murmurs of those who die there in misery.

The death of the cacique is the death of Comala, and not only because he physically destroyed the fields; the natural elements die as well in his moral vacuum: “a death also of the natural elements, to the destruction of life and to a ghostly silence” ... “the absence of rains and the invasion of silence and heat” (Solanilla 31-32).<sup>942</sup> As Solanilla explains, the increase in natural signs culminates in an absence of nature:

...the rain had gone; but the wind stayed... The water, which is the symbol of life, has slowly disappeared: in the beginning it falls in form of rain, then in a downpour, then in a deluge and finally it goes. Only the wind remains, ... hurricane wind... spectral clouds that seem to walk brushing the ground.<sup>943</sup> (38)

Indeed, the clouds are described throughout the work as interacting with the earth, but what in happier times were clouds making the earth beautiful colors, are described in more unnatural

<sup>940</sup> “Y así poco a poco la cosa se convirtió en fiesta. Comala hormigueó de gente, de jolgorio y de ruidos... Las campanas dejaron de tocar; pero la fiesta siguió. No hubo modo de hacerles comprender que se trataba de un duelo, de días de duelo.” (171) “— And so bit by bit the thing turned into a party. Comala swarmed with people, with revelry and with noise... The bells stopped ringing; but the party went on. There was no way to make them understand that it was about mourning, about days of mourning.”

<sup>941</sup> “— He evicted everyone from his lands and ordered the equipment burned. [...] Since then the land has been uncultivated and as in ruins. It caused sadness to see it filling up with the ailment of so much plague that invaded it when they left it alone. From there to here the people wasted away.” (137)

<sup>942</sup> “una muerte también de los elementos naturales, a la destrucción de la vida y al silencio fantasmal” ... “la ausencia de lluvias y la invasión del silencio y el calor”

<sup>943</sup> “...la lluvia se había ido; pero el viento se quedó... El agua, que es el símbolo de la vida, ha desaparecido paulatinamente: al comienzo cae en forma de lluvia, luego de aguacero, después de diluvio y finalmente se va. Queda el viento únicamente, ... viento huracanado... nubes espectrales que parecen caminar rozando la tierra”

tones during the period of unnatural rains: “*Pabellones de nubes pasaban en silencio por el cielo como si caminaran rozando la tierra*” (Rulfo 148).<sup>944</sup>

The air, wind, rain, and even the sounds all end in Comala with Pedro’s death. The bells that rang catastrophically at Susana’s death are now silent (Solanilla 37). This is the Comala that Juan Preciado finds: a hellishly hot place, empty even of air, which in itself results in Juan Preciado’s own demise, drawing him into its tragedy. Like the *sertão*, the land in *PP* is much more than a culturally and historically specific setting for a work on *caciquismo*; it is in relationship with its *dwellers*, those who live, die, and otherwise exist in deep relationship with the land. Pedro Páramo’s anger towards Comala shows his power to destroy it, his sins may even make it creak and boil in the night, and his covetous and violent reign over Comala introduces poison into the earth even before it is burned, in a further symbolic overlay over the connection already present between land and humankind. Like *GSV*’s *sertão*, the *tierra* in *PP* reflects its inhabitants; Riobaldo’s *sertão* is beautiful or terrible according to the love or violence perpetrated there, and his own perceptions and inclinations; so, too, is Comala for don Pedro and all the others, though due to this story’s trajectory, it is mostly a relationship of decay and entombment, lacking the relationship of grace in *GSV*.

The relationship of a story to its setting is not uncommon; Romanticism, for instance, expresses often the fecundity of nature and the beauty of a woman as being in tune, or terror and grief in conjunction with rainstorms.<sup>945</sup> There are also many more and more recent examples of the dirt itself being used as a figurative connection between humanity and homeland, or in some other way, our ancestral and natural origins. For instance, in Pepetela’s *Yaka* (1984), Alexandre, of white Portuguese ancestry and therefore complicated colonial belonging, nonetheless feels an intimate tie to Angola because it is the land of his birth, and this connection is illustrated in his ingestion of the earth as a baby. His first cry pierces Angola, violating it: “Alexandre Semedo’s first wail sounded in Cuvale territory. It had the effect of a gunshot. [...] There remained in the air the echo of the wail and the fearful mantle of silence that followed the violation.” (3 Pepetela, trans. Marga Holness)<sup>946</sup> However, his second cry is punctuated by his intimate interaction with the Angolan land: “The child’s mouth closed when he bit the earth (*Pepetela* 3).<sup>947</sup> And Alexandre adds, “The slave, perhaps because of her age, let me fall in the dust. A matter of seconds. But it was enough for the dusty soil and the liquids I brought with me out of my mother to mingle on my body” (4).<sup>948</sup> This scene exemplifies the power of “earth” on the human

<sup>944</sup> “Pavilions of clouds were passing in silence through the sky as if they were walking, brushing the ground.” (148)

<sup>945</sup> Jorge Isaacs’ *María* (Colombia, 1867) interprets its American landscape and its protagonists together in its melodramatic prose. The narrator Efraín speaks often of his deep love for his native valley and fear for its loss, and he associates his love for María with aromatic flowers. Nature is beautiful when he is in love, and nature cries with him upon her death; the landscape becomes sinister and dark in his grief. Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847) is another example of a Romantic work tying nature to humanity, also full of nature metaphor and nature as an element to develop the plot, as well as using rainy or fair weather to reflect the anxious or serene moods of its characters.

<sup>946</sup> “*O primeiro vagido de Alexandre Semedo estalou em terra cuvale. Parecia era tiro.... No ar ficou o eco do vagido e o manto silencioso, temeroso, que seguiu a violação*”. (13 Pepetela, *Yaka*, União dos Escritores Angolanos, 1988)

<sup>947</sup> “*A boca do menino se fechou, quando mordeu a terra*” (14).

<sup>948</sup> “*A escrava, talvez por velhice, deixou-me cair no pó. Segundos apenas. Os suficientes para no meu corpo ficar misturado o pó da terra e os líquidos que trazia comigo ao sair da minha mãe*” (14).

identity. In *Cien Años de Soledad* (1967), too, Gabriel García Márquez uses the consumption of earth as a metaphor for belonging. Rebeca comes to Macondo one day, an eleven-year-old orphan child of a distant cousin, with a canvas bag containing the bones of her parents, “that made a permanent noise of cloc cloc cloc” (48).<sup>949</sup> Malnourished and silent, all she would do is suck her thumb, and all she would eat was earth: “Rebeca only liked to eat the humid dirt of the patio and the cakes of whitewash that she pulled from the walls with her fingernails” (50). She fought astutely against attempts to stop her from eating earth, and continued to turn to it later in her life for comfort during emotional crises (72).<sup>950</sup> Her parents’ bones gave her comfort without morbidity, and so did the damp earth, “ancestral,” “primary,” “original”; evocative of Susana San Juan, the child prefers her dirt humid, and is connected to bones. The *material* of the land is depicted by these authors as being connected to humanity through both primal and ancestral identity. It is interesting to note that Márquez himself wrote about Rulfo, and his discovery of *PP* in 1961: “My discovery of Juan Rulfo... will be without a doubt an essential chapter of my memoirs” (19).<sup>951</sup> Márquez was deeply inspired by Rulfo; his dirt-eating Rebeca, with her cloc-cloc-cloc of ancestral bones and her taste for humid soil, may seem “Rulfian” for that very reason.

A deep emotional and physical connection to earth, as shown here, is not unique to *PP*; however, the work takes it further than Romanticism, and further, even, than Pepetela and Márquez. The landscape in Comala reflects its inhabitants, its inhabitants are deeply connected to its very mineral earth, and, too, in many ways, the characters truly *are* Comala, its earth, its elements, and in their connection, they make the space much more than a space of natural metaphor or telluric regional identity. Whether or not nature has formed humankind, as deterministic naturalists may believe, the Comalan landscape is the manifestation of its dwellers and of all of the actions and attitudes.

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<sup>949</sup> “que hacía un permanente ruido de cloc cloc cloc” ... “a Rebeca sólo le gustaba comer la tierra húmeda del patio y las tortas de cal que arrancaba de las paredes con las uñas”

<sup>950</sup> “En las tardes de lluvia, [...] una lágrima de nostalgia le salaba el paladar cuando veía las vetas de tierra húmeda y los montículos de barro contruidos por las lombrices en el jardín. Esos gustos secretos, derrotados en otro tiempo [...], estallaron en un anhelo irreprimible cuando empezó a llorar. Volvió a comer tierra. [...] poco a poco fue rescatando el apetito ancestral, el gusto de los minerales primarios, la satisfacción sin resquicios del alimento original” “In afternoons of rain, [...] a tear of nostalgia salted the palate when she saw the streaks of humid earth and the mounds of clay built by the worms in the garden. Those secret tastes, defeated in another time [...] exploded in an irrepressible yearning when she started to cry. She returned to eating earth. [...] little by little she was rescuing the ancestral appetite, the taste for the primary minerals, the complete satisfaction of the original food.”

<sup>951</sup> He was in a difficult moment as a writer: “I didn’t feel burned out. On the contrary: I felt that I still had a lot of books in me, but I couldn’t conceive of a convincing and poetic way to write them” (21). His friend Alvaro Mutis gave him *PP*, saying “Read this stuff, goddamit, and learn!” He read it twice, late into the night: “Never... had I experienced such an emotion... the rest of that year I couldn’t read any other author, because they all seemed minor... I could recite the whole book. ... the examination ... of Juan Rulfo’s work gave me at last the way that I sought to continue my books” (21).



## 1.4 ...EARTH:

The Real Academia Española provides many definitions for “*tierra*”<sup>952</sup>: *tierra* is “Crumbly material of which the natural soil is principally composed,”<sup>953</sup> also “Superficial part of the planet Earth not occupied by the sea,” and “Ground to walk on.” The RAE also, while not under “*tierra*,” admits to the use of “*tierra*” as opposed to “*cielo*” (sky/heavens/Heaven): “*terrenal*,” “earthly,” means “Belonging or relative to the earth, in opposition to what belongs to the sky/heavens/Heaven.”<sup>954</sup> Capitalized, “*la Tierra*” is the “planet we inhabit.”

These definitions are mirrored in the numerous definitions for “earth” provided by Merriam Webster,<sup>955</sup> parallel here to the Spanish above: “earth” is “the fragmental material composing part of the surface of the globe; *especially*: cultivable soil,” also “areas of land as distinguished from sea and air,” and “the solid footing formed of soil,” and, too, “the sphere of mortal life as distinguished from spheres of spirit life.” Capitalized, “Earth” is “the planet on which we live that is third in order from the sun.”

Beyond this, “*tierra*” in Spanish also contains meanings that in English pertain to “land”:

5. f. Plot of land dedicated to farming or appropriate for it. / 6. f. Nation, region or place in which one is born. / 7. f. Country, region. / 8. f. Territory or district constituted by present or historical interests. / 9. f. Group of settlers of a territory.<sup>956</sup>

“Land”<sup>957</sup> has several overlaps with “earth,” including the “solid part of the surface of the earth,” and “ground or soil of a specified situation, nature, or quality”; and it also concerns ownership (“a portion of the earth’s solid surface distinguishable by boundaries or ownership”), its uses (“a rural area characterized by farming or ranching”), and its identity (“the people of a country”), as well as being a kind of “realm” or “domain.”

*PP* omits references to Mexico entirely, placing the work there only through assumption and historical and cultural references; neither does it mention Jalisco or other regional associations. However, as has been shown above, the work does create a sense of connection to the land and local identity. The word “*tierra*” is used to refer to a kind of homeland, just as it did in the *sertão*; for instance, as Juan Preciado is told, “*Mejor no hubieras salido de tu tierra.*” (“It would

<sup>952</sup> “*tierra.*” *Real Academia Española: Diccionario de la Lengua Española.* 22<sup>nd</sup> Edition. <[http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltConsulta?TIPO\\_BUS=3&LEMA=tierra](http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltConsulta?TIPO_BUS=3&LEMA=tierra)> Web. 17 March 2011. “*terrenal.*” *Real Academia Española: Diccionario de la Lengua Española.* 22<sup>nd</sup> Edition. <[http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltConsulta?TIPO\\_BUS=3&LEMA=terrenal](http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltConsulta?TIPO_BUS=3&LEMA=terrenal)> Web. 17 March 2011.

<sup>953</sup> “*Material desmenuzable de que principalmente se compone el suelo natural,*” “*Parte superficial del planeta Tierra no ocupada por el mar.*” “*Suelo o piso*”

<sup>954</sup> “*Perteneiente o relativo a la tierra, en contraposición de lo que pertenece al cielo*” “*Planeta que habitamos,*”

<sup>955</sup> “earth.” *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary.* 2011. Merriam-Webster Online. 17 March 2011 <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/earth>>

<sup>956</sup> “5. f. *Terreno dedicado a cultivo o propio para ello.* / 6. f. *Nación, región o lugar en que se ha nacido.* / 7. f. *País, región.* / 8. f. *Territorio o distrito constituido por intereses presentes o históricos.* / 9. f. *Conjunto de los pobladores de un territorio.*”

<sup>957</sup> “land.” *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary.* 2011. Merriam-Webster Online. 17 March 2011 <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/land>>

be better if you hadn't left your land") (119), and as the Contla priest observes, "*Vivimos en una tierra en que todo se da...*" ("We live in a land in which everything grows") (130). Also, beyond the statements of the characters tying them to that place, their eternal ties to it are apparent in the work through the souls' presence there still. In Comala, the *tierra* – as land, and as described above as "place" – is the place people are born and dwell, and is defined by history and experience.

Comala contains, as well, the "Earth" meanings of "*tierra*." It contains *tierra* as soil, or *suelo*; *tierra* in opposition to water and air; *tierra* as the ground we walk on; and, too, *tierra* as mortal sphere, generally seen (as in these definitions) as being in opposition to the spiritual sphere, as *cielo*, or Heaven.

*Tierra* as "soil" has been mentioned above in its agricultural sense; it definitely exists in that sense in the work, and some of the characters even smell it, as shown above, experiencing its physical qualities as well as what it produces for sustenance or financial gain. *Tierra* is also shown in the work to be our "solid footing," the boundary between above- and below-ground. Father Rentería, for example, uses it as such when he leaps up in response to being recognized during his nighttime wanderings: "*Se alzó de la tierra y contestó: / — ¡Adiós! Que el Señor te bendiga.*"<sup>958</sup> (128). This footing is distinguished from the water and air above it. Fulgor's appreciation of the fragrant earth follows the rain: "*Al amanecer, gruesas gotas de lluvia cayeron sobre la tierra*"<sup>959</sup> (120). Susana, remembering the day of her mother's death in which she appreciated nature, notes the games the wind and clouds play with the earth: "*El viento bajaba de las montañas... Y las nubes se quedaban allá arriba... dejaban vacío el cielo azul, dejaban que la luz cayera en el juego del viento haciendo círculos sobre la tierra, removiendo el polvo y batiendo las ramas de los naranjos*"<sup>960</sup> (133). Dolores also speaks of the clouds and the earth, talking to her son about happier times: "*Me contaba cómo llegaba la marea de las nubes, cómo se echaban sobre la tierra y la descomponían cambiándole los colores...*"<sup>961</sup> (124). Earth, wind, rain, clouds, are separate entities interacting above "ground."

References to *tierra* also include earth as "mortal sphere," in opposition to Heaven or Hell. As Father Rentería tells his niece Ana, making the opposition between *tierra* the Earth and *cielo* Heaven: "*— Démosle gracias a Dios Nuestro Señor porque se lo ha llevado de esta tierra donde causó tanto mal, no importa que ahora lo tenga en su Cielo*"<sup>962</sup> (89). This was in response to her comment to him about Miguel, her rapist: "*Sé que ahora debe estar en lo mero hondo del infierno; porque así se lo he pedido a todos los santos con todo mi fervor.*"<sup>963</sup> Rentería himself

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<sup>958</sup> "He leapt up from the earth and answered: / — Goodbye! May the Lord bless you."

<sup>959</sup> "At dawn, thick drops of rain fell upon the earth."

<sup>960</sup> "The wind was coming down from the mountains... And the clouds were remaining up above... they were letting the light fall on the play of wind making circles on the earth, stirring the dust and whipping the branches of the orange trees" (133)

<sup>961</sup> "She told me how the tide of clouds would arrive, how they tossed themselves upon the earth and broke it down changing its colors..." (124)

<sup>962</sup> "— Let's give thanks to God Our Lord because He has taken him from this Earth where he caused such evil, it doesn't matter that he is now in Heaven." (89)

<sup>963</sup> "I know that he must now be in the mere depths of Hell; because that is what I have asked of all the saints with all my fervor."

also refers to “Hell” in this religious worldview: “¿Qué sabía él del cielo y del infierno?”<sup>964</sup> (92). He follows this conversation with a sleepless night, wandering, in which he refers to *la tierra* in its “mortal sphere” sense as a “valley of tears”: “Oyó el canto de los gallos”<sup>965</sup>. *Sintió la envoltura de la noche cubriendo la tierra. La tierra, «este valle de lágrimas»*<sup>966,967</sup> (92-93) Susana, on the other hand, only believes in Hell: “Yo sólo creo en el infierno” (165). Dorotea speaks of Heaven and Earth, too; she speaks of her dreamed visit to Heaven, and how they told her she was unable to have children, and then showed her to the door back to *la tierra*, saying: “Ve a descansar un poco más a la tierra, hija, y procura ser buena para que tu purgatorio sea menos largo.”<sup>968</sup> (120). She also speaks of “Hell,” the place she feels she must go if she couldn’t stay *where she is*, since she was never pardoned in life: “pero cuando a una le cierran una puerta y la que queda abierta es nomás la del infierno, más vale no haber nacido ... El cielo para mí, Juan Preciado, está aquí donde estoy ahora.”<sup>969</sup> (124) “Donde estoy,” where she is, is underground. Juan Preciado also uses “*tierra*” to refer to Earth, in saying: “sus ojos eran como todos los ojos de la gente que vive sobre la tierra”<sup>970</sup> (70), apparently in opposition to any other more ghostly realm, as she first appeared; and, in reference to his mother’s voice, “Su voz parecía abarcarlo todo. Se perdía más allá de la tierra.”<sup>971</sup> (116). Even Pedro Páramo uses “*tierra*” in this way: “¿acaso no era suficiente saber que era la criatura más querida por él sobre la tierra?”<sup>972</sup> (151)

However, as hinted at throughout the novel and this work, all of these definitions and oppositions are also subject to change in *PP*; the “soil” is cultivable, but it is also the same soil the dead are buried in, and which they dying become. The “solid footing” that keeps mortals walking on the surface and not falling below is not so solid, but is instead permeable, for the ghosts abide there and also above in community, and burial is not necessarily a physical act. The “mortal sphere” as separate from the “spiritual” one is no longer separate.

<sup>964</sup> “What did he know of Heaven and of Hell?” (92)

<sup>965</sup> A Biblical reference to the betrayal of Jesus by St. Peter: In Mark 14:30 (as in John 13:38), Jesus tells Peter “Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times.” (NRSV) In the following passages, Peter tells bystanders three times that he doesn’t know Jesus or what they are talking about; in Mark 14:72, the cock crows for the second time, and Peter, remembering the prophecy, “broke down and wept” (NRSV). As has been mentioned, and as will be later explored further, Father Rentería feels that he has abandoned the purpose of his faith with no possibility for redemption; he, too, breaks down, and speaks of the “Valley of Tears”.

<sup>966</sup> “He heard the crowing of the cocks. He felt the wrapping of the night covering the earth. The earth, «this valley of tears»” (92-93)

<sup>967</sup> This comes from a Catholic prayer called “*Dios te Salve, Reina y Madre*,” and the “valley of tears” references the earthly abode of humanity once expelled from the Garden of Eden: “*Dios te salve, Reina y Madre... A ti llamamos los desterrados hijos de Eva; a ti suspiramos, gimiendo y llorando, en este valle de lágrimas...*” (<[http://www.vatican.va/special/rosary/documents/misteri\\_gloriosi\\_sp.html](http://www.vatican.va/special/rosary/documents/misteri_gloriosi_sp.html) > accessed 17 March 2011.) In English: “Hail, holy Queen, mother of mercy... To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.” <[http://www.vatican.va/special/rosary/documents/misteri\\_luminosi\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/special/rosary/documents/misteri_luminosi_en.html)>

<sup>968</sup> “Go and rest a little more on the earth, daughter, and seek to be good so that your purgatory will be less long.” (120)

<sup>969</sup> “but when they close a door to one and the one that stays open is only that of Hell, it’s better to never have been born... Heaven for me, Juan Preciado, is here where I am now.” (124)

<sup>970</sup> “her eyes were like all the eyes of the people who live on the earth”

<sup>971</sup> “Her voice seemed to encompass everything. It was lost beyond the earth.”

<sup>972</sup> “wasn’t it enough to know that she was the creature most beloved by him on the earth?”

## 2. The METAPHYSICS of the LANDSCAPE:

### 2.1 “DUST” and LIMINAL SPACE:

#### ABOVE- and UNDERGROUND:

The rain described above was a product of the heavens, a separate phenomenon from the earth. Below the surface, however, the rain is also felt by Juan Preciado and Dorotea in their grave: it is felt as something that happens above-the-earth, “outside,” but they are nonetheless a part of it in their physical sensations, thus uniting below- and above-ground. Dorotea begins:

- ¿Oyes? Allá afuera está lloviendo. ¿No sientes el golpear de la lluvia?”
- Siento como si alguien caminara sobre nosotros.
- Ya déjate de miedos. Nadie te puede dar ya miedo. Haz por pensar en cosas agradables porque vamos a estar mucho tiempo enterrados.<sup>973</sup> (120)

Besides feeling it physically, the dampness produced by the rain also affects these bodies and their voices. It is the *humidity* – material, real – that causes Susanita – the body – to resume her dreamy speech, according to Dorotea: “*La de la sepultura grande. Doña Susanita. Está aquí enterrada a nuestro lado. Le ha de haber llegado la humedad y estará removiéndose entre el sueño*”<sup>974</sup> (135). It is not only Susanita who is affected by the rain in her grave; they hear other voices, including a man speaking of how Pedro Páramo left him missing limbs but didn’t kill him, though he could have. Dorotea explains: “*Lo que pasa con estos muertos viejos es que en cuanto les llega la humedad comienzan a removerse. Y despiertan.*”<sup>975</sup> (136) The strange rain that begins to fall in Comala is, according to the text, a rain that is heard after everything else stops, and a rain that links together the thread of life: “*La lluvia amortigua los ruidos. Se sigue oyendo aún después de todo, granizando sus gotas, hilvanando el hilo de la vida.*”<sup>976</sup> (144) That thread links life and death. The rain and wind and weather provide some connection between those who walk the earth, the people and the echoes of people, and those remembering bodies that lie beneath it. They are buried, but not deeply; perhaps they will sprout again, “*retoñar*,” as Gerardo hoped they might. The dead can, in fact, be in two places at once: Dorotea’s body rests in Juan Preciado’s arms, and keeps him company, “*aquí donde estoy ahora*” (“here where I am now”); but her soul, “[*d*]ebe andar vagando por la tierra.” (“must be roaming the earth) (124). There may be another Juan Preciado in Comala now, too, his soul telling his story to passers-by, thinking it is alive, asking for a place to stay to get away from the murmurs of the dead.

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<sup>973</sup> “— Do you hear it? Over there outside it’s raining. Don’t you feel the beating of the rain? / — I feel as if someone were walking over us. / — Stop your fears already. No one can frighten you now. Try to thinking about agreeable things because we’re going to be buried for a long time.”

<sup>974</sup> “The one in the big tomb. Doña Susanita. She’s here buried at our side. The humidity must have gotten to her and she will be shifting in dreams”

<sup>975</sup> “What happens with these old dead people is that when the humidity arrives they start shifting. And they wake up.”

<sup>976</sup> “The rain muffles the noises. It is still heard even after everything, hailing its drops, linking the thread of life.” (144)

The rain illustrates the connection of the dead to the world above. In fact, the cold, the air, and the fog announce their deaths, too – especially the air. As shown above, one thing that differentiates the earth from what is above it is the wind, the air; but as that air becomes harder to breathe, the difference between above- and below-ground also becomes harder to delineate. The air is often written of as “*limpio*” (clean; 157), “*quieto*” (calm; 69), or refreshing; and the “*época del aire*” (time of air, 74) meant the time when the wind blew well enough for kites, not the time when there was air at all. But as Pedro goes about his killing, Fulgor notices that “*El cielo era todavía azul. Había pocas nubes. El aire soplabá allá arriba, aunque aquí abajo se convertía en calor*”<sup>977</sup> (101). Later, when Bartolomé and Susana arrive, its air is “*viejo y entumido, pobre y flaco como todo lo viejo*”<sup>978</sup> (140).

By the time Juan Preciado arrives to Comala, the air in the town appears to be gone, perhaps just poetically at first: “*...bajamos cada vez más. Habíamos dejado el aire caliente allá arriba y nos íbamos hundiendo en el puro calor sin aire. Todo parecía estar como en espera de algo.*”<sup>979</sup> (67). It is no longer the airless quality of extreme heat that he feels when he dies there, however, but a lack of air at all, truly. First, he notices that where the air is scarce, the voices of the dead can be heard better: “*De voces, sí. Y aquí, donde el aire era escaso, se oían mejor*”<sup>980</sup> (70). And the loud cries he hears in Eduviges’s room feel as if “*la tierra se hubiera vaciado de su aire*”<sup>981</sup> (93). In his next refuge, Donis’s sister/lover cares for him, though she is dead; the lack of air makes him nauseous: “*Quise decirle: «Voy a salir a buscar un poco de aire, porque siento náuseas»*”<sup>982</sup> (113). At midnight, he wakes up next to her decomposing body, and no longer has enough air to breathe: “*Yo me sentía nadar entre el sudor que chorreaba de ella y me faltó el aire que se necesita para respirar*”<sup>983</sup> (116-117). Here, as explained earlier, he slips into death through a lack of air: “*Salí a la calle para buscar el aire... Y es que no había aire... No había aire.*”<sup>984</sup> He cups his hands to his mouth and tries to trap the breaths that leave his body, so he can breathe them in again, and survive a little longer; the air gets thinner, filtering through his fingers, forever gone. Then: the frothy clouds, the “*nubes espumosas*,” the “*nublazón*,” and he wakes up buried (117). Dorotea contradicts him, saying that if there weren’t air to breathe that night, they wouldn’t have been able to bury him; but her knowledge of underground “living” belies the idea that they were buried at the same time, and her saying that her bones decided to be quiet when they found him<sup>985</sup> does nothing to assuage that doubt; perhaps the ones who buried him didn’t need air, being dead themselves. Juan Preciado is not the only one to lose the air before dying; don Pedro finds as he dies: “*parecía como si también se detuvieran el tiempo y el aire de la vida.*”<sup>986</sup> (178). And, too, there is the smoke: Miguel, like Juan Preciado, crossing into

<sup>977</sup> “The sky was still blue. There were few clouds. The air was blowing there above, although here below it was converting into heat”

<sup>978</sup> “old and numb, poor and thin like all that’s old.”

<sup>979</sup> “...we went down more and more. We had left the hot air above and we were sinking into the pure heat without air. Everything seemed like it was waiting for something.”

<sup>980</sup> “With voices, yes. And here, where the air was scarce, they were heard better.”

<sup>981</sup> “the earth had been vacated of its air”

<sup>982</sup> “I wanted to tell her: «I’m going out to look for a bit of air, because I feel nauseas»”

<sup>983</sup> “I felt myself swimming in the sweat that dripped from her and I lacked the air that is necessary to breathe”

<sup>984</sup> “I left the street to look for air... And it’s that there was no air... There was no air.”

<sup>985</sup> “Después de que te encontramos a ti, se resolvieron mis huesos a quedarse quietos” (120)

<sup>986</sup> “it seemed as if time and the air of life also stopped”

death, saw the town obscured as by smoke or haze. Dolores' memories of Comala are of a place in which the air "*cambia el color de las cosas; donde se ventila la vida como si fuera un murmullo*" (118).<sup>987</sup> This idyllic image is of the power of the air to do good and make life beautiful; but the air also has the power to bring death to Comala, it is also "*como si fuera un murmullo.*" Only Susana, again different, takes her air with her when she dies: "*Pasaste rozando con tu cuerpo las ramas del paraíso que está en la vereda y te llevaste con tu aire sus últimas hojas. Luego desapareciste*"<sup>988</sup> (Pedro, 172).

Aboveground was defined as "life" by its air, and its rain; but the rain is underground, too, and the air aboveground is gone. What, then, is the difference between the two realms? Both are hot, damp, airless, and filled with murmurs. "*Sentirás que allí uno quisiera vivir para la eternidad. El amanecer; la mañana; el mediodía y la noche, siempre los mismos; pero con la diferencia del aire*"<sup>989</sup> claims Dolores. And the difference in the air is indeed what brings her son to stay for eternity: because it kills him. In breaking down the boundary between above- and belowground, the streets that Juan Preciado wanders are – at once – the streets of a town in Mexico, and the streets of a kind of underworld, or spiritual realm, a kind of Hades or purgatory, airless for beings that require none. As in *GSV*, the spiritual realm and the material one are paradoxically contained in the same "space." However, this is not the same as the mystical co-realmedness of *GSV*'s *sertão*; it is a coexistence of realms in tragedy, rather than mystical beauty.

## DUST:

Just as the aboveground and belowground realms become mixed through a change of the state of air, so, too, they are mixed in the use of the soil or dirt itself. That soil grew bounteous harvests; but it is also the earth in which dead things mold. It is, in many ways, akin to that Biblical dust of Genesis 3:19, perhaps something Rulfo had in mind given that he often alluded to Catholic images: "you are dust, and to dust you shall return." The dead in Comala are made of it, as well as buried in it. This "*tierra*" is the sticky dirt that Susana saw in the grave her father made her rob; and the dirt Justina kissed when Susana's mother was buried; and it is the dirt that made way but little for Dorotea, as seen in this strangely sweet phrase: "*Ya ves ni siquiera le robé espacio a la tierra. Me enterraron en la misma sepultura y cupe muy bien en el hueco de tus brazos*"<sup>990</sup> (120).

The dirt, too, is that of Donis's sister, Juan Preciado's last companion, the one with whom he lay as he lost his air: "*El cuerpo de aquella mujer hecho de tierra, envuelto en costras de tierra, se desbarataba como si estuviera derritiéndose en un charco de lodo... de su boca borbotaba un*

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<sup>987</sup> "changes the color of things; where life is ventilated as if it were a murmur"

<sup>988</sup> "You passed rubbing the branches of the paradise that's on the path and you lifted with your air its last leaves. Then you disappeared"

<sup>989</sup> "You will feel that one would wish to live there for eternity. The dawn; the morning; the midday and the night, always the same; but with the difference of the air"

<sup>990</sup> "You can see that I didn't even rob space from the earth. They buried me in the same tomb and I fit very well in the space of your arms."

*ruido de burbujas muy parecido al del estertor*<sup>991</sup> (116-117). The *tierra*, the *lodo* of that woman are evocative images and are connected to Christian imagery; the woman is becoming the dirt from which she came. The Biblical references in this scene are numerous, as has been commented by Solanilla. Donis and his sister – whether they are in Comala, or only in Juan Preciado’s impression of Comala, as the author claims – are trying to repopulate the town: “...*los únicos éramos nosotros. Y de algún modo había que poblar el pueblo*” (112).<sup>992</sup> However, they are siblings in an incestuous relationship; they are Adam and Eve already in sin; they are paradise lost again, returning to mud (Solanilla 79).

The “earthiness” of death persists throughout the book, tying what could otherwise be seen as a profound change of realms or states-of-being into a continuity of involvement with dirt and stones. Pedro Páramo himself is “of” the land in a way, as seen in his death at the end of the work. His passing is of stone and soil; he tries to physically clarify his vision of Susana with his hand, but it seems held fast by his legs, held to *stone* and *soil*. These references are not random, but are part of a pattern of associating death with earth:

Quiso levantar su mano para aclarar la imagen; pero sus piernas la retuvieron como si fuera de piedra. Quiso levantar la otra mano y fue cayendo despacio, de lado, hasta quedar apoyada en el suelo como una muleta deteniendo su hombro deshuesado.  
— Esta es mi muerte — dijo.<sup>993</sup> (178)

Then: “*Dio un golpe seco contra la tierra y se fue desmoronando como si fuera un montón de piedras*”<sup>994</sup> (178), the last sentence of the work. In an unmistakable Biblical reference,<sup>995</sup> the pile of rocks that Saint Peter used to build the Christian church was used in Peter Páramo for destruction, and is fallen to pieces. Carol D’Lugo (1997) points out, too, that he is not just one stone, but several, “at once a symbol of unity and of fragmentation, thus capturing not only the composition of the text but its implied reading as well” (80). The image mirrors the text; and it mirrors his relationship to Comala, both single in its power to destroy, and shattered in its ability to build. This point might explain, too, how, after tearing down everyone else’s walls, the one

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<sup>991</sup> “The body of that woman made of earth, wrapped in crusts of earth, was breaking down as if it were melting in a puddle of mud. ... From her mouth was bubbling a noise of bubbles very similar to the death rattle.”

<sup>992</sup> “We were the only ones. And in some way we had to repopulate the town”

<sup>993</sup> “He wanted to raise his hand to clarify the image; but his legs held it fast as if it were a stone. He wanted to raise the other hand and it was falling slowly, sideways, until it stayed supported on the earth like a crutch holding up his de-boned shoulder. / -This is my death – he said.”

<sup>994</sup> “He gave a dry blow against the ground and he was crumbling as if he were a heap of stones.”

<sup>995</sup> In the Bible, Jesus asks his disciples who he is, and when the one called Simon answers him well, Jesus gives him the name which is translated into “Peter,” in English; “Pedro,” in Spanish. The name comes from the Greek translation (“*petros*,” in the masculine) for the Aramaic word “*kepha*”: rock (Ray 1999: 35). Matthew 16 verses 15-19 (NRSV): “He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.’”

wall that Pedro tries to build to now contain his monstrous acquisition is the one that kills his favorite son.<sup>996</sup>

Pedro's death is earthy in its connection with dirt and stone, and also in that his crossing over to death coincides with his thoughts being in a different "place": "*Después volvió al lugar donde había dejado sus pensamientos.*"<sup>997</sup> His mind moving out of life, his body follows, losing its air, inhabiting a different space.

La tierra en ruinas .... Sus ojos apenas se movían; saltaban de un recuerdo a otro, desdibujando el presente. De pronto su corazón se detenía y parecía como si también se detuvieran el tiempo y el aire de la vida.<sup>998</sup>

Pedro's separation of himself from his present life is part of what causes him to die, just as his son Juan's acceptance of the living reality of Donis and his sister allows him to cross into their realm, as well be seen below. The other cause for Pedro's death is murder, and yet even that is earthy as well as ambiguous. Abundio's part in don Pedro's death – his act of murder of his father – lessens the gap between life and death in its strange, surreal quality, its slipping to and fro across the veil; and, too, in its sheer *earthiness*, his own interaction with the earth in that moment:

Abundio siguió avanzando, dando traspiés, agachando la cabeza y a veces caminando en cuatro patas. Sentía que la tierra se retorció, le daba vueltas y luego se le soltaba; él corría para agarrarla y cuando ya la tenía en sus manos se le volvía a ir; hasta que llegó frente a la figura de un señor sentado junto a una puerta.

[...]

Regresó a donde estaban esperándolo. Se apoyó en los hombros de ellos, que lo llevaron a rastras, abriendo un surco en la tierra con la punta de los pies.<sup>999</sup>

On his mission to pay for death, resulting instead in more of it, Abundio interacts with the earth that will soon bury almost everyone in the town. His approach of Pedro Páramo is an earthy one, crawling and grabbing at the dirt; and his departure is equally marked, this time by digging a furrow in the ground. In a crossing of life and death, this is not a furrow for fertile farming, but a

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<sup>996</sup> » — *Sólo brinqué el lienzo de piedra que últimamente mandó poner mi padre. Hice que el Colorado lo brincara para no ir a dar ese rodeo tan largo que hay que hacer ahora para encontrar el camino. Sé que lo brinqué y después seguí corriendo; pero, como te digo, no había más que humo y humo y humo* (84). (“» — I only jumped the stone wall that my father recently ordered put up. I made Colorado jump it to not have to make that long detour that one has to make now in order to find the way. I know that I jumped it and then kept running; but, as I tell you, there was nothing more than smoke and smoke and smoke”)

<sup>997</sup> “Then he returned to the place where he had left his thoughts”

<sup>998</sup> “The sun was turning around on things and returning their forms to them. The earth in ruins was in front of him, empty. The heat was warming his body. His eyes were scarcely moving; they jumped from one memory to another, blurring the present. Suddenly his heart stopped and it seemed as if time and the air of life also stopped.”

<sup>999</sup> “Abundio kept advancing, stumbling, lowering his head and sometimes walking on all fours. He felt that the earth was twisting, it was spinning around him and then letting him go; he ran to grab it and when he already had it in his hands it left him again; until he arrived in front of the figure of a man seated near a door. [...] He returned to where they were waiting for him. He supported himself on their shoulders, that they took him dragging, opening a furrow in the land with the tips of his feet.”



furrow of one who has become earth, and who has made others become earth. He digs as of a grave, becoming of the soil in his act of absentminded murder.

### **PATHS and WAYS: the THIRD BANK<sup>1000</sup> of COMALA**

Juan Preciado asks the woman with whom he spend his last “living” night, “¿Cómo se va uno de aquí?,” “How does one leave from here?,” and she responds that there are many paths, or ways. Most of what she describes appears to refer to the surface of the earth, and distances between points; but the last phrase has several interpretations (my emphasis):

— Hay multitud de caminos. Hay uno que va para Contla; otro que viene de allá. Otro más que enfila derecho a la sierra. Ese que se mira desde aquí, que no sé para dónde irá — y me señaló con sus dedos el hueco del tejado, allí donde el techo estaba roto—. Este otro de por acá, que pasa por la Media Luna. Y hay otro más, que atraviesa toda la tierra y es el que va más lejos<sup>1001</sup> (110)

Does this last path cross all the lands, or the whole Earth? Or, in another meaning of “*atravesar*,” does it go *through* the earth, tying above- to below-ground, the dead and their past stories to the present and future, through this open path in the land? This may be the same path that appears to Juan Preciado, in Comala, as an open wound: “*Pensé regresar. Sentí allá arriba la huella por donde había venido, como una herida abierta entre la negrura de los cerros*”<sup>1002</sup> (106-107). His mother’s statement – “«*Sube o baja según se va o se viene. Para el que va, sube; para el que viene, baja*»”<sup>1003</sup> (66) – is an understatement; it appears to be a simple matter of physics that a hill gone down in entering must be climbed in leaving, but that hill has become insurmountable. He is crossing a river Styx, but unable to see either shore; he is on the *third bank of Comala*, a different shore that is a space of liminality of realms. Comala is a plexus (interweave) of the nexus (link) between death and life, past and present. As explored in Part I, the narrator’s father in the story “The Third Bank of the River” decides to live in a boat in the middle of a river, never touching the shores. This story can be interpreted as a metaphor for the way in which the state of being in-between, in the journey, the flux, the crossing, the man is able perhaps to perceive truths invisible in more concrete places. The “third bank” of the river is that of the (meta)physical, perceived in a state of constant journey. The “Third Bank” of Comala is, then, what is perceived in that space by its very nature of being in-between, in flux, in crossing – of life and death.

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<sup>1000</sup> This references Guimarães Rosa’s story, “A Terceira Margem do Rio,” discussed in Part I

<sup>1001</sup> “— There is a multitude of ways. There is one that goes towards Contla; another that comes from there. Another that aims directly towards the mountain range. This that is seen from here, that I don’t know where it might go — and he pointed out to me with his fingers the hole in the roof, there where the roof was broken—. This other one over here, that goes to the Media Luna. And there’s another again, that *crosses all the land? goes through all the earth? ...* and is the one that goes the furthest” (110)

<sup>1002</sup> “I thought about going back. I felt there above the path by which I had come, like an open wound between the blackness of the hills.”

<sup>1003</sup> “«It ascends or descends according to if one goes or comes. For he that goes, [the path] ascends; for he that comes, it descends.»”

The act of dying is that of becoming earth, as the air leaves their lungs; but the act of becoming earth makes them a part of Comala, yearning for redemption, crying out, repeating their most terrifying moments, resting, testifying. The “mortal sphere” as separate from the “spiritual” one is no longer separate, and it is the *tierra* (land, dirt, earth...) that *creates* this paradoxical union, and holds it fast – as with the *sertão*, the land is the question about redemption, and its answer.

Comala is, then, a liminal space, a space in between death and life, a “third bank” where both coexist. The border is thin, as thin as the air; a boundary that, like Pedro Páramo’s torn-down fences, allows one reality to bleed into another. Thus when Juan Preciado finds Comala, the plains seem transparent, undone: “*la llanura parecía una laguna transparente, deshecha en vapores por donde se traslucía un horizonte gris*”<sup>1004</sup> (67). Comala is transparent, and unmade; full of echoes ancient and new, of trees that were once there and somehow still are, all a simultaneity of “stories-so-far.” It is what Dolores knew it to be, though in a darker way, just as the specialness of the air was darker than she knew or was able to explain:

*«Allá hallarás mi querencia. El lugar que yo quise. Donde los sueños me enflaquecieron. Mi pueblo, levantado sobre la llanura. Lleno de árboles y de hojas, como una alcancía donde hemos guardado nuestros recuerdos. Sentirás que allí uno quisiera vivir para la eternidad. El amanecer; la mañana; el mediodía y la noche, siempre los mismos; pero con la diferencia del aire. Allí donde el aire cambia el color de las cosas; donde se ventila la vida como si fuera un murmullo; como si fuera un puro murmullo de la vida...»*<sup>1005</sup> (118)

These italicized words from Dolores come right after “*Es cierto Dorotea. Me mataron los murmullos,*” and right before “*Sí. Dorotea. Me mataron los murmullos*”<sup>1006</sup> (118). As mentioned earlier, the air that changes colors, creating beauty, can also change life into death, in its absence and flux; the murmurs are not the sweet murmur of an open life, but the closed murmurs of those trapped in death to repeat their earthly concerns. The trees and leaves are no longer there in physical reality, but the airless wind still rustles their leaves, in remembrance: her dear town is the “*alcancía donde hemos guardado nuestros recuerdos,*” and her son, too, as a memory carefully guarded, is taken into its recesses, its earth. He is pulled into memory – into Comala’s “*alcancía*” – from life itself by the strength of what yearns to not be forgotten.

## 2.2 REALMS, MURMURS, LIFE and DEATH:

The dissolution of such boundaries as that between above- and belowground mirrors the dissolution of the boundaries between life and death, as explored above. As Ruffinelli states, Rulfo “narrated death from life and life from death, erased frontiers between two orders that

<sup>1004</sup> “The plain seemed like a transparent lake, undone in vapors where a gray horizon revealed itself”

<sup>1005</sup> “«*There you will find my love. The place that I loved. Where the dreams caused me to become thin. My town, raised on the plain. Full of trees and of leaves, like a piggy bank where we’ve kept our memories. You will feel that there one would like to live for eternity. The dawn; the morning; the midday and the night, always the same; but with a difference of the air. There where the air changes the color of things; where life is aired out as if it were a murmur; as if it were the pure murmur of life.*»”

<sup>1006</sup> “— It’s true Dorotea. The murmurs killed me... Yes, Dorotea. The murmurs killed me.”

Western rationalism separates”<sup>1007</sup> (447). The work does indeed collapse boundaries between life and death, and in fact it develops several categories of “dead,” “living,” or in-between/ambiguous characters, few of them are easily defined as one or the other. First and most clearly, there is violent death through murder and warfare. Some of this appears as a backdrop for the story or its historical frame of reference, and some of it furthers the plot of the fall of Comala. To begin with, Pedro Páramo’s father dies a death of violence, and Pedro kills or arranges for the killing of all of his father’s enemies, his own creditors, and Susana’s father – trying to gain power, land, his coveted bride, and trying also to erase the memory of his father’s death: “*La muerte de su padre que arrastró otras muertes y en cada una de ellas estaba siempre la imagen de la cara despedazada; roto un ojo, mirando vengativo el otro. Y otro y otro más, hasta que la había borrado del recuerdo cuando ya no hubo nadie que se la recordara*”<sup>1008</sup> (125). Miguel follows in his father’s footsteps, killing padre Rentería’s brother in order to rape the priest’s niece. But as they and others find, it isn’t easy to kill a memory, or erase a death; death in Comala is not a silent tomb.

Many of the other deaths in the work are more ambiguous, resulting not in a simple end to life, but in a reciprocity/continuity of states-of-being. For instance, Miguel Páramo, in his tragic accident, crosses into death as through a veil: he is thrown from his horse upon leaping a wall but continues to journey, looking for his girlfriend and confused about the new limits to his vision, as he relates afterwards to Eduviges:

— ...Lo que sucede es que yo no pude dar con ella. Se me perdió el pueblo. Había mucha neblina o humo o no sé qué; pero sí sé que Contla no existe. Fui más allá según mis cálculos, y no encontré nada. Vengo a contártelo a ti, porque tú me comprendes. Si se lo dijera a los demás de Comala dirían que estoy loco, como siempre han dicho que lo estoy.

— No. Loco no, Miguel. Debes estar muerto. Acuérdate que te dijeron que ese caballo te iba a matar algún día. Acuérdate, Miguel Páramo. Tal vez te pusiste a hacer locuras y eso ya es otra cosa.

— Sólo brinqué el lienzo de piedra que últimamente mandó poner mi padre. Hice que el Colorado lo brincara para no ir a dar ese rodeo tan largo que hay que hacer ahora para encontrar el camino. Sé que lo brinqué y después seguí corriendo; pero, como te digo, no había más que humo y humo y humo...<sup>1009</sup> (84)

<sup>1007</sup> “*narraba la muerte desde la vida y la vida desde la muerte, borraba fronteras entre dos órdenes que el racionalismo occidental separa*”

<sup>1008</sup> “The death of his father that dragged other deaths and in each one of them was always the image of the face torn to pieces; one eye broken, the other looking on vengefully. And another and another, until it had been erased from memory when there was no longer anyone to remember it”

<sup>1009</sup> “ — ...What happens is that I couldn’t meet her. I lost the town. There was a lot of fog or smoke or I don’t know what; but I do know that Comala doesn’t exist. I went beyond it according to my calculations, and I didn’t find anything. I come to tell you, because you understand me. If I told the others in Comala they would say I was crazy, as they have always said that I am. / — No. Not crazy, Miguel. You must be dead. Remember that they told you that horse was going to kill you some day. Remember, Miguel Páramo. Perhaps you did some crazy things and this is already something else. / — I only jumped the stone wall that my father recently ordered put up. I made Colorado jump it to not have to do that long trip around that one has to do now to find the path. I know that I jumped it and then continued running; but, as I tell you, there wasn’t more than fog and fog and fog...”

Miguel's death is as simple, to him, as jumping a wall and then riding his horse through fog; however, it is soon apparent that he has died, first because Eduvigés tells him so, and then through other references.

In further ambiguity, the reader would generally suppose Eduvigés to be alive in this scene, though it becomes clear by references to her suicide that she dies before meeting Juan Preciado. However, even the timing of her death before this ghostly existence is not clear, as is indicated by González Boixo in his appendices to the novel. González Boixo explains that Eduvigés' suicide "raises a difficult situation, from the point of view of the structure of the novel" (195).<sup>1010</sup> Several of the novel's fragments in fact appear to be in conflict, as González Boixo explains in his Apéndice to the work: (A) Eduvigés tells Juan Preciado candidly about the night of Miguel Páramo's death with neither obvious nor subtle hints that she was dead at the time: "The realistic tone of the dialogue between the young man and Eduvigés doesn't permit symbolic interpretations that would cause to suppose, by example, that Eduvigés is already dead" (González Boixo 195).<sup>1011</sup> According to her account, Miguel came to her window, dead but unaware of that fact. She then tells of how the same night and before dawn, "*Antes de que amaneciera un mozo de la Media Luna vino a decir: — El patrón don Pedro le suplica. El niño Miguel ha muerto. Le suplica su compañía*"<sup>1012</sup> (Rulfo 84). (B) While the *caporales* bring the body to the cemetery, the narrative makes the following reference: «*Había estrellas fugaces*»<sup>1013</sup> (Rulfo 90, González Boixo 196). The subsequent fragment narrates Father Rentería (C) in his deep and lasting self-reproach concerning the burial of Miguel. Angry at Miguel for killing his brother and raping his niece, Rentería balks at being asked to bless the dead boy, but he eventually gives in to the pressure, especially given that "*De los pobres no consigo nada; las oraciones no llenan el estómago*"<sup>1014</sup> (Rulfo 91, González Boixo 196). This leads him to remember the "episode of the suicide of Eduvigés, since he denies her that salvation when María Dyada tells him that she doesn't have money"<sup>1015</sup> (González Boixo 196). This fragment, too, is bracketed by "*Había estrellas fugaces*" and "*Llovía estrellas*"<sup>1016</sup> and it follows that it is, according to González Boixo, "difficult not to relate it to the previous one, especially taking into account that the phenomenon that he describes is not very habitual"<sup>1017</sup> (196). Therefore, it appears that on the night of Miguel's funeral, Eduvigés had already committed suicide, and her sister had been to see the priest, leading to his remorse at the boy's funeral; however, she was alive the night the boy died. Although González Boixo doesn't mention it, it still appears possible, albeit unlikely, that her suicide occurred after the dawn when she was sent for by don Pedro and before nightfall on the funeral day. However, perhaps because of the short length of

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<sup>1010</sup> "plantea una difícil situación, desde el punto de vista de la estructura de la novela" (195).

<sup>1011</sup> "El tono realista del diálogo entre el mozo y Eduvigés no permite interpretaciones simbólicas que hagan suponer, por ejemplo, que Eduvigés ya está muerta." (González Boixo 195)

<sup>1012</sup> "Before dawn a young man from the Media Luna came to say: The boss don Pedro begs of you. The boy Miguel has died. He begs your company." (Rulfo 84).

<sup>1013</sup> «There were falling stars»

<sup>1014</sup> "From the poor I don't obtain anything; prayers don't fill the stomach" (Rulfo 91, González Boixo 196)

<sup>1015</sup> "episodio del suicidio de Eduvigés, ya que le niega esta salvación cuando María Dyada le dice que no tiene dinero"

<sup>1016</sup> "There were falling stars" ... "It rained stars"

<sup>1017</sup> "difícil no relacionarlo con el anterior, sobre todo teniendo en cuenta que el fenómeno que describe es poco habitual" (196)

that window, González Boixo and other critics have found it to be conflicting. González Boixo explains that some critics believe Eduviges to have been dead when Miguel visited her, and others believe Rulfo made a mistake, or that Eduviges invented her story about Miguel; González Boixo, however, believes it to be chronological – and simply “*enigmático*,” enigmatic, like the paradoxical facts that the long-dead Eduviges was somehow chosen by those who fled the town years later to keep their furniture for them, and the fact that she talks to Juan Preciado now (198). The reader of *PP* may struggle with ambiguities and discontinuities and “enigmas,” but they are in fact the fabric of the work.

Many more of the “living” and the “dead” also interact in a way unexpected to “Western rationalism.” For instance, Pedro’s grandfather dies when he is a child, and his mother comes to the threshold of his room, the “*umbral*,” with a candle to ask him to come to the prayers, and then turns away to cry, opening her sobs, “*abrió sus sollozos*” (77). Later, his father dies, and he sees his mother return to the same spot to tell him the news. She stands “*de pie en el umbral; su cuerpo impidiendo la llegada del día; dejando asomar, a través de sus brazos, retazos de cielo, y debajo de sus pies regueros de luz*”<sup>1018</sup> (86). She tells him the news: “— *Han matado a tu padre*,” and then she cries, “again”: “*Y después el sollozo. Otra vez el llanto*.” And he responds: “— *¿Y a ti quién te mató, madre?*” – “And who killed you?” (86) This last phrase may be, as González Boixo indicates, “an image or memory of Pedro Páramo, now old, who reflects on that moment in his life. The phrase isn’t directed to anyone”<sup>1019</sup> (194), or, as Rulfo suggests, in his “clarification” of what the work failed to convey (see Chapter II), “it’s a thought that comes to him. ... This needs to be put on the next line, they put it together... the mother dies later”<sup>1020</sup> (González Boixo 249). However, we are reading the novel, not the author’s intentions undisclosed therein; and in the novel, her presence there seems to indicate the sort of apparition the reader comes to expect. Her standing on a threshold, the sky and light shining around her, these seem to place her in a space between life and death, a threshold between realms that are not entirely separate. Indeed, in the novel it is unclear when she died; Pedro remembers later that it was in a constrained voice, “*aquella voz quebrada, deshecha, sólo unida por el hilo del sollozo*”<sup>1021</sup>, that she told him the news, she, “*Una madre de la que él ya se había olvidado y olvidado muchas veces*” (125). Evidence points to her being an apparition, the ghost of the woman, now long-forgotten, who told him news the first time at that same *threshold*, that same place of crossing.

Are death and life so easily intertwined? For Anita, wishing to die while being sexually assaulted, the mind itself is perceived as a tool of the crossing: “*Y hasta dejé de pensar para morirme antes de que él me matara*.”<sup>1022</sup> (89). Pedro Páramo himself dies in the moment in which he thinks of the past more than of the present. Of course, if stopping one’s thoughts could

<sup>1018</sup> “on foot in the threshold; her body preventing the arrival of the day; allowing to peek out, through her arms, scraps of sky, and beneath her feet trickles of light.” ... “They have killed your father.” ... And then the sob. Again the weeping.” ... “And you killed you, Mother?” ...

<sup>1019</sup> “una imagen o recuerdo de Pedro Páramo, ya viejo, que reflexiona sobre aquel momento de su vida. La frase no va dirigida a nadie...”

<sup>1020</sup> “es un pensamiento que le viene. ... Falta interlinear esto, lo pusieron junto... la madre muere después”

<sup>1021</sup> “that voice, broken, undone, only held together by the thread of the sob” ... “A mother that he had forgotten and forgotten many times”

<sup>1022</sup> “And I even stopped thinking to die before he killed me”

halt life, the dead would be unconscious; but this isn't so. The dead *do* speak in *PP*: they are the *murmillos*, the murmurs, as will be explored further.

In the work, too, it seems that though soul, body, and mind are intertwined, they can perhaps exist quite separately, as well. For instance, Dorotea's body can converse while her soul walks the earth. She suffered in life from hunger, and from some cosmic mistake, having the heart of a mother but the "*seno de una cualquiera*" (119), so when the saints tell her in a dream that her beloved baby was never real, they show kindness to her: "*Ve a descansar un poco más a la tierra, hija, y procura ser buena para que tu purgatorio sea menos largo*" (120).<sup>1023</sup> However, the priest, unable to pardon her for his own selfish reasons, tells her she will never see Heaven. Hunger is difficult, and death something she waits for after long suffering, so when her bones decide to be still, she lets them, and in that moment her soul leaves, having failed to convince her to fight longer for the miracle of redemption:

— Debe andar vagando por la tierra como tantas otras; buscando vivos que recen por ella. Tal vez me odie por el mal trato que le di; pero eso ya no me preocupa. He descansado del vicio de sus remordimientos. Me amargaba hasta lo poco que comía, y me hacía insoportables las noches llenándomelas de pensamientos intranquilos con figuras de condenados y cosas de ésas. Cuando me senté a morir, ella me rogó que me levantara y que siguiera arrastrando la vida, como si esperara todavía algún milagro que me limpiara de culpas. Ni siquiera hice el intento: «Aquí se acaba el camino — le dije—. Ya no me quedan fuerzas para más.» Y abrí la boca para que se fuera. Y se fue. Sentí cuando cayó en mis manos el hilito de sangre con que estaba amarrada a mi corazón.<sup>1024</sup> (124-5)

Some part of Dorotea's whole, whole in itself, waits indefinitely in her body, buried in the arms of Juan Preciado. Another part of her wanders the surface of the earth, hoping to find someone to pray for her so she can go to the Heaven that the priest barred from her. Both appear to have will and consciousness, though they do not communicate with each other. The *murmillos* of the soil and the *murmillos* above it may be, then, separate; one for the living, and one for the dead.

Padre Rentería shows, too, in a different way, that one can kill the soul but still walk the Earth. He feels that he is dead in life, for though his body lives, he has committed offences against his faith out of weakness and greed; he feels dead – "*Hubiera querido responderles: «Yo. Yo soy el muerto.»*" (128) – but Susanita is the only living soul to recognize his loss: "— *¿Para qué vienes a verme, si estás muerto?*"<sup>1025</sup> (149).

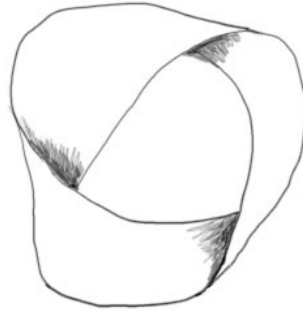
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<sup>1023</sup> "the womb of just anyone" ... "Go and rest some more on earth, daughter, and seek to be good so that your purgatory will be shorter"

<sup>1024</sup> "It [my soul] must be wandering the earth like so many others; looking for the living to pray for her. Perhaps she hates me for the poor treatment I gave it; but this doesn't bother me anymore. I have rested from the vice of remorse. It embittered even the little that I ate, and made unbearable the nights, filling them for me with thoughts worried by the figures of the condemned and things like that. When I sat down to die, she begged me to get up and keep dragging life on, as if I hoped there was still some miracle that would clean me of guilt. I didn't even try: "Here ends the road" I told her, "I have no strength for anything more" And I opened my mouth for her to leave. And she left. I felt it when the little thread of blood with which it was tied to my heart fell into my hands."

<sup>1025</sup> "I would have liked to respond to them: 'I. I am the dead one.'" ... "Why do you come to see me, if you're dead?"

Some of the spirits in *PP* walk the earth; others lie beneath it, though body and soul may be separate or the same. The Death/Life distinction is unmade. They are no longer separate states of being, or even two sides of a coin; for here, they are continuous, a Möbius strip of death and life (drawing mine)...



...where one can find oneself on the other side *without ever turning a corner*. The duality is not just broken; it is placed in flux, tied together, in a symbol remarkably like that of infinity.

### REFUGIO:

At the end of the work, the death of Abundio's wife Refugio illustrates the tragedy of Comala's injustices and leads to a culmination in murder of the pre-telling plot of Pedro Páramo's power. Also, like many other deaths, it shows a further aspect of the death/life interaction in the work.

Refugio is dead because they couldn't afford medical care. He remembers her *physical* being, as he walks to his father's house:

Pensó en su mujer, que estaba tendida en el catre, solita, allá en el patio de su casa, adonde él la había sacado para que se serenara y no se apestara pronto. La Cuca, que todavía ayer se acostaba con él, bien viva, retozando como una potranca, y que lo mordía y le raspaba la nariz con su nariz.<sup>1026</sup> (176)

She had been a very corporeal presence; and she now was a body that would decay. And he remembers her tragedy, born of poverty through his father's meanness. She suffered illness that led to the death of their baby son, and led to her own incapacitation; Abundio finds out how many illnesses she had – "*el mal de ojo y los fríos y la rescoldera y no sé cuántos males*"<sup>1027</sup> – when he finally sells his donkeys to bring the doctor there, too late. He mourns her, "*La Cuca, que ahora estaba allá aguantando el relente, con los ojos cerrados, ya sin poder ver amanecer, ni este sol ni ningún otro*"<sup>1028</sup> (176).

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<sup>1026</sup> "He thought of his wife, who was stretched out on the folding bed, all alone, there in the patio of his house, where he had taken her out so that she could calm down and not stink soon. Cuca, who still yesterday lay down with him, alive, tossing like a filly, and who bit him and rubbed his nose with hers."

<sup>1027</sup> "the evil eye and the colds and the heartburn and I don't know how many ills" – interesting to note, some are cultural conceptualizations of illness, despite the man being a "doctor."

<sup>1028</sup> "Cuca, who was now over there bearing the dew, with her eyes closed, unable now to see the sunrise, not this sun nor any other."

However, though Abundio certainly seems aware that she is dead – i.e., she is no longer a physical companion to him, cannot see, and will putrefy – nonetheless, he and his neighbors speak about her state of death as if it were impermanent, perhaps permeable, and as if the soul could actually linger to chat. Abundio converses quite naturally with the shopkeeper, madre Villa, who asks him to speak to his dead wife on her behalf:

— [...]Ve diciéndole entretanto a la difuntita que yo siempre la aprecié y que me tome en cuenta cuando llegue a la gloria. [...] Díselo antes de que acabe de enfriar.

— Se lo diré. Yo sé que ella también cuenta con usted pa que ofrezca sus oraciones [...] No se mortifique. Se lo diré en llegando. Y hasta le sacaré la promesa de palabra, por si es necesario y pa que usted se deje de apuraciones.<sup>1029</sup> (174)

The conversation must take place before the body becomes cold, according to the shopkeeper; and, according to Abundio, the conversation will be a dialogue, not a monologue. The deaths in Comala, then, merely *populate it with dead beings*, rather than removing anyone from the community.

### DAMIANA and PEDRO:

The next death act in the textual timeline is related to Abundio as well, but as the instigator: the apparent murder of his father Pedro Páramo, and of Damiana Cisneros, committed by Abundio instead of returning home to drink with his dead wife as he had promised. In this scene, death and life cross closely again in the way in which Damiana dies – in screams and silence, but with no apparent cause, while the scene is narrated from the third person limited perspective of the drunken aggressor.

He first arrives in front of a man seated near a doorway, “*la figura de un señor sentado junto a una puerta.*” Then, he stops and asks for charity to bury his wife: “—*Denme una caridad para enterrar a mi mujer —dijo.*”<sup>1030</sup> Damiana Cisneros, meanwhile, is praying: “*De las asechanzas del enemigo malo, líbranos, Señor.*” *Y le apuntaba con las manos haciendo la señal de la cruz.*”<sup>1031</sup> Abundio looks at her, confused in his drunken state:

Abundio Martínez vio a la mujer de los ojos azorados, poniéndole aquella cruz enfrente, y se estremeció. Pensó que tal vez el demonio lo había seguido hasta allí, y se dio vuelta, esperando encontrarse con alguna mala figuración. Al no ver a nadie repitió:

— Vengo por una ayudita para enterrar a mi muerta.

<sup>1029</sup> “—[...] Meanwhile go saying to the [dear/little] dead woman that I always appreciated her and that she take me into account when she arrives at the glory. [...] Tell her before she finishes getting cold. – I will tell her. I know that she also relies on you to offer prayers. Don’t torment yourself. I will tell her on arrival. And I will even get her promise in words, if it’s necessary for you to stop worrying.”

<sup>1030</sup> “— Give me some charity to bury my wife – he said.”

<sup>1031</sup> “Damiana Cisneros prayed: ‘From the traps of the bad enemy, free us, Lord.’ And she aimed at him with her hands in the sign of the cross”



El sol le llegaba por la espalda. Ese sol recién salido, casi frío, desfigurado por el polvo de la tierra.<sup>1032</sup>

The sunrise is cold instead of warm, an antithesis; and, too, it represents in its very liminality the threshold crossed next. In the very next sentence, with no indication of an action by Abundio, Damiana begins to scream:

La cara de Pedro Páramo se escondió debajo de las cobijas como si se escondiera de la luz, mientras que los gritos de Damiana se oían salir más repetidos, atravesando los campos: “¡Están matando a don Pedro!”

Abundio Martínez oía que aquella mujer gritaba. No sabía qué hacer para acabar con esos gritos. No le encontraba la punta a sus pensamientos. Sentía que los gritos de la vieja se debían estar oyendo muy lejos. Quizá hasta su mujer los estuviera oyendo, porque a él le taladraban las orejas, aunque no entendía lo que decía. ...

— ¡Ayúdenme! — dijo — . Denme algo.

Pero ni siquiera él se oyó. Los gritos de aquella mujer lo dejaban sordo.

Por el camino de Comala se movieron unos puntitos negros. De pronto los puntitos se convirtieron en hombres y luego estuvieron aquí, cerca de él. Damiana Cisneros dejó de gritar. Desechó su cruz. Ahora se había caído y abría la boca como si bostezara.

Los hombres que habían venido la levantaron del suelo y la llevaron al interior de la casa.<sup>1033</sup> (175-176)

Damiana's death is marked for Abundio, and by the fragment itself, only by her ceasing to scream. It was a scream that canceled out his own voice asking for help, a scream that the dead could hear; and it ended, and she fell, and she looked like she was yawning. When the men arrive, the narration explains: “*Desarmaron a Abundio, que aún tenía el cuchillo lleno de sangre en la mano.*”<sup>1034</sup> Apparently, according to the evidence of the bloody knife, he has stabbed Damiana in an effort to stop the screaming.

Pedro Páramo dies in this scene as well, and to further blur the life/death boundary, his crossing is as simple as joining Damiana for lunch (177-178). His death is marked by the perpetrator in this way: “*La cara de Pedro Páramo se escondió debajo de las cobijas como si se escondiera de la luz.*” Pedro Páramo then notices, but without alarm, that he can no longer lift his hands. He

<sup>1032</sup> “Abundio Martínez saw the woman with the alarmed eyes, putting that cross in front, and he trembled. He thought that maybe the Devil had followed him there, and he turned around, expecting to meet some bad apparition. Upon not seeing anyone he repeated / — I come for some little help to bury my dead woman. / The sun was arriving from behind. The recently appearing sun, almost cold, disfigured by the dust of the earth”

<sup>1033</sup> “Pedro Páramo's face was hidden beneath the blankets as if he was hiding from the light, while Damiana's screams were heard repeated more, crossing the fields: ‘They are killing don Pedro!’ / Abundio Martínez heard that that woman screamed. He didn't know what to do to end those screams. He felt that the screams of the old woman must be heard really far. Perhaps even his wife was hearing them, because they pierced his own ears, even though he didn't understand what they said. ... / Help me! — he said — . Give me something. / But even he didn't hear himself. The screams of that woman left him deaf. / Along the path of Comala little black dots moved. Suddenly the little dots turned into men and then they were here, near to him. Damiana Cisneros stopped yelling. She undid her cross. Now she had fallen and opened her mouth as if she were yawning. / The men that had come lifted her from the earth and brought her inside the house.”

<sup>1034</sup> “They disarmed Abundio, who still had the knife full of blood in his hand.”

ignores it, because he is used to feeling a part of him die, as he is used to watching the town die around him. After all, he caused it, taking his revenge on the town for having fun while his Susana was being buried: “— *Me cruzaré de brazos y Comala se morirá de hambre. / Y así lo hizo*” (“I will cross my arms and Comala will die of hunger. And that’s what he did”) (171). Here he is on his leather chair:

Allá atrás, Pedro Páramo, sentado en su equipal, miró el cortejo que se iba hacia el pueblo. Sintió que su mano izquierda, al querer levantarse, caía muerta sobre sus rodilla; pero no hizo caso de eso. Estaba acostumbrado a ver morir cada día alguno de sus pedazos. Vio cómo se sacudía el paraíso dejando caer sus hojas: «Todos escogen el mismo camino. Todos se van.»<sup>1035</sup>

He is used to loss, and so the loss of one hand or any other piece of him is unremarkable. He returns to his thoughts of his lost love Susana, the cause of so much of his anger, and so many of the ills visited upon the town: “*Después volvió al lugar donde había dejado sus pensamientos. — Susana — dijo. Luego cerró los ojos—. Yo te pedí que regresaras...*”<sup>1036</sup>

He tries to physically clarify his vision of her with his hand, but it seems held fast by his legs. He looks upon the ruins he has caused, and finds that just as he uses his physical eyes to look at past memories instead of the present, his “present” world is become emptied of *air* and *time*. His heart has stopped; apparently, Abundio has killed Pedro Páramo, too, in this strange accident of drunken entreaty:

El sol se fue volteando sobre las cosas y les devolvió su forma. La tierra en ruinas estaba frente a él, vacía. El calor caldeaba su cuerpo. Sus ojos apenas se movían; saltaban de un recuerdo a otro, desdibujando el presente. De pronto su corazón se detenía y parecía como si también se detuvieran el tiempo y el aire de la vida.<sup>1037</sup>

His memories are blurring his present; lost to the present moment, he loses its air, too. However, his only concern is that he might see ghosts, especially the ghost of his own son Abundio, repeating again the plea that he ignored in life. Pedro Páramo fears the ghosts with which he has peopled Comala, after spending his life laying all of his enemies down in the earth. This fear shows a kind of guilt:

«Con tal de que no sea una nueva noche», pensaba él.  
Porque tenía miedo de las noches que le llenaban de fantasmas. De eso tenía miedo.

<sup>1035</sup> “There behind, Pedro Páramo, seated in his leather chair, looked on the entourage that went towards the town. He felt that his left hand, on wanting to lift itself up, fell dead upon his knee; but he didn’t pay attention to that. He was accustomed to seeing some of his pieces die every day. He saw how the paradise was shaking itself, letting its leaves fall: ‘They all choose the same path. They all leave.’”

<sup>1036</sup> “Then he returned to the place where he had left his thoughts. — Susana — he said. Then he closed his eyes— . I asked you to come back...”

<sup>1037</sup> “The sun was turning around on things and returning their forms to them. The earth in ruins was in front of him, empty. The heat was warming his body. His eyes were scarcely moving; they jumped from one memory to another, blurring the present. Suddenly his heart stopped and it seemed as if time and the air of life also stopped.”

«Sé que dentro de pocas horas vendrá Abundio con sus manos ensangrentadas a pedirme la ayuda que le negué. Y yo no tendré manos para taparme los ojos y no verlo. Tendré que oírlo; hasta que su voz se apague con el día, hasta que se le muera su voz.»<sup>1038</sup>

He knows he has committed crimes. He knew it years earlier when his son Miguel died, finding death through his own approach to life: “*Estoy comenzando a pagar. Más vale empezar temprano, para terminar pronto*”<sup>1039</sup> (126).

Damiana’s hands on his shoulder cause him to straighten his body: “*Sintió que unas manos le tocaban los hombros y enderezó el cuerpo, endureciéndolo.*” (“He felt that some hands were touching his shoulders and he straightened his body, hardening it.”). But it isn’t to give him physical strength that she holds him. She has gone first into death, and is bringing him to join her there. She offers him lunch from the other side:

— Soy yo, don Pedro — dijo Damiana — . ¿No quiere que le traiga su almuerzo?

Pedro Páramo respondió:

— Voy para allá. Ya voy.

Se apoyó en los brazos de Damiana Cisneros e hizo el intento de caminar. Después de unos cuantos pasos cayó, suplicando por dentro; pero sin decir una sola palabra. Dio un golpe seco contra la tierra y se fue desmoronando como si fuera un montón de piedras.

Fin<sup>1040</sup>

Damiana is already dead, fallen; for Pedro Páramo to lean on her would be to lean on a spirit with his spirit. The narrative has neglected to show us any stabbing, but the consequences are clear. However, the ending leaves open the question of where Pedro Páramo’s voice, consciousness, or “soul” have gone, but his body – that has joined the earth by becoming it. Much is vague in terms of the states of death and life in the work; but what is consistent is its state of paradox, the joining of the two in a borderless flux.

## JUAN PRECIADO:

Abundio’s wife dies of a physical illness, but her passing is not as simple as ceasing to exist on earth; she remains an interlocutor for the living, as well as a memory of physicality and a corpse. Damiana’s death is apparently due to a knife becoming bloodied, a real cause though not enunciated, but she returns for Pedro Páramo on the porch even as her body yawns on the

<sup>1038</sup> “‘So long as it isn’t a new night’, he thought. / Because he was afraid of the nights that filled up with ghosts. That is what he was afraid of. / ‘I know that in a few hours Abundio will come with his hands bloodied to ask me for the help that I denied him. And I won’t have hands to cover my eyes and not see him. I will have to hear him; until his voice ends with the day, until his voice dies.’”

<sup>1039</sup> “I am beginning to pay. It’s better to start early, to finish soon.”

<sup>1040</sup> “— It’s me, don Pedro— Damiana said— . Don’t you want me to bring you your lunch? / Pedro Páramo responded: — I’m going there. I’m going. / He supported himself in the arms of Damiana Cisneros and made the attempt to walk. After a few steps he fell, supplicating inside; but without saying a single word. He gave a dry blow against the ground and he was crumbling as if he were a heap of stones. / End.”

ground. Pedro Páramo is likely killed by the same knife, precipitating her yelling; he loses his air, and she leads him to have lunch with her in a spiritual realm, leaving his body to crumple to the ground. Miguel, too, has likely died due to a real physical cause – a horse-back riding accident – but feels no barrier in his crossing, only seeing a mist that hides his way. These deaths show an unconventional life/death boundary, but one in which the reason for dying can be physically explained. Juan Preciado's death, on the other hand, takes the premise even further, for his is not a death wrought by the living, but by the dead. It is a truly subtle crossing of realms, a process of death *by participation in death*, by communing with Comala's "*gentío de animas*," crowd of souls (111).

The moment of Juan Preciado's death, however, is a culmination of a process of dying that is indicated throughout the text, hinted at and revealed through his interaction with the wandering souls of Comala and with their voices. It is through a process of subtle revelations that the reader can trace, with our own fear, Juan Preciado's slow crossing of the veil (if there is even a veil) into the world of the dead that surround him. These revelations take the form of voices speaking and voices heard – the *murmillos* – and Juan Preciado's reactions to them. As the voices are more insistent, the ghosts more real to him, Comala is consuming Juan Preciado himself, our narrator, ambassador, friend, bringing him to participate in its eternal Purgatory/Hell. The more real the dead seem to him, the more he becomes of their realm, a death wrought of his father's destruction of the town.

When the readers first meet Juan Preciado, we hear his voice as that of a living man who has sojourned to the land of his birth to understand his origins. In Juan Preciado's experience as narrated, and thus ours too, the town of Comala begins as silent:

Ahora estaba aquí, en este pueblo sin ruidos. [...] Mis pisadas huecas, repitiendo su sonido en el eco de las paredes teñidas por el sol del atardecer. [...] Fui andando por la calle real<sup>1041</sup> en esa hora. Miré las casas vacías; las puertas desportilladas, invadidas de yerba.<sup>1042</sup> (69-70)

As it grows dark, the town becomes peopled, though the individuals don't seem completely corporeal. In this scene, Juan is already part of the *narrated*, as well narrator; his steps and his eyes are part of the town, indicating that he is being drawn up into it (see italics, mine):

Al cruzar una bocacalle vi una señora envuelta en su rebozo que desapareció como si no existiera. Después volvieron a moverse mis pasos y mis ojos siguieron asomándose al agujero de las puertas. Hasta que nuevamente la mujer del rebozo se cruzó frente a mí.  
— ¡Buenas noches! — me dijo.  
[...]

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<sup>1041</sup> What does he mean by the "*calle real*"? Is it merely the principal street of the town, which is sometimes called "Calle Real"? Or is it the "real" or "true" street, as opposed to the one his soul walks now?

<sup>1042</sup> "Now I was here, in this town without noises. [...] My hollow footsteps, repeating their sound in the echo of the walls dyed by the evening sun. [...] I want walking over the real street at that time. I saw the empty houses; the chipped doors, invaded by grass."

Me di cuenta que su voz estaba hecha de hebras humanas, que su boca tenía dientes y una lengua que se trababa y destrababa al hablar, y que sus ojos eran como todos los ojos de la gente que vive sobre la tierra.

Había oscurecido.<sup>1043</sup> (70)

This woman initially disappears, but as it grows dark, he finds she has a tongue and teeth and a voice made of human fiber. Juan Preciado soon perceives other “life” in the village now that it is dark. This life takes the form of *voices*, voices that, as he becomes accustomed to their form of silence, become stronger:

Y aunque no había niños jugando, ni palomas, ni tejados azules, sentí que el pueblo vivía. Y que si yo escuchaba solamente el silencio, era porque aún no estaba acostumbrado al silencio; tal vez porque mi cabeza venía llena de ruidos y de voces.

De voces, sí. Y aquí, donde el aire era escaso, se oían mejor. Se quedaban dentro de uno, pesadas. Me acordé de lo que me había dicho mi madre: «Allá me oirás mejor. Estaré más cerca de ti. Encontrarás más cercana la voz de mis recuerdos que la de mi muerte, si es que alguna vez la muerte ha tenido alguna voz.» Mi madre... la viva.<sup>1044</sup> (70)

The air is growing scarce as the voices grow more real; he is becoming “accustomed” to being in a place in-between. And beyond the strangeness of hearing voices in the silence, and better without air, he mentions that the one who had told him he would hear her in Comala was “*Mi madre... la viva*,” “My mother ... the living one.” In that phrase it is implicit that there is another one, the dead one; and merely mentioning the distinction reveals that his mother speaks to him from beyond the grave. His mother is dead, but she knows even as she is dying that in the place of her birth and formative experiences, Comala, she will still have a voice – the voice of her life and memories. The others in Comala are also alive in death – not just an archive of history, that can be lost (as is apparently often done in Mexico<sup>1045</sup>) or burned in order to be forgotten, but a living history that never fades, and that envelops the living.

Juan Preciado has been told by Abundio to seek out doña Eduvigés, and he seeks rest there. In his interaction with her, there are several more hints that something otherworldly is in effect in Comala. When he knocks on the door, it turns to air, perhaps because it was opened by the woman who expects him, perhaps because of the illusions that he has been seeing/hearing: “*Toqué la puerta; pero en falso. Mi mano se sacudió en el aire como si el aire la hubiera*

<sup>1043</sup> “On crossing the entrance I saw a woman wrapped in her shawl who disappeared as if she didn’t exist. Then my steps began to move again and my eyes kept looking through the keyholes of the doors. Until the woman with the shawl crossed in front of me again. / “Good evening!” she said. / [...] I realized that her voice was made of human fibers, that her mouth had teeth and a tongue that stuck and unstuck on speaking, and that her eyes were like all the eyes of the people who live on the earth. / It had gotten dark.”

<sup>1044</sup> “And even though there weren’t children playing, nor pigeons, nor blue rooftops, I felt that the town lived. And that if I heard only silence, it was because I still wasn’t accustomed to silence; perhaps because my head came full of noises and voices.” / Of voices, yes. And here, where the air was scarce, they could be heard better. They stayed inside of one, heavy. I remembered what my mother had said to me: ‘*There you will hear me better. I will be closer to you. You will find more nearby the voice of my memories than that of my death, if it is that death has ever had a voice.*’ My mother... the living one.”

<sup>1045</sup> “*México es el paraíso de los archivos perdidos.*” (“Mexico is the paradise of lost archives”) (Harss 65)

*abierto. Una mujer estaba allí.*<sup>1046</sup> (71). Eduviges Dyada invites him inside a house covered in the furniture and trinkets of those who have left. She has been expecting him:

— ... ¿De modo que usted es hijo de ella?

— ¿De quién? — respondí.

— De Doloritas.

— Sí ¿pero cómo lo sabe?

— Ella me avisó que usted vendría. Y hoy precisamente. Que llegaría hoy.

— ¿Quién? ¿Mi madre?

— Sí. Ella.

Yo no supe qué pensar. Ni ella me dejó en qué pensar:

— Éste es su cuarto — me dijo. [...] — ... la madre de usted no me avisó sino hasta ahora.

— Mi madre — dije — , mi madre ya murió.

— Entonces ésa fue la causa de que su voz se oyera tan débil, como si hubiera tenido que atravesar una distancia muy larga para llegar hasta aquí. Ahora lo entiendo. ¿Y cuánto hace que murió?

— Hace ya siete días.

— Pobre de ella. Se ha de haber sentido abandonada. Nos hicimos la promesa de morir juntas. De irnos las dos para darnos ánimo una a la otra en el otro viaje, por si se necesitara, por si acaso encontráramos alguna dificultad. Éramos muy amigas. ... ¿De modo que me lleva ventaja, no? Pero ten la seguridad de que la alcanzaré. Sólo yo entiendo lo lejos que está el cielo de nosotros; pero conozco cómo acortar las veredas. Todo consiste en morir, Dios mediante, cuando uno quiera y no cuando Él lo disponga. O, si tú quieres, forzarlo a disponer antes de tiempo.<sup>1047</sup> (72-73)

In this conversation with Eduviges, several facts are revealed. First, Eduviges was his mother's friend, and his mother "Doloritas" informed Eduviges that Juan Preciado was coming. Second, Dolores spoke with Eduviges only recently, *after* her death. Third, Eduviges is not disturbed to know that her friend spoke to her from death, but is only concerned that she needs to catch up with her friend on the road to Heaven, apparently by forcing God's hand (we find out later that she already committed suicide many years earlier). Eduviges, at this moment, appears to believe she is alive; and Juan Preciado, still unaware of the mounting proof of Comala's life/death multiplicity, believes she is crazy. However, as Carol D'Lugo points out (77), this is also the

<sup>1046</sup> "I knocked on the door; but falsely. My hand shook itself in the air as if the air had opened to it. A woman was there."

<sup>1047</sup> "So you're her son?" / "Whose?" I responded. / "Doloritas." / "Yes, but how do you know?" / "She told me you would come. And today precisely. That you would come today." / "Who? My mother?" / "Yes. She." / I didn't know what to think. Nor did she leave me anything to think about: "This is your room." she said. [...] "...your mother didn't tell me until just now." / "My mother," I said, "my mother already died." / "So that was why her voice sounded so weak, as if it had to cross a long distance to arrive here. Now I understand. And when did she die?" / "Seven days ago." / "Poor thing. She must feel abandoned. We made a promise to die together. To go the two of us to give each other strength on the other journey, in case it was needed, in case we encountered some difficulty. We were very much friends. ... So she has the advantage, right? Well be sure that I will reach her. Only I understand how far the heavens are from us; but I know how to shorten paths. It all consists in dying, God willing, when one wishes, and not when He decrees it. Or, if you wish, to force him to decree before the time."

moment when he first begins to let himself fall into Comala's unreality, unable to sufficiently explain it all to himself:

Yo creía que aquella mujer estaba loca. Luego ya no creí nada. Me sentí en un mundo lejano y me dejé arrastrar. Mi cuerpo, que parecía aflojarse, se doblaba ante todo, había soltado sus amarras y cualquiera podía jugar con él como si fuera de trapo.<sup>1048</sup> (Rulfo 73)

That “*luego*” might refer to the culmination of this Orpheus-like journey, however, for in the same conversation he tells Eduviges that he learned about her from Abundio, and in response to the statement that Abundio is dead he appears willing to agree that they must be speaking about two men in order to settle the cognitive dissonance of the moment:

- ... De usted vine a saber por el arriero que me trajo hasta aquí un tal Abundio.
- El bueno de Abundio. ¿Así que todavía me recuerda? Yo le daba sus propinas por cada pasajero que encaminara a mi casa. ... Fue buen hombre y muy cumplido. Era quien nos acarrea el correo, y lo siguió haciendo todavía después que se quedó sordo. ...
- Este de que le hablo oía bien.
- No debe ser él. Además, Abundio ya murió. Debe haber muerto seguramente. ¿Te das cuenta? Así que no puede ser él.
- Estoy de acuerdo con usted.<sup>1049</sup> (78)

Juan Preciado appears to still believe at that point, or to want to believe, that there is an explanation, even though Eduviges appears to think it possible that a man who “*was*” – in the past tense – good could remember her and speak to the visitor. Then, sleeping in Eduviges' spare room, Juan Preciado experiences another voice – a scream that seems right next to his ears: “*¡Ay vida, no me mereces!*” (“Oh life, you don't deserve me!”). Upon waking, he hears only silence – the *sound*, “*rumor*,” of silence: “*todo estaba en silencio; sólo el caer de la polilla y el rumor del silencio.*” The silence doesn't exist just as the shadow-opposite of sound, but as its own entity, and the sound itself is part of it. This silence has sound and physical power:

No, no era posible calcular la hondura del silencio que produjo aquel grito. Como si la tierra se hubiera vaciado de su aire. Ningún sonido; ni el del resuello, ni el del latir del corazón; como si se detuviera el mismo ruido de la conciencia.<sup>1050</sup> (93)

<sup>1048</sup> “I believed that that woman was crazy. Then I didn't believe anything anymore. I felt myself in a distant world and I let myself be dragged. My body, which seemed to become loose, folded before everything, had let go of its moorings and anyone could play with it as if it were a rag.”

<sup>1049</sup> “... I learned about you from the mule driver that brought me here, someone called Abundio.’ / ‘How good of Abundio. So he still remembers me? I gave him tips for every traveler that he sent to my house. ... He was a good man and very thoughtful. He was the one who brought us the mail, and he kept doing it even after he went deaf...’ / ‘The one I'm talking about heard well.’ / ‘It must not be him. Besides, Abundio already died. He must have died. Do you realize? So it can't have been him.’ / ‘I agree with you.’”

<sup>1050</sup> “All was in silence; only the falling of the falling of the moth and the sound of silence. ... / No, it wasn't possible to calculate the depth of the silence that that yell produced. As if the earth had been emptied of its air. No sound; neither that of labored breathing, nor the beating of the heart; as if the sounds of consciousness itself was halted.”

The scream of a man condemned to die alone and unseen is both a sound and a silence; and silence is a sound and force, it stops his breathing and his heart, and even the noise of his thoughts. These are the sounds that can ‘kill’ him. Damiana Cisneros comes next, to take him from that room, coming from the Media Luna because she found out he was there, “*Supé que estabas aquí*”; she says she has known him since he opened his eyes (94). From Damiana he learns that the voice was that of Toribio Aldrete, and that the door has been closed and locked since Aldrete was condemned to die there: “— *Tal vez sea algún eco que está aquí encerrado. En este cuarto ahorcaron a Toribio Aldrete hace mucho tiempo. Luego condenaron la puerta, hasta que él se secase; para que su cuerpo no encontrara reposo. No sé cómo has podido entrar, cuando no existe llave para abrir esta puerta.*”<sup>1051</sup> (94) Somehow his hostess was able to let him through where a living man could not enter. Perhaps it is because she, too, is dead, as Damiana explains: “— *Pobre Eduviges. Debe de andar penando todavía,*” “Poor Eduviges. She must be wandering in sorrow still” (94), “*penando*” like an “*alma en pena,*” a lost soul.

Damiana seems to share his experience of echoes and ghosts; as they cross the town, she relates her own experiences with the living silent sounds of Comala:

— Este pueblo está lleno de ecos. Tal parece que estuvieran encerrados en el hueco de las paredes o debajo de las piedras. Cuando caminas, sientes que te van pisando los pasos. Oyes crujidos. Risas. Unas risas ya muy viejas, como cansadas de reír. Y voces ya desgastadas por el uso. Todo eso oyes. Pienso que llegará el día en que estos sonidos se apaguen. [...]

Este pueblo está lleno de ecos. Yo ya no me espanto. Oigo el aullido de los perros y dejo que aúllen. Y en días de aire se ve al viento arrastrando hojas de árboles, cuando aquí, como tú ves no hay árboles. Los hubo en algún tiempo, porque si no ¿De dónde saldrían esas hojas?<sup>1052</sup> (101-102)

She hears people laughing, tired echoes of tired laughs, and hears dogs barking, and even hears the voices of people she knows, and sees her deceased loved ones. There are feelings, too, the feeling of feet treading on your own. And the sounds of mortals aren’t the only sounds that exist in this limbo; even the wind and the trees have echoes in Comala. Damiana tells him not to worry, and this is the first to use his name in the novel, and a sign that perhaps she, too, knew to expect him in some otherworldly fashion: “*Así, que no te asustes si oyes ecos más recientes, Juan Preciado*” (“So, don’t worry if you hear more recent echoes, Juan Preciado”) (102). In these echoes, time has converged; the past is still present, and the two interact.

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<sup>1051</sup> “— Perhaps it is some echo that’s locked up in here. In this room they hung Toribio Aldrete a long time ago. Then they condemned the door, until he dried; so that his body would not find rest. I don’t know how you have been able to enter, when there doesn’t exist a key to open this door.”

<sup>1052</sup> “— This town is full of echoes. They seem as if they were enclosed in the hollow of the walls or beneath the stones. When you walk, you feel like the steps are treading on you. You hear rustling. Laughter. Some really old laughs, like tired of laughing. And voices already spent in the use. All of this you hear. I think the day will come in which these sounds extinguish themselves. ... / This town is full of echoes. I no longer get frightened. I hear the howling of the dogs and I let them howl. And on days of air one sees the wind sweeping leaves of trees, when here, as you see there are no trees. There were one time, because if not, where did these leaves come from?”



The next section of text explicitly ties Juan Preciado to this strange sliding distinction between the dead who make sounds, the dead who hear sounds, the living that hear sounds. He can no longer explain the inconsistencies, and he realizes that he is speaking to ghosts:

— ¿También usted le avisó a mi padre que yo vendría? — le pregunté.

— No. Y a propósito, ¿qué es de tu madre?

— Murió — dije.

— ¿Ya murió? ¿Y de qué?

[...]

— Sí. Quizá usted debió saberlo.

— ¿Y por qué iba a saberlo? Hace muchos años que no sé nada.

— Entonces ¿cómo es que dio usted conmigo?

— ...

— ¿Está usted viva, Damiana? ¡Dígame, Damiana!

Y me encontré de pronto solo en aquellas calles vacías. Las ventanas de las casas abiertas al cielo, dejando asomar las varas correosas de la yerba. Bardas descarapeladas que mostraban sus adobes revenidos.

— ¡Damiana! — grité—. ¡Damiana Cisneros!

Me contestó el eco: «¡...ana... neros...! ¡...ana... neros!»<sup>1053</sup> (102-103)

Some of them appear to know they are dead, and some no; but Juan Preciado is beginning to appreciate the “reality” of his situation. After this experience, the sounds multiply around him:

Oí que ladraban los perros, como si yo los hubiera despertado.

Vi un hombre cruzar la calle:

— ¡Ey, tú! — llamé.

— ¡Ey, tú! — me respondió mi propia voz.

Y como si estuvieran a la vuelta de la esquina, alcancé a oír a unas mujeres que platicaban.<sup>1054</sup> (103)

He can now see the movement of Comala, and he hears his mother’s voice, narrating the Comala of memory, now passed, but still passing:

Vi pasar las carretas. Los bueyes moviéndose despacio. El crujir de las piedras bajo las ruedas. Los hombres como si vinieran dormidos.

<sup>1053</sup> “— Have you also told my father that I would come? — I asked her. / — No. And on that subject, what of your mother? / — She died — I said. / — She already died? And of what? / [...] / — Yes. Perhaps you should know of it. / — And why would I know? It’s been many years that I don’t know anything. / — So, how did you find me? / — ... / — Are you alive, Damiana? Tell me, Damiana! / And I found myself suddenly alone in those empty streets. The windows of the houses open to the sky, letting the tough stalks of the grass show through. Peeling walls that showed their damp adobes. / — Damiana! — I screamed—, Damiana Cisneros! / The echo answered me: “...ana...neros...! ...ana...neros!”

<sup>1054</sup> “I heard that the dogs barked, as if I had woken them. / I saw a man cross the street: / — Hey, you! — I called. / — Hey, you! — my own voice replied. / And as if they were around the corner, I was able to hear some women who were chatting.”

«...Todas las madrugadas el pueblo tiembla con el paso de las carretas. [...] Es la misma hora en que se abren los hornos y huele a pan recién horneado. Y de pronto puede tronar el cielo. Caer la lluvia. Puede venir la primavera. Allá te acostumbrarás a los “derrepentes,” mi hijo.»

Carretas vacías remoliendo el silencio de las calles. Perdiéndose en el oscuro camino de la noche. Y las sombras. El eco de las sombras.

Pensé regresar. Sentí allá arriba la huella por donde había venido, como una herida abierta entre la negrura de los cerros.<sup>1055</sup> (106-107)

Sleepwalking figures, sounds of stones beneath wheels, but silent sounds; shadows, but echoes of shadows. At this moment, Juan Preciado thinks of leaving Comala, but the path out of this place seems like an open wound to him, a hard, even impossible road back from this river Styx that he is crossing. This vivid description of his own path, his own footsteps, as an open wound illustrates the true nature of his journey: down a hill, and into the space between life and death. Like Orpheus, he has looked at what he shouldn't have seen, and now he is part of Comala's fabric.

Next, however, Juan Preciado is approached by Donis and his sister, who claim they heard him banging his head against their door. He accepts them as “real” and accepts their hospitality, thus seeking refuge from the dead, again, among those who seem to be living. He asks them if they are dead; she laughs, and Donis says he must be drunk. Juan Preciado finds his disturbing recent experiences fading, and he notes that their words actually have “sound,” unlike the silent sounds of the felt echoes outside:

Oía de vez en cuando el sonido de las palabras, y notaba la diferencia. Porque las palabras que había oído hasta entonces, hasta entonces lo supe, no tenían ningún sonido, no sonaban; se sentían; pero sin sonido, como las que se oyen durante los sueños.<sup>1056</sup> (107)

As he sleeps, however, even these voices dip in and out of sound. Is it sleep that causes them to cross to and fro a border? “*Como que se van las voces. Como que se pierde su ruido. Como que se ahogan. Ya nadie dice nada. Es el sueño*” (107).<sup>1057</sup>

In this process of interaction with the sights and sounds of the dead, the protagonist is engaging in a border-crossing without his knowledge, just like Miguel with his fog, and Pedro Páramo

<sup>1055</sup> “I saw the carts passing by. The oxen moving slowly. The rattling of the stones beneath the wheels. The men as if they were coming asleep. / “*Every early morning the town trembles with the passing of the carts. [...] It's the same hour as when the ovens are opened and it smells of recently baked bread. And suddenly the sky can thunder. The rain falls. Spring can come. There you become accustomed to the “suddenlies,” my son.*” / Empty carts re-grinding the silence of the streets. Losing themselves in the dark path of the night. And the shadows. The echo of the shadows. / I thought about going back. I felt there above the path by which I had come, like an open wound between the blackness of the hills.”

<sup>1056</sup> “I occasionally heard the sound of the words, and I was noticing the difference. Because the words that I had heard until then, until then I knew, hadn't had any sound, didn't make sound; they were felt; but without sound, like those that are heard during dreams.”

<sup>1057</sup> “As if the voices are going. As if their sound is lost. As if they're drowning. Now nobody says anything. It's the sleepiness.”

leaning on a spirit to stand up and go to lunch. Sound and silence, hearing and feeling, time and nature are turned around; shadows coexist with the “echo” of shadows past. There are threads that tie the past and present, like these coexisting shadows; like the “sound” of voices that can only be felt, like the rain that passes through both the air and the earth, the living and the dead. The binaries are broken, but not shattered – instead they are melted and muddled, a primordial soup of states and possibilities in which nothing is linear or binary... in which the fact of two states of being occupying one space is plausible, if *paradoxical*. Paradox in *PP* lies in the coexistence of life and death, past and present, sound and silence; and, like the paradox in *GSV*, it opens Comala up to its third-bank possibilities.

In Donis’s and his sister-lover’s home, time passes quickly, as measured by the cosmos and by Juan Preciado’s bruised perceptions:

Por el techo abierto al cielo vi pasar parvadas de tordos, esos pájaros que vuelan al atardecer antes que la oscuridad les cierre los caminos. Luego, unas cuantas nubes ya desmenuzadas por el viento que viene a llevarse el día.

Después salió la estrella de la tarde, y más tarde la luna.<sup>1058</sup> (113)

During this time, an old woman comes and takes sheets from the house; “*Era vieja de muchos años, flaca como si le hubieran achicado el cuerpo.*”<sup>1059</sup> She looks around the room, but makes no sign of having seen him. She leaves on tiptoe. Then, however, time passes slowly, perhaps even backwards:

Como si hubiera retrocedido el tiempo. Volví a ver la estrella junto a la luna. Las nubes deshaciéndose. Las parvadas de los tordos. Y en seguida la tarde todavía llena de luz.

Las paredes reflejando el sol de la tarde. Mis pasos rebotando contra las piedras. El arriero que me decía: «¡Busque a doña Eduvigis, si todavía vive!»<sup>1060</sup> (114)

He is reliving his own last moments, as the dead apparently often do; and he is becoming out-of-time, like his surroundings.

He sleeps in the sister-lover’s bed that night, though his perception of the bed and the woman next to him is disconcerting; she snores as one who pretends to sleep, and the bed smells of stale urine, the pillows are stiff with sweat. He feels her naked legs and her breathing. When she serves him some meager food, her statement should cause him shock, but as narrator he is quiet:

— Son cosas que le pude conseguir — oí que me decía desde allá— . Se las cambié a mi hermana por dos sábanas limpias que yo tenía guardadas desde el tiempo de mi madre.

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<sup>1058</sup> “Through the roof open to the sky I saw flocks of thrushes passing, those birds that fly at sunset before the darkness closes the ways to them. Then, some few clouds already shredded by the wind the comes to bring day. / Then the star of the evening came out, and later the moon.”

<sup>1059</sup> “She was old of many years, thin as if her body had shrunk”

<sup>1060</sup> “As if time had stepped back. I saw the star next to the moon again. The clouds undoing themselves. The flocks of thrushes. And then the afternoon still full of light. / The walls reflecting the sun of the afternoon. My steps rebounding against the stones. The mule driver who told me: ‘Look for Doña Eduvigis, if she still lives!’”

Ella ha de haber venido a recogerlas. No se lo quise decir delante de Donis; pero ella fue la mujer que usted vio y que lo asustó tanto.

Un cielo negro, lleno de estrellas. Y junto a la luna la estrella más grande de todas.<sup>1061</sup>  
(115)

The implication is that the woman cannot be alive, with an ancient sister; she needed food only for him, so she may be dead herself. Her “sounds” of voice and the feel of her are mysterious. The star is still next to the moon. Juan Preciado speaks quietly to his mother; she can hear him, but not see him: “*Su voz parecía abarcarlo todo. Se perdía más allá de la tierra. — No te veo.*”<sup>1062</sup> (116) He has now broken bread with a woman who is not quite of his world, just as in the Greek myth of Persephone, kidnapped by the Lord of the Underworld for a wife. Hades agreed to give Persephone back as solace to her mother, Demeter of the Harvest, so that living things could continue to grow; however, she had partaken of Underworldly fare, four pomegranate seeds, so she had to return each year to Hades’ realm for four months, leaving her mother to grieve: the barren months of the year. Juan Preciado, in partaking of the dead realm, will become it.

He wants to return to the town he was raised in, the place he left: “*Cada vez entiendo menos —y añadí—: Quisiera volver al lugar de donde vine. Aprovecharé la poca luz que queda del día.*”<sup>1063</sup> (112) But he stays at the woman’s urging, and sleeps with her, an act that pushes him one step further over the line into her world (116-117):

Entonces fui y me acosté con ella.

El calor me hizo despertar al filo de la medianoche. Y el sudor. El cuerpo de aquella mujer hecho de tierra, envuelto en costras de tierra, se desbarataba como si estuviera derritiéndose en un charco de lodo. Yo me sentía nadar entre el sudor que chorreaba de ella y me faltó el aire que se necesita para respirar. Entonces me levanté. La mujer dormía. de su boca borbotaba un ruido de burbujas muy parecido al del estertor.

Salí a la calle para buscar el aire; pero el calor que me perseguía no se despejaba de mí.

Y es que no había aire; sólo la noche entorpecida y quieta, acalorada por la canícula de agosto.

No había aire. Tuve que sorber el mismo aire que caía de mi boca, deteniéndolo con las manos antes de que se fuera. Lo sentía ir y venir, cada vez menos; hasta que se hizo tan delgado que se filtró entre mis dedos para siempre.

Digo para siempre.

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<sup>1061</sup> “— They’re things that I could find for you — I heard that she told me from over there— . I exchanged them with my sister for two clean sheets that I had kept since the time of my mother. She must have come to gather them. I didn’t want to tell you in front of Donis; but she was the woman that you saw that that frightened you so. / A black sky, full of stars. And next to the moon the biggest star of all.”

<sup>1062</sup> “Her voice seemed to span everything. It was becoming lost beyond the earth. — I don’t see you.”

<sup>1063</sup> “Every time I understand less — and I added— ; I would like to return to the place from which I came. I will take advantage of the little light that remains of the day”

Tengo memoria de haber visto algo así como nubes espumosas haciendo remolinos sobre mi cabeza y luego enjuagarme con aquella espuma y perderme en su nublazón. Fue lo último que vi.<sup>1064</sup>

The woman is earth, dissolving into earth; he is already buried, in her. The ghosts of Comala have taken him among them; he has heard and felt them and is unable to leave. Dorotea claims she found him in the plaza where Donis claimed he was faking his death, though he was stiff and they took him and buried him. Thus begins his conversation with Dorotea, the turning point in the book in which it is discovered that Juan Preciado never left Comala and told his story, or wrote it down; he died there, and is telling his story now, in this oral writing, this placeless narrative that is its own place.

He thinks he died of suffocation, but Dorotea, dying (dead?) of hunger, could “still breathe”:

[...] De no haber habido aire para respirar esa noche de que hablas, nos hubieran faltado las fuerzas para llevarte y contimás para enterrarte. Y ya ves, te enterramos.

— Tienes razón Doroteo. ¿Dices que te llamas Doroteo?

— Da lo mismo. Aunque mi nombre sea Dorotea. Pero da lo mismo.

— Es cierto Dorotea. Me mataron los murmullos.

[...]

— Sí. Dorotea. Me mataron los murmullos.<sup>1065</sup> (118)

The “air” – is it nourishing? Absent? Absent for the living, but present for the dead? Besides the murmurs, fear kills him: “*Se me había venido juntando hasta que ya no pude soportarlo. Y cuando me encontré con los murmullos se me reventaron las cuerdas*”<sup>1066</sup> (118). Juan Preciado narrates his death as follows, a strange interaction/change of state that challenges all states of being:

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<sup>1064</sup> “Then I want and I slept with her. / The heat made me wake up at the edge of midnight. And the sweat. The body of that woman made of earth, wrapped in crusts of earth, was breaking down as if it were melting in a puddle of mud. I felt myself swimming in the sweat that gushed out of her and I lacked the air that was necessary to breathe. Then I got up. The woman slept. From her mouth was bubbling a noise of bubbles very similar to the death rattle. / I went out into the street to seek air; but the heat that pursued me didn’t come unstuck from me. / And it’s that there wasn’t air; only the dulled and still night, heated by the dog days of August. / There wasn’t air. I had the sip the same air that fell from my mouth, stopping it with my hands before it went. I felt it come and go, each time less; until it became so thin that it filtered between my fingers forever. / I say forever. / I have a memory of seeing something like frothy clouds making whirlwinds on my head and then rinsing myself with that froth and losing myself in its cloudiness.”

<sup>1065</sup> “[...] If there weren’t air to breathe that night that you’re talking about, we wouldn’t have had the strength to take you and, more, to bury you. And you see, we buried you. / — You’re right, Doroteo. You say that you’re called Doroteo? / — It’s all the same. Though my name is Dorotea. But it’s all the same. / — It’s true Dorotea. The murmurs killed me. / “*There you will find my love. The place that I loved. Where the dreams caused me to become thin. My town, raised on the plain. Full of trees and of leaves, like a piggy bank where we’ve kept our memories. You will feel that there one would like to live for eternity. The dawn; the morning; the midday and the night, always the same; but with a difference of the air. There where the air changes the color of things; where life is aired out as if it were a murmur; as if it were the pure murmur of life.*” / Yes, Dorotea. The murmurs killed me.”

<sup>1066</sup> “It had been collecting in me until I couldn’t handle it anymore. And when I found myself with the murmurs my strings snapped.”

»Llegué a la plaza, tienes tú razón. Me llevó hasta allí el bullicio de la gente y creí que de verdad la había. Yo ya no estaba en mis cabales, recuerdo que me vine apoyando en las paredes como si caminara con las manos. Y de las paredes parecían destilar los murmullos como si se filtraran de entre las grietas y las descarapeladuras. Yo los oía. Eran voces de gente; pero no voces claras, sino secretas, como si me murmuraran algo al pasar, o como si zumbaran contra mis oídos. Me aparté de las paredes y seguí por la mitad de la calle; pero las oía igual, igual que si vinieran conmigo, delante detrás de mí. No sentía calor, como te dije antes; antes por el contrario, sentía frío. Desde que salí de la casa de aquella mujer que me prestó su cama y que, como te decía, la vi deshacerse en el agua de su sudor, desde entonces me entró frío. Y conforme yo andaba, el frío aumentaba más y más, hasta que se enchinó el pellejo. Quise retroceder porque pensé que regresando podría encontrar el calor que acababa de dejar; pero me di cuenta a poco andar que el frío salía de mí, de mi propia sangre. Entonces reconocí que estaba asustado. Oí el alboroto mayor en la plaza. [...] Vi que no había nadie, aunque seguía oyendo el murmullo como de mucha gente en día de mercado. Un rumor parejo, sin ton ni son, parecido al que hace el viento contra las ramas de un árbol en la noche, cuando no se ven ni el árbol ni las ramas, pero se oye el murmurar. Así. Ya no di un paso más. Comencé a sentir que se me acercaba y daba vueltas a mi alrededor aquel bisbiseo apretado como un enjambre, hasta que alcancé a distinguir unas palabras casi vacías de ruido: “Ruega a Dios por nosotros.” Eso oí que me decían. Entonces se me heló el alma. Por eso es que ustedes me encontraron muerto.<sup>1067</sup> (118-19)

Juan Preciado’s “death,” as process or finished state, has been occurring throughout the narration, but it isn’t until page 116 that it is explicit. The narrator’s own “death,” like those of all the others, is shrouded in implicitness throughout much of the text; it is there, but not mentioned. Perhaps, more than anything, it goes unmentioned because it is not a complete change but instead a gradual, paradoxical, habitation of several realms at once. Rulfo claims, controversially, that there is no frontier between life and death in the work because all the characters are dead<sup>1068</sup>; more than this, however, there is no barrier to cross even for those who lived, for Juan Preciado. Juan Preciado’s death opens the concept of “death” up to question, especially in relation to “life” as a separate concept.

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<sup>1067</sup> “I arrived at the square, you’re right. The racket of people brought me there and I think that there really were [people]. I already wasn’t fine, I remember that I came supporting myself on the walls as if I were walking on my hands. And the murmurs seemed to distill from the walls as if they were filtered from between the cracks and peelings. I heard them. They were voices of people; but not clear voices, but secret, as if they murmured something on passing, or as if they buzzed against my ears. I pulled back from the walls and continued down the middle of the street; but I heard them just the same, as if they came with me, before behind me. I didn’t feel heat, as I told you before; more on the contrary, I felt cold. Since I left the house of that woman who lent me her bed and who, as I said, I saw unmake herself in the water of her sweat, since then cold entered me. And as I went, the cold grew more and more, until it gave me goose bumps. I wanted to step back because I thought that returning I could find the heat that I had just left; but I realized on walking a little that the cold came from me, from my own blood. Then I realized I was scared. I heard the biggest clamor in the square. [...] I saw that there wasn’t anybody, even though I still heard the murmur as of many people on the market day. An equal rumor, without tone or sound, similar to the one the wind makes against the branches of a tree at night, when you can’t see either the tree or the branches, but can hear the murmuring. Like that. I didn’t take one more step. I started to feel that that muttering pressed as a swarm was approaching me and turning around me, until I managed to distinguish some words almost empty of sound: ‘Beg to God for us.’ I heard them say that. Then my soul froze. That is why you found me dead.”

<sup>1068</sup> “no existe esta frontera entre la vida y la muerte. Todos los personajes están muertos” (González 107)

\*

As has been shown here, the “land” in *PP* is an complex part of the work’s plot, style, and symbolism; more than setting, Comala’s land is an agrarian home connected to its inhabitants through generations of tilling, living, and dying; it is also the earth of their burial, and connected to humanity in the most visceral of fashions – as the dust we return to upon dying, and, too, as soil that gives or poisons according to its dwellers’ transgressions. The land is Comala, the dirt is Comala, and Comala is its people, and these connections create of Comala more than a metaphor. Just as the *sertão* in *GSV* is so much a part of Riobaldo that it *is* both his narrative journey and his warpath, Comala in *PP* is so much a part of its dwellers that it *is* their deaths and tragedies, and it *is* the very metaphors for “place” given above: a “simultaneity of stories-so-far” (Massey), a “repository of memory” (Tuan). And in that material/felt complexity of human-land interaction, Comala is – though not quite the “realm-realm” found in the “real,” as such multiplicity appears in *GSV*’s material metaphysics – nonetheless a multiplicity of realms: that of the past/present/living/dead, all of Comala, all at once. The paradox of (meta)physics in Comala lies in confluence of past and present, living and dead, without boundary; the “echoes” have no expiration, and death is on the other side of a thought, a fog, a breath, a fence, an acceptance, even nothing at all. And in this boundaryless co-realmedness, the earth, water, and air that are at once distinct and yet also ambiguous: Juan Preciado’s lover melts into earth, and the earth and rain are both experienced by him in his conscious, participatory death; and the air is both present and gone. The realms of Comala are intertwined, like those of *GSV*, but the metaphysical is there in a way so present that it is, also, manifest – more real than imagination, experience, or felt spirituality, and more real than “real” in its honest, palpable approximation of the truth in the land.

**CHAPTER III:  
The NARRATIVE IMMANENCE of COMALA:**

The spatial ambiguity explained in Chapters I and II creates a Comala of symbol intertwined with the Comala of “reality,” a simultaneously real/imaginary space, paradoxical, liminal, co-realmed like the *sertão* of *GSV*, even as in quite a different and more manifest way. However, Juan Preciado’s description and the novel’s ambiguity of temporal and spatial location, discussed above, are not the only methods for freeing Comala from the role of “setting” to its much larger role. In fact, just as in *GSV*, the *narrative* of *PP* itself assists in constructing a Comala of vocal simultaneity, free of specificity, through its language, its narrator, and the lack of linearity in the fragmentary narrative. Narrative, land, space, message, all are intertwined, all one in the work. The explicit paradoxes, the ambiguous narration, the non-linear narrative time, and divided narrator reflect the similar techniques used in *GSV* to – similarly – both support the freeing of the landscape/textscape from time and specificity, and, in so doing, create of the work a participatory work and thus an inescapable space of remembered tragic past for every reader, past, present or future.

**1. NARRATIVE TEXTURE:**

*PP* takes the theme of language always one step further: the linguistic style of the work is oral, the narrative voice is open to question, the text itself unfurls fragmentarily, and it is, in fact, language, or voices, that play a vital role in the plot of Juan Preciado’s journey: voices kill him.

It is in fact also not through plot alone that the work *PP* creates a complex construction of Comala’s history and present and the space of flux between those and other such apparently distinct terms. The form of the work, and its language, are also constitutive of that tearing down of boundaries, and are an invitation for reader integration and “dwelling” in the very Comala that killed its returning son, just as they are to Riobaldo’s material/internal/spiritual *sertão*, as seen in Part I.

**1.1 EXPLICIT PARADOX: ANTITHESES in PROXIMITY:**

As in *GSV*, one of the first and most salient features of *PP* is the state of paradox that it encourages with its juxtaposition of concepts perceived as disparate, even opposite. Many of these concepts have to do with the human senses, and their juxtaposition is a kind of sensory paradox, perhaps a “synesthesia” of sorts. Frequently used to refer to literary symbolism that mixes sensory input in metaphor, assigning a color or taste to a feeling or concept, etc., the term “synesthesia” refers also to a medical condition in which sensory input is indeed crossed in the brain, resulting in, as Richard E. Cytowic (2002) puts it, “the rare capacity to hear colors, taste shapes, or experience other equally strange sensory fusions” - in fact, “a minority of individuals exist who experience the phrase, 'I see what you're saying' as literally true” (1). Like the “synesthetes” the narration of *PP* brings sound into juxtaposition with the senses of touch and sight; and, too, *sounds* into juxtaposition with *silence*.



Shadows have echoes (sight = sound), and silence can be milled (sound = tactile):

Carretas vacías remoliendo el silencio de las calles. Perdiéndose en el oscuro camino de la noche. Y las sombras. El eco de las sombras (107).<sup>1069</sup>

The voices of the dead are felt (sound = tactile), rather than heard:

Oía de vez en cuando el sonido de las palabras, y notaba la diferencia. Porque las palabras que había oído hasta entonces, hasta entonces lo supe, no tenían ningún sonido, no sonaban; se sentían; pero sin sonido, como las que se oyen durante los sueños (107).<sup>1070</sup>

And Juan Preciado's perceptions also undo the difference between *sound* and *silence*, in which the "sound" of the voices of the dead in Comala are surrounded by a deep silence, and are also inseparable from that silence:

Y que si yo escuchaba solamente el silencio, era porque aún no estaba acostumbrado al silencio; tal vez porque mi cabeza venía llena de ruidos y de voces (70).<sup>1071</sup>

...todo estaba en silencio; sólo el caer de la polilla y el rumor del silencio. ... (93)

No, no era posible calcular la hondura del silencio que produjo aquel grito. Como si la tierra se hubiera vaciado de su aire. Ningún sonido; ni el del resuello, ni el del latir del corazón; como si se detuviera el mismo ruido de la conciencia (93).<sup>1072</sup>

A scream is a silence, silence is a sound, and silence is a lack of air, a heart and mind stopped. Silence can be *remolido* - milled, mashed, ground up and destroyed, so close to *remolino*, a whirling eddy of silence; silence as a substance or an object. Shadows can be sound, with "echoes"; words can be either felt or heard.

"Sound" and "silence" are generally antonyms; according to the OED, "sound" is "that which is or may be heard,"<sup>1073</sup> whereas "silence" is "The state or condition when nothing is audible;

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<sup>1069</sup> "Empty carts re-milling the silence of the streets. Losing themselves in the dark path of the night. And the shadows. The echo of the shadows." (all translations mine)

<sup>1070</sup> "I occasionally heard the sound of the words, and I was noticing the difference. Because the words that I had heard until then, until then I knew, hadn't had any sound, didn't make sound; they were felt; but without sound, like those that are heard during dreams."

<sup>1071</sup> "And that if I heard only silence, it was because I still wasn't accustomed to silence; perhaps because my head came full of noises and voices."

<sup>1072</sup> "All was in silence; only the falling of the falling of the moth and the sound of silence. ... / No, it wasn't possible to calculate the depth of the silence that that yell produced. As if the earth had been emptied of its air. No sound; neither that of labored breathing, nor the beating of the heart; as if the sounds of consciousness itself was halted."

<sup>1073</sup> "sound, n./3". Second edition, 1989; online version November 2010. <<http://oed.com:80/Entry/185124>>; accessed 10 March 2011.

absence of all sound or noise; complete quietness or stillness; noiselessness.”<sup>1074</sup> But this generally accepted binary becomes confused in *PP*. Silences are audible, and sounds are not; what Juan Preciado “hears” or “feels” seems to pertain to something other than the scientifically soundable physical realm. The image of voices in silence, felt but not heard, has apparent metaphorical possibilities: for instance, violence, such as that of the recent (to the work) bloody history of Mexico, is both shrouded in the silence of those who would try to forget or hide it, and the silence of those who are dead, but it persists in being *felt* the participatory archives of the soil and the national soul.

Parallel to the synesthesia that unites the heard, felt, and seen in the text is the Möbius strip of *life* and *death* in the work: no longer even opposite sides of a coin, but instead a continuity. This is hinted at in the last quote above: the yell from beyond the grave stops the narrator’s own breathing, heart, and consciousness, stealing the air from the above-earth realm to make it inhospitable to life.

*PP* places into doubt the separation of such concepts as death/life, earth/air, below ground/above, shadow/substance, silence/sound, past/present... if these concepts exist here, it is neither in relation of opposites to each other, nor is it independent of each other, but instead, with and of each other, in interaction and coexistence.

## 1.2 WORDS and MURMURS:

The work’s language at first seems to be as disparate from that of *GSV* as can be conceived: it is concise and sparse, where the others is immensely abundant and creative. In fact, the author apparently threw out 150 pages before publishing the work to leave is as a “spoken language”: “...*fue, simplemente el lenguaje que hablaba la gente...* Pedro Páramo *es un lenguaje hablado. Tuve que echar fuera más de 150 páginas antes de dejarla como quedó. No sé si ese ajuste fue necesario*”<sup>1075</sup> (Roffé 69). However, though lacking in verbosity, the sparse language is also, in its bareness, both intimate and powerful. In being simple, it appears to require no poetic mediation; but then the carefulness of the words is also a surprising wellspring of symbolism. In tiny indications, repetitions, and juxtapositions, the words open up mysteries to the reader, many of which have already been explored in the first two chapters here, such as placing into doubt such concepts as sound vs. silence, death vs. life, and, too, when or where plot points actually occurred.

The opening sequence of the work provides an example of the syntax and temporality of much of the work’s speech-like text. Pronouns are omitted, and sentences begin with conjunctions; the sentences are often quite succinct, and they follow the narrator’s thoughts, not an imposed logic, as evident in the use of time in prepositions and verbs. This opening page gives a glimpse into the temporal planes of the entire work, working with tense to cover the past in plane and moment, the future and present and past of the past, and not linearly:

<sup>1074</sup> “silence, n.”. Second edition, 1989; online version November 2010. <<http://oed.com:80/Entry/179646>>; accessed 10 March 2011.

<sup>1075</sup> “It was, simply, the language that the people spoke... *Pedro Páramo* is a spoken language. I had to throw out more than 150 pages before leaving it as it remained. I don’t know if that adjustment was necessary.”

Vine a Comala porque me dijeron que acá vivía mi padre, un tal Pedro Páramo. Mi madre me lo dijo. Y yo le prometí que vendría a verlo en cuanto ella muriera. Le apreté sus manos en señal de que lo haría, pues ella estaba por morir y yo en un plan de prometerlo todo. «No dejes de ir a visitarlo — me recomendó — . Se llama de este modo y de este otro. Estoy segura de que le dará gusto conocerte. » Entonces no pude hacer otra cosa sino decirle que así lo haría, y de tanto decírselo se lo seguí diciendo aun después de que a mis manos les costó trabajo zafarse de sus manos muertas.<sup>1076</sup> (65)

“*Vine*” the recent past, “*dijeron [...] dijo*,” the past of his mother’s passing, “*prometí [...] vendría*,” “*apreté [...] haría*,” the joining of the two. “*estaba por*,” a snapshot of a *process* in time, “*dejes, [...] Estoy*” her words in the past of her passing, “*le dará*,” her son’s future with his father, “*pude [...] decirle [...] haría [...] decírselo [...] seguí diciendo*,” the moments and processes and voices converge. Then another passed past, placed before, and speaking to the future of her son’s now-past voyage:

Todavía antes me había dicho:  
 — No vayas a pedirle nada. Exígele lo nuestro. Lo que estuvo obligado a darme y nunca me dio... El olvido en que nos tuvo, mi hijo, cóbraselo caro.  
 — Así lo haré, madre.<sup>1077</sup> (65)

And then there is a more recent past than that of the promises or that of “*todavía antes*” – that of “*ahora pronto*,” which then brings him back to the beginning, “*vine a Comala*”:

Pero no pensé cumplir mi promesa. Hasta que ahora pronto comencé a llenarme de sueños, a darle vuelo a las ilusiones. Y de este modo se me fue formando un mundo alrededor de la esperanza que era aquel señor llamado Pedro Páramo, el marido de mi madre. Por eso vine a Comala.<sup>1078</sup> (65)

This fragment of text, its first, sandwiches so many different verb tenses between “*Vine a Comala*” and its identical counterpart, that the concept of time is already placed into flux in the work. Also, what appear to be straightforward sentences with simple words are, instead, carefully constructed phrases that, placed in context with their neighbors throughout paragraphs and throughout the book as a whole, positively blossom with interpretations and questions. His mother’s voice and the concepts of dreams, hopes, and half-heeded promises are abundant

<sup>1076</sup> “I came to Comala because they told me that my father lived here, one such Pedro Páramo. My mother told me. And I promised her that I would come to see him when she died. I pressed her hands in signal that I would do it, since she was about to die and I in a way of promising her everything. «Don’t stop from going to see him — she recommended to me— . He’s called in this way and this other way. I am sure that it will give him pleasure to meet you.» Then I could do nothing else but tell her that I would do it like that, and in so much telling it to her I kept telling her even after it cost my hands effort to escape from her dead hands.”

<sup>1077</sup> “Still before she had told me: / — Don’t go to ask for anything from him. Demand what is ours from him. What he was obligated to give me and he never gave me... The oblivion in which he had us, my son, charge him dearly for it.” / — Thus I will do, mother.”

<sup>1078</sup> “But I didn’t plan to honor my promise. Until just now I started to fill myself with dreams, to give flight to hopes. And in this way a world started forming for me around the hope that was that gentleman named Pedro Páramo, the husband of my mother. That is why I came to Comala.”

images in the work, and the hopeful idea of a world in Comala formed around Pedro Páramo is an ironic glimpse into the actual realm that awaits him there.

Other critics have seen the complexity of this opening page, as well; Peter Beardsell explains that this same first page gives a glimpse of the uncertainty that is thematic and formal in the work. It already introduces the uncertainty relating to his mother's bitterness about the past, and uncertainty as to the strange detachment of Juan's voice, then counteracted when Rulfo "pretends to restore the impression of simplicity. Juan candidly recalls that his search was motivated by dreams, wishful thinking and hope, and emphatically declares: 'Por eso vine a Comala.'" (Beardsell 77) Beardsell continues, explaining how this segment is in a way microcosmic of the work's narrative structures and devices:

In an important respect this opening fragment typifies the development of the novel. It sets up an opposition between reader expectation and actual fictional reality – the expectation is that Juan's love for his mother and promises to her will prove to be the cause of his quest. At the same time it tardily reveals information which, running counter to expectation, disturbs, disappoints or shocks the reader (Beardsell 77).

Beardsell's point about the opposition between reader expectation and actual fictional reality is an important point, and one certainly illustrated throughout the work in its fragmentary and circuitous revelations. More, the term "actual fictional reality" in itself is easily undermined in the work, as many of the fragments appear to contradict possibility, and sometimes even each other, as seen in the passages pertaining to the time and date of Edugives's death.

These words are a microcosm of the text not only in showing the disconnect between expectation and what is found in the text, as Beardsell explains, but also in their simultaneity: past and present and future are all together, all muddled, just as will be the voices he finds in Comala. The *words* undo the *text*. And, these words are dangerous; beyond the power of the words to create and dispel illusions with equal ease, the murmurs of testimony that explicitly kill the narrator are themselves words. His own words are murmurs, too, then, and reach our hands inexplicably.

### 1.3 NON-LINEAR NARRATIVE (the FRAGMENTS):

*PP* and *GSV* share further in their narrative techniques in both having a non-linear narrative. As explored in Part I, the non-linear nature of the narrative in *GSV* contributes to its atemporal nature, and its power as a space for reader interaction. In Comala, this is true as well, though the nonlinearity takes the shape of fragments instead of a *redemoinho*.

The fragmentary nature of the text in *PP* is one that takes readers off guard from the beginning; indeed, the work appears at first to be non-cohesive, even incoherent, because of this. D'Lugo explains that most critics, in reaction to this striking incoherence, have searched for some kind of unity in the work: "With such a self-conscious emphasis on the status of fragmentation, a logical, active response is for readers to question the concept of unity in the novel. Significantly, almost every scholar writing on Rulfo's text offers a version of unity in *Pedro Páramo*" (80). However,

these “thematic unifiers”<sup>1079</sup> are as varied as the number of readers of the text, suggesting that there isn’t just one way to interpret the work. She suggests that the work is not just a text, but rather *consists* of “an active response to an enigmatic text,” and a non-constraining one: “Rulfo appears to have had a firm vision of the whole when writing this novel and has managed to convey a sense of that vision with artistry, without constraining readers” (81). Further, she has created a series of stages that she believes correspond to the reader’s interaction with the text:

Rulfo succeeds in freeing his public from their assumed narrative conventions by means of a complicated discourse that, without blatant, exterior guidelines, maneuvers readers through the stages of (1) traditional assumptions, (2) attempts at coherence, (3) shock of dislodgement, and (4) adjustment to a liberated status through reassessment, rereading, and a free-flowing enjoyment. ... Rulfo honors his readers by presenting them with a pluralistic text that engages and liberates – a paradox perhaps, but when associated with the reading experience of *Pedro Páramo*, it enables one to intuit a meaning for a simple and sweet complexity. (81)

The work’s nonlinear nature does indeed make of it a participatory text; from the beginning, the story takes great effort to compose for the reader, and that composition is, as D’Lugo explains, continuously “dislodged.” For example, the fragments written by “yo” about a recent past are, just in the first part, on pages 65-68 (“fragment 1”), 69-71 (“2”) a little later, 71 (“3”) slightly before the former chronologically, 71-73, 78-82, 82, 93, 101, and 102, where “yo” is finally named, by another, as Juan Preciado. These first-person narrated accounts are interspersed with the third person account of a child, which appears on pages 73-5, and 75-76; these contain as well the thought? commentary of the grown man, saying “I was thinking about you, Susana...” while the boy is chastised for sitting too long in the toilets. On p. 76 we learn that it’s Pedro; then, further, on 77, 82, 85, and 86 Pedro Páramo is a grown man dealing with his son’s death, narrated in 3<sup>rd</sup> person... On 88, Padre Rentería speaks with his niece Anita, and he reappears on 91, all in 3<sup>rd</sup> person. On page 89, the somewhat omniscient narrator describes a scene that “nobody saw”: “*Un caballo pasó al galope donde se cruza la calle real con el camino de Contla. Nadie lo vio.*”<sup>1080</sup> On page 94 Fulgor Sedano appears accusing Toribio Aldrete of stealing land with his fences, and, unnamed, he is narrated again on 95, 98, 98 again, 100, and 101, speaking with Pedro Páramo at various moments in the past as Pedro accumulates his lands. On 105, Miguel speaks with Chona about running away together. On 106, there are simply “voices”:

Ruidos. Voces. Rumores. Canciones lejanas:

*Mi novia me dio un pañuelo  
con orillas de llorar ...*

En falsete. Como si fueran mujeres las que cantaran.<sup>1081</sup>

<sup>1079</sup> “George Ronald Freeman... a fall from grace... Carlos Fuentes (nature)..., Julio Ortega (the mythic search)..., Ricardo Estrada (death)... Enrique Pupo-Walker... “antithesis”... Luis Leal... reader’s... association of character with motif... other critics have supported the notion of unity through character... Freeman and José de Colina see Pedro Páramo as unifier, ... Colina... the other characters are fragments of Pedro... Mariana Frenk... Comala as the protagonist...” (80-81)

<sup>1080</sup> “A horse passed at a gallop where the royal road crosses with the road of Contla. Nobody saw it.”

<sup>1081</sup> “Noises. Voices. Sounds. Distant songs: *My girlfriend gave me a handkerchief with borders of crying...* In falsetto. As if they were women those who sang it”

And on 106, 107-113, 113-114, and 114, Juan Preciado tells of the naked “*mujer*” and “*hombre*” (Donis, p. 110); on 115, he narrates a conversation with his mother, and on 115 and 116, he tells of his interaction with the naked woman, in his last “living” act, a testimony that, on 117, joins seamlessly into his conversation with Dorotea, both in the grave. The voices are all of the dead, though some of the utterances occurred while they yet lived, or apparently lived. The voices that Juan Preciado is privy to in his grave are those of Dorotea, in conversation, and the ethereal monologue of Susanita, and other distant voices when the dirt becomes humid due to rain.

The information comes out – as in *GSV* – circularly, ever deeper, baring the past cruelties and indiscretions of the townspeople, their lord, their priest, and others, as well as their better moments. The ever more complete picture of the town’s past and present circumstances comes out slowly, as a weaving unravels, or as petals fall off of a flower... and the reader’s perception jumps and changes throughout. Mortal states and many other elements of the story are revealed slightly and then are hinted at again and again. There are tantalizing hints towards the unknown, which for an already informed reader seem more obvious, but still never completely clear. For example, as we have seen, the town becomes “livelier” – as Juan Preciado crosses over to death; and Eduviges says his mother must feel abandoned – because Eduviges died first, which Juan Preciado, and the reader find out much later, when Damiana explains that Eduviges Dyada’s soul must still be in pain, and when the priest remembers her suicide.

In other hints and revelations, Abundio, the “*arriero*,” says that Juan Preciado’s father “*Se pondrá contento de ver a alguien después de tantos años que nadie viene por aquí*”<sup>1082</sup> (66), which is followed by candid speech about Pedro Páramo and his flaws. However, this is followed on page 69 by a conversation that both confuses the reader and illumines the story:

- Que ya estamos llegando, señor.
- Sí, ya lo veo. ¿Qué pasó por aquí?
- Un correcaminos, señor. Así les nombran a esos pájaros.
- No, yo preguntaba por el pueblo, que se ve tan solo, como si estuviera abandonado. Parece que no lo habitara nadie.
- No es que lo parezca. Así es. Aquí no vive nadie.
- ¿Y Pedro Páramo?
- Pedro Páramo murió hace muchos años.<sup>1083</sup> (69)

No one “lives” there, but there they are; Pedro Páramo may well be happy to see him, as will all of the wandering spirits. Abundio is remarkably calm about Comala’s abandoned state; in fact, he seems to have forgotten to mention it, as he forgot to mention his own death.

There are other cases, too, in which nothing is explicitly said about a context, but it unfurls of its own accord, such as with Donis and his sister; Juan Preciado is apparently sleeping there, though

<sup>1082</sup> “He will become content on seeing someone here after so many years that no one comes through here”

<sup>1083</sup> “–We are arriving, sir. / –Yes, I see. What happened here? / –A roadrunner, sir. That’s what we call those birds. / –No, I asked about the town, which seems so alone, as if it were abandoned. It seems like no one lives there. / –It isn’t that it seems so. It is so. No one lives here. / –And Pedro Páramo? / –Pedro Páramo died years ago.”

he is instead listening to them, and she says to Donis: “...*si nos mira aquí nos preguntará cosas*”<sup>1084</sup> (108), and they talk for a while about whether one of them should leave. Later, watching him toss and turn, she brings up something that Donis did to her, that she regretted, that was a bad thing to do: “...*lo que me sucedió a mí la primera vez que lo hiciste. Y de cómo me dolió y de lo mucho que me arrepentí de eso [...] De cómo me sentía apenas me hiciste aquello, que aunque tú no quieras yo supe que estaba mal hecho*”<sup>1085</sup> (108). We find out several pages later that these two are siblings, and that she believes her sin has disfigured her; perhaps for this reason she has no name, and is defined only in her relationship to her brother. Then, when her contact with Juan Preciado suffocates him, we understand that these conjugal siblings, too, are probably dead, not ghosts only but, as Juan Preciado accepts their world as real, they are what may perhaps be termed “*thanabiological*” beings, materially present both as living people and as the sweaty dead dirt of decomposition (116).

The text is like a narrative quilt worked of the torn fabric of many testimonies, memories, voices and moments, layered and ambiguous, even while succinct. The work does not explain itself in narrative overlay; it simply speaks, and through its non-linear construction and its ambiguity and its explosion of narrative voice, it defies a passive read.

#### 1.4 The MULTIPLE NARRATOR:

Juan Preciado is the main first-person narrator and, though the book is called *Pedro Páramo*, he appears at first to be its protagonist, as his struggles are the most deeply felt. (It can easily be argued also, however, that Comala itself is protagonist, or Susana, as Rulfo has claimed, especially in the second half of the work). Like Riobaldo’s, Juan Preciado’s name is only spoken by others, and then many pages into the work. His narration is, in fact, much like Riobaldo’s in other ways as well: unmediated by apparent authorial intervention, named only in his narration of another calling him by name, and in interlocution with a voice that is revealed only over time, though Dorotea does speak, whereas *o senhor* is neither named nor heard.

However, *PP* contains many more voices, too. Juan Preciado’s narration, presented in an unmediated fashion (i.e. without words from any other narrator/author to frame them) also includes the first-person accounts that he hears, other voices in the first person, such as Dorotea and all those he “converses” with above-ground, as well as Susana’s monologues – just as Riobaldo tells of his dialogues with others. But the events that occur in Comala before Juan Preciado’s coming are narrated more mysteriously, generally in the third person, and interspersed at odd moments, slowly building the context of Juan Preciado’s journey and demise, and slowly populating Comala with abuses.

The town is voiced a rich variety of archetypes and examples of humanity, containing literary dialect, stutters, and a multiplicity of socioeconomic origins. The work is written in a language that is unique in its fragmentary and oral nature, as well as the in-communication and the archetype and the rich temporality. It is far from the official language of intellect and archive;

<sup>1084</sup> “And if he sees us here he will ask us things”

<sup>1085</sup> “...what happened to me the first time that you did it. And of how it hurt me and how much I regretted it. [...] Of how I felt just after you did that to me, that although you don’t want to, I knew that it was badly done.”

yet it is its own archive of Mexico's history and character. It contains a multitude of voices of the poor and disenfranchised, the wealthy and powerful, the religious, women, men, and children, the crazy and the sick, the kind and selfish, the violent and the victims, and many who regret their actions. It contains even the stutterer, speaking to his *patrón* Pedro Páramo with a voice both hesitant and insistent, retelling one multitude's story within the frame of his constant personal repetition: *cocon, cucuando, paparte, cocosa, nanada, rurrumbo, mumultitud, coconozco, Memedia, totomaron, ¡Cocórrale!, cacalda, pepesado, cocorriendo, momoví. nonoche, papasó, nonombran, papatrón*. This man's speech also contains the written encoding of the popular diction of common words such as "usté" for "usted" "ansí" for "así," adding a literary-dialect aspect to this creative work (Rulfo 149-150).

Some of these voices are those of ghosts or other similar beings who interact with Juan Preciado, and whose voices he records in his own narrative; some are the *murmillos*, the murmurs, whom he also hears and records, monologues, songs, conversations, and snatches of these that he hears in the streets of Comala and later narrates to his grave-mate. But many more are heard in the third-person fragments, accounts of mysterious origin that are given of Pedro Páramo, Anita and her uncle Father Rentería, Fulgor, Miguel Páramo and many others. These accounts could be termed in general "limited omniscient third person narration," because sometimes they appear to know what the characters are thinking, and sometimes not. For instance, sometimes these fragments include references to their thoughts, desires or impressions, and even dreams, though still in the third person, such as "*No quería pensar para nada que había estado en Contla, donde hizo confesión general*"<sup>1086</sup> (Rentería, 129), or "*Pensaba más en Susana San Juan... se preguntaba hasta cuándo terminaría aquello... Él creía conocerla*"<sup>1087</sup> (Pedro Páramo, 151). Sometimes the descriptions are also in the third-person voices of the narrated, such as "*Oyó el croar de las ranas; los grillos*"<sup>1088</sup> (Damiana 161), and sometimes such impressions are seamlessly integrated with descriptions, such as "*Fulgor Sedano sintió el olor de la tierra... El agua apretó su lluvia hasta que allá, por donde comenzaba a amanecer, se cerró el cielo... Suspiró y trató de imaginar en qué lugar irían ya los vaqueros*"<sup>1089</sup> (122-123). Sometimes, however, the descriptions appear to be quite separate from the characters' awareness, setting the scene, such as when the beauty of Comala after a storm is described, complete with "*gotas brillantes*" falling from the tree branches (74), but Pedro Páramo, the main subject of the fragment, is in the lavatory; or when, as mentioned above, the narrator describes the galloping horse that "nobody saw" (89). The narration is, then, intensely multiple, not only in number of voices, but in types of voice, levels of access, ambiguity of origin. Pedro Páramo's commentary on his youth appears especially ambiguous; where do those thoughts come from? Is his voice one of the buried voices? Where does the narrative itself come from? Is the land itself telling the story, but allowing for commentary and interjection from the dead?

Beyond the voices that are given names and contexts, there are many more voices that are also open to question. The work begins with Juan Preciado's first-person narrative in which he appears to be alive, a voice of "yo" describing past actions, with no indication of to whom he

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<sup>1086</sup> "He didn't want to think at all about how he had been in Contla, where he made general confession"

<sup>1087</sup> "He thought more about Susana San Juan... he asked himself when it would end... He thought he knew her"

<sup>1088</sup> "She heard the croaking of the frogs; the crickets"

<sup>1089</sup> "Fulgor Sedano felt the smell of the earth... the water pressed its rain until there, where it began to be dawn, the sky closed... He signed and tried to imagine where the cowboys would be going already"



speaks or writes. Among his words is his mother's voice, as well, italicized,<sup>1090</sup> in this case interrupting his conversation with Eduviges (80-81), such as «...El abandono en que nos tuvo, mi hijo, cóbraselo caro». These words are reminiscent of the words she spoke to her son as she was dying: “— ...*El olvido en que nos tuvo, mi hijo, cóbraselo caro.*” (65), but are not the same; so the reader is left to wonder: is he remembering something she once said, or is she speaking even now? Are these words part of the context that Juan Preciado is narrating, or part of the context of his narration of the past from the tomb? As indicated earlier, the sections pertaining to Juan Preciado are interspersed in the beginning with third person narration of the childhood of Pedro Páramo, along with the commentary of Pedro Páramo the man (75). The conversations of the boy are indicated with —, as a dialogue, while these ruminations are identified with Spanish/angular *comillas* « », interpretable in this situation as thoughts or commentary. Juan Preciado's mother's interjections are also indicated with those *comillas* « », indicating thoughts, perhaps his memories of her; but they are italicized as well, indicating exception, and leaving their origins ambiguous for much of the first part of the text. It appears more likely that her son hears her disembodied voice after death, after this exchange:

— ¿No me oyes? — pregunté en voz baja.  
 Y su voz me respondió: — ¿Dónde estás?  
 — Estoy aquí, en tu pueblo. Junto a tu gente. ¿No me ves?  
 — No, hijo, no te veo.  
 Su voz parecía abarcarlo todo. Se perdía más allá de la tierra.  
 — No te veo. (116)

However, as is apparent here, gone are the *comillas*, and gone the separation through italics; this exchange, perhaps because he is closer to death himself, is different, and thus sheds little light on the former interjections. This conversation is not that of a living man hearing a dead woman's voice, seen by her, but is between equals, separated.

After Juan Preciado's death in the book, the voices thicken and multiply, both as first-person accounts and dreams, and descriptions of scenes in the past by an unknown third-person account, in which details of the community and its passions, violence, death, illusions, come to light, though there is no living person to testify to any of it besides the reader.

The identities of all of these voices and characters are revealed slowly, as well, if at all, as the reader treads a meandering path through time and person. These third person accounts are unmediated in that there is no “author” voice interjecting interpretation, nor introducing the characters; they are all entered into *in medias res*, and often out of chronological or even generational order, and it is often only several fragments later that the reader understands whom we have been reading about, or when. In this sense, then, the work *appears* to be unmediated by explanation or authorial voice. Beardsell explores this issue in his chapter, as well, claiming that the “author acts like an instrument that... only transmits and displays signals” (81). It is true that there is no explicit living recipient of the story, nor any indication that the third-person narrator is a living person with consciousness or opinions. However, *PP*, though never does it contain an authorial voice saying, “This fragment is about so-and-so,” etc., is certainly not unmediated as a

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<sup>1090</sup> All Spanish in paragraphs has been italicized here, so the italicized Spanish is in plain text.

work. In fact, it is the opposite, because it is carefully written by a writer of fiction, and in its pages Comala's overlapping realms of history/present, dead/alive, etc., bring the active moments together in such a way that the reader is in suspense, and is brought into those realms slowly, much like Juan Preciado himself. Beardsell admits to this, as well, saying later that, "the order of fragments is not haphazard," given the patterns of consecutiveness, "thematic cohesion" in some series of fragments, and "interdependency" in others (82). There are works that, though having an organizer/author, present themselves as part of the realm of perceived authenticity of testimonial literature – as in, for instance, Elena Poniatowska's *La noche de Tlatelolco* (chronicling the 1968 massacre). That work appears at first to be a simple vessel of testimony from the oral history surrounding a historical event, a "truth-telling." However, as there is an author-compiler, even this work filled with real voices recorded in journalistic media is mediated, and contains upon closer inspection a certain coherence in which components of its thematic focus are reflected. It is cyclical and topographical, a map with its own imposed trajectory, and contains contrast for effect, even while it is also easily perceived as free access to the voices of the moment. As this example shows, even a work explicitly working with "truth" is necessarily mediated; *PP* certainly is. Some claim – including Poniatowska herself, as mentioned above – that Rulfo *is* the voices of his *pueblo*, somehow bringing authenticity to his work: "Rulfo doesn't like to talk about himself because he has given himself entirely to the voices of his people, to the murmurs of Comala that every day open a path in him, laboriously and clumsily, because Rulfo barely helps them express themselves"<sup>1091</sup> (Poniatowska 814-815). *PP* is, though, in the end, a constructed work, not an unfiltered recording of "reality."

However, its *apparent* lack of mediation, its entry *in medias res*, its general ambiguity, are important aspects of the work's functionality: they allow for the voices to, in a way, speak for themselves, and the work immerses the reader in others' voices, despite the third person narration. It creates the "world" of Comala, just as Juan Preciado did, in building his world of hopes around Pedro Páramo and then finding it to in fact be a world, but of disillusionment.

In "Rulfo, el tiempo del mito" (1992), Fuentes explains that the moment of Juan Preciado's death is a moment of creation of a collective narrative, which becomes "ours," that of the community: "When Juan Preciado is defeated by the murmurs, the narration stops speaking in the first person and assumes the third person collective: from then on, it is the *we* who speaks, who reclaims the *mythos* of the work" (827).<sup>1092</sup> And as a result of this incorporation, the novel "generates itself": "*Pedro Páramo* is an extraordinary novel, among other things, because it generates itself, as a mythic novel."<sup>1093</sup> In fact, as will be shown, it generates itself also in being truly "ours," that of the *reader*. The novel that generates itself is the town, Comala, in which all are dead, and therefore outside of space and time; and in taking the reader into its space, it regenerates itself for the reader. The liminality of the place is its freedom to suffer – and speak – in any place and time.

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<sup>1091</sup> "A Rulfo no le gusta hablar de sí mismo porque se ha dado por entero a las voces de su pueblo, a los murmullos de Comala que todos los días se abren paso en él, trabajosa y torpemente, porque Rulfo apenas les ayuda a expresarse."

<sup>1092</sup> "Cuando Juan Preciado es vencido por los murmullos, la narración deja de hablar en primera persona y asume una tercera persona colectiva: de allí en adelante, es el nosotros el que habla, el que reclama el *mythos* de la obra"

<sup>1093</sup> "*Pedro Páramo* es una novela extraordinaria, entre otras cosas, porque se genera a sí misma, como novela mítica"

## 1.5 The NARRATOR, DIVIDED:

As has been shown above, several aspects of the narration of *PP* are surprisingly parallel to those of *GSV*. Further, the narration in *PP* is multiple in that it has multiple “beginnings,” just as *GSV* has multiple “ends”; and, too, like in *GSV*, the narrator himself is multiple, split in half by a truth, in being perceived as alive, at first, and in being subsequently known to be dead, narrating his living moments. Juan Preciado is also split in that he is both a part of and is separate from Comala’s “world,” just as Riobaldo both is and isn’t of the *sertão*. The work is, in fact, divided by secrets, between the life/death of the narrator, and between his anonymity and being named.

### BEGINNINGS and ENDINGS:

There is no introduction of characters and premise in *PP*, though there is some exposition in his explanation on the first page of why he came to Comala. In one regard, then, since he is explaining the situation that brought him to Comala, it is exposition; but in that there is no clear interlocutor for pages and pages, nor any kind of introduction, it really does begin *in medias res*: it begins in the middle of his conversation with Dorotea, underground.

Then, on page 119, he repeats himself: “*Ya te lo dije en un principio. Vine a buscar a Pedro Páramo, que según parece fue mi padre. Me trajo la ilusión.*”<sup>1094</sup> The beginning of the work is, then, “a” beginning, “*un*” *principio*; the middle of the book is another, after the truth is revealed. This is a second “exposition”; Juan Preciado has finally been identified by name on p. 102, and now his narratee is revealed as his interlocutor, the dead woman in his arms – which, suddenly, leaves the text’s arrival in the hands of the reader inexplicable, and creates *directness* in reading. There are also many other “beginnings” throughout, as other characters’ voices and stories fit themselves into the tale, creating their own exposition.

*PP* has multiple beginnings; and *PP*, like *GSV*, “ends” in the middle of the book, to begin again there. Riobaldo stops halfway through and then commences again, going into further detail the second time around; but Juan Preciado “ends” halfway through the novel because he, himself, *ends*, at least insofar as his living life ends. He dies there, and the first half is immediately and stunningly re-contextualized as one more murmur itself, one more voice of the dead. Carol D’Lugo points out that this division in terms of “readers’ awareness of Juan Preciado’s death” divides the book almost neatly in half; the revelation occurs in fragment 37 of the 70 fragments of the work.<sup>1095</sup> Juan Preciado is split, in being perceived as alive, at first, and in being later known to be dead, narrating his living moments; this is a fundamental duality of the work. There is no easily apparent indication during his narration that he is underground until the moment in which he narrates his death, and then his interlocutor shows herself, and the scenery of their conversation is revealed to be a shared tomb. The illusions are all gone.

<sup>1094</sup> “I already told you in a beginning. I came to look for Pedro Páramo, who according to appearance was my father. Hope/illusion brought me.”

<sup>1095</sup> These are “ranging in length from three lines... to eight or nine pages” (D’Lugo 71). In the 2004 Cátedra edition, the revelation of his death occurs on page 117 of 65-178, leaving 52 pages before and 61 pages after.

The narrators of *GSV* and *PP* are both divided, then, by what they know “now” (Diadorim is a woman / I am dead, and so is everyone else) and what they thought “then” (Diadorim is my brother-in-arms / I am alive and these others seem to be, too). This division alters the essence of the work, making of *PP* a work that already contains multiple realities in its narration that of living-Juan Preciado and that of dead-Juan Preciado, even before its multiple realms of being are fully expressed.

### UNRELIABLE ORIGINS:

There is also a level of untrustworthiness in the narrative, as expressed by Alan Bell (1966): “Juan Preciado’s interpretation of reality cannot be trusted” (241). Bell claims that much of the story is subjective, and thus can have been “a manifestation of a tired, depressed and lonely human being who continues to create real-life episodes from facts that have been stored in his mind.” Juan Preciado is “in a state of fright,” in “depths” of “madness” (241). Also, “[t]he fact that Juan Preciado is thoroughly susceptible to dreams and to false images, before ever reaching Comala, is one of the primary keys to understanding the work” (238). Other critics have pointed out other ways in which the work is untrustworthy. For instance, Octavio Paz in *Corriente Alterna* claims that Juan Preciado is actually dead before he ever undertakes the journey to Comala:

If the theme of Malcolm Lowry is that of the expulsion from paradise, that of the novel by Juan Rulfo (*Pedro Páramo*) is that of the return. That is why the hero is a dead man: only after dying can we return to the native Eden. But Rulfo’s character returns to a scorched garden, to a lunar landscape, to the true Hell. The theme of returning turns into that of condemnation; the trip to the patriarchal house of Pedro Páramo is a new version of the pilgrimage of the lost soul.<sup>1096</sup> (17-18)

Nicolás Emilio Álvarez (1983) cites this critical argument in his book in part, and one from María J. Embeita,<sup>1097</sup> as well: “«It is a dead town where only souls live, where all of the characters are dead, and even he who narrates is dead»”<sup>1098</sup> as evidence of critical conclusions about Juan Preciado as a wandering soul from the beginning (Álvarez 19). Álvarez then concludes, against these, that Juan Preciado must have been corporeal and alive in the work’s first part, since a soul doesn’t need to be buried, and since Preciado himself confesses that “*Mi madre... ni siquiera pudo venir a morir aquí. Hasta para eso me mandó a mí en su lugar*”<sup>1099</sup> (Rulfo 124). But what do we really know of whether a soul needs burial by other souls in order

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<sup>1096</sup> “*Si el tema de Malcolm Lowry es el de la expulsión del paraíso, el de la novela de Juan Rulfo (Pedro Páramo) es el del regreso. Por eso el héroe es un muerto: sólo después de morir podemos volver al edén nativo. Pero el personaje de Rulfo regresa a un jardín calcinado, a un paisaje lunar, al verdadero infierno. El tema del regreso se convierte en el de la condenación; el viaje a la casa patriarcal de Pedro Páramo es una nueva versión de la peregrinación del alma en pena.*”

<sup>1097</sup> María J. Embeita, «Tema y estructura en *Pedro Páramo*» *Cuadernos americanos*, Year 26, 151.2 (1967): 221. (in Álvarez 19).

<sup>1098</sup> “«Juan Preciado is the traveler, on his way towards eternity. The dead man as traveler is an ancient theme.»”

<sup>1099</sup> “My mother... couldn’t even come to die here. Even for this she sent me in her place.”

to know that it has really died? The issue of Juan Preciado's life status is controversial, and ambiguous.

Álvarez began this critical discussion with Rulfo's declaration from his interview with Sommers, that Comala "is a dead town where only souls live, where all the characters are dead, and even the one who narrates is dead"<sup>1100</sup> (15-16), claiming that this does not imply that he was always dead, but merely that the narrator is dead now: "this declaration of his seems to validate the opinion that the whole first narrative moment is part of the dialogue that Juan Preciado and Dorotea sustain – already dead and buried – in the grave they both share."<sup>1101</sup> That aspect of the work – that the narrative is told from the point of view of the now-dead Juan Preciado – is certainly implied through a careful reading of the text, and doesn't need the author's validation of intended meaning; the "good number of critics"<sup>1102</sup> who "have determined that the whole narration from the first page has been part of the dialogue between both characters" (Álvarez 16) are likely understanding well what the work indicates, since it is evident in the work that Juan Preciado's conversation with Dorotea in the tomb is on the topic of his coming to Comala, with which he begins the work. But there is no indication in Rulfo's phrase or in the novel itself of when or if the narrator died for the *first* time.

Interestingly, though, in his 1983 interview with González Boixo, he in fact answers the question quite directly:

- There's an issue that has divided the critics; for some, Juan Preciado is already a dead man when he arrives to Comala, for others he is still alive.
- *When he arrives to Comala he's alive, he dies there.*<sup>1103</sup> (248)

The author unsubtly "clarifies" his intent here, which places the "authorial intent" aspect of the critical divide to rest; but in the novel itself, as an independent being,<sup>1104</sup> much is open to ambiguity in relation to Juan Preciado, and much to duality.

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<sup>1100</sup> "« Es un pueblo muerto donde no viven más que ánimas, donde todos los personajes están muertos, y aun quien narra está muerto»" ... Álvarez continues: "«Juan Preciado es el viajero, camino hacia la eternidad. El muerto como viajero es un tema antiguo»"

<sup>1101</sup> "[e]sta declaración suya parece convalidar la opinión de que todo el primero momento narrativo es parte del diálogo que sostienen Juan Preciado y Dorotea – ya muertos y enterrados – en la fosa que ambos comparten."

<sup>1102</sup> "buen número de críticos" ... "han determinado que toda la narración desde la primera página ha sido parte del diálogo entre ambos personajes"

<sup>1103</sup> "— Hay una cuestión que ha dividido a la crítica; para unos, Juan Preciado ya es un muerto cuando llega a Comala, para otros aún está vivo. / — Cuando llega a Comala está vivo, él muere allí."

<sup>1104</sup> As the author states about his characters (González 106): "...lo dejo en libertad. A partir de ese momento sólo me dedico a observarlo. Tiene vida propia, y mi tarea se simplifica a ese extremo de no tener otra cosa que hacer, más que seguirlo." ("I leave him in liberty. From this moment on I only dedicate myself to observing him. He has his own life, and my work becomes simplified at this point from not having anything else to do, but to follow him.") (106)

**BELONGING:**

Also like Riobaldo and the *sertão*, Juan Preciado is split by belonging, in that he is both a part of and separate from Comala's "world" – and in *PP*, like in *GSV*, this invites the reader into the work and its world. Juan Preciado was born there in Comala, but was raised elsewhere, and he returns to Comala knowing only what his mother told him: that it is beautiful and she missed it as she died, and that Pedro Páramo is his legitimate father, and owes him something for that. He comes to Comala, then, a stranger, but he already shares several things with its inhabitants: he has hopes due to his wealthy parentage, but he was already injured by that same parent, his father who allowed him to be raised without recognition nor attention. His search for his past and some sense of belonging may be what makes him vulnerable to the town's dark story; or we may all be vulnerable.

According to Bell, the "loneliness of Juan Preciado, searching for his roots in the abandoned town of Comala, is a clear echo of Octavio Paz's *El laberinto de la soledad*" (241), in which, as mentioned by Solanilla as well, Juan Preciado is a "symbol of the confused Mexican personality" in his state of loneliness and horror. Looking closer at *El laberinto...*, Paz claims, for example, that "the discovery of ourselves manifests itself in knowing ourselves to be alone"<sup>1105</sup> (11), and that Mexico as a nation has responded to this crisis of self-manifestation through self-interrogation and contemplation, as all nations also do. However, according to Paz, the Mexican solitude is different, and has no easy answer:

Man is alone everywhere. But the solitude of the Mexican ... is different... In the Valley of México man feels suspended between the heavens and the earth and oscillates between contrary powers and forces, petrified eyes, mouths that devour. The reality, that is, the world that surrounds us, exists for itself, has its own life and hasn't been invented, like in the United States, by man. The Mexican feels torn out of the bosom of that reality, to a creative and destructive time, Mother and Tomb. He has forgotten his name, the word that ties him to all of those forces in which his life is manifested. That is why he yells or is silent, stabs or prays, begins to sleep a hundred years.

The history of Mexico is that of the man who seeks his filiation, his origin.<sup>1106</sup> (22)

Juan Preciado is not a "member" of any community; his questions about his origin separate him from Comala, but also unite him to the town's own abiding unease with itself. He comes in from the outside, not raised there, and never having visited; he is, *like the reader*, an outsider. However, he has a connection to it. He finds that in his own vulnerability he shares the town's restlessness, and in his own lack of fatherhood from don Pedro, he shares the cause of the restlessness.

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<sup>1105</sup> "El descubrimiento de nosotros mismos se manifiesta como un sabernos solos"

<sup>1106</sup> "En todos lados el hombre está solo. Pero la soledad del mexicano ... es diversa... En el Valle de México el hombre se siente suspendido entre el cielo y la tierra y oscila entre poderes y fuerzas contrarias, ojos petrificados, bocas que devoran. La realidad, esto es, el mundo que nos rodea, existe por sí misma, tiene vida propia y no ha sido inventada, como en los Estados Unidos, por el hombre. El mexicano se siente arrancado del seno de esa realidad, a un tiempo creadora y destructora, Madre y Tumba. Ha olvidado el nombre, la palabra que lo liga a todas esas fuerzas en que se manifiesta la vida. Por eso grita o calla, apuñalea o reza, se echa a dormir cien años. / La historia de México es la del hombre que busca su filiación, su origen."

In a way, Juan Preciado's outside/insider status mirrors that of the author, Rulfo. Though he lost much through violence, Rulfo was born not poor but into privilege, and in spite of his tragedy his societal place was akin to that of the landowners rather than that of the peasants whose voices take over much of his novel. He had the benefit of education, something which, according to Fuentes in *La nueva novela hispanoamericana* (1969), already made him "elite": "the Latin American writer, by the mere fact of being that in a semi feudal, colonial, illiterate community, belongs to an elite"<sup>1107</sup> (12). Like Guimarães Rosa, then, Rulfo was not completely representative of the place or the people that he wrote about, though he was arguably closer to the Páramo family in economic origin, and to many other characters in his sense of violent loss, than Guimarães Rosa ever was to sertanejan *jagunços*, whom, though local to his childhood home, he knew only through legend and later purposeful visits with a recorder. Guimarães Rosa mentioned often (too much?) that he was truly "of" the region about which he wrote, perhaps to legitimate his speaking for it, as is explored in Part I; Rulfo, on the other hand, made little mention at all of his legitimacy as the voice of his region or of his belonging there, perhaps because he didn't feel a need to authenticate the work. There are several statements that he has made about his access to the place and its voices in which, be it casually or purposefully, he appears to support his place as intuitively connected to the "*pueblo*" about which he writes, rather than artificially researching it:

...it was, simply the language that the people spoke... it isn't a captured language, it's not that one goes there with a recorder to capture what the people say, that is, to observe 'Let's see how they talk. I am going to learn their way of talking.' There isn't that here. This is how I heard people speak since I was born in my house, and that is how the peoples in those places speak.<sup>1108</sup> (Roffé 69)

He also said that he is not a reporter: "I am a person who can't write about what I see. I am not a reporter... I am an intuitive writer."<sup>1109</sup> However, this statement, when taken in its full context, was not intended to imply that he somehow already knew the documentary specifics of the town about which he wrote without having to research them, thus legitimating his place as regional writer; in its entirety, his statement in fact places him as "intuitive" in that he *imagined* Comala, and makes no claims as to its authentic regional identity: "I can only write about things that I imagine. ... They are apparently real things, but they aren't based in reality. There aren't even parallel situations. At least, in my case, what works is the imagination. Recreations of the reality that feeds from imaginary reality" (interview with Eric Nepomuceno, in Klahn 423; see above).<sup>1110</sup> However, no matter how close Rulfo felt to the societal types who resemble the voices he wrote in his novel, he created an initial protagonist – Juan Preciado – who fulfills the

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<sup>1107</sup> "el escritor latinoamericano, por el solo hecho de serlo en una comunidad semifeudal, colonial, iletrada, pertenece a una elite"

<sup>1108</sup> "...fue, simplemente el lenguaje que hablaba la gente... no es un lenguaje captado, no es que uno vaya allá con una grabadora a captar lo que dice esa gente, es decir, a observar: "A ver cómo hablan. Voy a aprehender su forma de hablar." Aquí no hay eso. Así oí hablar desde que nací en mi casa, y así hablan las gentes de esos lugares."

<sup>1109</sup> "Soy una persona que no puede escribir sobre lo que veo. No soy reportero... Soy un escritor intuitivo"

<sup>1110</sup> "...sólo puedo escribir sobre cosas que imagino... Aparentemente son cosas reales, pero no están basadas en la realidad. Ni siquiera hay situaciones paralelas. Por lo menos, en mi caso, lo que funciona es la imaginación. Recreaciones de la realidad que se alimenta de una realidad imaginada."

function of connecting, if not the author, then the reader (outside) to the work (inside), creating a sense of narrative trust and then abandoning the reader to his same fate.

It is as an outsider himself that Juan Preciado brings the reader's attention with him into Comala, suffering curiosity, confusion, shock and fear as he does; and once he has the reader with him in Comala, he succumbs to its grave, leaving the narrative in our hands now that it is tainted by the murmurs themselves. Already involved emotionally, the reader finds him/herself involved in the narrative itself in a tricky way: although it is logically and analytically apparent that the work did not arise out of the earth as it appears to have done, the overall effect on the reader is that it did; and, too, we may be on our way to dying, too, through believing Juan Preciado's murmurs to be the voice of a living man.

Juan Preciado opens the text to the reader, by illustrating a relationship to Comala that the reader then, through Juan Preciado, replicates as it becomes clear that his "living" experience of "dead" Comala is parallel to our "living" experience of the "dead" Juan Preciado.

Other critics have noted this "welcoming" parallel, as well; Wilson notes, "The reader is like Juan Preciado and enters the fiction like the latter enters Comala" (239). Carol D'Lugo's analysis illustrates this point, as well. In *The Fragmented Novel in Mexico*, she claims: "In *Pedro Páramo* (1955), Rulfo presents an allegory of reading within the text, exemplified by a fictional character, Juan Preciado, who serves as surrogate for readers" (70). This statement reflects in other words what has been illustrated here above. She goes further to illustrate that this process has to do with creating in the reader a "liberated, active response" to an "emancipated discourse," and, in "repositioning them in their relation to the text," it dislodges the reader from "their conventional conditioning to a passive experience" (70).

Her illustration of Juan Preciado's role and the reader's identification with him mirrors her more general analysis of the work's fragmentary nature (above) that draws the reader in to a semblance of order, then disintegrates that order, forcing the reader to fail at a simple coherent reading and to search for a deeper one, and, in the process, dislodging the work from any specificity. Rulfo uses, according to D'Lugo, several narrative strategies to 1) bond the reader to their "fictional counterpart" Juan Preciado, and to 2) bring them into the text actively through the "syntagmatic arrangement of fragments" - in whose interpretation the reader becomes "dependent" on Preciado (71). This dependency begins when the novel begins by appearing to be traditional: "[r]eaders are brought into the fiction by a first-person narrator who, although unidentified, feeds the readers' narrative assumptions by seeming to direct his tale to them. Readers are... nestled into this passive role" (73). However, as has been illustrated above in analyzing the first page, the reader is soon thrown into confusion. Why the italics? And, soon, in subsequent fragments, to whom is he speaking as he walks? What is the temporal present or past? What is happening? At certain points in the text, according to D'Lugo, "any sense the most diligent reader might have constructed is shattered" (75). The reader then either tries even harder to arrange the fragments to "come closer to their preconceived notions of narrativity" (76), or, instead, they "cling to Juan Preciado's first-person narration as the only apparently stable story line within the narrative... Juan Preciado becomes the embodiment of the reader-in-the-text" (76). They are both now "active seekers of story." She explains that Juan Preciado's wonder is our wonder; his bewilderment our bewilderment. Thus, when we find that he too is



dead, and his “comfort” a “snare,” the readers both “experience a loss of innocence” and are “decentered” (77): Juan Preciado is talking to Dorotea, not us. He isn’t a living person, like us. We are abandoned, alone. D’Lugo illustrates how – in the face of the chaos of the work – the reader is drawn into identification with Preciado; and how his death is our loss, and leads us to give up our illusion of connection and coherence, just when he gives up his illusions about his father and Comala. We are forced to reevaluate our position as readers and become more participatory (78-79). Her analysis shows how through shared positions as visitors to Comala, Juan Preciado aids in creating the reader’s illusion of story, which is subsequently broken, leading to a new kind of reading of the text – a participatory read, driven by the *fragments*; and then, our growing empathy with Preciado as he tries to piece together Comala’s reality is shattered when we discover he is dead, and our participatory read becomes our own gaping wound of a path up the hill behind us.

We are invited into Comala by our affinity for Juan Preciado as an outsider entering in, and we are tricked, as he was, into hearing the voice of a dead man as that of a living interlocutor. There is space for us, then, in *PP*. Indeed, the language itself leaves room for the reader, as Felipe Garrido (2004) explains: “What Rulfo can teach us is a way of saying and a way of being/becoming silent” (61-62).<sup>1111</sup> Garrido finds great power in the spareness of Rulfo’s language. The work is, he claims, humble, and abides by what is essential; more than this, however, his phrase can be taken to mean that the novel, in its spare prose, leaves room for the reader to interject him/herself into its space.

*GSV* invites the reader in through Riobaldo’s partial belonging in the *sertão*, providing a bridge for us; and his narrative asks us to complete what is spoken there. *PP*, too, leads the reader into Comala through Juan Preciado’s divided belonging and our empathy with his confusion, and through the prose’s sparseness and ambiguity and the fragments’ disarray, so that by the end of the novel the way back is like an open wound in the hill behind us. We are stuck there, too, due to the narrator’s divided state of life. The connection between the reader and the space of Comala is strengthened through a shared experience of disorientation, which Juan Preciado feels as he enters Comala, and the reader feels upon entering the work. By the middle of the novel, what the reader thinks of as the one familiar (*living*) thread in the work turns out to be also a *murmullo*: Juan Preciado is drawn into his birthplace’s death-state by believing the voices to be alive; the reader, too, has believed Juan Preciado to be alive when he isn’t. It becomes clear that to enter the reading of *Pedro Páramo* is to enter Comala, just as for Juan Preciado, to enter the town was to enter its history of violence, guilt, and lost hope.

Comala exists, then, in the reading of the work, as much as in/on the earth; and its narrative complexity and fragmentation, shown here above, along with its placement of linearity, reality, and occidental binaries in flux, is at the same time its construction as a place out of space, a time out of chronology.

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<sup>1111</sup> “Lo que Rulfo puede enseñarnos es una manera de decir y una manera de callar”

## 2. WHAT IS COMALA? NARRATIVE ACCESS in SPACE and TIME:

### 2.1 NOT of SPACE or TIME:

The combination of the multiplicity of voices, the ambiguity of their origins and the ambiguity of the origin of the book itself (within its fictional plane) take the work out of time. The chronology of the work is uncertain, its communications completely fragmentary though often in a kind of order or juxtaposition. And in that juxtaposition are voices from multiple moments of Comala's past, beginning in terms of living history with don Pedro as a boy remembering his grandfather's death and his childhood friend Susana, and ending with what appears to be the death of his last living son; continuing, then, into dead history with Juan Preciado's telling of the story to Dorotea, surrounded still by the voices of others.

Critics have attempted to lay out the bare facts for both works (Viggiano for *GSV*, González Boixo for *PP*), but without achieving in those chronologies any better understanding of the works' messages; García Márquez (1983) writes of putting the fragments in order as "expedient" to offer some insight as to the work's carpentry, but resulting in a "flat and unsewn" book, concentrating on "chimeric" detail that is irrelevant since "no one can know, in reality, how long are the years of death" (22). In fact, though, this attempt at linearization of the work is likely undertaken mentally by almost all of its readers, and with the same result; as Carlos Fuentes explains in his article, "As soon as we understand that the times of Pedro Páramo are simultaneous times we start to accumulate and to juxtapose, retroactively, this contiguity of times that we are coming to know" (826).<sup>1112</sup> The reader tries to create a sense of unity in the text, but any structure still results in paradox and mystery. Solanilla explains: "Due to the complex structure of the novel, it's difficult to determine the chronology, since Rulfo wanted in his work to abolish the categories of time and space through death" (44).<sup>1113</sup> Though Solanilla's interpretation of what Rulfo "*quiso*" is not cited, he may have referred to the following interview:

...life is not a sequence of events. Years can pass without anything happening and then all of a sudden a multitude of events is unleashed. Things happen to no one in a constant manner and I set out to tell a tale with the facts and deeds well distanced, breaking with time and space... Towards that end I searched for dead characters who were not of space or time. (Benítez 15)

Rulfo is also cited saying twice more that there is no space nor time in death, which leads to his freedom to create of the work whatever he wanted:

...there is no limit between space and time. The dead don't have time or space.<sup>1114</sup> (Sommers 19)

<sup>1112</sup> "Apenas entendemos que los tiempos de Pedro Páramo son tiempos simultáneos comenzamos a acumular y a yuxtaponer, retroactivamente, esta contigüidad de tiempos que vamos conociendo."

<sup>1113</sup> "Debido a la compleja estructura de la novela, es difícil determinar la cronología, ya que Rulfo quiso en su obra abolir las categorías del tiempo y el espacio a través de la muerte"

<sup>1114</sup> "...no hay un límite entre el espacio y el tiempo. Los muertos no tienen tiempo ni espacio."

I imagined the character, I saw him. Then, upon imagining the treatment, I logically encountered a dead town. And of course, the dead don't live in space or in time. It gave me the freedom to handle the characters indistinctly. That is to say, let them enter, and then they can evaporate, disappear.<sup>1115</sup> (Roffé 63)

*PP*, then, appears to seek independence from chronology just as *GSV* does. It is true in the work that the simultaneity of narrative fragments from different temporal moments “breaks with time and space”; in fact, whether or not the author sought it, the effect of the work goes beyond a simple non-linearity that breaks with chronological narrative time in death. In separating the work from the specificity of time and place, Rulfo leaves an open space for interpretation and frees *PP* to fully interact with its reader.

Rulfo continues in his interview with Sommers to explain that the fragmentary nature of the work is due in fact to his unwillingness to include the “essayistic” authorial interventions that he disliked in other works; he wants to leave only the “noun”. He has read, he tells Benítez, “a good amount of Spanish literature” and found that those writers “filled empty spaces with digressions and elucubrations.” Rulfo admits that he had done this before himself, but then he realized that “what really counted were the facts and deeds and not the interventions of the author, ...and I reduced myself to the facts, eliminating the essayistic.” He “suppressed those ideas with which the authors could fill vacuums” and “avoided the adjective, then in fashion,” finding that, rather than adorning a work, it “only destroyed the essential substance of the work, in other words, the noun.” He continues in his interview with Benítez:

*Pedro Páramo* was an exercise in elimination. I wrote 250 pages (and rejected them) where the author once again put in his two bits. The practice of writing the short stories disciplined me, and made me see the need to disappear and to leave my characters the freedom to talk at will, which provoked, it would seem, a lack of structure. Yes, there is a structure in *Pedro Páramo*, but it is a structure made of silences, of hanging threads, of cut scenes, where everything occurs in a simultaneous time which is a no-time. I also pursued the goal of allowing the reader the opportunity to collaborate with the author and allowing him to fill these empty spaces. In the world of the dead, the author could not intervene. (15-16)

In attempting to remove himself from the work, in creating silence and simultaneity, he makes a “simultaneous time which is a no-time,” a simultaneity that results in timelessness, much as was explored by Joseph Frank (1963)<sup>1116</sup> in the work of James Joyce and Proust, as mentioned in part one. These were described as works which “intend the reader to apprehend their work spatially, in a moment of time, rather than as a sequence” (9). Joyce, claims Frank, “aimed at attaining” a “sense of simultaneous activity” (17-18), and Proust sought to codify his “extratemporal moments” in a novel that could have “no ordinary narrative” (20). Rulfo’s work is no ordinary narrative; it is productive of the extratemporal, the simultaneous. And, that timelessness is

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<sup>1115</sup> “Imaginé el personaje, lo vi. Después, al imaginar el tratamiento, lógicamente me encontré con un pueblo muerto. Y claro, los muertos no viven en el espacio ni en el tiempo. Me dio libertad eso para manejar a los personajes indistintamente. Es decir, dejarlos entrar, y después que se esfumaran, que desaparecieran.”

<sup>1116</sup> See Works Cited for Part I for Space/Time philosophers

reinforced by the reader's *integration into the work* – all readers, always, are invited to participate in Comala's space through the *lacunae* in the fragmentary, ambiguous work.

In his interview with Sommers, Rulfo communicates again that the fragmentary nature of the text is due to his unwillingness to waste space on moments without activity: "Occurrences don't always happen in sequence. So I try to avoid dead moments, in which nothing happens. I make a jump until the moment when something happens to a character, when an action is initiated, and he must act, travel through the events of his life" (20).<sup>1117</sup> He claims in the fragments to jump between moments of action.

Whatever the cause, the result is a work that is freed of unifying narratives, free to be challenging and participatory. The "paradox" is of a work that is both fragmentary and coherent, but one unchangeable series of words and punctuation, a finished printed work, and, at the same time, a different text for every reader. It is, as Fares describes, "disarticulated" (58), but at the same time, it articulates a lot more in being so. It is in the narrative space of fragmentation that the time of the work is liberated from linearity. As was explored in the section "Space and Time in Literature" of Part I on *GSV*, the debate of "space" and "time" and their relationship in literature has many perspectives, but in *GSV* there is a self-generative space, a space of psychical geography, created through the use of *narrative time*. Like Joyce's breakdown of linear time into "simultaneity," Rulfo's atemporal Comala is a freed space as well as a freed time. Speaking of *PP*, O'Neill (1974) claims the following: "The temporal planes become simultaneous; the spatial relations lose their meaning" (O'Neill 286).<sup>1118</sup> Time and space are related, and liberated.

In his interview in Madrid, Rulfo expressed that he took out his own opinions from the book's pages, in order to take the reader into account as "*coautor*," co-author (González 108), and he has also expressed that "*el lector... tiene que añadir lo que falta*," the reader has to add what is lacking" ("Juan Rulfo examina..." 875). The fragments, then, serve the purpose of freeing the work to be something new for every reader, and not just a singly interpretable thesis or even place. Like *GSV*, *PP* has "lacunae"<sup>1119</sup> for the reader to fill in, and is become an *open space for interpretation*, out of time, out of space.

## 2.2 SIMULTANEITY, "STORIES-SO-FAR":

Beyond the fragmentary nature of the work, other aspects of the work also contribute to taking it out of time. As mentioned above, there is some chronology of the order of events; for instance,

<sup>1117</sup> "*Los hechos no siempre se dan en secuencia. De modo que yo trato de evitar momentos muertos, en que no sucede nada. Doy el salto hasta el momento cuando al personaje le sucede algo, cuando se inicia una acción, y a él le toca accionar, recorre los sucesos de su vida*"

<sup>1118</sup> "*Los planos temporales se hacen simultáneos; las relaciones espaciales se pierden su significado*"

<sup>1119</sup> A "lacuna" is, according to OED, "In a manuscript, an inscription, the text of an author: A hiatus, blank, missing portion" (lacuna, n. Second edition, 1989; online version March 2011. <<http://oed.com:80/Entry/104956>>; accessed 08 April 2011.) Wolfgang Iser used the term "*Leerstellen*," translated as "blanks," "gaps" or "lacunae" to refer to spaces in the text that "have to be filled in or 'concretized' by the reader in order to interpret the text." (under "reader-response theory" in *A dictionary of literary terms and literary theory*, ed. John Anthony Cuddon and Claire Preston, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1998, p. 726) As mentioned earlier, Iser believes that a reader composes the text.

Pedro Páramo's life comes "before" that of his son, in linear time. However, in the book, such a chronology is only partially relevant, because all of these moments *occur at the same time*. This is not only due to the fragments' juxtaposition; rather, it is due to Comala's state of being.

The phrase of Massey's in describing "space" as a "simultaneity of stories-so-far" (9-10) is uncannily applicable to Comala. As Juan Preciado wanders across the town with Damiana, she explains to him about the "echoes" in the town. Among those, there are "*Unas risas ya muy viejas, como cansadas de reír. Y voces ya desgastadas por el uso,*"<sup>1120</sup> but there are also "*ecos más recientes*" (102). There are many voices that she herself knows, some from long ago; she recently saw her sister who died when she herself was twelve, and who is "*todavía vagando por este mundo.*" But then, some are even more recent, too; it is unknown how much time passed between Pedro Páramo's death and Juan Preciado's arrival, but even so Damiana herself is a more recent echo if not a new one, having died long after her sister. All of these echoes are together, now; all of the pasts are still present, simultaneous.

Time does seem to change some things in Comala, according to Damiana; the laughs are tired, the voices spent, and at first, she claims she heard the sounds of a party, but those sounds died out:

— Hubo un tiempo en el que estuve oyendo durante muchas noches el rumor de una fiesta. Me llegaban los ruidos hasta la Media Luna. Me acerqué para ver el mitote aquel y vi esto: lo que estamos viendo ahora. Nada. Nadie. Las calles tan solas como ahora.

Luego dejé de oírla. Y es que la alegría cansa. Por eso no me extrañó que aquello terminara.<sup>1121</sup> (101)

She believes that some of these sounds will extinguish themselves, over time, especially the joyful ones. However, she herself is still there, and so is Eduvigis, and the siblings, and Abundio, and many others whose voices Juan Preciado hears, whether they are remnants of actions or conversations guarded by the land of Comala and replayed constantly, or the souls themselves, wandering in death, repeating actions from their lives but also approaching anyone living to beg for their prayers. These murmurs from many different moments converge for Juan Preciado; and all of those moments converge again for the reader, in a chronology of simultaneity that, especially given the ambiguity of the source of Juan Preciado's own *murmullo*, lifts the book out of history and into the present of the reader, whenever that may be.

Beyond the explicit timelessness of that cacophony that crosses generations in simultaneity, there is also the timelessness experienced by Juan Preciado on dying. Juan Preciado first sees the star next to the moon in the moment in which he accepts Donis's argument for him to stay. After admitting to the couple that he knows they are siblings, in a scene with possibilities of confrontation, he then asks her for their help to get home, saying "*Cada vez entiendo menos...*

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<sup>1120</sup> "— ... Some really old laughs, like tired of laughing. And voices already spent in the use." ... "more recent echoes" ... "still wandering through this world"

<sup>1121</sup> "— There was a time in which I was hearing for many nights the sound of a party. The noises came up to the Media Luna. I came closer to see that festivity and I saw this: what we are seeing now. Nothing. Nobody. The streets as alone as now. / Then I stopped hearing it. And it's that joy tires. That's why it didn't surprise me that that ended."

*Quisiera volver al lugar de donde vine. Aprovecharé la poca luz que queda del día.*<sup>1122</sup> He responds, “*Es mejor que espere... Aguarde hasta mañana. No tarda en oscurecer y todos los caminos están enmarañados de breñas. Puede usted perderse. Mañana yo lo encaminaré* (112-113).” Juan Preciado agrees to wait, and then looks through the broken roof and notices the following, as mentioned above:

Por el techo abierto al cielo vi pasar parvadas de tordos, esos pájaros que vuelan al atardecer antes que la oscuridad les cierre los caminos. Luego, unas cuantas nubes ya desmenuzadas por el viento que viene a llevarse el día.

Después salió la estrella de la tarde, y más tarde la luna.<sup>1123</sup> (113)

Juan Preciado hasn't flown before the night closes his way; the paths that are becoming tangled will remain so for him forever. Waiting, alone, he sees an old woman enter the room to take some sheets; unsure of what to do, he is “*aguantando la respiración, buscando mirar hacia otra parte. Hasta que al fin logré torcer la cabeza y ver hacia allá, donde la estrella de la tarde se había juntado con la luna*” (114).<sup>1124</sup> He looks to the heavens for constancy, and it is constant. The siblings join him again, and when he tells them he has been seeing ghosts, they believe him to be a mystic, probably a charlatan. But after all this conversation passes, he sees the same sky as earlier:

Como si hubiera retrocedido el tiempo. Volví a ver la estrella junto a la luna. Las nubes deshaciéndose. Las parvadas de los tordos. Y en seguida la tarde todavía llena de luz.

Las paredes reflejando el sol de la tarde. Mis pasos rebotando contra las piedras. El arriero que me decía: «¡Busque a doña Eduvigés, si todavía vive!»<sup>1125</sup> (114)

Time isn't passing normally. The sky is the same again, though time must surely have passed. He has either slept for a whole day, or the time has wound itself backwards, to that moment when he first agreed not to leave by the road by which he came. Further, time returns him to the moment he arrived, that – or another – afternoon. The woman offers him tortillas, which her “sister” – the old woman – brought her in exchange for the sheets, and he looks up again: “*Un cielo negro, lleno de estrellas. Y junto a la luna la estrella más grande de todas*”<sup>1126</sup> (115).

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<sup>1122</sup> “Every time I understand less... I would like to go to the place from where I came. I will take advantage of the little light that remains of the day” ... “It's better for you to wait... Wait until tomorrow. It will be dark soon and all the paths will be tangled with rough ground. You could get lost. Tomorrow I will point you in the right direction.”

<sup>1123</sup> “Through the roof open to the sky I saw flocks of thrushes passing, those birds that fly at sunset before the darkness closes the ways to them. Then, some few clouds already shredded by the wind that comes to bring day. / Then the star of the evening came out, and later the moon.”

<sup>1124</sup> “holding my breath, trying to look somewhere else. Until I finally managed to twist my head and see there, where the star of the evening had joined the moon.”

<sup>1125</sup> “As if time had stepped back. I saw the star next to the moon again. The clouds undoing themselves. The flocks of thrushes. And then the afternoon still full of light. / The walls reflecting the sun of the afternoon. My steps rebounding against the stones. The mule driver who told me: ‘Look for Doña Eduvigés, if she still lives!’”

<sup>1126</sup> “A black sky, full of stars. And next to the moon the biggest star of all”

In 1954, Rulfo published fragments of what was to become *Pedro Páramo*, first as part of the as yet unpublished novel *Una estrella junto a la luna*<sup>1127</sup> (in n° 1 (January-March) of *Letras Patrias* and second as a fragment of the unpublished novel *Los murmullos* in the June edition of *Revista de la Universidad de México* (Fell 410). His desire to name the work *Los murmullos* has been documented earlier here; but it is interesting that his earlier working title for the work was *Una estrella junto a la luna*, A Star Next to the Moon. This astronomical reference is what marks Juan Preciado's temporal experience of becoming a part of the timelessness of Comala's state in death.

Juan Preciado is becoming a part of Comala's loop of time, its constantly repeated and renewed *space of simultaneity of stories*. All past events are still occurring there at the same time, and the dead still speak about all of them, in various states of consciousness of their own and others' states. For instance, Damiana experiences the voices, and believes that an "echo" can be locked in a room; but she also appears to believe herself to be alive. Where would the leaves come from that the wind rustles, she asks, if there weren't leaves here once? "*Y en días de aire se ve al viento arrastrando hojas de árboles, cuando aquí, como tú ves no hay árboles. Los hubo en algún tiempo, porque si no ¿De dónde saldrían esas hojas?*"<sup>1128</sup> (101-102) The question for her has to do with where the leaves come from; no longer does it matter *when*. If they were there once, they will always be there.

Pedro Páramo's death also has to do with time and simultaneity: "*Sus ojos apenas se movían; saltaban de un recuerdo a otro, desdibujando el presente. De pronto su corazón se detenía y parecía como si también se detuvieran el tiempo y el aire de la vida.*"<sup>1129</sup> His mental focus on memory, instead of the present, coincides with his stopped heart and lack of air. It is unclear whether there is causality here, whether his leaving the present to focus on the past, and his own lack of air, stop his time and bring him over to the place of Comala's death. What is clear is the coincidence. And it brings to memory his own experience of his grandfather's death, when he was a child: "*El reloj de la iglesia dio las horas, una tras otra, una tras otra, como si se hubiera encogido el tiempo.*" (77). Now a man, the cause of Comala's otherness as a space of death and memory, he becomes a part of it. Pedro looks upon the ruins he has caused, and finds that just as he uses his physical eyes to look at past memories instead of the present, his "present" world is become emptied of *air* and *time*. His heart has stopped.

The fragmentary nature of the work succeeds in liberating it from linear time, and it is the end of *linear time* itself that marks one's entrance into Comala's new existence. It marks the reader's experience, as well, a temporal fragmentation for us of what is already temporally fragmented for the narrator and the other voices. Telling, pre-telling, post-telling, all are blurred, and Comala is a relaxation or crumbling of conceptual and mortal boundaries, which, coupled with the *apparently* unmediated orality of *PP*, allow the work to define a temporality of conversation in which what is "past" has never passed.

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<sup>1127</sup> "*parte de la novela inédita Una estrella junto a la luna*" ("part of the unpublished novel *A Star Next to the Moon*") ... "*fragmento de la novela inédita Los murmullos*" (fragment of the unpublished novel *The Murmurs*)

<sup>1128</sup> "And on days of air one sees the wind sweeping leaves of trees, when here, as you see there are no trees. There were one time, because if not, where did these leaves come from?"

<sup>1129</sup> "His eyes were scarcely moving; they jumped from one memory to another, blurring the present. Suddenly his heart stopped and it seemed as if time and the air of life also stopped."

Durán (1985) presents the work as a new category in this regard, with a “circular structure that places us in a past that is a present that is a future.”<sup>1130</sup> He then refers to Octavio Paz to imply that *PP* is a temporal/spatial category of the presentness of the past:

It's Octavio Paz who has seen that poems and myths coincide in changing time into a temporal spatial category, a past always future and always disposed to be present, to *present itself*. (218)

In *PP*, the past surely does “*presentarse*” – present itself, and *become present* – and time is transmuted into a new non-linear category. Comala, outside of time, is in a state of past, present, and continuous renewal. It is a gerund – which is, according to Mogobe B. Ramose (2002), a “state of being and becoming at the same time,” and “an enduring action or state of be-ing and the openness to yet another action or state of be-ing” (643).<sup>1131</sup> Like *GSV*'s *sertão*, Comala is a “gerundive” state of being – liberated from temporality into participatory immortality. The connection of the past to the present in becoming, and to the future in possibility, reflects Paz's concept of a work's ability to “*presentarse*,” and both are applicable to Comala. This is Comala: an open gerund, both state and process... non-linear, non-delineated, unfixed, and therefore, completely open to the process of being and the superimposition and interaction of the “states” of time: already, happening-now, and not-yet.

The aspects of narrative voice and words in this work relate to its ambiguity as a whole, in multiplicity, contradiction, and chaos, undoing the certainty of the palpable or linear, and placing in symbolic/conceptual doubt such ideas as individuality of voice, the difference between life/death, silence as distinct from sound, etc., in which such concepts function more as a Möbius strip than as distinct entities. This lack of certainty leaves open the possibility of a new fabric of poetics, space, and time, constructed in part in collaboration with the reader.

It is Comala's fictional/realistic history of violence and abandoned hopes that is continually *renewing* its construction as discourse, in its continued presentness of speech. As has been shown, Comala, with its lacunae, and with its constructive separation from linear temporality or geographically specifiable space, becomes a different place for every reader, a portable participatory history that can never be relegated to anything other than current human experience. Greater than a written archive of history or a fixed testimonial, *PP* is creative of a temporality and space within the mind of every reader, a self-perpetuating, atemporal – or multi-temporal – place that connects us to the earth and to all generations. Every voice is that of a

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<sup>1130</sup> “*estructura circular que nos remite a un pasado que es un presente que es un futuro.*” “*Es Octavio Paz quien ha visto que los poemas y los mitos coinciden en transmutar el tiempo en una categoría temporal espacial, un pasado siempre futuro y siempre dispuesto a ser presente, a presentarse.*”

<sup>1131</sup> Mogobe B. Ramose has written of the experience of time as one of motion and change rather than corralled definition. He uses the terms “-ness” and “-ism” to point to different ways of seeing time: “[E]verything is in a flux; a condition of incessant change and changeability because motion, and not rest, is the principle of being. To be is to be in the condition of -ness rather than -ism” (627). Ramose also stands by the gerund (the process) rather than the noun (the state): “...a gerundive, a verbal noun denoting a particular state of being and becoming at the same time. It thus denotes a particular action already performed, an enduring action or state of be-ing and the openness to yet another action or state of be-ing” (643).



person no longer physically alive, but the plane of mortality of Comala is not one of dust and decay, but one of consistent voice and retelling, one of interaction and liminality.

*PP* is both placed in a time and space, giving it shape and many levels of relevance and message, and it is also, paradoxically, *outside* of time and space, liberated, placed into the reader's mind as a simultaneous and present, "now" and "here," even as it is the past and somewhere else.

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Both *GSV* and *PP* use narrative techniques which bring their regional settings to life as protagonists, metaphors, and thematic unifiers within the works, as places and literary spaces, and those techniques then function further to construct collaboration and reader integration into those regional literary spaces. Through language and form, *PP*'s Comala breaks down the barriers between sound and silence, past and present, life and death, and also breaks down the narrative itself in ambiguity and paradox; Comala becomes a multiplicity of voices that relive their past and strive to be more than ghosts, even as the land is also a plausible regional landscape. The narration has created a space in the work that allows for its coexistence of realms. Further narrative techniques, also similar to those of *GSV*, are the unreliable origins of the narratives themselves, and the technique of using Juan Preciado as a kind of bridge to the reader: he is connected to Comala, but is an outsider as we are; he struggles with creating order in what he experiences, and so do we. When the book begins again in the middle, as does *GSV*, it does so with the knowledge that our living narrator in a dead land is a dead *murmullo* himself, which further tightens the reader's binding connection to Comala. As Comala's witness, the reader was subjected to believing in life where there is none, just as Preciado believed Eduviges, Damiana, and the siblings to be alive; that was Preciado's downfall. In its ambiguity and *lacunae*, the novel invites reader collaboration; in its sympathetic narrator-bridge, it invites integration. The narrative form is also instrumental in the temporal aspect of the work: Comala is out of time because of its own simultaneity of realms and chronologies, and, too, because it is become a psychological space in the time of every reader, a constant reminder for the reader that memory cannot be buried.

**CHAPTER IV:  
PENANCE and the REPOSITORY of MEMORY**

**1. “EI PAISAJE MEXICANO HUELE A SANGRE”**

As mentioned above, the metaphors of “place” used by Tuan and Massey are more than metaphor in *PP*’s Comala. Comala is indeed a “simultaneity of stories-so-far” (Massey 9). And, too, as Tuan explains, the land for those who work it contains “physical intimacy” – as noted above, for Comala – and is “a repository of memory” (97), much like Juan Preciado’s mother’s image of the bank of memories:

*«Mi pueblo... Lleno de árboles y de hojas, como una alcancía donde hemos guardado nuestros recuerdos. Sentirás que allí uno quisiera vivir para la eternidad. El amanecer; la mañana; el mediodía y la noche, siempre los mismos; pero con la diferencia del aire. Allí donde el aire cambia el color de las cosas; donde se ventila la vida como si fuera un murmullo; como si fuera un puro murmullo de la vida...»<sup>1132</sup> (118)*

The town does contain all of the memories of its inhabitants, and they play out for an eternity. The times of day are always the same, because it is timeless in its simultaneity of time. The air is not a murmur of life, however; it is a murmur of death. And those deaths are caused by despair driven in Comala by the *cacique* Pedro Páramo, and his priest.

Many critics have found a connection between the novel and social criticism, as mentioned earlier here. Anderson (2002) in fact points to the *caciquismo* in its historical context as the direct object of the characters’ *murmillos*:

As ghosts, Pedro, Susana, and Juan point outward to the social context of Mexico in the difficult movement toward modernization, toward social arrangements that never completely die as a newer social order is established. ... The *Porfiriato* ... allowed for anomalies such as the creation of the Media Luna ranch... Within this context, Susana San Juan and other individuals murmur their complaints in ghostly whispers. ... Speaking in the streets of Comala, overheard in dreams, and groaning in the cemetery, these spectral murmurs bespeak a reality hidden beneath the façade of Porfirian progress.

In fact, more than the feudal order, the work condemns all the corruption and violence in Comala: that of the brutal *cacique*, that of the corrupt priest who allowed the dead and murdered townspeople to remain oppressed in fear and penance, and, too, that of any who spilled blood into the soil. Though Rulfo has at times negated the socially critical nature of his work, distancing it from the revolution, from *caciquismo*, even from a real time and place, the work nonetheless functions critically, even if all that it criticizes is within the boundaries of imaginary Comala.

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<sup>1132</sup> “«My town... Full of trees and of leaves, like a piggy bank where we’ve kept our memories. You will feel that there one would like to live for eternity. The dawn; the morning; the midday and the night, always the same; but with a difference of the air. There where the air changes the color of things; where life is aired out as if it were a murmur; as if it were the pure murmur of life.»”

Comala carries its struggles in its own earth, a perpetual burden. It wasn't always so; Dolores remembers, in speaking to her son Juan Preciado, that Comala was "*Un pueblo que huele a miel derramada*" (80), a town that smells of spilled honey. But the very use of the phrase with "*huele*" brings to mind a similar phrase, one associated with the Revolution: "*El paisaje mexicano huele a sangre*," "the Mexican landscape smells of blood," said Eulalio Gutiérrez, Mexico's provisional president from November 1<sup>st</sup> 1914 to January 20<sup>th</sup> 1915, designated by the Convención de Aguascalientes (Poniatowska *La noche...* 270). This phrase speaks to the stain of death and violence on the *earth itself* – the earth, so connected to humankind. In Comala, the landscape not only smells of its past violence, but it sounds of it, too; it hasn't recovered, and cannot be ignored. Bartolomé, perhaps a perpetrator of cruelty himself, sees this, evoking a similar image of blood and soil, and a Biblical one of returning to dust: "*Este mundo que lo aprieta a uno por todos lados, que va vaciando puños de nuestro polvo aquí y allá, deshaciéndonos en pedazos como si rociara la tierra con nuestra sangre*"<sup>1133</sup> (141).

Another man in the cemetery remembers blood, too, his own, a result of Pedro's aggression in the aftermath of his father's death, in which, according to Dorotea, "*Pedro Páramo causó tal mortandad después que le mataron a su padre, que se dice casi acabó con los asistentes a la boda en la cual don Lucas Páramo iba a fungir de padrino*." Pedro didn't know who had killed his father, so he killed them all, and left "*ni el rastro*" of their property (136). The man in the cemetery denied his presence at the wedding, and was given "only a warning," in this terrifying and grotesque scene:

«...Tenía sangre por todas partes. Y al enderezarme chapotí con mis manos la sangre regada en las piedras. Y era mía. Montonales de sangre. Pero no estaba muerto. Me di cuenta. Supe que don Pedro no tenía intenciones de matarme. Sólo de darme un susto. ... Yo chapoteaba entre mi sangre y le preguntaba: "¿En cuál boda, don Pedro? No, no, don Pedro, yo no estuve. Si acaso, pasé por allí. Pero fue por casualidad..." Me dejó cojo, como ustedes ven, y manco si ustedes quieren. Pero no me mató. Dicen que se me torció un ojo desde entonces, de la mala impresión. Lo cierto es que me volví más hombre. El cielo es grande. Y ni quien lo dude.»<sup>1134</sup> (136)

The man remembers don Pedro's violence as justified, and his own survival as a kind of mercy; accustomed to the power situation, he has accepted the *cacique's* violence as his birthright. He is "more of a man" without legs and arms, a further example of Rulfo's sense of humor. The heavens may have seemed to look well on the man when he survived, but he is not there now; instead, he is reliving the violence done to him, including the epistemological violence that convinced him that it was acceptable for it to have been done.

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<sup>1133</sup> "This world that presses one on all sides, as if emptying fistfuls of our dust here and there, undoing us in pieces as if it sprinkled the land with our blood"

<sup>1134</sup> "There was blood everywhere. And on straightening up I squelched with my hands the blood spilled on the stones. And it was mine. Tons of blood. But I wasn't dead. I realized. I knew that don Pedro didn't intend to kill me. Just to scare me. ... I squelched around in my blood and asked him: 'In which wedding, don Pedro? No, no, don Pedro, I wasn't there. If perhaps, I passed by. But it was by chance...' He left me lame, as you see, and without arms, if you like. But he didn't kill me. They say that my eye twisted from then on, from the bad impression. What is certain is that I became more of a man. The heavens are big. And let no one doubt it."

Bell explains, “[t]he murmur can be thought of as the muffled protest of the Mexican people against the *cacique*” (242). More than that, the work seems critical of everyone who bloodied the landscape, including the revolutionary forces. Pedro Páramo’s semi-feudal system of corrupt landownership and violence brings down the whole town, validating, in the work, a desire for agrarian reform; but the revolutionary forces, though precipitated through a legitimate complaint, nonetheless wreak violent havoc on Mexico as well, resulting in more blood in the soil. And, shedding the historical significance and specificity of social comment, as Rulfo at times intimated, the work in fact is a voice against any unnecessary violence and bloodshed, and creates a larger case for understanding violence’s place in memory in order to move on *with* the past, not without it.

Returning to the quote above - “*La muerte de su padre que arrastró otras muertes y en cada una de ellas estaba siempre la imagen de la cara despedazada; roto un ojo, mirando vengativo el otro. Y otro y otro más, hasta que la había borrado del recuerdo cuando ya no hubo nadie que se la recordara.*”<sup>1135</sup> (125) – Pedro Páramo finds, as do all of his neighbors and sons, that violence is not so easily forgotten; the broken face of his father is not erased in all the death, but is instead *multiplied*, for that and all the other deaths continue to be pronounced by the earth itself. When he cheats Gerardo out of a pension, telling him that the few coins should be cared for because they won’t sprout again or reappear, Gerardo replies with the following: “*Sí, tampoco los muertos retoñan —y agregó— : Desgraciadamente*”<sup>1136</sup> (159-160). He indicates that the return of the dead would be a justice, a punishment for the *cacique*. And, in Comala, they do return, not only in punishment, but because they simply can’t rest. And even though he acts with impunity, unhindered by internal or external (Church) conscience, Pedro Páramo nevertheless does feel a weight from his actions: when his son Miguel dies following his example, he says, as mentioned above, “*— Estoy comenzando a pagar. Más vale empezar temprano, para terminar pronto*”<sup>1137</sup> (126).

The textual quotations in the preceding paragraphs function together to indicate that 1) Pedro Páramo caused blood to run in the soil, 2) violence leads to more violence, 3) there is a cost, and 4) if the dead could speak, it would serve justice. That may be the foundation for this atemporal, psycho-spatial Comala, this space that cries out constantly, if not specifically, against the nature and cost of violence. Just as Gutiérrez stated, the soil itself smells of blood; Comala itself, humanity’s reflection and responsibility, has taken in the evil done upon it, and redemption cannot be found in blind progress on top of the ruins, just as the conquistadors could not erase the slaughter by building churches with the stones of temples.

As has been shown in previous chapters, the space of Comala is defined by being out of time and place, but nonetheless grounded – literally – and also, through many narrative and thematic means, participatory and portable. Its very nature of regional earthiness, its many layers of usage of earth and land and dust and dirt, make of it a psychical and current space that is relevant and humanly felt. It could not function as it does without the reader feeling the reality of the

<sup>1135</sup> “The death of his father that dragged other deaths and in each one of them was always the image of the face torn to pieces; one eye broken, the other looking on vengefully. And another and another, until it had been erased from memory when there was no longer anyone to remember it”

<sup>1136</sup> “— Yes, and neither do the dead re-sprout — and he added— : Unfortunately.”

<sup>1137</sup> “— I’m starting to pay. It’s better to start early, to end soon.”

landscape, just as *GSV* would not be as powerful were it situated on the moon. Our connection to land and our connection to history are, in *PP*, one.

Homi Bhabha (2008) writes about the past's role in our lives (7):

[W]e negotiate with the past to transform our lives; but we cannot simply choose or unchoose the past. The cultural past is an 'incubational' presence in our lives (Gramsci): we live with it, or alongside it, in continual conversation with it, and although our views of the past change, and our dialogue develops in unexpected ways, the past *becomes* us, just as the future *begets* us.

In his statement, Bhabha indicates that the past cannot be "unchosen," but is our "incubator," and all that we can change is the manner in which we see it and dialogue with it. He then quotes from T.S. Eliot's "The Dry Salvages":

Trying to unweave, unwind, unravel  
And piece together the past and the future,  
Between midnight and dawn ...  
When time stops and time is never ending...

The poem points with unexpected precision to Comala's place. Time has stopped there, and is also never ending; it is in a liminal place, and between the worst of the past (midnight) and the possibilities of the future (dawn); and as readers, our attempts to unravel and piece together the work are also our attempts to piece together the connection between past and future. *PP* asks us to dialogue with the past in a truly unexpected way: in the present, where it has joined us, incubating in the earth from which we ourselves are nourished and born. In this way, as in many others, the violence and regret of *Comala* are more powerfully present than they could be in, for instance, a historical fiction narrative, even a documentary. The effect of the past on the *reader* is clear, for the reader is in Comala too, or Comala is in us.

Juan Preciado's mother speaks of Comala as the "*alcancia donde hemos guardado nuestros recuerdos*," the bank where we keep our memories. In this respect, it can be considered analogous to a concept of historical archive. However, a written historical archive generally has many limitations. Though it may be seen as an informational resource of fact, it can be inscribed in its beginnings through subjective lenses, and over time it becomes changed, canonized, erased, mediated, and misunderstood. It can provide a false authenticity to "truth." In discussing ethnography, Clifford (1986) states: "There is no way definitely, surgically, to separate the factual from the allegorical in cultural accounts" (Clifford 119). Neither can one separate fact, allegory, and culture in the historical archive of a nation, for the instant a "fact" is recorded, it is colored by perception, subjectivity, and circumstance, forever altered – if there ever was such a thing as an "fact" without perspective. In *Archive Fever* (1996), Derrida, too, discusses the limitations of the "archive," which he considers to be a produced discourse with exteriority, i.e., a consigned "history" in an "external place" (11). Its interpretation is left to privileged "authorized archons" who hold centrality in the relationship between power and the production of knowledge (2), choosing what and how to elect, order, and repress the archive into a "corpus" (3). The "archive" is, then, an institution with a "deconstructible history..." (4), and its

classifications are not organic or “true,” not “assured,” developed, created, produced. The “archive,” then, fails to truly express history, because even in its inscription it is limited to that moment’s interpretation, frozen there.

Indeed, Harss claims that “*México es el paraíso de los archivos perdidos*” (“Mexico is the paradise of lost archives”) (Harss 65). These limitations in recording Mexican history and especially the time leading up to the Revolution have been noted above by Friedrich Katz (1974); the *hacendados* kept or destroyed their papers, and Katz had few accounts and of disparate origin on which to base his work. The “archive” in Mexico, then, is subjectively compiled, as Derrida indicates. And, as Rulfo writes about his experience working in the migration office, the archive was a place in which one could be assured of having privacy simply because no one wanted to go there:

I discovered that in the archive of Migration nothing moved because no one was interested in being there. With each cabinet change they kicked out everyone except those in the archive, which no one remembered, and we would go to this department where nothing happened... We didn’t want anyone to see us...<sup>1138</sup> (Poniatowska 819-820)

An archive can be, then, not only a past that is shaped from its inception by the ideology of its keepers, and thus no font of “truth,” but can be, too, *ignored*, shelved and forgotten.

Comala shares with the concept of the “archive” in that it is a compilation of historical events and perspectives that has been written down according to the perspective of a person privileged to be literate. However, in Comala, though the novel was written down, the narrative and thematic structures of the work function to – whether or not they endeavor to or not – liberate Comala from the fate of the archive. Perhaps it isn’t that of Cortés, but nonetheless, as Paz states, *PP* brings to light “a secret conflict, that we still haven’t resolved”<sup>1139</sup> (95). Comala will not let itself be ignored; it will not let its past be forgotten, paved over, set out of mind.

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<sup>1138</sup> “*Descubrí que en el archivo de Migración nada se movía porque a nadie le interesaba estar allí. Con cada cambio de gabinete los corrían a todos menos a los del archivo, del cual ni se acordaban, y en ese departamento donde no sucedía nada nos fuimos a meter... No queríamos que nos viera nadie...*”

<sup>1139</sup> “*un conflicto secreto, que aún no hemos resuelto*”

## 2. *COMALA PENANDO: SHAME and the CHURCH:*

One of the questions that *PP* poses to the reader, just as *GSV* does, concerns the origin of evil and the nature of guilt. It has been established that there was violence and injustice, and that the town of Comala subsists in a unique kind of space for the reader of the work, a participatory and communicative space that, through our connection to earth and the past, cries out for memory to be separate from the convenient interpretation – or even loss and oblivion – of dusty archive. “Progress” may be changing the space of Mexico, even the world, Comala tells us, but there is blood in the soil, and it must be noticed and, perhaps, remedied over time through *attention*, much like our attentive read of the work. However, the nature of the ghosts in Comala, and their reason for suffering there, remains more mysterious than the work’s communicative effect.

In his comparison of *PP* to Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, Hugo Rodríguez-Alcalá (1992) mentions that Olga Vickery (1970) has defined “the inferno of the moderns”<sup>1140</sup> as “a hell created by man not God” (678). In context:

...the modern world in many ways stands forth as a displaced existential projection of Dante’s *Inferno*, a hell created by man not God and therefore an exact archetype of the radical truncation of the imagination. It is man who has polluted the earth, air, and water only to be punished by so doing. It is man who has built his own cities of Dis and has found himself trapped by them. He has traced his own circles of the Inferno, his own Malebolge, by separating group from group, man from man, imprisoning them in the loathsome squalor of clichés, stereotypes, and egocentricity. He has created his own monsters and submitted himself to them. He has endured pain, but apparently without empathy he has inflicted it on others. He is indeed the fallen man who has, through centuries, created for himself what Dante describes as “The City of Woe,” of “Forsaken People,” of “Eternal Sorrow” (Vickery 151).

This appears to be a portrait of Pedro Páramo and Comala. Suffering but not empathetic, the *cacique* has inflicted pain on others, keeping them in the squalor of their own ingrained sense of inferiority and dependence, and killing them when it serves his egocentric needs. He has built a town and *hacienda* that are dystopian, and the earth, air, and water forsake the monster created there. Comala becomes – with its priest’s help, as will be seen here – a forsaken city of woe and eternal sorrow. Hugo Rodríguez-Alcalá responds to Vickery saying, “Now let us remember who is guilty of the fact that the paradise-like town of Comala has been converted into what in English is commonly called a ghost town... In Rulfo, the creator of the damned town is not *man* but *a man*: the ferocious *cacique* Pedro Páramo, the tyrant of the region” (679).<sup>1141</sup>

Pedro Páramo, as has been shown, may not be the figure of Cortés, because he suffers from

<sup>1140</sup> In Rodríguez-Alcalá, “*el inferno de los modernos*” ... “«un inferno creado por el hombre y no por Dios... que el hombre ha contaminado la tierra, el agua y el aire y halla en ello su castigo»”

<sup>1141</sup> “Ahora recordemos quién es el culpable de que el pueblo paradisíaco de Comala se haya convertido en lo que en inglés se dice comúnmente un ghost town... En Rulfo, el creador del pueblo maldito no es el hombre sino un hombre: el feroz *cacique* Pedro Páramo, el tirano de la región”

human failings;<sup>1142</sup> therefore, it is also unlikely that he is the devil. A complex character, a suffering villain, he does not appear to represent an otherworldly evil, but rather one very much *of this world*. His Hell, therefore, is also *in this world*; it is in Comala itself. Pedro Páramo, an aspect of humanity, a flawed and lonely member of an institutionalized power structure, is in many ways the sole instigator of ruin in Comala, the “*culpable*” as Rodríguez-Alcalá states. However, it is not only Pedro Páramo who roams Comala in penance; they all do, complicating the question of guilt as that of “a” man instead of mankind in general. Olga Vickery’s comment, brought to bear on Comala, does indicate that humanity *can* create a kind of “hell” – and begs the question, is there then redemption, in a *human* hell?

In *GSV*, Riobaldo struggles incessantly with the origins of his own violent evildoings, and those of others, only to conclude almost with certainty that evil is of humanity’s own making, while grace is God’s. In *PP*, the priest Rentería is the one who struggles to understand evil as he guiltily condones it, while everyone in the ghost town of Comala struggles to understand guilt and redemption.

Comala’s role as religious or otherwise metaphysical space is complex. Comala exists within the work in a locative sense; though not specifically placed on a map, it is a town and a geographical area. However, it is also imaginary, conceptual, and representational of the historical, the psychological, and the metaphysical. As has been mentioned earlier, it is a place where all paths converge, which has led some critics to interpret it as “the mythical image of the Center: the place where all paths converge”<sup>1143</sup> (Solanilla 85). It is also, perhaps, “Axis Mundi”: Beardsell defines “Axis Mundi” as a place “at which heaven, earth and hell meet,” and explains that in “Mesoamerican mythology this Axis Mundi is fundamental.” Comala is a kind of crossroads, much like that in *GSV* in which Riobaldo sought the Devil, and a long-held cultural symbol in many Western cultures<sup>1144</sup>. For Riobaldo, “*Lugar meu tinha de ser a concruz dos caminhos.*” (434), “my place had to be the crossing of the ways”; it is a critical turning point in morality as well as space, a divergence of good and evil. Comala has that aspect, too; it is a place in which decisions have created darkness, and in which, years later, its long-lost son Juan Preciado becomes integrated into that yearning purgatory. Having participated in their realm, he finds his road home is no longer open to him once it has become an open wound in the hill behind him (107), a tangled path (113), impossible to find once he has crossed the river Styx into Comala’s

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<sup>1142</sup> Fuentes’ conclusion of Pedro Páramo’s flawed humanity is seconded by Solanilla, who analyzes the character as a “prototipo del *macho* mexicano” (62) and finds that his character is not a simple flat prototype, for although “*su vida es toda una serie de atropellos, crímenes, injusticias, para erigirse como señor y dueño de Comala, en su aspecto exterior,*” on the other hand: “... *en su interioridad es un hombre solitario, sentimental, contradictorio, de una gran dimensión humana... llega a tenerlo todo menos su paz interior. ... Su figura transparenta una dimensión individual compleja, como la de todo hombre*” (62-63). (“his life is a series of outrages/violations, crimes, injustices, to set himself up as master and owner of Comala, in his exterior aspect” ... “in his interiority he is a solitary, sentimental, contradictory man, of a great human dimension... he manages to have everything but his interior peace. ... His figure shows through a complex individual dimension, like that of every man”

<sup>1143</sup> “*la imagen mítica del Centro: el lugar donde convergen todos los caminos*”

<sup>1144</sup> The Devil followed Faust home from his late night walk in Goethe’s play; and this trope has been replayed specifically with a crossroads in the U.S. music tradition, as seen in blues musician Robert Johnson’s 1936 song “Cross Road Blues” and its accompanying legend of his sale of his soul to the Devil there, as shown in the 1986 film *Crossroads* and reborn as general cultural icon in the appearance of a musician who has sold his soul at a crossroads in the 2000 film *O Brother, Where Art Thou* by the Coen brothers.



coexisting airless aspect. Like the tragedy of Orpheus and Eurydice, Juan Preciado has looked upon what he shouldn't have seen, and there is no return to life as he knew it. The past was left to fester in Comala, and it has become powerful and can no longer be ignored; the human evil is still there.

Comala is, then, for many, a kind of underworld, or an "Axis Mundi," a central place that combines the living earth, with manifestations of the Catholic conception of Hell, or perhaps Purgatory, no less metaphysical for being man-made, and, perhaps for that very reason, *physical* as well. In fact, the concept of Purgatory has interesting applications to Comala. Bell states that "Rulfo has built a world of purgatory where guilty souls and memories of the past do penance by never coming to a state of rest." (241). This application of "purgatory" may be quite purposeful. Addis and Arnold's *Catholic Dictionary* (1884) defines Purgatory in the following way:

A place in which souls who depart this life in the grace of God suffer for a time because they still need to be cleansed from venial, or have still to pay the temporal punishment due to mortal sins, the guilt and the eternal punishment of which have been remitted. Purgatory is not a place of probation, for the time of trial, the period during which the soul is free to choose eternal life or eternal death, ends with the separation of soul and body. All the souls in Purgatory have died in the love of God, and are certain to enter heaven. But as yet they are not pure and holy enough to see God, and God's mercy allots them a place and a time for cleansing and preparation.... The Councils of Florence... and Trent... define "that there is a Purgatory, and that the souls detained there are helped by the prayers of the faithful and, above all, by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar." (702)

According to this definition, those in Purgatory have "died in the love of God," but are not yet pure and holy enough to see Him; they are no longer on trial in this period, but are simply waiting, and can be helped by the "prayers of the faithful" and the "acceptable sacrifice of the altar." It is unclear in *PP* whether the dead are "in the love of God"; but what is clear is that the people there are *waiting*, indefinitely, timelessly, and that other than Miguel – whose voice, curiously enough, the reader does not hear in the grave – they did not receive that *altar sacrifice* that Father Rentería so often denied.

In fact, though they clamor to be released, Donis's sister explains that they simply can't be: "*Son tantas, y nosotros tan poquitos, que ya ni la lucha le hacemos para rezar porque salgan de sus penas. No ajustarian nuestras oraciones para todos. Si acaso les tocaría un pedazo de Padrenuestro. Y eso no les puede servir de nada*"<sup>1145</sup> (111). Why is it that the "Our Fathers" prayers can't help the suffering dead? Is it because there is no God, or because they aren't in His purgatory, but that of the tainted Church, in a land tainted by violence and corruption? This statement points to the possibility that they are not in a typical Christian Purgatory. They are stuck somehow, in between. What have Pedro Páramo and Father Rentería done?

In comparing Comala to the concept of "Axis-Mundi," Beardsell makes a comment that has very useful implications: "Though not exactly contiguous to heaven, [Comala] could certainly be seen as a meeting-point of Church, earth and hell" (90). If its space of hell/purgatory, contiguous to

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<sup>1145</sup> "They are so many, and we so few, that we don't even fight to pray for them to leave their pain. Our prayers wouldn't suffice for all of them. If perhaps a piece of Our Father could touch them. And this can't help them at all."

the earth, is contiguous also to the Church but not to heaven, it follows that the Church is somehow flawed in its ability to intercede between humanity and God. The line to God has been lost, and the punishment is not God's doing, but that of don Pedro and, to his own dismay, Rentería... a purgatory with no end in sight. Hell, then, in Comala, is man-made.

Returning "home," Juan Preciado is buried without last rites by Comala itself, killed by its crowd of souls begging to be released from their wandering misery: "*Ruega a Dios por nosotros*," "Beg to God for us" (118). He mentions to Dorotea that he didn't see his mother, nor Heaven, when he died: "*Es curioso, Dorotea, cómo no alcancé a ver ni el cielo. Al menos, quizá, debe ser el mismo que ella conoció*"<sup>1146</sup> (124). However, his mother is not there in the ground with him; she lost sight of him when he crossed over to its airless space. *She is someplace else*. Dorotea responds that she hasn't bothered to think about Heaven since "*el padre Rentería me aseguró que jamás conocería la gloria. Que ni siquiera de lejos la vería*"<sup>1147</sup>. She considers it far, far outside of the reach of even her eyes. With no hope of glory, since the priest closed that door, she is happy to stay in Comala forever: "*El cielo para mí, Juan Preciado, está aquí donde estoy ahora*"<sup>1148</sup> (124). The dirt-laden deaths of Juan Preciado and Dorotea do not appear to be those of the condemned, but instead those in-between, unable to move on, trapped.

Rentería closes the door for many of his parishioners. He is a silent accomplice in Comala, standing by as Pedro Páramo and his son demolish Comala through violence and violation, corrupt not only in accepting money to bless those he shouldn't, but in refusing to bless those he should. The novel in fact lays out the priest's mistakes throughout, his sins of omission and commission, and those of his peers:

## 2.1 SINS of COMMISSION:

The priest's "sins of commission" are those committed, as well as having to do with another sense of the word "commission": that of authority conferred or denied by, in his case, a source of power other than Rome, and other than God.

At Miguel's wake, Father Rentería says to himself:

«Hay aire y sol, hay nubes. Allá arriba un cielo azul detrás de él tal vez haya canciones; tal vez mejores voces ... Hay esperanza, en suma. Hay esperanza para nosotros, contra nuestro pesar.

»Pero no para ti, Miguel Páramo, que has muerto sin perdón y no alcanzarás ninguna gracia.<sup>1149</sup>

<sup>1146</sup> "It's curious, Dorotea, how I didn't manage even to see Heaven. At least, perhaps, it must be the same that she knew."

<sup>1147</sup> "Father Rentería assured me that I would never know glory. That I would never even see it from far away."

<sup>1148</sup> "Heaven for me, Juan Preciado, is here where I am now"

<sup>1149</sup> "«There is air and sun, there are clouds. There above a blue sky beyond it perhaps are songs; perhaps better voices... There is hope, in sum. There is hope for us, against our sorrow. / »But not for you, Miguel Páramo, who have died without pardon and will never reach any grace."

However, before he can leave the church, the parishioners ask him to bless the murderous boy: “— ¡Padre, queremos que nos lo bendiga!”<sup>1150</sup>. He refuses, at first, albeit nervously, explaining that God wouldn’t forgive him for interceding on behalf of such a sinner:

— ¡No! — dijo moviendo negativamente la cabeza — . No lo haré. Fue un mal hombre y no entrará al Reino de los Cielos. Dios me tomará mal que interceda por él. Lo decía, mientras trataba de retener sus manos para que no enseñaran su temblor.<sup>1151</sup>

However, then Pedro Páramo himself approaches the priest, kneels next to him, and whispers in his ear:

— Yo sé que usted lo odiaba, padre. Y con razón. El asesinato de su hermano, que según rumores fue cometido por mi hijo, el caso de su sobrina Ana, violada por él según el juicio de usted; las ofensas y falta de respeto que le tuvo en ocasiones, son motivos que cualquiera puede admitir. Pero olvídense ahora, padre. Considérelo y perdónelo como quizá Dios lo haya perdonado.

Puso sobre el reclinatorio un puño de monedas de oro y se levantó:

— Reciba eso como una limosna para su iglesia.<sup>1152</sup>

The priest accepts the money – “*El padre Rentería recogió las monedas una por una y se acercó al altar*” – knowing that it is a betrayal of his beliefs:

— Son tuyas — dijo — . Él puede comprar la salvación. Tú sabes si éste es el precio. En cuanto a mí, Señor, me pongo ante tus plantas para pedirle lo justo o lo injusto, que todo nos es dado pedir ...

Por mí condénalo, Señor.

Y cerró el sagrario.

Entró en la sacristía, se echó en un rincón, y allí lloró de pena y de tristeza hasta agotar sus lágrimas.

— Está bien, Señor, tú ganas — dijo después.<sup>1153</sup> (86-87)

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<sup>1150</sup> “— Father, we want you to bless him for us!”

<sup>1151</sup> “— No! — he said moving his head negatively— . / I won’t do it. He was a bad man and he won’t enter the Realm of Heaven. God will take it badly if I intercede for him. / He said it, while he tried to hold onto his hands so they wouldn’t show their trembling”

<sup>1152</sup> “Pedro Páramo approached, kneeling at his side: / — I know that you hated him, Father. And with reason. The murder of your brother, which according to rumors was committed by my son, the case of your niece Ana, raped by him according to your judgment; the offenses and lack of respect that he had towards you on occasions, are motives that anyone can admit. But forget it now, Father. Consider it and pardon him as perhaps God already has. / He placed on the kneeler a fistful of gold coins and got up: / — Receive this as alms for your church.”

<sup>1153</sup> “Father Rentería picked up the coins one by one and approached the altar. / — They’re yours — he said— . He can buy salvation. You know if this is the price. For me, Lord, I place myself before your (presence) to ask of you the just or the unjust, which to all of us is given to ask... / For me condemn him, Lord. / And he closed the tabernacle. / He entered the sacristy, threw himself down in a corner, and there cried in sorrow and sadness until he spent his tears. / — It’s okay, Lord, you win — he said later.”

He meant to take a stand against don Pedro, but he failed. When faced with the temptation to take the safe and financially beneficial route, he took don Pedro's coins, one by one, in a possible reference to Judas' 30 pieces of silver; he knows that he is disappointing God, that God "*me tomará mal que interceda por él.*" By placing the coins on the altar, he believes that he, as a priest, has interceded for the boy; as a man, he asks for Miguel to be condemned, but believing that those words won't be heard.

Rentería's sense of shame as related to Miguel goes back to the boy's birth. He recalls how one of his parishioners brought him a child whose mother had died, claiming it was Pedro's. He knew that Pedro would be a terrible influence for a child, but nonetheless he brought it to the *hacendado*. Pedro recognized it upon hearing that the priest believed it to have "bad blood":

- Don Pedro, la mamá murió al alumbrarlo. Dijo que era de usted. Aquí lo tiene.
- Y él ni lo dudó, solamente le dijo:
- ¿Por qué no se queda con él, padre? Hágalo cura.
- Con la sangre que lleva dentro no quiero tener esa responsabilidad.
- ¿De verdad cree usted que tengo mala sangre?
- Realmente sí, don Pedro.
- Le probaré que no es cierto. Déjemelo aquí. Sobra quien se encargue de cuidarlo.
- En eso pensé, precisamente. Al menos con usted no le faltará el sustento.
- El muchachito se retorció, pequeño como era, como una víbora.<sup>1154</sup> (127-128)

Far from proving that the boy didn't have "bad blood," Pedro raises his son without rules or consequences, in his own image, both without remorse. As the priest explains:

...Fue creciendo como una mala yerba. Lo malo de esto es que todo lo obtuvo de mí: "Me acuso, padre, que ayer dormí con Pedro Páramo." "Me acuso, padre, que tuve un hijo de Pedro Páramo." "De que le presté mi hija a Pedro Páramo." Siempre esperé que él viniera a acusarse de algo; pero nunca lo hizo. Y después estiró los brazos de su maldad con ese hijo que tuvo. Al que él reconoció, sólo Dios sabe por qué. Lo que sí sé es que yo puse en sus manos ese instrumento"<sup>1155</sup> (127).

The priest didn't stop don Pedro from sleeping with all of the women of Comala; and when the son of his sinfulness was born, the priest handed the child over to don Pedro to be educated in his shadow.

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<sup>1154</sup> "— Don Pedro, the mother died on giving birth to him. She said it was yours. Here you have it. / And he didn't doubt it, he only told him: / — Why don't you keep him, Father? Make him a priest. / — With the blood that he has inside I don't want that responsibility. / — Do you really believe that I have bad blood? / — Really yes, don Pedro. / — I will prove to you that it isn't true. Leave him here with me. There are more than enough people to take on caring for him. / — That's what I thought of, precisely. At least with you he won't lack sustenance. / The little boy twisted himself, small as he was, like a snake." (127-128)

<sup>1155</sup> "He was growing like a bad weed. The bad in all of this is that he obtained it from me: 'I confess, Father, that yesterday I slept with Pedro Páramo' "I confess, Father, that I had a son with Pedro Páramo." "That I lent my daughter to Pedro Páramo." I always waited for him to come to confess to something, but he never did. And then he stretched out the arms of his evil with this son that he had. Which he recognized, only God knows why. What I do know is that I put this instrument in his hands." (127)

Despite his disregard for the Church in his own cruel actions, the *cacique* appears to care whether his son is pardoned by the Church, though perhaps only for appearance's sake, or in order to torture the priest. He also appears to have a sense of what might be called "karma," at the least, feeling he is being punished with his son's death. However, he himself never confesses, nor does he follow any moral guidelines. He baptizes all of his children, but then abandons all of them with the exception of Miguel; Solanilla indicates that this "can be interpreted as another way of mocking the religious authority"<sup>1156</sup> (121), and indeed, with this fact, together with the scene at Miguel's funeral, it seems that don Pedro really enjoys keeping the Father in his pocket.

Later in the novel, if not chronologically, the priest is home with his niece, and he speaks to her about Miguel. She tells him of how the boy came into her room, and how she knew who he was, and *what* he was:

— Pero sabías quién era.

— Sí. Y qué cosa era. Sé que ahora debe estar en lo mero hondo del infierno; porque así se lo he pedido a todos los santos con todo mi fervor.

— No estés tan convencida de eso, hija. ¡Quién sabe cuántos están rezando ahora por él! Tú estás sola. Un ruego contra miles de ruegos. Y entre ellos, algunos mucho más hondos que el tuyo, como es el de su padre.

Iba a decirle: «Además, yo le he dado el perdón.» Pero sólo lo pensó. No quiso maltratar el alma medio quebrada de aquella muchacha. Antes, por el contrario, la tomó del brazo y le dijo:

— Démosle gracias a Dios Nuestro Señor porque se lo ha llevado de esta tierra donde causó tanto mal, no importa que ahora lo tenga en su cielo.<sup>1157</sup> (89)

The priest believes that his niece's deepest prayers can do nothing, but that money can buy grace, and that he has allowed don Pedro to buy it for the very same young man who killed his brother and raped the girl. In the novel, it seems that his belief is correct; Miguel's voice does not appear to be there, *penando*, with the rest. But where he has gone from there, is beyond the novel's place to tell.

## 2.2 SINS of OMISSION:

Rentería's "sins of commission" are those of pardoning people he shouldn't in exchange for money; likewise, his "sins of omission" are those of not pardoning the people he should, simply

<sup>1156</sup> "*puede interpretarse como otra forma de burlarse de la autoridad religiosa*"

<sup>1157</sup> "— But you knew who he was. / — Yes. And what thing he was. I know that now he must be in the far depths of Hell; because that is what I have asked all of the saints with all of my fervor. / — Don't be so convinced of that, daughter. Who knows how many are praying for him now! You are alone. One request against thousands of requests. And among them, some much deeper than yours, as is that of your father. / He was going to tell her: «Moreover, I have already pardoned him.» But he only thought it. He didn't want to mistreat the half broken soul of that girl. On the contrary, he took her by the arm and said to her: / — Let's give thanks to God our Lord because he has taken him away from this earth where he caused such evil, it doesn't matter if now He has him in His heaven"

because they cannot pay. The priest, though he feels guilty, tries to comfort himself in the knowledge that he has to subsist somehow, and that the world has always been this way:

«Todo esto que sucede es por mi culpa — se dijo — . El temor de ofender a quienes me sostienen. Porque ésta es la verdad; ellos me dan mi mantenimiento. De los pobres no consigo nada; las oraciones no llenan el estómago. Así ha sido hasta ahora. Y éstas son las consecuencias. Mi culpa. He traicionado a aquellos que me quieren y que me han dado su fe y me buscan para que yo interceda por ellos para con Dios. ¿Pero qué han logrado con su fe? ¿La ganancia del cielo? ¿O la purificación de sus almas? Y para qué purifican su alma, si en el último momento...<sup>1158</sup> (91)

The last sentence is unfinished. From context, since the next sentence involves María Dyada asking for a blessing for her sister, it appears that after “*en el último momento...*” he would continue, “they commit suicide.” However, also “[*e*]n el último momento...,” he himself *closes the door*; in a Catholic worldview in which the priest must intercede with God on the behalf of mortals, he has truncated the path of the souls entrusted to his care.

After trying to convince himself that it was acceptable to simply be a part of how things had always been, since he needs to be sustained by material goods and not by prayers which don’t fill the stomach, he remembers how he refused to pardon Eduvigis because her sister could not pay that “altar sacrifice” that would induce him to intercede on the behalf of the dead: “...*Todavía tengo frente a mis ojos la mirada de María Dyada, que vino a pedirme salvara a su hermana Eduvigis*”<sup>1159</sup>. María speaks to him of her sister, who always served others, giving them everything she had, and who was driven to suicide by her situation of unwed motherhood (quite possibly due to Pedro, though it isn’t mentioned explicitly):

» — Ella sirvió siempre a sus semejantes. Les dio todo lo que tuvo. Hasta les dio un hijo, a todos. ... Abusaron de su hospitalidad por esa bondad suya de no querer ofenderlos ni de malquistarse con ninguno.  
 » — Pero ella se suicidó. Obró contra la mano de Dios.  
 » — No le quedaba otro camino. Se resolvió a eso también por bondad.  
 » — Falló a última hora — eso es lo que le dije — . En el último momento. ¡Tantos bienes acumulados para su salvación, y perderlos así de pronto!<sup>1160</sup> (91-92)

<sup>1158</sup> “Everything that happens is my fault — he told himself— . The fear of offending those who maintain me. Because that is the truth: they give me my maintenance. From the poor I don’t gain anything; prayers don’t fill the stomach. That is how it has been until now. And these are the consequences. My fault. I have betrayed those who love me and who have given me their faith and who look for me so that I can intercede for them with God. But what have they gained with the faith? The winning of Heaven? Or the purification of their souls? And why purify their soul, if at the last moment...”

<sup>1159</sup> “I still have in front of my eyes the gaze of María Dyada, who came to ask me to save her sister Eduvigis”

<sup>1160</sup> “» — She always served her fellow men. She gave them everything she had. She even gave them a son, to all of them. ... They abused her hospitality because of that goodness of hers of not wanting to offend them nor alienate any of them. / » — But she killed herself. She worked against the hand of God. / » — She had no other choice. She resolved to that also out of goodness. / » — She failed at the last moment — that is what I told her— . At the last moment. So many goods accumulated for her salvation, and to lose them like this all of a sudden!”

At this point, it becomes clear that the priest is asking for money, and, too, that he knows later that he was wrong to do so. With “*eso es lo que le dije*,” “that is what I told her,” he indicates the moment to which his guilty conscience directs him in memory; perhaps this was a reasonable thing to say, as suicides are not well looked upon by the church, but in telling this to Maria he was not merely imparting information; he was asking for money. The “*bienes*” (goods) of which he spoke were monetary. María responds:

» — Pero si no los perdió. Murió con muchos dolores. Y el dolor ... Usted nos ha dicho algo acerca del dolor que ya no recuerdo. Ella se fue por ese dolor. Murió retorcida por la sangre que la ahogaba. Todavía veo sus muecas, y sus muecas eran los más tristes gestos que ha hecho un ser humano.<sup>1161</sup> (92)

She is speaking of other “*bienes*,” those of her sister’s goodness and her pain. The conversation continues on those two levels. “» — *Tal vez rezando mucho*”<sup>1162</sup> he tells her, and she replies, “» — *Vamos rezando mucho, padre*,” but these earnest requests from her soul to the heavens are not the prayers that he is thinking of:

» — Digo tal vez, si acaso, con las misas gregorianas, pero para eso necesitamos pedir ayuda, mandar traer sacerdotes. Y eso cuesta dinero.”

»Allí estaba frente a mis ojos la mirada de María Dyada, una pobre mujer llena de hijos.

» — No tengo dinero. Eso usted lo sabe, padre.

» — Dejemos las cosas como están. Esperemos en Dios.

» — Sí, padre.»<sup>1163</sup> (92)

When she is unable to pay, he tells her to leave her hope in God, but he believes, as she likely does as well, that he has already blocked Eduviges’ salvation in refusing to pardon her with one, two, even a hundred words that would be so easy. He knew what he was doing; he was bartering with the penniless, who would always lose. He continues:

¿Por qué aquella mirada se volvía valiente ante la resignación? Qué le costaba a él perdonar, cuando era tan fácil decir una palabra o dos, o cien palabras si éstas fueran necesarias para salvar el alma. ¿Qué sabía él del cielo y del infierno? Y sin embargo, él, perdido en un pueblo sin nombre, sabía los que habían merecido el cielo. Había un catálogo. Comenzó a recorrer los santos del panteón católico comenzando por los del

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<sup>1161</sup> “» — But she didn’t lose them. She died with a lot of pain. And pain... You have said something to us about pain that I don’t remember. She went because of that pain. She died twisted in the blood that drowned her. I still see her grimaces, her grimaces were the saddest gestures that a human being has made”

<sup>1162</sup> “» — Perhaps praying a lot” “» — We are praying a lot, Father”

<sup>1163</sup> “» — I mean perhaps, maybe, with the Gregorian masses, but for this we need to ask for help, we need to bring priests. And that costs money.” / »There was in front of my eyes the gaze of María Dyada, a poor woman full of children. / » — I don’t have money. You know that, Father. / » — Let’s leave things as they are. Let’s hope in God. / » — Yes, Father.»”

día... Ya iba siendo dominado por el sueño cuando se sentó en la cama: «Estoy repasando una hilera de santos como si estuviera viendo saltar cabras.»<sup>1164</sup> (92-93).

It is at this point that he goes outside only to see that the heavens are falling: “*Llovía estrellas. Lamentó aquello porque hubiera querido ver un cielo quieto. ... Sintió la envoltura de la noche cubriendo la tierra. La tierra, «este valle de lágrimas»*”<sup>1165</sup> (93). The priest may have the power to pardon Miguel and not Eduviges, insofar as the first leaves Comala’s Purgatory and the second stays there, but he knows that there is a greater power, a greater sense of justice, than his own; that is reflected in the novel with nature’s own reaction to the moral corruption of the town.

Father Rentería then goes to Contla in order to give his own confession to another priest, and he finds no absolution for himself there, just as he provided none for his poor parishioners: “*No quería pensar para nada que había estado en Contla, donde hizo confesión general con el señor cura, y que éste, a pesar de sus ruegos, le había negado la absolución*”<sup>1166</sup> (129). The priest’s words:

— Ese hombre de quien no quieres mencionar su nombre ha despedazado tu Iglesia y tú se lo has consentido. ¿Qué se puede esperar ya de ti, padre? ¿Qué has hecho de la fuerza de Dios? Quiero convencerme de que eres bueno y de que allí recibes la estimación de todos; pero no basta ser bueno. El pecado no es bueno. Y para acabar con él; hay que ser duro y despiadado. Quiero creer que todos siguen siendo creyentes; pero no eres tú quien mantiene su fe; lo hacen por superstición y por miedo. ... Sé lo difícil que es nuestra tarea en estos pobres pueblos donde nos tienen relegados; pero eso mismo me da derecho a decirte que no hay que entregar nuestro servicio a unos cuantos, que te darán un poco a cambio de tu alma, y con tu alma en manos de ellos ¿qué podrás hacer para ser mejor que aquellos que son mejores que tú? No, padre, mis manos no son lo suficientemente limpias para darte la absolución. Tendrás que buscarla en otro lugar<sup>1167</sup> (129).

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<sup>1164</sup> “Why did that gaze become so valiant before her resignation? What did it cost him to pardon, when it was so easy to say a word or two, or a hundred words if these were necessary to save the soul. What did he know of Heaven and Hell? Nonetheless, he, lost in a town without name, knew those who had deserved Heaven. There was a catalog. He started to go over the saints of the Catholic pantheon beginning with those of the day... He was already becoming dominated by sleep when he sat up in his bed: «I am reviewing a row of saints as if I were watching goats jump»”

<sup>1165</sup> “It was raining stars. He lamented that because he would have liked to see a calm sky. ... He felt the wrapping of the night covering the earth. The earth, « this valley of tears»”

<sup>1166</sup> “He didn’t want to think for anything that he had been in Contla, where he did general confession with the [respected/his superior] priest, and that this [priest], in spite of his pleas, had denied him absolution.”

<sup>1167</sup> “— This man whose name you don’t want to mention has torn your Church to pieces and you have consented to it. What can be hoped from you now, Father? What have you done with the strength of God? I want to convince myself that you are good and that there you receive the esteem of all; but it isn’t enough to be good. Sin isn’t good. And to finish it off, you must hard and pitiless. I want to believe that they all continue to be believers; but you are not the one who maintains their faith; they do it because of superstition and because of fear... I know how difficult our work is in those poor towns where they have us relegated; but this itself gives me the right to tell you that we can’t hand over our services to some few, who will give you a little bit in exchange for your soul, and with your soul in their hands, what will you be able to do to be better than those who are better than you? No, Father, my hands aren’t sufficiently clean to give you absolution. You will have to look for it someplace else.”



The priest tells him he must find pardon elsewhere, because he cannot continue to consecrate others when he himself is in sin. Father Rentería worries that they might suspend his ministry; perhaps it is for this reason that he begins this memory with, “*No quería pensar para nada que había estado en Contla.*”<sup>1168</sup> He appears to have no intention of going further; he asks his friend to provisionally give communion etc: “*Mueren tantos en mi pueblo, señor cura.*”<sup>1169</sup> The other responds: “—*Padre, deja que a los muertos los juzgue Dios.*” It remains unclear whether the Contla priest has committed the same sin; this may be why his hands are not clean enough to pardon Rentería, and he refuses to provide provisional services. In any case, his advice is the same as what the Father has already been doing in Comala, but with the belief that, without his intercession, God takes none of them into Heaven. Then they turn to talk about the acidic land, as has been mentioned earlier; Rentería mentions that Pedro Páramo’s ownership of all of Comala is “*la voluntad de Dios,*” and his friend replies, “—*No creo que en este caso intervenga la voluntad de Dios*”<sup>1170</sup> (130).

Father Rentería finishes this memory the same way that he started it, in *denial*, dismissing his duty into the back of his mind: “*Con todo, ahora aquí, vuelto a la realidad, no quería volver a pensar más en esa mañana de Contla*”<sup>1171</sup> (130). He is not clean enough to bless others, and his friend was not clean enough to bless him; he is supposed to mediate between God and his parishioners’ souls, but that is no longer a door he could even open if he wanted to. He has reduced his church to belonging to don Pedro, like everything else, and can only mediate between those souls and the purgatory/hell in earth that is mankind’s own creation.

Following his trip to Contla, he goes out for a walk. Ana asks him where he is going, and if he is feeling “*mal,*” sick: “—*Mal no, Ana. Malo. Un hombre malo. Eso siento que soy*”<sup>1172</sup> (131). He goes to the Media Luna and hears don Pedro’s further “*disculpas por las inculpaciones que le habían hecho a su hijo,*” feeling now that “*Al fin ya nada tenía importancia.*”

He goes to his church to take confession, now aware that he is a fraud. Dorotea approaches him, drunk; he has always told her not to bother confessing, not to take up his time, considering her crazy or incapable; but now he allows her to speak, and she tells him that she brokered girls for Miguel. The priest goes through the motions, asking her “since when,” and how it happened, etc. He is faced with her actual sin, her actual need for pardon; and knowing that he can’t give it to her, despite her belief in him, he tells her that Heaven is closed to her forever:

— ¿Qué quieres que haga contigo, Dorotea? Júzgate tú misma. Ve si tú puedes perdonarte.

— Yo no, padre. Pero usted sí puede. Por eso vengo a verlo.

<sup>1168</sup> “He didn’t want to think for anything that he had been in Contla”

<sup>1169</sup> “So many die in my town, Father” ... “Father, let the dead be judged by God.”

<sup>1170</sup> “the will of God” ... “— I don’t think that in this case God’s will is intervening”

<sup>1171</sup> “With everything, now here, returned to reality, he didn’t want to think any more about that morning in Contla”

<sup>1172</sup> “— Ill no, Ana. Bad. A bad man. That’s what I feel I am.” ... “excuses for the charges that they had made against his son” ... “In the end nothing mattered”

— ¿Cuántas veces viniste aquí a pedirme que te mandara al cielo cuando murieras? ¿Querías ver si allá encontrabas a tu hijo, no, Dorotea? Pues bien, no podrás ir ya más al cielo. Pero que Dios te perdone.

— Gracias, padre.<sup>1173</sup> (132)

He leaves her no penance not out of benevolence, but because he doesn't believe that any penance he would give her would do her any good. Neither, though, does he send her elsewhere for confession, to one who could pardon her; unable to admit his ineffectualness as a priest, and therefore again avoiding taking action to remedy his sins against his parish, he leaves her burdened and hopeless. He doesn't pardon her, just as he doesn't pardon Eduvigis for her suicide. But at this point it isn't only because Dorotea is poor and can't buy her salvation; so corrupted by don Pedro, the priest has, at this point, already been denied absolution himself, and no longer has the right to absolve others.

Another one comes to confess. The priest collapses into himself with his own shame:

...mientras oía el Yo pecador su cabeza se dobló como si no pudiera sostenerse en alto. Luego vino aquel mareo, aquella confusión, el irse diluyendo como en agua espesa, y el girar de luces; la luz entera del día que se desbarataba haciéndose añicos; y ese sabor a sangre en la lengua. El Yo pecador se oía más fuerte, repetido, y después terminaba: “por los siglos de los siglos, amén,” “por los siglos de los siglos, amén,” “por los siglos ...”<sup>1174</sup>

In a sense, this is his death scene; later, in the woods, confronted by townspeople about where he is going and who has died, he says to himself “*Yo. Yo soy el muerto.*” (“I. I am the dead man.”) (128). Overwhelmed by the sounds of confession, with the taste of blood in his mouth from having tried to confess them, he leaves the church where only those without sin can take communion, and no one can be pardoned; he leaves behind, quite significantly, “*un murmullo,*” the murmurs of those seeking pardon where there is none, in a broken church. The *murmullo* is *his creation*, as much as the sin was don Pedro's:

Se levantó del confesionario y se fue derecho a la sacristía. Sin volver la cabeza dijo a aquella gente que lo estaba esperando:

— Todos los que se sientan sin pecado pueden comulgar mañana.

Detrás de él, sólo se oyó un murmullo (133).<sup>1175</sup>

<sup>1173</sup> “— What do you want me to do with you, Dorotea? Judge yourself. See if you can pardon you. / — Not I, Father. But you can. That's why I come to see you. / — How many times did you come here to ask me to send you to Heaven when you died? You wanted to see if you could find your son there, right, Dorotea? Well, you won't be able to go to Heaven anymore. But may God pardon you. / — Thank you, Father.”

<sup>1174</sup> “...while he heard the Confiteor\* his head folded as if he couldn't sustain it lifted. Then came that nausea, that confusion, the diluting of himself as in thick water, and the spinning of the lights; the entire light of the day was disrupted shattering itself to smithereens; and this taste of blood on the tongue. The Confiteor was heard stronger, repeated, and then it ended: “for ever and ever, amen,” “for ever and ever, amen,” “for ever...” \*”*Yo pecador*” is the beginning of a prayer of confession called in English/Latin “Confiteor,” in which the penitent confesses sins (See *Catholic Prayers in Spanish and English, Selected and Arranged for the Occasion of the Visit to the United States of the School Teachers of Cuba*, printed at Harvard University, 1900, pages 9-11; “Google eBook”)

<sup>1175</sup> “He got up from the confessional and went straight to the sacristy. Without turning his head he said to those people who were waiting for him: / — any of you who feel without sin can take communion tomorrow. / Behind

His shame is what leads him to wander through the night, going over his guilt in his mind; when he hears carts approaching, he hides, just like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, to cover the shame they should never have had to feel, and in doing so admit their guilt: “*Comenzaron a pasar las carretas rumbo a la Media Luna. Él se agachó, escondiéndose en el galápago que bordeaba el río «¿De quién te escondes?», se preguntó a sí mismo*”<sup>1176</sup> (128). The answer for Adam and Eve was “God.” In Genesis 2:25, Adam and Eve are “naked” but “not ashamed”; however, after eating the forbidden fruit, “...the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked” (3:7). When they hear God walking in the garden, “the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden (Genesis 3: 8). The reference is clear; Father Rentería is destroying Paradise, and he feels the shame of it. Again, the reference is Biblical; Rulfo knew his catechism. Whether he meant the work to allow for the existence of a God or not is not clear; but through these pages, it becomes more and more clear that the purgatorial place of Comala is not God’s, but the doing of humans. It is a metaphysical, but earthly work.

Father Rentería doesn’t try to change anything in Comala. When the Cristero Rebellion arises, he joins its ranks, expressing a kind of frustration, but this ends up being a hopelessly violent act to cover the spiritual violations on his conscience, just as Pedro kills to erase his father’s ruined face. Even in finally acting, in joining the Cristero Rebellion, the priest only succeeds in perpetuating violence and, also, in abandoning what remains of his parish.

And when he is gone, others continue his “work” of denying salvation to those who have been driven to sin, like Eduvigés, because of Comala’s downfall, its downfall caused in part by the Church itself. Donis’s sister explains:

Nadie podrá alzar sus ojos al cielo sin sentirlos sucios de vergüenza. Y la vergüenza no cura. Al menos eso me dijo el obispo que pasó por aquí hace algún tiempo dando confirmaciones. Yo me le puse enfrente y le confesé todo:

» — Eso no se perdona — me dijo.

» — Estoy avergonzada.

» — No es el remedio.

» — ¡Cásenos usted!

» — ¡Apártense!

» — Yo le quise decir que la vida nos había juntado, acorralándonos y puesto uno junto al otro. Estábamos tan solos aquí, que los únicos éramos nosotros. Y de algún modo había que poblar el pueblo. Tal vez tenga ya a quien confirmar cuando regrese.

» — Sepárense. Eso es todo lo que se puede hacer.

...

»Y se fue, montando en su macho, la cara dura, sin mirar hacia atrás, como si hubiera dejado aquí la imagen de la perdición. Nunca ha vuelto. Y ésa es la cosa por la que esto está lleno de ánimas; un puro vagabundear de gente que murió sin perdón y que no lo

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him, only a murmur was heard”

<sup>1176</sup> “The carts started to pass on the way to the Media Luna. He crouched down, hiding himself in the [shielded area] that bordered the river. «Who are you hiding from?», he asked himself.”

conseguirá de ningún modo, mucho menos valiéndose de nosotros. Ya viene. ¿Lo oye usted?»<sup>1177</sup> (111-112)

Shame is no remedy; but he also offers none. As Beardsell states, Rulfo's text shows a Roman Catholic Church that is "steeped in doctrine, perplexed yet inflexible" (87). None of the souls in Comala can look at the heavens without shame because they are given no recourse for sin; and no one is without sin. Whether or not they were alive at that moment, the siblings are dirt now, taken into the self-sustaining mass of lost souls. Pedro Páramo may have created Hell, remaining there as "*Un rencor vivo*"<sup>1178</sup> (68), as his son Abundio ironically calls him knowing that don Pedro, like everyone is dead. We find out later that it is the bitterness that is alive, not the man. However, it is Father Rentería who implemented that rancor, allowing it to fester/flourish after life itself is over. The novel may deny the existence of grace; or it may just separate "grace" from Comala, due to the priest's own act of blocking the townspeople's access to it according to their shared Catholic worldview. In any case, however Rulfo might conceive of God or grace, Comala is still waiting for the altar sacrifice and prayers that it was denied, in a purgatory that is no longer en route to Heaven, an earthly purgatory wrought of landowning abuse, a purgatory of the land.

Solanilla explains that Father Rentería was supposed to mediate between God and men, but instead played his role between the town and the *cacique*: "Definitively, Father Rentería is the mediator between the town and the cacique, although – paradoxically – he is also [mediator] between God and mankind" (65).<sup>1179</sup> Having lost his own faith in his ability to intercede to God, the priest refuses absolution to Comala, and the obedient Catholics there will wait forever in a Purgatory without outlet, reliving their brutal lives.

Comala is both a town and a space out of time and place, a space written into the mind of the novel's reader as borderless, a space where historical injustices are still suffering in the earth itself. *PP*, likewise, is both a book and a space, a "psychical space" for discussing evil and its human cause. For, as Riobaldo finds in the *sertão*, evil in *PP* is of the "human man," but it is no less real. The residents of Comala search for salvation in God, but they are caught in a human evil; this land holds only the key to its own bloody past.

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<sup>1177</sup> "No one will be able to lift their eyes up to the sky without feeling them dirty with shame. And shame doesn't cure. At least that's what the bishop told me, who passed by here some time ago giving confirmations. I put myself in front of him and confessed everything: / » — That is not pardoned — he told me. / » — I am ashamed. / » — That is no the remedy. / » — Marry us! / » — Get away! / » — I wanted to tell you that life has joined us, corraling is and throwing us one together with the other. We were so alone here, that the only ones were we. And somehow we had to populate the town. Perhaps you may have someone to confirm when you return. / » — Separate yourselves. That is all you can do. / ... / » And he left, mounted on his mule, his face hard, without looking back, as if he had left here the image of perdition. He has never returned. And that is thing due to which this is full of souls; a pure drifting of people who died without pardon and who won't obtain it in any way, much less asking it of us. It's coming. Do you hear it?»"

<sup>1178</sup> "A living bitterness"

<sup>1179</sup> "*En definitiva, el padre Rentería es un mediador entre el pueblo y el cacique, aunque—paradójicamente—lo sea también entre Dios y los hombres*"

### 3. REDEMPTION?

It would be difficult to construe this novel as hopeful. Comala has destroyed its own son with the strength of its appeals; it may in fact be lost. It has been compared to Hell, Purgatory, and, too, a lost Eden: Solanilla, for instance, calls the town an “ambiguous fusion” of “*purgatorio/infierno*,”<sup>1180</sup> and states that Donis and his sister represent a “primordial couple” like Adam and Eve – but their attempts to repopulate the paradise destroyed through sin are, in themselves, sinful, a repetition in incest of the forbidden fruit and, akin to Eden’s fall, visited on all future generations (80, 86). Juan Preciado could not receive a financial patrimony, because his patrimony was his father’s evil acts, visited on the son.

The work may not be hopeful; however, it can be construed as helpful, and thus in a way providing of hope. It shows that perpetrated evil infiltrates the world around us and will not be silenced. It points constructively to the fact that repressed memories will fester, and appears to ask for *participation* in that past, the “incubator” of the present, as terrible as it might be. Thus, although the novel contains perhaps little room for redemption or regeneration of the town of Comala, it does in its tragedy point to a better way: 1) to see the past for what it was, because it is there whether we do or not, and 2) the cost of injustice is high and can not be forgotten, so as a society we must avoid that path, beginning with fixing our broken institutions in landholding, governance, and faith.

In fact, the novel contains a figure that points to that better way: Susana. In her willingness to speak – born not simply of courage but of a mind outside of the norms of sanity – she sheds light on the oppression of the *cacique* and the Church. In her madness, she is liberated, and though she is not communally redemptive, being unable to participate in the community, her *voice* combats the entrenched injustice in her town.

Rulfo himself points to Susana San Juan as being important in the work: he is quoted by Roffé as saying, “*Susana San Juan fue siempre el personaje central*,” “Susana San Juan was always the central character” (Roffé 65-66). He indicates as well that in the work she was initially the largest part: “In the book she had the largest part, the three quarters part, but I had to shorten it”<sup>1181</sup> (“Juan Rulfo examina...” 875). She is emphasized as important in many critical interpretations of the work, as well. For instance, Danny Anderson looks to Susana as a voice for the repressed women of the Porfirian era: “The Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920 gave expression to repressed peasants—the *campesinos* of rural Mexico—and put an end to the *Porfiriato*. Susana San Juan, in turn, reveals the repressed role of women in a patriarchal order.” She also stands out as being Pedro Páramo’s one human weakness and, ironically, also the one person that Pedro Páramo never truly owns. She may “represent” repressed women, but she

<sup>1180</sup> “*La Pareja Primordial pierde la inocencia, siente vergüenza de su desnudez, tiene conciencia del pecado y la mujer llevará en su cuerpo la huella imborrable de esa culpa: es la caída de la gracia. En la tradición católica, el pecado cometido (el pecado de la carne) está simbolizado en la desobediencia de Adán y Eva al probar el “fruto prohibido”; en la novela de Rulfo, por la relación sexual entre Donis y su hermana*” (80). “The Primordial Pair loses their innocence, feels shame of their nudity, has consciousness of the sin and the woman will wear on her body the indelible mark of this guilt: it’s the fall from grace. In the Catholic tradition, the sin committed (the sin of the flesh) is symbolized in the disobedience of Adam and Eve on trying the “forbidden fruit”; in Rulfo’s novel, in the sexual relationship between Donis and his sister”

<sup>1181</sup> “*En el libro tenía la mayor parte, las tres cuartas partes, pero lo tuve que cortar*”

herself is not repressed, albeit due to her insanity. She lives in a state of erotic pleasure, remembering Florencio, “the man Pedro would have had to be in order to have Susana's love” (Anderson). Not all critics would lift Susana to a place of importance in the work; in recounting the novel's voices, Beardsell dismisses her entirely, saying “Another [voice] – although far less important – is that of Susana San Juan, whose few first-person meditations unexpectedly intervene two-thirds of the way through the novel” (81). However, I believe that she stands out in the work as to challenge institutionalized power of *machismo*, wealth, and religion, even as her truly redemptive or revolutionary role in the work remains open to question. She is probably crazy, but she is the only one who escaped the *cacique*'s grasp; and, paradoxically, also perhaps the only one whose soul is in “Glory,” who took her own air with her, even as her body tells its story underground.

### 3.1 SUSANA'S ROLE:

As mentioned previously, the interruption of Susana's funeral with gaiety led to Pedro Páramo's conscious destruction of Comala. However, his “love” for her – or his obsession with her – was also part of the cause of his unconscious destruction of the town. As he explains, he “loves” Susana so much that much of his violent amassment of wealth and subsequent destruction of Comala was done “for” her, as he tells here: “*Esperé treinta años a que regresaras, Susana. Esperé a tenerlo todo. No solamente algo, sino todo lo que se pudiera conseguir de modo que no nos quedara ningún deseo, sólo el tuyo, el deseo de ti*”<sup>1182</sup> (139). He murdered, married, and otherwise obtained everything and everyone that he could so that he and Susana would lack nothing when finally together; this is a romantic – if terrible – gesture; a human gesture.

And that “loving” gesture ends in tragedy on all fronts. In spite of his murder of her father and his physical possession of her, however, Pedro Páramo can never have Susana; this is the work's irony, and the source of Pedro's ruin. Susana doesn't even know he exists. Long a widow, nonetheless with the priest approaches her at the Media Luna she says, “*Ya sé que vienes a contarme que murió Florencio,*” referring to her first husband (149). Even on her deathbed, when Pedro is near, she tells him: “*Hemos pasado un rato muy feliz, Florencio.*”<sup>1183</sup> (165). Susana is the one woman – the one “anything” in fact – that he can never conquer, given that she is “*«Una mujer que no era de este mundo»*,” a woman not of this world:

Pensó en Susana San Juan. Pensó en la muchacha con la que acababa de dormir apenas un rato. Aquel pequeño cuerpo azorado y tembloroso que parecía iba a echar fuera su corazón por la boca. «Puñadito de carne», le dijo. Y se había abrazado a ella tratando de convertirla en la carne de Susana San Juan. «Una mujer que no era de este mundo» (164).<sup>1184</sup>

<sup>1182</sup> “I waited thirty years for you to return, Susana. I waited to have everything. Not just something, but all that could be obtained so that no desire would remain to us, only yours, the desire of you.”

<sup>1183</sup> “I know that you come to tell me that Florencio died” ... “We've passed a very happy while, Florencio.” (165)

<sup>1184</sup> “He thought about Susana San Juan. He thought about the girl that he had just slept with only a little while ago. That small body, alarmed and trembling, which seemed like it was going to expel its heart through its mouth. «Little handful of flesh» he said to her. And he had embraced her trying to convert her into the flesh of Susana San Juan. «A woman who was not of this world»”

This scene is in his later years; he has done everything in his earthly power to make Susana his own. He has already killed her father Bartolomé and taken her home, but she has persisted in looking through him and seeing only her own feverish dreams and the ghost of her dead husband Florencio. This one woman who won't, perhaps can't, fall into Pedro's possession, results in the demise of Comala itself. This may be love; or it may be pride, the evil that Bartolomé saw in him. The humanity of his "love" is a dark and controlling one, a desire to take and have everything, and a violent despair when he can't have it. The tyrant's one weakness is his undoing and that of all of his dominion; Susana *broke* Pedro Páramo by being unattainable. Indeed, beyond unattainable, she is the only one free to mock the Church and the *cacique*, and free to see the damage they are causing the town.

### 3.2 SUSANA'S FREEDOM:

The source of Susana's freedom from don Pedro's grasp appears to be a kind of insanity. She is an internalized and experiential being rather than a consciously active one, and she may have always been this way; she may, too, have been driven mad by her childhood role in Bartolomé's grave-robbing excursions.

Rulfo himself said in a university dialogue that "The insanity came to her because her father... on a certain occasion lowered her to a tomb... They didn't find anything but skulls and that traumatized her"<sup>1185</sup> ("Juan Rulfo examina..." 875). Susana's father ties a rope around her, and lets her down into a grave, asking her to tell him what she sees. She experiences the rope as painful, but the only line to the outside world: "*Estaba colgada de aquella sogá que le lastimaba la cintura, que le sangraba sus manos; pero que no quería soltar: era como el único hilo que la sostenía al mundo de afuera*"<sup>1186</sup> (147). He lets her down further, between rotten and dirty boards into a hole, where she becomes mute with fear. She then experiences the dead body, picking up a skull in the dark: "*Y ella agarró la calavera entre sus manos y cuando la luz le dio de lleno la soltó. — Es una calavera de muerto — dijo.*"<sup>1187</sup> She doesn't scream, she only lets it go; her father asks her to look for round wheels of gold, "[*r*]uedas redondas de oro." The body falls to pieces between her hands:

El cadáver se deshizo en canillas; la quijada se desprendió como si fuera de azúcar. Le fue dando pedazo a pedazo hasta que llegó a los dedos de los pies y le entregó coyuntura tras coyuntura. Y la calavera primero; aquella bola redonda que se deshizo entre sus manos.<sup>1188</sup> (148)

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<sup>1185</sup> "*La locura le vino porque el padre... en cierta ocasión la bajó a una tumba... No encontraron más que las calaveras y eso la traumatizó*"

<sup>1186</sup> "She was hanging from that rope the hurt her waist, that bloodied her hands; but that she didn't want to let go: it was like the one thread that held her to the world outside."

<sup>1187</sup> "And she grabbed the skull in her hands and when the light hit it in full she let it go. — It's a dead man's skull — she said."

<sup>1188</sup> "The cadaver came apart in canes; the jawbone detached as if it were made of sugar. It was giving itself to her piece-by-piece until she came to the toes and it delivered joint after joint. And the skull first; that round ball that fell to pieces in her hands."

She faints then, awakening to her father's icy gaze. Some critics have interpreted this moment and others as signs of childhood abuse beyond the grave robbing. Indeed, there appears to be physical abuse; when Bartolomé tells her he would have belted her to death if he had known she bathed with Pedro as children:

»Así que te quiere a ti, Susana. Dicen que jugabas con él cuando eran niños. Que ya te conoce. Que llegaron a bañarse juntos en el río cuando eran niños. Yo no lo supe; de haberlo sabido te habría matado a cintarazos.”<sup>1189</sup> (140)

...she replies, “*No lo dudo*,” “I don't doubt it.” This scene is a sign of physical abuse, though whether the beating would have been out of moral shock, pure cruelty, or jealousy, is unclear. There are further signs that their relationship may be inappropriate. When the two of them finally come to Comala per Pedro's request, Fulgor Sedano tells Pedro that Bartolomé has come with his wife:

— Patrón, ¿sabe quién anda por aquí?  
 — ¿Quién?  
 — Bartolomé San Juan.  
 [...]  
 — ...Yo me encargo de ellos. ¿Han venido los dos?  
 — Sí, él y su mujer. ¿Pero cómo lo sabe?  
 — ¿No será su hija?  
 — Pues por el modo como la trata más bien parece su mujer.<sup>1190</sup> (138)

In private, too, she calls him “Bartolomé,” insolently, and denies that he is her father: “*No es cierto. No es cierto.*”<sup>1191</sup> (141). It is stated then explicitly that she is crazy, if we believe her:

— Este mundo que lo aprieta a uno por todos lados, que va vaciando puños de nuestro polvo aquí y allá, deshaciéndonos en pedazos como si rociara la tierra con nuestra sangre. ¿Qué hemos hecho? ¿Porqué se nos ha podrido el alma? Tu madre decía que cuando menos nos queda la caridad de Dios. Y tú la niegas, Susana. ¿Porqué me niegas a mí como tu padre? ¿Estás loca?  
 — ¿No lo sabías?  
 — ¿Estás loca?  
 — Claro que sí, Bartolomé. ¿No lo sabías?<sup>1192</sup> (141)

<sup>1189</sup> “»So he loves you, Susana. They say that he played with you when you were children. That he already knows you. That you even bathed together in the river when you were children. I didn't know about it; if I had known I would have killed you with my belt.”

<sup>1190</sup> “— Master, do you know who has come around here? / — Who? / — Bartolomé San Juan. / [...] / — ...I will take care of them. Have they both come? / — Yes, he and his wife. But how do you know? / — Wouldn't it be his daughter? / — Well with the way that he treats her she seems more like his wife.”

<sup>1191</sup> “It's not true. It's not true.”

<sup>1192</sup> “This world that presses one on all sides, that goes emptying fistfuls of our dust here and there, coming apart in pieces as if it were spraying the earth with our blood. What have we done? Why have our souls rotted? Your



Rulfo claims that there was no incest, although it appears that there is: “Apparently, but there isn’t. The father wanted to have her always with him” (González Boixo 250).<sup>1193</sup> However, incest or no, Susana is different. This being who taught Pedro to love nature as a boy, and captivated his heart even then, has somehow become untouched by the bitterness of worldly greed, desire, anger, or anything else.

Susana is also unconcerned about *death*, that pervasive theme of the work, perhaps due to her childhood shock; she appears to accept the world around her as a natural order, disregarding what appears to her to be an arbitrary social overlay. In fact, Susana experiences nature, sensuality, and death all with the same serenity, as illustrated in the first installment of her dead-body-monologue. She begins by *fully* experiencing her place in the world, her grave:

Estoy aquí, boca arriba, pensando en aquel tiempo para olvidar mi soledad. Porque no estoy acostada sólo por un rato. Y ni en la cama de mi madre, sino dentro de un cajón negro como el que se usa para enterrar a los muertos. Porque estoy muerta. Siento el lugar en que estoy y pienso...<sup>1194</sup> (133)

Her comfort with the death/life in-between realm that is Comala comes from a history of comfort with death, a comfort born perhaps of her insanity that frees her from any emotional or rational concerns about death. Her ruminations are not inane, however; they are experiential in the present. She *feels* being dead, in the ground, as she has *felt* all things. She knows that the body is a dead thing, and feels no fear or anxiety, merely experiencing the earth around her. From there, she moves on to fully experiencing the glory of nature:

Pienso cuando maduraban los limones. [...] El viento bajaba de las montañas en las mañanas de febrero. Y las nubes se quedaban allá arriba en espera de que el tiempo bueno las hiciera bajar al valle; [...] Y los gorriones reían; picoteaban las hojas que el aire hacía caer, [...] En febrero, cuando las mañanas estaban llenas de viento, de gorriones y de luz azul. Me acuerdo.<sup>1195</sup> (133)

Susana then comfortably juxtaposes her memories of nature with the fact of her mother’s death – “*Mi madre murió entonces.*”<sup>1196</sup> – and then continues on to explain how she didn’t see the point in despair because the day was beautiful, and her body was blooming:

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mother said that at least we have God’s charity. And you deny it, Susana. Why do you deny me as your father? Are you crazy? / — Didn’t you know? / — Are you crazy? / — Of course, Bartolomé. Didn’t you know?”

<sup>1193</sup> “*Aparentemente, pero no la hay. El padre la quería tener siempre con él.*”

<sup>1194</sup> “I’m here, face up, thinking about that time to forget my solitude. Because I’m not lying down just for a short time. And neither am I in my mother’s bed, but inside of a black box like those used to bury the dead. Because I am dead. / I feel the place I am in and I think...”

<sup>1195</sup> “I think about when the lemons were maturing. [...] The wind was coming down from the mountains on February mornings. And the clouds were remaining up there, waiting until the good weather caused them to descend to the valley; [...] And the sparrows were laughing; they were pecking the leaves that the air caused to fall, [...] In February, when the mornings were full of wind, of sparrows and blue light. I remember.”

<sup>1196</sup> “Then my mother died”

Que yo debía haber gritado: que mis manos tenían que haberse hecho pedazos estrujando su desesperación. Así hubieras tú querido que fuera. ¿Pero acaso no era alegre aquella mañana? Por la puerta abierta entraba el aire, quebrando las guías de la yedra. En mis piernas comenzaba a crecer el vello entre las venas, y mis manos temblaban tibias al tocar mis senos. Los gorriones jugaban. En las lomas se mecían las espigas. Me dio lástima que ella ya no volviera a ver el juego del viento en los jazmines; que cerrara sus ojos a la luz de los días. ¿Pero por qué iba a llorar?<sup>1197</sup> (134)

Susana speaks just as easily of her mother's dead body as of her own youthful sensuality, her womanly hair growing on her body, her trembling hands on her own breasts:

¿Te acuerdas, Justina? [...] mi madre sola, en medio de los cirios; su cara pálida y sus dientes blancos asomándose apenas entre sus labios morados, endurecidos por la amoratada muerte. Sus pestañas ya quietas; quieto ya su corazón. Tú y yo allí, rezando rezos interminables, sin que ella oyera nada sin que tú y yo oyéramos nada, todo perdido en la sonoridad del viento debajo de la noche. [...] sus manos [...], cruzadas sobre su pecho muerto, su viejo pecho amoroso sobre el que dormí en un tiempo y que me dio de comer y que palpitó para arrullar mis sueños.<sup>1198</sup> (134)

Solemn but philosophical, Susana finds it a pity that her dead mother can no longer appreciate life, but feels that this is no reason for the living to stop doing so. Her memories of the day her mother died involve mostly the beauty of her natural surroundings and her joyful awareness of her own sensuality as a part of the fecund agricultural scene. Her mother's death that day is an afterthought to the sparrows, corn, lemons, and wind. She speaks in one breath of the beauty of her town's vibrant youth, and the dead countenance of her mother, and she experiences both nature and death as she experiences her own body. She feels a complacent wonder at the peaceful interaction of death and life. She knows that she was expected to cry, but she didn't, and doesn't; and she knows that she was expected to pray, and did so, but feels, dispassionately, that her mother heard nothing.

She is not sad that no one comes to the funeral (due to the fact that her mother died of tuberculosis, according to Dorotea): "*Nadie vino a verla. Así estuvo mejor. La muerte no se reparte como si fuera un bien. Nadie anda en busca de tristezas*"<sup>1199</sup> (134). She also finds it

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<sup>1197</sup> "That I should have screamed: that my hands should have been made pieces squeezing their desperation. That is how you would have wanted it to be. But wasn't that morning joyful? Through the open door the air was entering, breaking the guides of the ivy. In my legs the hair was beginning to grow among my veins, and my hands trembled warm on touching my bosom. / The sparrows were playing. In the hillocks the corn ears were rocking. It was a pity that she would never again see the play of wind in the jasmines; that she would close her eyes to the light of the days. But why would I cry?"

<sup>1198</sup> "Do you remember, Justina? [...] my mother alone, among the candles; her face pale and her white teeth peeking about between her purple lips, hardened by the blue death. Her eyelashes now still; still now her heart. You and I there, praying interminable prayers, without her hearing anything without you or I hearing anything, all lost in the tone of the wind beneath the night. [...] her hands [...] crossed on her dead chest, her old loving chest on which I slept at one time that gave me to eat and that fluttered to lull me to sleep."

<sup>1199</sup> "No one came to see her. It was better like that. Death is not distributed like goods. No one goes in search of sadness."

exceedingly odd that men are paid to bury the body as one would be paid for a thing, and pays more attention to their sweaty effort than to the solemnity of the occasion:

— Y tus sillas se quedaron vacías hasta que fuimos a enterrarla con aquellos hombres alquilados, sudando por un peso ajeno, extraños a cualquier pena. Cerraron la sepultura con arena mojada; bajaron el cajón despacio, con la paciencia de su oficio, bajo el aire que les refrescaba su esfuerzo. Sus ojos fríos, indiferentes. Dijeron: «Es tanto.» Y tú les pagaste, como quien compra una cosa desanudando tu pañuelo húmedo de lágrimas, exprimido y vuelto a exprimir y ahora guardando el dinero de los funerales...<sup>1200</sup> (134-135)

Susana would have found it odd indeed, then, if she were aware, that Pedro Páramo's revenge on Comala was precipitated by their enjoying life as she was laid to rest in death. This irony communicates something about the anger and violence perpetrated in the work and its relationship to death and history: violence precipitates violence, and it is never dead but continues to speak always; on the other hand, death can be observed as a part of joyful, full, independent life, and let go. Susana is an unlikely muse for Comala's destruction.

She has the freedom to experience beauty, life, and death – and freedom to see through appearances to the core of the people and world around her. Unconcerned about social norms and cultural rules, Susanita is a woman, a soul, and a body, a voice – all these things – who is, unlike any of the other characters in the novel, completely in tune with the fragmentation and flux created in the work. Her voice in the grave is a calm constant, and even in life she was both aware and unaware of her surroundings: aware of the spiritual state of Comala and the people around her, but completely uninterested in their reality. As Dorotea explains, “*Unos dicen que estaba loca. Otros, que no. La verdad es que ya hablaba sola desde en vida.*”<sup>1201</sup> (135) This woman is aware of life and death in life, and aware of death and life in death, with both a piercing clarity and a persistent blurry haze between herself and reality.

### 3.3 SUSANA and the CHURCH:

Her unique perspective affects her interaction with the Church, as well. The Church as depicted in *PP* presents itself as the legitimate broker of spirituality, and indeed it appears to have some such power, as its failings are effective in the souls of its parish. However, it is shown as corrupt, inadequate, and not divine. It closes doors that should be open, and opens those that it should by its creeds keep closed, and all for money. Church is a tool of *power*; indeed, even Susana's father tries to tell her once that by denying him as her father, she is denying the love of God.

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<sup>1200</sup> “— And your chairs remained empty until we went to bury her with those rented men, sweating due to a foreign weight, strange to any pain. They closed the sepulcher with wet sand; they put down the casket slowly, with the patience of their office, under the air that freshened their effort. Their eyes cold, indifferent. They said: «It's this much.» And you paid them, like someone buying a thing unknitting your handkerchief humid with tears, wrung out and wrung out again and now holding the funeral money...”

<sup>1201</sup> “Some say that she was crazy. Others, not. The truth is that she already talked to herself in life.”

In her monologue, she reminds Justina that the church tried to get her to pay for a Gregorian mass for her mother; she finds it ludicrous that one would have to pay for prayers in order to leave Purgatory. She asks, “Who are they to make justice?”:

Tocaron la aldaba. Tú saliste.  
 — Ve tú — te dije—. Yo veo borrosa la cara de la gente. Y haz que se vayan. ¿Que vienen por el dinero de las misas gregorianas? Ella no dejó ningún dinero. Díselos, Justina. ¿Que no saldrá del purgatorio si no le rezan esas misas? ¿Quiénes son ellos para hacer la justicia, Justina? ¿Dices que estoy loca? Está bien.<sup>1202</sup> (134)

This little paragraph indicates that not only does she not believe that one can pay for salvation, she has no regard at all for local cultural institutions as related to religion or grief. It also shows that her “insanity” may be more than it seems; her logical response to a corrupt faith institution appears to Justina to be insane – to which she responds, “That’s fine” – but it may also be a kind of greater wisdom.

Susana is not, apparently, opposed to the concept that there is “someplace else” that souls go to, only to the notion that anything that a priest could do with money would affect its journey. This is shown in her explanation of where her mother “is”:

Y cuando ellos se fueron, te arrodillaste en el lugar donde había quedado su cara y besaste la tierra y podrías haber abierto un agujero, si yo no te hubiera dicho: «Vámonos, Justina, ella está en otra parte, aquí no hay más que una cosa muerta.»<sup>1203</sup> (135)

So where is Susana now? She is speaking in her grave, but according to her views, often wise ones, that is only “a dead thing,” and “she is in a different place,” someplace else. Don Pedro claims to have seen Susana go to heaven; perhaps she has gone:

[...]«Hace mucho tiempo que te fuiste, Susana. La Luz era igual entonces que ahora, no tan bermeja; pero era la misma pobre luz sin lumbre, envuelta en el paño blanco de la neblina que hay ahora. Era el mismo momento. Yo aquí, junto a la puerta mirando el amanecer y mirando cuando te ibas, siguiendo el camino del cielo; por donde el cielo comenzaba a abrirse en luces, alejándote, cada vez más desteñida entre las sombras de la tierra.

»Fue la última vez que te vi. Pasaste rozando con tu cuerpo las ramas del paraíso que está en la vereda y te llevaste con tu aire sus últimas hojas. Luego desapareciste. Te dije: “¡Regresa, Susana!” »<sup>1204</sup> (172-173)

<sup>1202</sup> “They knocked on the door. You went out. / — You go — I told you—. I see people’s faces as blurry. And make them leave. That they’re coming for the money for the Gregorian Masses? She didn’t leave any money. Tell them, Justina. That she won’t leave purgatory if they don’t pray those masses for her? Who are they to make justice, Justina? You say I’m crazy? That’s fine.”

<sup>1203</sup> “And when they left, you knelt in the place where her face had remained and kissed the earth and you could have opened up a hole, if I hadn’t said to you: «Let’s go, Justine, she is in a different place, here there is nothing more than a dead thing.»”

<sup>1204</sup> “«It’s been a long time since you left, Susana. The Light was the same then as it is now, not so reddish; but it was the same poor light without fire, wrapped in the white cloth of the haze that there is now. It was the same

This unique woman, the cause of strife in Comala, understands the world differently, and though her body continues to tell stories in the damp earth, her soul, apparently, was raised up into Heaven, despite – or perhaps because of – her indifference to dogma and societal distinctions.

Susana's understanding of the Church plays out on her deathbed. When Father Rentería comes to see her, she reacts to him knowing somehow, in her strange wisdom free of constraint, that he is a fraud and that he is, in fact, “dead” – if not physically, dead as a priest, dead in his role.

She is naked when he comes, her body convulsing as she twists the sheets in her hands, exposing herself. Don Pedro covers her, and calls her name, before letting the priest in the room. He then holds her up while the priest places the host in her mouth; she replies, completely ignoring them both and seeing only her dead husband, “*Hemos pasado un rato muy feliz, Florencio,*” “We have had a very happy time, Florencio” (165). She is also unconcerned about the certainty of her own demise; he tells her he is there to prepare her for death, and she replies:

— ¿Ya me voy a morir? [...] — ¿Por qué entonces no me deja en paz? Tengo ganas de descansar. La han de haber encargado que viniera a quitarme el sueño.<sup>1205</sup> (168)

She agrees to repeat his words when he promises “*Nunca volverás a despertar*”<sup>1206</sup>, but then, in response to «*Tengo la boca llena de tierra*», slipped secretly into her hear, she mouths a different response, in which death, body, sensuality, all are one:

«Tengo la boca llena de ti, de tu boca. Tus labios apretados, duros como si mordieran mis labios...» (168)

The priest then continues to speak to her more strongly of the darkness of decay, a scene designed perhaps to frighten her into accepting his truncated form of bought religious pardon:

— Trago saliva espumosa; mástico terrones plagados de gusanos que se me anudan en la garganta y raspan la pared del paladar ... Mi boca se hunde, retorciéndose en muecas, perforada por los dientes que la taladran y devoran. La nariz se reblandece. La gelatina de los ojos se derrite. Los cabellos arden en una sola llamarada...<sup>1207</sup> (168)

She remains calm. The troubled priest is faced with doubt and confusion. Has she repented? Does she have anything to repent for?

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moment. I here, next to the door looking at the dawn and looking when you were going, following the path to the heavens; where the sky began to open itself in lights, taking you far away, all the time more faded among the shadows of the earth. / ‘It was the last time that I saw you. / »You passed rubbing the branches of the paradise that’s on the path and you lifted with your air its last leaves. Then you disappeared. I told you: “Come back, Susana!”

<sup>1205</sup> “Am I going to die now? [...]— So why don’t you leave me alone? I feel like resting. They must have assigned you to come and steal my sleep.”

<sup>1206</sup> “You will never wake up again” “ ‘My mouth is full of dirt’ “ “ ‘I mouth is full of dirt, of your mouth. Your pressed lips, hard as if they bit my lips...’ “

<sup>1207</sup> — I swallow frothy saliva; I chew lumps infested with worms that become knotted in my throat and scrape the wall of my palate... My mouth sinks, writhing in grimaces, perforated by the teeth that pierce and devour it. My nose softens. The gelatin of my eyes melts. The hairs burn in one single blaze... (168).

[A Padre Rentería] [l]e extrañaba la quietud de Susana San Juan. Hubiera querido adivinar sus pensamientos y ver la batalla de aquel corazón por rechazar las imágenes que él estaba sembrando dentro de ella. Le miró los ojos y ella le devolvió la mirada. Y le pareció ver como si sus labios forzaran una sonrisa.<sup>1208</sup> (168)

He is trying to sow imagery inside of her, but she fights him; so he continues to speak of the “vision of God,” but not as a reward, only as the last vision of those condemned to eternal pain: “*La alegría de los ojos de Dios, última y fugaz visión de los condenados a la pena eterna. Y no sólo eso, sino todo conjugado con un dolor terrenal*”<sup>1209</sup> (169). She responds again by whispering of the love that her husband gave her, holding her in his arms: “«*Él me cobijaba entre sus brazos. Me daba amor.*»” (169)

The priest’s efforts are poetic and passionate, albeit empty; he appears to be fascinated by his inability to reach her, even as he knows himself that he actually truly can’t, having secretly lost the privilege to pardon others. This meeting reveals his own terror of uselessness and condemnation more than it does her “insanity.” Indeed, she knows him more than he could ever know her: when he first comes to see her, she sees not the priest, but his heart (even if it seems to be a candle), and she tries to comfort it:

Entreabre los ojos. Mira como si cruzara sus cabellos una sombra sobre el techo, con la cabeza encima de su cara. Y la figura borrosa de aquí enfrente, detrás de la lluvia de sus pestañas. Una luz difusa; una luz en el lugar del corazón, en forma de corazón pequeño que palpita como llama parpadeante. «Se te está muriendo de pena el corazón — piensa— . Ya sé que vienes a contarme que murió Florencio; pero eso ya lo sé. No te aflijas por los demás; no te apures por mí. Yo tengo guardado mi dolor en un lugar seguro. No dejes que se te apague el corazón.»<sup>1210</sup> (148-149)

He tells her he has come to comfort her, but she asks, “*¿Para qué vienes a verme, si estás muerto?*” (“Why do you come to see me, if you’re dead?”) (149), an echo of what he himself had expressed, internally, “*Yo. Yo soy el muerto.*” (“I. I am the dead man.”) (128). She sees this in him, acutely aware, as always, of the true states of things, even as she is completely unaware of (or uncaring about) the reality of the world around her. In another moment, she shows how she is the only one who can actually hear the effects of Comala’s sins on the earth itself: “— *¿Verdad que la noche está llena de pecados, Justina? ... ¿No oyes cómo rechina la tierra? ... Te*

<sup>1208</sup> “[Father Rentería] found the calmness of Susana San Juan strange. I would have liked to divine her thoughts and see the battle of that heart to reject the images that he was sowing within her. He looked at her eyes and she returned his gaze. And he seemed to see that her lips forced a smile.”

<sup>1209</sup> “The joy of the eyes of God, last and fleeting vision of the condemned to eternal pain. And not only that, but all conjugated with an earthly pain.”

<sup>1210</sup> “She half-opens her eyes. She sees as if a shadow on the ceiling crossed her hairs, with the head on top of her face. And the blurry figure here in front, behind the rain of her eyelashes. A diffuse light; a light in the place of the heart, in the form of a little heart that beats with a flickering flame. «Your heart is dying of pain — she thinks— . I know that you’re coming to tell me that Florencio is dead; but I already know. Don’t be distressed about others; don’t worry about me. I have my pain guarded in a safe place. Don’t let your heart go out.»”

*digo que te asombrarías de oír lo que yo oigo.*<sup>1211</sup> (164). “Insane” where others are “sane,” she is nonetheless – or, perhaps, consequently – able to see and hear the realities of Comala before anyone else can.

The priest is shaken: “*Le entraron dudas. Quizá ella no tenía nada de que arrepentirse. Tal vez él no tenía nada de que perdonarla*”<sup>1212</sup> (169). He leans over her again, but she wants no more confession, and tells him so: “— *¡Ya váyase, padre! No se mortifique por mí. Estoy tranquila y tengo mucho sueño*”<sup>1213</sup> (169). She also wants no more tears; upon hearing a sob in the shadowy corner, “*Susana San Juan pareció recobrar vida. Se alzó en la cama y dijo: — ¡Justina, hazme el favor de irte a llorar a otra parte!*” (169) She wants to be left alone, but not to be sad, or modest; she simply wants her experience of *being* to be undisturbed by corrupted systems of symbol and ritual, or by inane (to her eye) reactions to the death of the human body.

### 3.4 REDEMPTIVE, SUBVERSIVE, SENSUAL SUSANA:

Some critics have viewed this scene as redemptive. Bell, for instance, reads this scene as the “real climax of the work” (244). He writes that Susana, in refusing to take part in confession with Father Rentería, is engaged in a last act of rebellion against the contaminating forces of the *cacique*. He believes that “Rentería is no longer God's messenger, but the minister of Páramo. Confessing with Rentería would be a symbol of Susana's complete and final acceptance of the *cacique* before her death” (Bell 244). Pedro Páramo, knowing that the priest is his and not God's, is making a last attempt to access and have Susana. The *cacique*'s own lack of faith in God, and thus, perhaps, knowledge of the farce of confessing Susana, is expressed in this exchange with Justina before the priest arrives:

- ...el padre Rentería no le ha traído la comunión. Dijo que lo haría a hora temprana, y ya ve usted, el sol ya está aquí y no ha venido. No debe estar en gracia.
- ¿En gracia de quién?
- De Dios, señor.
- No seas tonta, Justina.<sup>1214</sup> (165)

“In whose grace?” is indeed the question, since Rentería is no longer God's priest, but Pedro Páramo's. Bell explains further:

Susana desperately struggles, with God's help, to reject the church, in the form of Rentería, the *cacique* in the form of Pedro Páramo, and any type of officialdom that

<sup>1211</sup> “— Isn't it true that the night is full of sins, Justina? ... Don't you hear how the earth grinds? ... I tell you that you would be astonished to hear what I hear.”

<sup>1212</sup> “Doubts entered him. Perhaps she didn't have anything to repent for. Perhaps he didn't have anything to pardon her for.”

<sup>1213</sup> “Leave already, Father! Don't suffer for me. I am tranquil and I'm really sleepy” ... “Susana San Juan seemed to recover life. She rose up in bed and said — Justina, do me the favor of going to cry somewhere else!”

<sup>1214</sup> “— ...Father Rentería hasn't brought her communion. He said he would do it at an early hour, and you see, the sun is already here and he hasn't come. She must not be in grace. / — In whose grace? / — God's, sir. / — Don't be silly, Justina.”

would crush her individual spirit... She does not need the consolation of the priest's false words since she was able to rejoice in the kingdom of God and in His creation where the *cacique* could not enter (244).

He points to her sensual interaction with the world and especially the sea, a symbol of purity, as a sign that her internal realm was one of purity and innocence, protected from Pedro Páramo – as from her father – by her shield of madness. Bell believes that Susana's rebellion becomes a triumph of the human will against entrenched injustice: "The optimism of Rulfo's vision lies in its contemplation of a future in which each man, unlike Juan Preciado, will have the chance to assert the positive qualities of his own will" (245). It seems a bit overzealous to speak of Rulfo's vision as optimistic, given that her rebellion has no social outlet, but Bell sees optimism in Susana as a character free to think what she wants, free from any societal constraint.

Her rebellions against institutionalized religion and against any recognition of don Pedro's power or, indeed, of don Pedro himself have been noted by many other critics, too, as being indicative of redemption or hope in the work, both through her power over Pedro Páramo, and through the sensual nature of her character.

Carlos Fuentes (1992) focuses on the first aspect mentioned above, Susana's power over Pedro Páramo, as the *cacique's* Achilles Heel, his mortal weakness. "Pedro Páramo is not Cortés... He has a secret flaw, a crack through which the recipes of power bleed uselessly. The fortune of Pedro Páramo is a woman, Susana San Juan, about whom he dreamed as a boy, locked in the bathroom" (827)<sup>1215</sup> He avoids the "*lugar común*" (cliché) of speaking of don Pedro's unrequited love as being the source of his downfall, although that is "*común*" (common) because it is evident; Fuentes describes what occurred in this way:

... the role of Susana San Juan is much more vast and more unique, singular. Her first function... is that of being dreamed about by a boy and that of opening, in that boy who is going to be the Páramo tyrant, a window in his soul/spirits that will end up destroying him. If in the end of the novel Pedro Páramo falls to pieces like a pile of rocks, it's because the fissure of his soul was opened by his childhood dream of Susana: through a dream.<sup>1216</sup>

More than unrequited love, it is the unrequited love of *his own boyhood dream* that destroys the man: "Pedro was torn from his political, Machiavellian, patrimonial history from before living it, from before being it" (827).<sup>1217</sup> He was never going to be that "wicked cacique, the villain of the

<sup>1215</sup> "Pedro Páramo no es Cortés... Tiene una falla secreta, un resquicio por donde las recetas del poder se desangran inútilmente. La fortuna de Pedro Páramo es una mujer, Susana San Juan, con la que soñó de niño, encerrado en el baño."

<sup>1216</sup> "...el papel de Susana San Juan es mucho más vasto y más único, singular. Su primera función... es la de ser soñada por un niño y la de abrir, en ese niño que va a ser el tirano Páramo, una ventana anímica que acabará por destruirlo. Si al final de la novela Pedro Páramo se desmorona como si fuera un montón de piedras, es porque la fisura de su alma fue abierta por el sueño infantil de Susana: a través del sueño."

<sup>1217</sup> "Pedro fue arrancado a su historia política, maquiavélica, patrimonial desde antes de vivirla, desde antes de serla." ...



silent movie, the conqueror of the Palace's walls\* that he could have been"<sup>1218</sup> (832), because he entered the world of a myth, the world of a dream, by loving Susana, even though he could never enter *her* world. Pedro Páramo is not Cortés; and Susana is not La Malinche, because she was never taken, no matter how many attempts were made to violate her.

Solanilla also considers Susana to be the *cacique's* downfall due to her being an unobtainable myth; even more, she is a subversive feminine revolution. Solanilla breaks down the gender issues of Mexico's rural society during the *Porfiriato* in order to explain Susana's role in countering it. He explains that the society contains a multiple conceptualization of Woman. On the one hand, there is the ideal woman with impossible attributes; this feminine archetype is determined in Mexico, he claims, by a fundamentally Catholic inspiration, patterns that "concentrate more than everything on the figure of the Virgin Mary" ... "as Virgin (...pure, innocent, beautiful, holy) and another as Mother (...tender, devoted, self-sacrificing, resigned, submissive)" <sup>1219</sup> (123). On the other hand, there is the real woman, who always fails to compete with the ideal:

...This separation of beings (or of the 'forms' of woman) creates in the man a dichotomy that he will reproduce in his social life: he will maintain always as a "concept" the idealized woman... but will submit to his domain and quasi-slavery of the real woman, this one that is contingent, real, concrete.<sup>1220</sup> (123)

He points to the women in Pedro Páramo's life to illustrate the duality. As has been shown, the women in the town, in general, "are looked down upon, humiliates, subjugated to the sexual trafficking of the *cacique* and his son"<sup>1221</sup> (Solanilla 125); even his first wife was treated abusively. However, Pedro's mother and Susana are both presented with Holy Virgin iconography. When his mother appears in his bedroom to announce his grandfather's death, young Pedro's mother is carrying light: "*Allí estaba su madre en el umbral de la puerta, con una vela en la mano.*"<sup>1222</sup> (Rulfo 77) But then when his father dies, she returns, perhaps living perhaps not, to repeat the scene, this time with sacred imagery, surrounded by light:

Y aquí, aquella mujer, de pie en el umbral; su cuerpo impidiendo la llegada del día; dejando asomar, a través de sus brazos, retazos de cielo, y debajo de sus pies regueros de luz; una luz asperjada como si el suelo debajo de ella estuviera anegando en lágrimas. Y después el sollozo. Otra vez el llanto suave pero agudo, y la pena haciendo retorcer su cuerpo.<sup>1223</sup> (86).

<sup>1218</sup> "*cacique malvado, el villano de película muda, el conquistador de los muros de Palacio\* que pudo haber sido*"

\*This is likely a reference to Cortés conquering Tenochtitlán.

<sup>1219</sup> "*se concentran ante todo en la figura de la Virgen María*" ... "*como Virgen (... pura, inocente, bella, santa) y otra como Madre (... tierna, devota, sacrificada, resignada, sumisa)*"

<sup>1220</sup> "*...Esta separación de los seres (o de las 'formas' de mujer) crea en el hombre una dicotomía que irá a reproducir en su vida social: mantendrá siempre como "concepto" la mujer idealizada... pero someterá a su dominio y cuasi-esclavitud a la mujer real, a esta que es contingente, verdadera, concreta.*"

<sup>1221</sup> "*son despreciadas, humilladas, sometidas al tráfico sexual del cacique y su hijo*"

<sup>1222</sup> "There was his mother on the threshold of the door, with a candle in her hand"

<sup>1223</sup> "And here, that woman, on foot in the threshold; her body preventing the arrival of the day; allowing to show, through her arms, scraps of sky, and beneath her feet trickles of light; a sprinkled [this term is used to refer to holy

Susana, as memory and as inaccessible though present woman, is also painted with sacred imagery in don Pedro's memory. Her moment of ascension, as perceived by don Pedro, is indicated above; she disappears into the light of the morning sky, a sky that opens itself into light as it draws her away, taking with her the last leaves from the garden (172-173). Her leaving as a child made a similar impression on him:

«El día que te fuiste entendí que no te volvería a ver. Ibas teñida de rojo por el sol de la tarde, por el crepúsculo ensangrentado del cielo. Sonreías. Dejabas atrás un pueblo del que muchas veces me dijiste: “Lo quiero por ti; pero lo odio por todo lo demás, hasta por haber nacido en él.” Pensé: “No regresará jamás; no volverá nunca.”»<sup>1224</sup> (82)

Susana had a miserable life, but he remembers her as loving the town for his sake - sacrificing and benevolent. And as she goes, the afternoon sun dyes her red. Later, in the moment of his own passing, Pedro recalls her yet again, alive and present at an unknown moment in time, but as always irretrievably distant:

... Había una luna grande en medio del mundo. Se me perdían los ojos mirándote. Los rayos de la luna filtrándose sobre tu cara. No me cansaba de ver esa aparición que eras tú. Suave, restregada de luna; tu boca abullonada, humedecida, irisada de estrellas; tu cuerpo transparentándose en el agua de la noche. Susana, Susana San Juan.<sup>1225</sup>

Solanilla's research into the imagery of the Virgin of Guadalupe reveals, among other images, that “The dress was of a pale red,” and that there were “the stars of her cloak” (129).<sup>1226,1227</sup> The juxtaposition of this pale red dress with Susana dyed red by the evening sun, and of the stars on the Virgin's mantle and the stars of Susana's mouth, point to the Virgin of Guadalupe specifically, while much of the rest of the imagery points to her divinization in other ways.

Susana is, then, an idealized woman, and she remains ideal in that she is unobtainable, always out of reach. Even Juan Rulfo idealized her:

Susana San Juan was always the central character. Susana San Juan was an ideal thing, a woman idealized to such a degree, that what I didn't find was who idealized her. ... Perhaps she is a girlfriend that I imagined some time. And I constructed *Pedro Páramo*

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water] light as if the floor beneath her were flooded in tears. And then the sob. Again the soft but intense weeping, and the pain making her twist her body”

<sup>1224</sup> “«The day in which you left I understood that I wouldn't see you again. You went dyed with red from the afternoon sun, from the bloody twilight of the sky. You smiled. You left behind a town of which many times you told me: “I love it for you; but I hate it for all the rest, even for having been born in it”. I thought: “She will never come back; she will never come back”»”

<sup>1225</sup> “There was a big moon in the middle of the world. I lost my eyes in looking at you. The rays of the moon filtering over your face. I didn't tire of seeing that apparition that was you. Soft, rubbed with moon; your mouth puffed up, moistened, iridescent with stars; your body becoming transparent in the water of the night. Susana, Susana San Juan.”

<sup>1226</sup> from Virgilio Elizondo. “La Virgen de Guadalupe como símbolo cultural”. en *Páginas* (Lima). Vol. II. No. 10. Junio 1977, pp. 3/11

<sup>1227</sup> “*El vestido era de un rojo pálido*” ... “*las estrellas del manto*”

around her and around the town.<sup>1228</sup> (Roffé 65)

In Pedro Páramo's idealization of her, Pedro becomes lost, but she remains free. Solanilla describes her as free, sensual, full, but in all, "her greatest attribute is liberty"<sup>1229</sup> (132). She is what Pedro Páramo most wants, and the only thing that he cannot have: "The character escapes from the dominion of Pedro Páramo not simply due to being the woman that he has idealized, but because in herself she is inaccessible since she is crazy"<sup>1230</sup> (132). More, Solanilla believes her insanity to be subversive: "her insanity is *subversive*, her insanity questions the values of society"<sup>1231</sup> (137), and her sensuality to be its method, since it is there that she finds her "form of plenitude of Being" ... "in sensuality she manifests her female liberty"<sup>1232</sup> (138). He interprets Susana as the "*should be* of the woman for Rulfo" (132), and "the new and possible Mexican woman"<sup>1233</sup> (143). Perhaps she is so, though in her insanity and uninhibited sexuality, she may not be a functional ideal. In any case what she most proves to be in the work is Pedro Páramo's undoing, due to her own *freedom*. She has the freedom to be herself, whatever that may be: she speaks out against her father, the priest, even God,<sup>1234</sup> and spends her days and nights fantasizing about her dead husband.

Susana's world is a sensual one; that is the form that her freedom takes. As shown above, she glories in her nascent sexuality even as her mother lies dead in the same room; and she glories in the abundant fertility and beauty of the natural world around her. She also glories in her dreams and memories/hallucinations of Florencio, her first husband. In life, she speaks of him in her mad dreams. Here, Pedro Páramo watches her, but she doesn't acknowledge his existence; instead, she speaks to him poetically but quite explicitly about Florencio, in dreams:

— ¡Qué largo era aquel hombre! ¡Qué alto! Y su voz era dura. Seca como la tierra más seca. ... yo lo que quiero de él es su cuerpo. Desnudo y caliente de amor; hirviendo de deseos; estrujando el temblor de mis senos y de mis brazos. Mi cuerpo transparente suspendido del suyo. Mi cuerpo liviano sostenido y suelto a sus fuerzas. ¿Qué haré de mis doloridos labios?<sup>1235</sup> (156)

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<sup>1228</sup> "Susana San Juan fue siempre el personaje central. Susana San Juan era una cosa ideal, una mujer idealizada a tal grado, que lo que no encontraba yo era quién la idealizaba. ... Tal vez sea una novia que me imaginé alguna vez. Y construí Pedro Páramo alrededor de ella y alrededor del pueblo."

<sup>1229</sup> "su atributo mayor es la libertad"

<sup>1230</sup> "El personaje escapa al dominio de Pedro Páramo no por ser simplemente la mujer que él ha idealizado, sino porque en si misma es inalcanzable ya que es loca."

<sup>1231</sup> "su locura es subversiva, su locura cuestiona los valores de la sociedad"

<sup>1232</sup> "forma de plenitud del Ser" ... "en la sensualidad manifiesta su libertad de mujer"

<sup>1233</sup> "deber ser de la mujer para Rulfo" ... "la nueva y posible mujer mexicana"

<sup>1234</sup> "She mentions in a dream that she had asked God to protect Florencio, and yet he died. She did not cry to "rinse out her anguish," as many would, but she lost faith: '¡Señor, tú no existes! Te pedí tu protección para él. Que me lo cuidaras. Eso te pedí. Pero tú te ocupas nada más de las almas.' She continues, 'Y yo lo que quiero de él es su cuerpo. Desnudo y caliente de amor...' " "Lord, you don't exist! I asked your protection for him. For you to take care of him. That is what I asked. But you don't bother with souls anymore." ... "And I what I want of him is his body. Naked and hot with love..." (156)

<sup>1235</sup> "— How long that man was! How tall! And his voice was hard. Dry like the driest earth. ... what I want from him is his body. Naked and hot with love; boiling in desires; squeezing the trembling of my breasts and my arms.

Pedro Páramo watches, helpless and apart. Even though he cannot have her, he fears to lose her: “¿Qué sucedería si ella también se apagara cuando se apagara la llama de aquella débil luz con que él la veía?”<sup>1236</sup> (157)

In the grave, she still remembers sensuality and Florencio, in conjunction with nature, the sea, showing here that even Florencio could not keep up with her internal world of free sensuality:

«Mi cuerpo se sentía a gusto sobre el calor de la arena. Tenía los ojos cerrados, los brazos abiertos, desdobladas las piernas a la brisa del mar. Y el mar allí enfrente, lejano, dejando apenas restos de espuma en mis pies al subir de su marea... Era temprano. El mar corría y bajaba en olas. Se desprendía de su espuma y se iba, limpio, con su agua verde, en ondas calladas.

» — En el mar sólo me sé bañar desnuda — le dije. Y él me siguió el primer día, desnudo también, fosforescente al salir del mar. No había gaviotas; sólo esos pájaros que les dicen 'picos feos', que gruñen como si roncaran y después de que sale el sol desaparecen. El me siguió el primer día y se sintió solo, a pesar de estar yo allí.

» — Es como si fueras un 'pico feo', uno más entre todos — me dijo—. Me gustas más en las noches, cuando estamos los dos en la misma almohada, bajo las sábanas, en la oscuridad.

»Y se fue.

»Volví yo. Volvería siempre. El mar moja mis tobillos y se va; moja mis rodillas, mis muslos; rodea mi cintura con su brazo suave, da vuelta sobre mis senos; se abraza de mi cuello; aprieta mis hombros. Entonces me hundo con él, entera. Me entrego a él en su fuerte batir, en su suave poseer, sin dejar pedazo...<sup>1237</sup> (151-152)

Florencio's body was just one more wonderful sensation to her; so is the sea, a cleansing and deep, physical and natural sensation. He felt this; he felt alone with her, and felt as if she were a part of nature there, rather than a part of their couple... even Florencio couldn't have her, and she loved him. Along with her pain, Susana carries this beauty of the sea inside of her, inside her own little world, completely protected. All Pedro Páramo knows of her is that he loves her, and wants to *have* her, even by murder and trickery, even by religious fraud; but he can't access her.

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My transparent body suspended from his. My light body sustained and released at his strength. What will I do with my aching lips?”

<sup>1236</sup> “What would happen if she also extinguished when the flame of that weak light by which he saw her went out?”

<sup>1237</sup> “«My body felt at ease on the heat of the sand. I had my eyes closed, my arms open, legs unfolded to the sea breeze. And the sea there in front, far away, leaving just remainders of foam on my feet on the rising of its tide... It was early. The sea ran and lowered in waves. It pulled back from its foam and went, clean, with its green water, in quiet waves. / » — In the sea I only know how to bathe naked — I told him. And he followed me the first day, naked also, phosphorescent on leaving the sea. There were no seagulls; only those birds they call ‘ugly beaks,’ who grunt as if they were snoring and then disappear when the sun comes out. He followed me the first day and he felt alone, even though I was there. / » — It’s as if you were an ‘ugly beak’, one more among all of them — he told me—. I like you more at night, when we are both on the same pillow, under the sheets, in the darkness. / »And he left. / »I went back. I would always go back. The sea wets my ankles and goes; wets my knees, my thighs; circles my waist with its soft arm, gives a turn around my breasts; embraces my neck; presses my shoulders. Then I sink into it, whole. I give myself to it in its strong churning, in its soft possessing, without leaving a piece behind...”

In a rare moment of active narrative voice, that third-person narrator of Comala asks, “*¿Pero cuál era el mundo de Susana San Juan? Ésa fue una de las cosas que Pedro Páramo nunca llegó a saber*”<sup>1238</sup> (151). Free from submission to patriarchal, controlling Pedro Páramo, she doesn’t even acknowledge his existence. She has vanquished him.

Susana’s voice is serene and wise, a voice that is masterfully natural to the world of the novel, detached from and critical of those things that the novel itself seeks to uproot and topple. Susanita’s murmurs provide a link between all narrated worlds, a link of spiritual understanding that comprises a sort of wisdom in indifference, a step back from the toil of understanding or dogmatizing death or life; Susana, alone, insane, understands the world and how it could be better.

However, in herself she is not a tool for saving the town. In fact, in a way she has been its downfall; she inspired Pedro Páramo to amass power and wealth as a gift to her, and in her death, Comala topples with her. González Boixo explains: “On Susana’s death, the paradise to which Pedro Páramo aspired disappears; the same paradise that Juan Preciado will be unable to find”<sup>1239</sup> (36). González Boixo believes that the work is completely about a *loss* of hope, as reflected in all of the lost hopes of its characters:

If in the stories the anguish of mankind was reflected in their life n the earth, in *Pedro Páramo*, this anguish crosses the frontiers of time and eternalizes itself in the image of a town converted into hell ... This last space determines the failure of the diverse hopes that have marked the principle characters of the novel.<sup>1240</sup> (35)

Juan Preciado realizes that the Comala he hoped for doesn’t exist, and he dies because of it; Dorotea agrees that hope is costly: “*Su encuentro con Juan Preciado hace que ambos unan sus ilusiones: Juan Preciado, el hijo que busca al padre, y Dorotea, la madre que busca al hijo. Sólo que ninguna de esas aspiraciones llegará a cumplirse.*”<sup>1241</sup> (36)

And if Susana serves as a symbol of hope and redemption for Comala, she nonetheless does so within the confines of her own insanity, albeit a “freeing” one. She is able to escape the confines of Comala’s demise by participating in life on a completely different level than others do, a level unhindered by rules or conventions. But she is not a conscious heroine, starting a healthy future for the town; she is a kind of madwoman, a being separated from society by her own perspective, liberating though it might be. She “rebels” by being sexual and outspoken where others are not, oblivious to power where others are bowed by it, and thus aware of larger truths; and she rebels, too, in being so untouched by that flawed society that she doesn’t require the priest’s permission

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<sup>1238</sup> “But what was the world of Susana San Juan? That was one of the things that Pedro Páramo never found out.”

<sup>1239</sup> “*Al morir Susana, el paraíso al que aspiraba Pedro Páramo desaparece; el mismo paraíso que ya no podrá encontrar Juan Preciado...*”

<sup>1240</sup> “*Si en los cuentos la angustia del hombre se reflejaba en su vida sobre la tierra, en Pedro Páramo, esa angustia traspasa las fronteras del tiempo y se eterniza en la imagen de un pueblo convertido en infierno ... Este último espacio determina el fracaso de las diversas ilusiones que han marcado a los principales personajes de la novela.*”

<sup>1241</sup> “Her encounter with Juan Preciado makes both of them unite their hopes: Juan Preciado, the son who seeks her father, and Dorotea, the mother who seeks his son. Only none of these aspirations will be fulfilled.”

to leave his and Pedro's manufactured Purgatory. However, she is, in the end, a passive agent against the status quo in Comala. She is, as Fuentes explains, an impossible refuge for the town: "The displacement of the promise of life and regeneration of the barren world of Pedro Páramo and Doloritas, the parents of Juan Preciado, to the erotic world of Susana San Juan results impossible."<sup>1242</sup> It is in her madness, her role as "myth," that she escapes the "the dominion of Pedro Páramo. If the *cacique* has dominions, she has demons" (Fuentes 832).<sup>1243</sup> If Susana is free, she is free through a loophole that has also ruined her own life; it is not a solution for the town. Fuentes explains that she is not really alive, and not really in the world; and Rulfo describes her in the novel, raving in her bed at the Media Luna, as being in the "*la sepultura de sus sábanas*"<sup>1244</sup> (165). Even Solanilla, who looks to her for redemption, lets slip that she is in fact in a "refuge," perhaps not a true state of freedom: "The insanity preserves her from her exterior reality, in which the beings generally lead a miserable life; it makes her radically different from the women of Comala, who don't have in essence any full liberty as beings... she takes refuge in the clarity of the bursting of the senses" (136).<sup>1245</sup> She is free, but *separate*, unable to change anything for anyone else. Susanita is «*una mujer que no era de este mundo*»<sup>1246</sup> (164).

Claudio Lomnitz in *Death and the Idea of Mexico* (2005) focuses only on the barrenness of Rulfo's work, as a ludic sign of hopelessness, an arid and unproductive purgatory. Lomnitz writes that Mexico has nationalized death nihilistically, rather than collectively: "Mexico's nationalization of death has a ... nihilistic, lighthearted component. It is a modern refurbishment of a medieval theme: death comes to all and makes a mockery of us all." He connects this lighthearted nihilism with Mexico's "serious limitations to concerted collective action" as leading to a national understanding that there is no imaginable collective future; Death thus gains the "status of a *national sign*." Rulfo's work "Luvina," seen by many as a precursor to *PP*'s Comala is, according to Lomnitz, illustrative of this sign and its nihilism, the "literary representation of this condition." Luvina is a dead town, in a dead landscape, whose residents are afraid to leave their dead and their history behind, instead only waiting to die there themselves. Thus, for Lomnitz, it is a "place without a future" (21). The same could be said, then, for Comala; it is as infertile as incest, dead, dead. In fact, Jason Wilson (2005) does say so: "*Pedro Páramo* is defined by... bleakness, and by the absence of a future" (234). Is the book, then, barren?

Perhaps; but it also *appears* to be hopeful, for some, and at some moments. After all, for a town that died in drought, for there to be *rain* is in itself hopeful. As mentioned previously (Chapter III part 5), when Juan Preciado and Dorotea are buried in an embrace, the motherless son and the sonless mother, it starts to rain outside: "*¿Oyes? Allá afuera está lloviendo. ¿No sientes el*

<sup>1242</sup> "El desplazamiento de la promesa de vida y regeneración del mundo yermo de Pedro Páramo y Doloritas, los padres de Juan Preciado, al mundo erótico de Susana San Juan resulta imposible."

<sup>1243</sup> "dominio de Pedro Páramo. Pues si el cacique tiene dominios, ella tiene demonios."

<sup>1244</sup> "the sepulcher of her sheets"

<sup>1245</sup> "La locura la preserva de la realidad exterior, en la que los seres llevan generalmente una vida miserable; la hace radicalmente diferente a las mujeres de Comala, que no tienen en esencia ninguna libertad plena como seres... se refugia en la claridad del estallido de los sentidos"

<sup>1246</sup> "a woman who wasn't of this world"

*golpear de la lluvia?*<sup>1247</sup> (120) And this rain is one that links them to life, “*hilvanando el hilo de la vida.*”<sup>1248</sup> (144)

Rulfo has provided his own interpretation of the return of the rain as being both optimistic and pessimistic – in paradox, as usual. González asks the author the same question I am asking here:

— *Juan Preciado and Dorotea comment, from their tomb, that it rains. Could this be interpreted as an optimistic end to the novel?*

— Pedro Páramo left a miserable, sad, arid world, but at this time the rain already begins to be reborn, they had to live and die in Comala..., it seems that now it is going to be reborn, that it can return to exist as it was before; because of this the obsession with the rain. The rain is regenerating a land, but now that they don't need it it's becoming productive again, now that there is no remedy; this pessimism that exists from when things happen that don't happen at the right time, they happen when there is already no hope already no remedy.<sup>1249</sup> (González Boixo 251)

Rulfo apparently believes that in this rain, his work is not only pessimistic, but also ironic: the rain is rejuvenating the land, now that it is too late for those who lived there. It is certainly too late for Juan Preciado and for Dorotea, for they are dead, killed by the damage that Pedro Páramo did to his people and to the land itself. But is it too late for their souls to find peace? And – is it too late for the reader to make peace?

It is the rain that wakes the voices of the dead in their graves, those bodies that have something important to say, especially Susana: “*Le ha de haber llegado la humedad y estará removiéndose entre el sueño*”<sup>1250</sup> (135). And Susana's voice is powerful; it functions as a clarifying lens, a means to undo the epistemological violence of those dominant institutions – landowner, Church, wealth, gender – that are the object of the other miserable voices' cries. Her perspective frees their locutionary object – themselves, history, their town, their experience – from simple framing within discourses, genres, or even time. They cannot be mere archetypes while she speaks calmly, introspectively, of freedom; they are the voices of tragedy which could be, some day, voices of change, connected as they are both to history and to now and forever, both to Jalisco and everywhere. In the words phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty uses to frame his philosophical method, Susana – like Comala – “places in abeyance the assertions arising out of the natural attitude, the better to understand them.” (xiv). He explains: “[i]t is because we are through and through compounded of relationships with the world that for us the only way to

<sup>1247</sup> “Do you hear? There outside it's raining. Don't you feel the beating of the rain?”

<sup>1248</sup> “The rain muffles the noises. It is still heard even after everything, hailing its drops, linking the thread of life.” (144)

<sup>1249</sup> “— Juan Preciado y Dorotea comentan, desde su tumba, que llueve. ¿Podría interpretarse la lluvia como un final optimista de la novela?

— *Pedro Páramo dejó un mundo miserable, triste, árido, pero ya a estas alturas ya empieza la lluvia a renacer, a ellos les tocó vivir y morir in Comala..., parece que ahora ya va a renacer, que puede volver a existir como era antes; por eso esa obsesión por la lluvia. La lluvia está regenerando una tierra, pero ahora que ya no la necesitan está volviendo otra vez a ser productiva, ya cuando no tiene remedio; ese pesimismo que existe de que cuando suceden cosas que no suceden en el tiempo justo, suceden cuando ya no hay ninguna esperanza ya sin remedio.*”

<sup>1250</sup> “The humidity must have gotten to her and she is moving in dreams”

become aware of the fact is to suspend the resultant activity, to refuse it our complicity [...], or yet again, to put it 'out of play' [...] (xiv). In Comala, there is likewise suspension of complicity with reigning occidental binaries such as sound/silence, life/death, and even of the body, which Merleau-Ponty believes "is a frontier which ordinary spatial relations do not cross" (112). And, for Susana, there is a suspension of complicity with all reigning cultural institutions as well, a possibility in itself for reform if she can be heard. Susana's murmurs happen when the ground becomes damp. Is Comala recovering from its dryness? Might the souls find hope there? Will enough people come back to listen, and pray, that the cycle will be inverted?

Susana may have been passive in the living Comala, a voice considered mad and a coveted object; whether or not she is a passive agent in Comala's voice, *in the novel*, however, is up to the reader. She is free of the *cacique's* grasp, and free from the farce perpetuated by a corrupted Church, and free from the limitations of her gendered role in an unjust society, and she points those who listen to her down this path.

*PP* doesn't ask, as *GSV* does, about whether the Devil exists as opposed to free will, but rather it comes to that conclusion from the start; it lays out a very human evil in its pages, a human evil with metaphysical consequences instead of the other way around. The Devil in both novels is mankind himself, but in *PP* it was never a question; the landowner and the priest "created their own monsters" (Vickery), and the townspeople subjected themselves to it. What the novel does ask, however, like *GSV*, and searchingly, is whether redemption is possible. Does Comala have a role to play, or is it simply a fathomless and self-repeating darkness? Comala had its own downfall within its human capability; that downfall was wrought; is there an undoing of that undoing also implicit in the humanity there? As has been explored here, Susana provides a glimpse into what it looks like to "undo" the institutions of wealth and power that so failed Comala's moral foundation, to "refuse them complicity," although she does so in a way that is itself barren of revolutionary promise outside of her mind, at least during her lifetime. The possibilities of her voice, w(h)etted by the rain, are up to the reader now, Comala's link to life.

\*

Why does the work create this entire realm of suffering, and its connection to the earth? It appears that Comala serves to show that violence and greed are at the root of human institutions, specific or general, and that they are *forever* tragic, not easily stepped over; that they must be dealt with in order to move on, because otherwise they will fester in the soil itself. Is the novel a dystopia without a reformative hope? Hope is hard to find; the earth may return to fertility, but the town still wanders, a lost soul, and murmurs. But two of the dead have found a home in each other's arms, and Susana is still speaking out, a calmly subversive sign that things could and should be different. And the reader is there, brought all the way into this space, feeling and understanding the nature of the truth in the soil, listening to Juan Preciado's voice as if it were real, and through him, all the others, either to have the same fate befall him/her, or in order to learn and change Comala's future as the dead failed to do.



## CONCLUSIONS to PART II:

### 1. In CONVERSATION with the REGIONAL/UNIVERSAL DIALECTIC:

Like Guimarães Rosa's *GSV*, Rulfo's *PP* participates in the literary construction of its regional landscape both as a specific place and a symbolic one, connected. It is the specificity of the agrarian town in Jalisco that creates meaning: meaning in its connection to its dwellers, and meaning in the bloodshed it hoards. And that meaning allows it to become that (meta)physical space that is on the third bank of the river Styx: both the land of the living, and the realm of the dead, forced to wander the landscape of their trauma because they believe they were denied salvation. The novel's use of region is complex and central, and it is due to the novel's narrative techniques that any of it is possible. In the work's *lacunae*, its participatory ambiguity, it draws the reader in; and in its unreliable narration, it traps us there, integrating us into that participatory space in order to fully comprehend the importance of the "stories-so-far" in the tragic landscape.

However, like *GSV*, *PP*'s critical reception has often focused not on its special and complete *integration* of narrative and region, but rather on its perceived place *between* regional and universal literature, in which regional literature is compared more to geography than to literature, lacking in aesthetic innovation and character development. For example, Peruvian author Mario Vargas Llosa wrote an article in 1969 called "*Novela primitiva y novela de creación en América latina*" ("Primitive Novel and Novel of Creation in Latin America") in which he classified Latin American novels into the categories of "primitive novel"<sup>1251</sup> (including the "novel of the earth" "*novela de la tierra*," as well as the "*indigenista, costumbrista, criollista, nativista*" (184)) and "novel of creation," which includes the novels of the "Boom" or "New Novel." He characterizes the "primitive" novel as "picturesque and rural", favoring "the countryside over the city, the landscape over character, and content over form,"<sup>1252</sup> in "confusion between art and artisanship, between literature and folklore, between information and creation,"<sup>1253</sup> and become "census, geographical fact, description of uses and customs, ethnological testament, regional fair, folkloric collection" representing the " 'autochthonous' and 'telluric' values of America"<sup>1254</sup> (185). Also, thematically, though there is novelty in copying reality as opposed to copying Europe, the conflicts are all "archetypal,"<sup>1255</sup> and lacking in real mystery, and consist more than anything of "conflict... of man and nature" (185). For Vargas Llosa, then, there is a deep conflict between content/context and form, marked with his apparent valorization of form; and the "rural" novel, of "the countryside," "landscape," "content," is automatically also that of "artisanship," "folklore," and "information" – and is directly opposed to the "city" novel, of "character" and "form," of "art" and "literature" and "creation."

The critical reception of *Pedro Páramo* has been likewise focused on the perception of "regional" and "universal" elements, wherein the "universal" is either aesthetic innovation, "human relevance," or both, and the "regional" is a limited genre. *PP* is often seen as

<sup>1251</sup> "*novela primitiva*" ... "*novela de creación*" ... "*nueva novela*"

<sup>1252</sup> "*pintoresca y rural*," "*el campo sobre la ciudad, el paisaje sobre el personaje, y el contenido sobre la forma*"

<sup>1253</sup> "*confusión entre arte y artesanía, entre literatura y folklore, entre información y creación*"

<sup>1254</sup> "*censo, dato geográfico, descripción de usos y costumbres, atestado etnológico, feria regional, muestrario folklórico*" ... "*valores 'autoctonos' o 'telúricos' de América*"

<sup>1255</sup> "*arquetípicos*," ... "*conflicto... del hombre y la naturaleza*"

distinguishing itself with its innovation from the telluric literary tradition of “*novela de la revolución mexicana*” (novel of the Mexican Revolution, one of the telluric traditions canonized in Mexico’s literary history), and thus being somewhere in between literary moments.

Because of his use of revolutionary history as the one recognizable historical reference in the work, Rulfo’s novel is most often compared to, included in, or excluded from the “*novela de la revolución mexicana*.” There are multiple accounts of what constitutes the novel of the Mexican Revolution, and some of them include Rulfo while most do not. However, those who do, as I have found, include him as a step towards something else, connected to the genre but not of it, or both regionalist and not regionalist, in parts.

Brian Gollnick (2005) and Antonio Castro Leal (1960), among others, leave Rulfo completely out of their canons of the “*novela de la revolución mexicana*,” defined somewhat differently by both: for Castro Leal, the *novela*... is defined by being inspired by the revolution’s military and popular actions and their social and political effects (17). For Gollnick, the *novela*... is any work “written during the first three or four decades of the twentieth century with a direct concern for the relationship between local and national structures,” which “represent diverse social subjects and collective cultural projects” often “allegorized through the landscape and rural life” (45). Rulfo’s novel may be too late for Gollnick, or not enough inspired by the revolution for Castro Leal; they do not explain.

Max Aub (1985), in his corpus of “*narradores de la Revolución Mexicana*” (narrators of the Mexican Revolution), not just novels, does include Juan Rulfo’s *El llano en llamas*, second to last in his list, though not *Pedro Páramo* – but he includes the book of stories as a *transition*. Aub indicates that these works all share in, at the very least, a picturesque or documentary observation of rural Mexican life and landscape during the time of the revolution in Mexico. Many had naturalist tendencies, and many had testimony and autobiographical aspects; and he remarks upon several of the “most important” writers of the period (in “*notas acerca de los escritores importantes de la época*”<sup>1256</sup> as having a remarkable attention to the reality of the countryside.<sup>1257</sup> Aub claims that “[a]s is natural, Rulfo himself doesn’t hold himself as a narrator of the Revolution, but he is”<sup>1258</sup> (59). However, Rulfo “is” that narrator in a *new and different*

<sup>1256</sup> “notes regarding the important writers of the time”

<sup>1257</sup> For instance, Frías, according to Aub, as predecessor, gave the genre its characteristics of *testimony* and *autobiography*, and *naturalist* tendencies (15, 30-31). Mariano Azuela also wrote as a “*mirror*,” *espejo*, according to Aub (34); the author was concerned with telling “the *truth*,” even if it impinged on the artistic nature of the novel, (as shown in his acceptance speech for a prize in 1950: 34-36). Guzmán was, above all, “*retratista*,” (portraitist) according to Aub; “*dibujante*” (drawing-like) and “*colorista*” (colorist), though he says it was not a “*fácil pintoresquismo*” (easy “picturesquism”) (40). Rafael Muñoz was the most “*reporteril*” (reporterly) of all, although he at times amalgamated fact and fiction (43-44). Romero was both a naturalist and picaresque writer (47). Magdaleno’s his style was, according to Aub, *barroquista*, (over-elaborate style) with long descriptions and more and more detail, yet still with the “*exacto y popular del diálogo*” (exact and popular of the dialogue) of Azuela (48-50). Guadalupe de Anda is “*el más injustamente olvidado de los novelistas de la Revolución*”<sup>1257</sup> (50), because he concentrated on the Cristero revolt with the same attention to natural and cultural landscape of Azuela (50-53). Luis Rivero del Val’s work on the *Cristeros* “*suen a verdad y a panfleto a la vez*”<sup>1257</sup> (53). Rojas González wrote *indigenismo* with a background as an ethnographer, writing in “*folklorismo*” (56). Naturalist, testimonial, autobiographical, mirror, portraiture, picturesque, Baroque, exact popular dialogue, folklore, ethnography – and, too, “truth” and “*panfleto*,” writing with a cause.

<sup>1258</sup> “*Como es natural, el propio Rulfo no se tiene como un narrador de la Revolución, pero lo es.*”

way. Aub claims that genres generally end drowned in overly elaborate style.<sup>1259</sup> However, there is no such deterioration (“*mengua*”) between Azuela, considered the father of the genre, and Rulfo, fifty years later. Thematically, the two introverts are united by despair (“*desconsuelo*”) and profound pessimism, the firm belief that death and violence is in vain; they are united in the same disenchantment (“*desencanto*”) and the same “particular tone,” “*tono particular*” (60-61). But stylistically, Rulfo’s work, rather than ending the genre in excess, ends it in precisely the contrary, in what at first glance is much like Azuela but is in fact totally different: “instead of perishing among the trimmings of *barroquismo* as almost all the genres, [the narrative of the Revolution] comes to drown itself precisely in the contrary. Azuela has no great care with his way of writing; not thus Juan Rulfo, the reason for his sparing prose”<sup>1260</sup> (61).

He considers that Rulfo narrates the Revolution, and breathes the air of the region, making him fundamentally a part of the genre; but he is the last to look at that pre-machine countryside, for he changes the role of that countryside, that rural people, in literature. He uses the same Jalisco that Azuela described, but no longer in *imitation* – instead, it is in *creation* that he does so. Aub explains that Rulfo’s work “decants directly from [the narrative of the Revolution]” and “the air that he breathes, the breath of his characters is still the same,” but that “In Rulfo there are no longer the primary characteristics of the narrative of the Revolution (testimony and autobiography).” Rulfo has gone beyond:

It’s no longer the seen and lived, yes its recreation; there is already the necessary distance for art. ... Rulfo is pure reconstruction, another world;... Rulfo is the best writer of those of his stock; he doesn’t imitate, he creates. He stylizes,... it is no longer life but art... This stylization gives Rulfo an immediate international resonance. With him closes a certain way of considering the Mexican countryside still uninjured by machinery. From him onward the Mexican novel, even the rural novel, is another.<sup>1261</sup> (58-59)

Aub considers that Rulfo “ended” the genre with his *artistic* spare prose, a style that is new in using the revolution, countryside, community as *scenery for art* – a foundation on which to reconstruct, create, and imagine – rather than scenery imitated for its own sake. And this new style paves the way for new directions in Mexican literature – directions with “international resonance.”

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<sup>1259</sup> “*generalmente, un género muere en la postración, ahogado por el barroquismo*” (“generally, a genre dies in deep depression, drowned in over-elaborate (baroque) style”)

<sup>1260</sup> “*en vez de perecer entre los perifollos del barroquismo como casi todos los géneros, [la narrativa de la Revolución] viene a ahogarse precisamente en lo contrario. A Azuela le tiene sin gran cuidado el modo de escribir; no así a Juan Rulfo, razón de su parquedad.*”

<sup>1261</sup> “*decanta directamente [de la narrativa de la Revolución]*” ... “*el aire que respira, el hálito de sus personajes es todavía el mismo*” ... “*Ya no se dan en Rulfo las características primeras de la narrativa de la Revolución (testimonio y Autobiografía).* ... “*Ya no es lo visto y vivido, sí su recreación: ya existe la distancia necesaria al arte. ... Rulfo es pura reconstrucción, otro mundo... Rulfo es el mejor escritor de los de su estirpe: no imita, crea. Estiliza...; ya no es la vida sino el arte. ... Esta estilización le dará a Rulfo una inmediata resonancia internacional. Con él se cierra cierta manera de considerar el campo mexicano todavía no herido por la maquinaria. De él en adelante la novelística mexicana, aun la campesina, es otra*”

Fares (1994) also defines Rulfo's opus as being made up of two main tendencies (as "diverse critical opinions"<sup>1262</sup> have also pointed out). Like Aub, he sees the work as bridging the novel of the revolution to something new, but he speaks the name of this new literature – the "*nueva novela*" – and names its influence on Rulfo. For Fares, Rulfo has that tendency "associated with regionalism"<sup>1263</sup>, "telluric," which he also calls "national" (7); this telluric tradition includes "the novel of the Revolution, *costumbrismo* [literary genre of local customs] and Indigenism," and Rulfo's work, as in this tradition, "deals with themes already presented in the works of the novel of the revolution, related with the agrarian sphere of the pre and post-revolutionary Mexico" (15). On the other hand, however, it contains "modernist forms," the "cosmopolitan current," "International" (7, 15-16), and "his work incorporates itself to the movement of the "new novel" that arises beginning in the decades of the 40s and 50s in Mexico and the rest of Latin America, giving origin later to the 'boom' of the letters of the continent."<sup>1264</sup> This is due to the work's incorporation of unconventional narrative techniques that include, according to Fares:

...narrative techniques such as the fragmentation of the text, the questioning of the time of the reading, the requirement of the collaboration of the reader, the chronological dislocation, etc. that give as a result the creation of a town of dead people where the limits between life and not-life blur.<sup>1265</sup> (16)

The work, for Fares, is *dual*, much as *GSV* has been dual for its critics; it deals with the *themes* and *settings* of regionalist works, but with the *methods* associated with the *nueva novela* and, later, the Boom: the work's innovations are "too radical to make them belong to the novel of the earth, even when its themes are similar" (15-16).<sup>1266</sup>

Samuel O'Neill (1974), too, claims that the work is a bridge – no longer one thing, not quite another. It is on one hand, social and realist: "This novel is generally located in the category of neo-Realist fiction, because it occupies itself, principally, with one of the notable defects of the Mexican social system, *caciquismo*. Rulfo himself considers the work as a social novel more than a psychological one"<sup>1267,1268</sup> (286), but nonetheless, in the work, "Rulfo's initial introspective efforts concentrate themselves," and "the realist theme is amply presented by

<sup>1262</sup> "*diversas opiniones críticas*"

<sup>1263</sup> "*asociada al regionalismo*" ... "*telúrica*"... "*nacional*" ... "*la novela de la revolución, el costumbrismo y el indigenismo*" ... "*trata temas ya presentes en las obras de la novela de la revolución, relacionados con el ámbito agrario del México pre y post-revolucionario*"

<sup>1264</sup> "*formas modernistas*" ... "*corriente... cosmopolita*"... "*internacional*" ... "*su obra se incorpora al movimiento de la "nueva novela" que surge a partir de las décadas de los cuarenta y cincuenta en México y en el resto de América Latina, dando origen posteriormente al 'boom' de las letras del continente*"

<sup>1265</sup> "*técnicas narrativas tales como la fragmentación del texto, el cuestionamiento del tiempo de la lectura, la exigencia de la colaboración del lector, la dislocación cronológica, etc., que dan como resultado la creación de un pueblo de muertos en donde los límites entre vida y no vida se desdibujan*"

<sup>1266</sup> "*demasiado radicales para hacerlas pertenecer a la novela de la tierra, aún cuando sus temas sean parecidos.*"

<sup>1267</sup> O'Neill cites a letter dated November 22, 1963, in which Margaret Shedd, director of the *Centro Mexicano de Escritores*, cites Rulfo personally, p. 286 footnote 2

<sup>1268</sup> "*Esta novela se ubica generalmente en la categoría de ficción neo-realista, porque se ocupa, principalmente, de uno de los notables defectos del sistema social mexicano, el caciquismo. Rulfo mismo considera la obra como una novela social más que psicológica*"

means of expressionist techniques” (286).<sup>1269</sup> O’Neill explains that Rulfo is distinguished from predecessors like Azuela and Guzmán in that, while he turns to the same basic themes of *caciquismo*, Revolution, and landscape, he is also a proponent of *universal* themes and techniques, and makes a:

...deliberate effort to penetrate beyond the telluric reality of rural Mexico and its inhabitants. He triumphs in extracting the lyrical and sensitive qualities from the landscape, and, with this, he applies introspective techniques to the exploration of the subconscious, which have been the great literary contributions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1270</sup> (O’Neill 285)

For O’Neill, then, it is both a realistic, social novel with traditional Mexican themes, and also one that uses psychological introspection and innovative expression to “penetrate beyond the telluric reality of rural Mexico and its inhabitants.” O’Neill’s perspective, like the others listed here, separates the work into its themes (“social realism”) and its “narrative technique,” in which the former is telluric and Mexican, and the latter universally literary and lyrical.

Wilson (2005), like those above, also locates *PP* both within regionalism, and, too, separated from it, by aesthetic innovation:

Rulfo... also appears to fit into what has been called the ‘regional’ novel in Latin America.... But Rulfo is a modern... he ... has adopted some surrealistic motifs... as well as highlighting words themselves and rhythms as poems do... It is an experimental novel. (238)

... and, too, by the condition that its innovation produces: its interactive, co-constructed space:

If this haunting, lyrical novel is reduced to themes, it can be easily fitted into the Latin American tradition of the rural novel, dealing with lawless bosses. But what makes it resistant to this kind of reductionism is the way it forces the reader to collaborate in making sense of the dreamy voices and fragments. (243)

Manuel Durán, in “Juan Rulfo y Mariano Azuela: ¿sucesión o superación?”<sup>1271</sup> (1985), also describes Rulfo as a bridge, closing the literary cycle of the Mexican Revolution, and opening a new literary realm through aesthetics. He uses the metaphor of “Janus,” the two-faced Roman god of transitions: “Dual-faced Janus looks with his two faces towards two horizons”<sup>1272</sup> (217). Like other critics, he claims that Rulfo’s novel is more than just a continuation but rather closes, and “it brilliantly closes the cycle of novels of the Mexican Revolution,”<sup>1273</sup> which “was initiated

<sup>1269</sup> “Los esfuerzos introspectivos iniciales de Rulfo se concentran” ... “el tema realista está ampliamente presentado por medio de técnicas expresionistas”

<sup>1270</sup> “...deliberado esfuerzo para penetrar más allá de la realidad telúrica del México rural y sus habitantes. Triunfa en extraer las cualidades líricas y sensibles del paisaje y, junto con esto, aplica las técnicas introspectivas de exploración del subconsciente, que han sido las grandes contribuciones literarias del siglo XX”

<sup>1271</sup> “Juan Rulfo and Mariano Azuela, succession or supersession?”

<sup>1272</sup> “Jano bifronte mira con sus dos caras hacia dos horizontes”

<sup>1273</sup> “magistralmente cierra el ciclo de las novelas de la Revolución mexicana”<sup>1273</sup>, ... “iniciado por Azuela y

by Azuela and brilliantly continued by Yáñez” (217). He writes that Rulfo looks both to the horizon of the past (“the *costumbrista* and naturalist novels, ... the “novels of the earth”<sup>1274</sup>) and to the future. For Durán, this future is both aesthetic and thematic, given that Rulfo’s opus “comes to reconcile with the two great halves of Mexican literature [poetry and prose],”<sup>1275</sup> and, too, his works show interiority in the characters (“In Rulfo’s works the anguish and the oppression don’t come from outside, but from the interior of the characters”<sup>1276</sup> (217)), and they point to issues of the subconscious and the cosmos, the same ideas that others have associated with the “universal”: “Poet in prose, his pages always take into account the subconscious of the characters, the mystery of our existence in the cosmos, the myths that express this mystery and the constant tragedy of expressing it only halfway”<sup>1277</sup> (Durán 218). Again, Rulfo’s work is shown to be heir to regionalism, but innovative in being aesthetic and having thematic and narrative depth, characteristics apparently lacking from regionalism.

*PP* is, then, like *GSV*, is theorized quite consistently as a bridge between the preceding telluric literary tradition and a new more *universal* or *modernist* one, perhaps even as the first of the *nueva novela latinoamericana*. Felipe Garrido (2004) is another critic who writes of Rulfo between the regionalist *novela de la revolución* and a genre of innovation and the universal; however, he makes the distinction of saying that Rulfo did not “close” the cycle of the novel of the revolution,<sup>1278</sup> but rather “opens it”<sup>1279</sup> (61-62). He makes this distinction under the apparent assumption that because “Rulfo’s two books conserve the vigor of the first day,”<sup>1280</sup> and “the new ways of telling a story that Rulfo took advantage of, discovered, implanted, are still very far from being exhausted,” then Rulfo was not the “last” of anything, but rather simply the *best*: “Let us say that what was shown before... came to have its worthy expression in the hands of Rulfo.” This is another way, however, of saying the same thing; either Rulfo ended that cycle by transcending it aesthetically even though he was heir to it, or he expanded it by being of it and yet transcending its former manifestations to give it new aesthetic life. Indeed, not everyone sees regionalism as inherently limiting; within the “regional novel,”<sup>1281</sup> Brian Gollnick looks to the authors of the novel of the Mexican Revolution – such as Azuela, Vasconcelos, Guzmán, and Campobello – and claims that some of these writers were able to perceive more ambiguity in Mexico, and thus “their work largely defines the regional novel as a crucible of innovation still

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*brillantemente continuado por Yáñez*

<sup>1274</sup> “las novelas costumbristas y naturalistas, ... las “novelas de la tierra”

<sup>1275</sup> “...lleva a reconciliarse a las dos grandes mitades de la literatura mexicana [poesía y prosa]”

<sup>1276</sup> “En las obras de Rulfo la angustia y la opresión no vienen de fuera, sino del interior de los personajes.”

<sup>1277</sup> “Poeta en prosa, sus páginas siempre toman en cuenta el subconsciente de los personajes, el misterio de nuestra existencia en el cosmos, los mitos que expresan este misterio y la constante tragedia de expresarlo sólo a medias”

<sup>1278</sup> “Por eso me resisto a aceptar eso que se ha dicho tantas veces, que la obra de Rulfo cierra un ciclo” (“This is why I resist accepting what has been said so many days, that the work of Rulfo closes a cycle”)

<sup>1279</sup> “Más bien lo abre”

<sup>1280</sup> “Más bien lo abre” ... “Los dos libros de Rulfo conservan el vigor del primer día” ... “las nuevas maneras de contar una historia que Rulfo aprovechó, descubrió, implantó, están aún muy lejos de haber sido agotadas” ... “Digamos que lo ensayado antes... llegó a su expresión cabal en manos de Rulfo.”

<sup>1281</sup> Brian Gollnick describes the “regional novel” in Mexico as consisting of, most obviously, the “novelas de la tierra,” the “telluric novels, that describe local realities through nature, rural life, and cultural traits understood as peculiar to Latin America” (44); these have been canonized since the 1930s, and are considered to be both reliant on “problematic concepts of representation” and “crucial... in defining Latin America’s cultural modernity”.

relevant today” (45). For Gollnick, then, regionalism can be innovative and ambiguous, and has room to grow and become relevant.

The question of where to place the work in a textbook of genres is not pertinent here; however, what is pertinent is an understanding of the conceptualizations of the role, used here as foil, of the aesthetic/narrative/form and the region/landscape/content/context as categories that are separate in theory and in the work. These concepts of Rulfo’s novel as expanding or transcending a telluric category in its innovation, or creating a new category in innovation that happens to be telluric, focus on the region as a hindrance, as part of the old novel as opposed to the new. As Octavio Paz states in *Corriente Alterna*, “Juan Rulfo is the only Mexican novelist who has given us an image – not a description – of our landscape”<sup>1282</sup> (18).

Mexican author and critic Carlos Fuentes in 1969 also criticizes the “traditional” Latin American literary work (as opposed to the “contemporary” Latin American literary work, including Vargas Llosa, Carpentier, García Márquez, and Cortázar) for being closer to geography than to literature,<sup>1283</sup> being “described” rather than written (9), a “naturalism,” or “documentary and naturalist tendency of the Latin American novel,” which is “closer to a document of protest than to true creation” (11). Further, “the traditional novel of Latin America appears as a static form inside a static society”<sup>1284</sup> (14).

Part of this conceptualization of literary limitation has its roots in Latin Americans’ traditional relationship to their land, according to Fuentes. On the first page of his essay, Fuentes quotes José Eustasio Rivera, ending a work with “*¡Se los tragó la selva!*”<sup>1285</sup>; according to Fuentes, this is the commentary of a century’s worth of Latin American writers, for whom the mountains, the *pampa*, the mines, the rivers, and other geographical elements swallow their heroes; in fact, the geography of Latin America has been seen for ages, according to Fuentes, as implacable and on an inhuman scale, an enemy, and yet also the only protagonist of the work to the detriment of the characters, “the true Latin American *character*”<sup>1286</sup> (10). Harss, too, in saying that regionalist literature was more “agricultural” than “literary,” implies that it attempted to domesticate the nature that terrified Americans; and Fares claims the same, that the regionalist novel attempted to change the land (23). Durán, as well, speaks of the “novels of the earth” as describing “an oppressive and destructive environment”<sup>1287</sup>, which *subjects* characters to its oppressive power (217). Thus, Fuentes argues, the main drama of the literary world has been “*Civilización vs. Barbarie*,” Civilization vs. Barbarism, a battle as well as a conceptual tool. He argues that this literature is mimetic of explorers during the conquest, reflective of the colonies’ roots in being subjected to an “essentially strange” natural environment, and lacking in human identity: “the

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<sup>1282</sup> “*Juan Rulfo es el único novelista mexicano que nos ha dado una imagen – no una descripción – de nuestro paisaje.*”

<sup>1283</sup> “[m]ás cercana a la geografía que a la literatura” ... “descrita” ... “naturalismo” ... “tendencia documental y naturalista de la novela latinoamericana,” ... “más cercano al documento de protesta que a la verdadera creación”

<sup>1284</sup> “*la novela tradicional de América Latina aparece como una forma estática dentro de una sociedad estática*”

<sup>1285</sup> “The jungle swallowed them!”

<sup>1286</sup> “*el verdadero personaje latinoamericano*”

<sup>1287</sup> “*un ambiente opresivo y destructor*”

Conquistador arrives in search of the treasures of nature, not the personality of men” (11).<sup>1288</sup> Literature, then, has been lacking in *human identity*, and lacking in *art*, as others have argued about “regionalism”: it has become geographical, documentary, naturalist, and “described” rather than written, lacking in “true creation.” He believes that, in “traditional” Latin American literature, communities have become overly simplistic and primitive heroic or villainous tropes to populate natural landscapes that are both the protagonist of the works, more than their settings, and yet also felt to be inherently *alienated* from the writer and characters, “essentially strange.”

However, there is a new literature, according to Fuentes, and it finds its first champion in Rulfo, who opens the way to others: “the transition from the old naturalist and documentary naturalist to the new diversified, critical and ambiguous novel”<sup>1289</sup> (24). In his discussion of the regionalism/universalism debate in Latin America, Fuentes places Juan Rulfo’s *PP* as a bridge between traditional regionalism as seen in the revolutionary literature of his contemporaries in México, and this new literature later considered to be Latin America’s literary “boom.” Rulfo does this, according to Fuentes, complexly, through a new use of “*universal myth*” and a new use of *land*. The “traditional themes of the Hinterland,”<sup>1290</sup> with what appears to be the same location and characters, are converted instead into “mythical literature” in which:

...nature has been assimilated and the proscenium [front part of the stage] is occupied by men and women who don’t play an illustrative role, but are really personal totalities pierced by language, history and imagination.<sup>1291</sup> (36)

According to Fuentes, then, the novel differs from other regional works in that its characters are no longer illustrations but totalities, and that the land is no longer center-stage, so there is room for character development. Fuentes claims that, in *PP*, Rulfo uses the “great universal myths”<sup>1292,1293</sup> but in a Mexican context, thus marrying universalism and regionalism:

the mythical imagination is reborn in the Mexican soil ... all this mythical background permits Juan Rulfo to project the human ambiguity of the cacique, his women, his

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<sup>1288</sup> “*el conquistador llegó en busca de los tesoros de la naturaleza, no de la personalidad de los hombres*”

<sup>1289</sup> “*el tránsito de la antigua literatura naturalista y documental a la nueva novela diversificada, crítica y ambigua*”

<sup>1290</sup> “*temas tradicionales del Hinterland*” ... “*literatura mítica*”

<sup>1291</sup> “*la naturaleza ha sido asimilada y el proscenio lo ocupan hombres y mujeres que no desempeñan un papel ilustrativo, sino que realmente son totalidades personales traspasadas por el lenguaje, la historia y la imaginación*”

<sup>1292</sup> Among others, some as in his other article, he cites Juan Preciado as being Telemachos, on a counter-Odyssey; Abundio as taking him to “*la otra orilla, la muerta, de un río de polvo*” (“the other bank, the dead one, of a dust river”); Dolores’ voice as being “*Yocasta-Euridice*,” taking “*Edipo-Orfeo... por los caminos del infierno*” (“down the paths of Hell”), the incestuous siblings as being “*edénicos y adánicos*” (related to Eden and Adam), sleeping together “*en el lodo de la creación*” (“in the mud of Creation); Eduviges, Damiana, and Dorotea as being “*viejas virgilianas*” (“Virgilian old women,” as stated earlier); Susana San Juan as being “*Electra al revés*” (“backwards”), and Pedro Páramo as “*Ulises de piedra y barro*” (“Ulysses of stone and mud”) (16) (Interestingly, Rulfo has debunked this, at least insofar as it was his intention to portray Ulysses, for it can be interpreted as it will: “*hay algunos mitos, sí, pero no tantos como para hablar de la mitología romana y de Ulises, ni nada de eso*” (“there are some myths, yes, but not so many as to speak of Roman mythology and of Ulysses, or anything like that”))(“Juan Rulfo examina...” 880)

<sup>1293</sup> “*grandes mitos universales*”



gunmen and their victims and, through them, incorporate the theme of the countryside and the Mexican Revolution into a universal context.<sup>1294</sup> (15-16)

He continues, placing Rulfo's work as the strand that will lead Mexican literature to the "new Latin American novel":

The work of Juan Rulfo isn't only the maximum expression that the Mexican novel has achieved until now: through *Pedro Páramo*, we can find the thread that brings us to the new Latin American novel and to its relationship with the problems set out by the so-called international crisis of the novel.<sup>1295,1296</sup>

Rulfo's work, then, leads literature from the "problem" of the traditional Latin American novel, to a contemporary approach to literature that escapes the flaws listed above not through repeating ancient paradigms but through new uses of language, structure, and myth – and, too, land (20). First of all, the Latin American author's relationship to land needed to change, finally converting the "insane/foreign nature to one's own nature"<sup>1297</sup> (11). Then, the author needed to free himself from the euro-centric vision of "universal" literature, the "provisional definition of universalism, derived from the believe in European centrality"<sup>1298,1299</sup> (23), which led the writer with "universal" aspirations to merely copy the Europeans, attempting to exist in the "future" of Latin America while still in Europe's wake, and lacking significance at home or abroad. The author needed also to free himself from the stagnation of the "regional" literature in opposition to it, his "provincialism of content and... anachronism of form" (23)<sup>1300</sup> with which, in writing for his countrymen, he wrote statically, and for the wrong purposes, based on the false premise of an identity lost in peripheral origin. Freed from that false dialectic of center/periphery, future/past, the Latin American novelist is free, according to Fuentes, to escape the maniquean simplicity of regionalism, and to develop *complexity* and *ambiguity* in literature (36), as well as critical imagination, humor and parody, personalization, and mythification (24). It is the complexity of

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<sup>1294</sup> "la imaginación mítica renace en el suelo mexicano ... todo este trasfondo mítico permite a Juan Rulfo proyectar la ambigüedad humana de un cacique, sus mujeres, sus pistoleros y sus víctimas y, a través de ellos, incorporar la temática del campo y la revolución mexicanos a un contexto universal"

<sup>1295</sup> This "crisis" refers to the supposed "death of the novel". Fuentes explains that, according to Alberto Moravia, the novel is dead: "Para Alberto Moravia, por ejemplo, la novela ha muerto: sus temas, procedimientos, personajes e intenciones son hoy objeto de una popularización o anexión o banalización" ("For Alberto Moravia, for example, the novel has died: its themes, processes, characters and intentions are today the object of a popularization or annexation or banalization") (17) and Moravia claims, too, that the novel of customs and that of psychology are the two great circles of the novel, and have been closed.

<sup>1296</sup> "La obra de Juan Rulfo no es sólo la máxima expresión que ha logrado hasta ahora la novela mexicana: a través de *Pedro Páramo*, podemos encontrar el hilo que nos conduce a la nueva novela latinoamericana y a su relación con los problemas que plantea la llamada crisis internacional de la novela"

<sup>1297</sup> "naturaleza enajenada en naturaleza propia"

<sup>1298</sup> "provisional definición del universalismo, derivada de la creencia en la centralidad europea"

<sup>1299</sup> "[p]erdida la vieja pretensión universalista de la burguesía europea, todos somos hoy exilados en un mundo sin centro" (84) ... "[e]l fin del regionalismo latinoamericano coincide con el fin del universalismo europeo: todos somos centrales en la medida en que todos somos excéntricos" (97) ("lost the old universalist pretension of the European bourgeois, we are all today exiled in a world without center" ... "the end of Latin American regionalism coincides with the end of European universalism: we are all central to the extent that we are eccentric")

<sup>1300</sup> "provincianismo de fondo y ... anacronismo de forma"

characterization that Machado de Assis sought for his “national” literature; and both this and the great *ambiguity* that we find in abundance in *GSV* and *PP*.

Fuentes, like other critics, sees *PP* as a bridge between the old regional novel and the “new novel”; and, too, he looks at that bridge in terms of the author’s ability to set the work in a rural landscape, but nonetheless escape its “provincialism” in his innovative use of myth and form to bring the work to a “universal” context, thus again opposing content and form, text and context, regional and universal, as has been discussed in the introduction to this dissertation.

However, Fuentes begins to look at that the issue in more complex terms, pointing (albeit without explanation of their role in *PP*, or with different approaches to those roles) to elements that have been explored here: 1) the land as one’s own nature, discussed here in Chapters I and II, and 2) “complexity” and “ambiguity.” Fuentes does not go into detail about Rulfo’s use of land or of ambiguity as he does about Rulfo’s use of myth; however, his concept that literature has changed from considering nature to be a foe to considering nature to be one’s own is quite apparent in *PP*, where the land is entirely and intrinsically connected to the people who live, toil, struggle and die there – it is, though Fuentes doesn’t say so, so much *theirs* that it is *them*.

The characters, mentioned by Fuentes as taking the *place* of the land, are another of the main distinctions that have been expressed between Rulfo’s work and that of the cycle of the Revolution. Durán writes, too, in another statement the points towards our analysis, that, “In Rulfo’s works the anguish and the oppression don’t come from outside, but from the interior of the characters”<sup>1301</sup> (217). This statement is relevant on several levels, beyond perhaps what Durán was implying; the oppression and anguish is not about a war with the Hinterlands, but is, instead, about an internal and human and moral struggle that comes from *within the characters themselves*. As many critics have expressed above, *PP* has both aesthetic and character development that set it apart from the cycle of the Revolution. Far from the “inert souls” of which Machado de Assis complained in reference to Naturalism, the souls in *PP* have *interiority*. *PP* is different in many ways from the novels of the revolution, just as *GSV* is different from its regional predecessors. However, a fact which neither Fuentes nor Durán write, that struggle of complex characters is *expressed in* their natural and agricultural environment.

It is easy to see Guimarães Rosa’s *GSV* also reflected in Fuentes’ conceptualization of the renovating and invigorating role of a literature that finally takes ownership of the *hinterland* and therefore is free to use local protagonists without the limitation of archetype, and free to concentrate on human ambiguities and the presence of universal myths in local soil. It is also easy to see there the “universal” aspects of narrative style and character development. *PP* and *GSV* are those regionally-set works that nonetheless surpass the qualities with which critics have limited and denounced that genre; they are and aren’t “regionalist” works, as seen through their aesthetics and all of their powerful levels of complexity, ambiguity, and paradox; perhaps they are a separate category, as others claim. Their local protagonists escape the role of archetype, even as they are grounded in history and culture. The soil, the mythical aspect, the human ambiguity and character development, the connection between local rural themes and “universal” fates are what make, to many observers, of *PP* and *GSV* a unique facet of regionalism, and one

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<sup>1301</sup> “En las obras de Rulfo la angustia y la opresión no vienen de fuera, sino del interior de los personajes.”

that both reflects that previous literary history of regionalism and turns over a new leaf in its aspirations.

However, as has been explored in this dissertation, although the works *do*, as these critics all suggest, contain elements of region and elements of new complexity in form and ambiguity, it is not the Janus-faced contradiction between the landscape and local protagonists and the universal myths and modernist techniques that make the works unique; they do not have one foot in the regionalism/context camp, and one in universalism/form. Rather, the novels have both feet in both camps, for their “hinterlands” are not just *owned*, “*naturaleza propia*,” but are deeply and complexly integrated with their dwellers in literary places of region constructed through the narrative devices themselves – devices which go beyond creating space within the works, to creating space within the readers. Text and context are one; and so are the works’ realms. Not only have the works not moved beyond region – they are more regional than ever, for in the *earth* is their creative source, subject matter, center, innovation, and method.

## 2. CONCLUSION:

Much of Part II has been devoted to showing *Pedro Páramo* to be a multiple work: past and present, hopeless and hopeful, deeply ambiguous. It is also a multiple *space*, as shown here as well; it is a space that is both Jalisco around the time of the Mexican Revolution, and an imagined space supposedly unaffiliated with that real one. And, it is a dual realm, within that real/imagined location: it is all at once the realm of the living, and that realm of the suffering dead, created by Pedro's cruelty and Rentería's complicit denial of a possibility of change or salvation. This living/dead space is Comala's "simultaneity of stories-so-far" (Massey), its "repository of memory" (Tuan), which, though metaphors for our experience of "places," are in *PP* no metaphor – they *are* the dual-realmed yet borderless "place" of the town in which there both is and isn't air, and the leaves that rustled and the voices that spoke in the past still rustle and speak even though all is scorched and gone.

The space of Comala is also, through its ambiguous and dynamic narrative form, the interactive and timeless space of the *reading* of the work, as explored in Part I with *GSV* as well. Fares points to the multiplicity of "space" in the work, defining space as both a "referent" (Fares 73), the "real" space of Jalisco, and, too, as "a different space, that Juan Rulfo creates, in which he places his characters, and to which the reader must contribute in constructing with his/her active participation."<sup>1302</sup> This explanation contains both that space of imagination mentioned above, and that "space" of the work (73), resembling the one I have been explaining here: the interactive, co-constructed, psychical space of Comala created through the innovations of the work.

This space is a complex creation. As has been pointed out in these chapters, it is created through a narrative process of fragmenting time, juxtaposing past and present, dismantling chronology and with it the reader's sense of the "pastness" of the work as a whole. The interaction of the narrative past and its present, as one, points to the work being "present" to its reader as well. Part of this process involves the other aspects of the narrative structure that bring the reader into the work itself, creating a "presentness" through its *lacunae* and through the dualities and divisions of its initially central narrator.

This space, also, cannot be separated from its Jalisco referent; much of the development of the work involves a deep connection between the human beings in the work and the land that they inhabit, the land in which they dwell. These "dwellers" define the land around them, and are inextricable from it; their sins and failings bring about its ruin. Therefore, the "space" that is created through narrative technique is *also* the "space" of Comala's own dirt and blood, and on many levels. It is the land they have worked and experienced, and it is their own physical and moral image, the dust they came from and to which they return; it is the stuff of burial, and, too, the supposed boundary between life and death that becomes deeply a part of both states of being.

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<sup>1302</sup> "un espacio diferente, que Juan Rulfo crea, en donde ubica sus personajes, y al que el lector debe contribuir a construir con su activa participación"

As has been mentioned previously, there are many telluric literary traditions that trap the past, just as they trap a natural space, into a kind of photograph. Some would claim the same for *PP*, that he “captures” rural Mexico and a historical moment on the cusp of its loss:

All a rural world, whose culture is on the way towards extinction, multicolored in flavors and smells, in textures and colors, in fruits and animals common and strange, that feed and coexist with the inhabitants of the South of Jalisco, form and give personality to a landscape, that in its reality seems to become fiction, tangible and perennial reality, in its marvelous inventory.<sup>1303</sup> (González Casillas 150)

It may be true that he captures it. However, it is not to pin into a box like a dead butterfly; although Comala is dead, the work’s *spatiality* is very much alive through its interactivity and timelessness. Far more than immortalizing a rural scene as a photographic image, embalming it in the documentary action associated with regionalism, *PP* immortalizes it as an *interactive space*. In a time when the land itself can be commercialized, built upon and changed, its history submerged under the transformation of his or our or another modern era, *PP* forges a path to enduring imaginaries of regional space – not the glorified space of earlier regional or national literatures that depended on the rural and the desert to grasp and *fix* the immutable or the lost, but, instead, a fluid space in which mutability is no threat, and loss no object, and in which the past can coexist with the present, haunting it and interacting with it in a way that no simple archive could do. This “place” is a real and imaginary and cosmological space.

That world was indeed disappearing while he wrote the novel, and the work would therefore resonate for many in Mexico during that period of change and rural flight to cities, as well as many since then who never knew the land as it was. However, this connection is more than nostalgia for Rulfo. Harss explains in his annotated interview that, as an orphan, Rulfo always felt the weight of his ancestors, like many of his compatriots, and it was the *dead* who worried the living when they needed to flee their dying towns, and still do:

Most people have migrated. Those who have stayed behind are there to keep the dead company. “Their ancestors tie them to the place. They don’t want to leave their dead.” Sometimes when they move they actually dig up their graves. “They carry their dead on their shoulders.” Even when they leave them behind, they continue to bear the weight.

So with Rulfo, whose ancestry seems remote, therefore perhaps doubly cumbersome. He has also dug up old family graves in search of his lost origins... ‘Historical curiosity’ has sent him browsing, usually in vain, through libraries, bank vaults, and civil registries. Mexico is a country of missing files and misplaced documents”<sup>1304</sup> (Harss and Dohmann 250)

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<sup>1303</sup> “*Todo un mundo rural, cuya cultura está en vías de extinción, abigarrado de sabores y de olores, de texturas y colores, de frutos y animales comunes y extraños, que alimentan y conviven con los habitantes del sur de Jalisco, forma y da personalidad a un paisaje, que en su realidad parece volverse ficción, realidad tangible y perenne, en su inventario maravilloso*”

<sup>1304</sup> in the Spanish (original) version: “*Casi todo el mundo ha emigrado. Los que se han quedado atrás lo han hecho para no dejar a sus muertos. ‘Los antepasados son algo que los liga al lugar, al pueblo. Ellos no quieren abandonar a sus muertos.’ A veces cuando se van cargan con ellos... Y hasta cuando los abandonan, de alguna*

The further he goes from his origins, Harss explains, the more Rulfo feels the weight of his ancestors, a weight one cannot unload. This leads naturally to the concept that buried events and histories, like buried ancestors, remain *always with the living*. They cannot be ignored. In Comala, they certainly cannot be ignored; and what they have to say is that, bury history as you will, it is *still here*. The blood is still in the earth. As Wilson describes, the novel uses memory and dream-states to “make the past a bad dream that cannot be explained away” (Wilson 239); it is always here, in the mind of the reader who fell for the same trap as Juan Preciado, the trap of blindly becoming a repetition and participant in a dark and violent history, rather than knowing it in order to revitalize the land while including the past. It is for more than that nostalgic regionalist grasping that the work creates itself in a rural space, surrounded by rural descriptors and examples. The land that was destroyed there is the same land that cradles the dead, Mexico’s history, and serves as cradle for those living now or yet to be born. In *PP*, that land becomes what it has, in a way, always been: a deeply felt history that is eternally immanent, never past, a cry for redemption and participation.

*PP*, like *GSV*, is a paradoxical work, in that it combines apparently contradictory elements into a unified whole. It combines sound and silence, above- and below-ground, and, more than anything, it combines life and death, and material and immaterial realms, creating of its town a place in which nothing buried is ever forgotten, or at all forgettable. It is a history of belonging and violence, but immanent, here, participatory. Comala has a material life, complete with historical references, seasonal crops, and its own corrupt *hacendado*; it is this material life that creates its symbolic meaning, and serves as protagonist in a non-material play. *PP* is (meta)physical like *GSV*, through it is not mystical or transcendent; it is (meta)physical with its combination of the material realm and a kind of purgatory, all at once, and through human acts and beliefs. Just as *GSV*’s *sertão* is a space of identity and journey and the divine as much as, and because of, the land, *Pedro Páramo*’s Comala is a participatory and self-renewing space of identity and immanent memory, created through similar narrative techniques and thematic concerns.

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*manera siguen acarreándolos. / Rulfo sabe que el peso de los antepasados aumenta con la distancia. El de los suyos, que están lejos, no lo ha descargado nunca. Se ha pasado la vida abriendo tumbas en búsqueda de sus orígenes perdidos. La ‘curiosidad histórica’ lo ha hecho excavar, generalmente en vano, en bibliotecas, cajas fuertes, sótanos de bancos y registros civiles. México es el paraíso de los archivos perdidos.” (Harss 64-65)*

**PART III:  
NARRATIVE and (META)PHYSICAL PARADOX in TWO NOVELS**

**1. PREVIOUS COMPARATIVE WORK on the TWO NOVELS:**

I am not the first to see parallels in the works or in their reception. The comparison of the two works or authors has been explored with varied intellectual framing in articles and conference articles by critics – generally from critics affiliated with universities in Brazil or the United States of America – including Victoria Bañales (1989), Prisca Rita Agustoni de Almeida Pereira (2006), Andre Fiorussi (2007), and Maria Virginia Oliveira Maciel (2007); and, too, in dissertations by Paul Dixon (1981, UNC) (followed by a book in 1985), by Keith Brower (1985, PSU), Paulo da-Luz-Moreira (2008, UCSB), Mario René Rodríguez Torres (2009, USP) and Maciel (2009, USP); and a book by Harss and Dohmann (1967). The works have also been compared within larger analytical frameworks, such as in Ángel Rama’s now classic work *Transculturación Narrativa*, and have been mentioned together by others such as Brazilian critic Marli Fantini. Many of these works are mentioned in this overview, and more information about them can be found in Appendix 2.

As indicated in the Introduction to this dissertation and in Parts I and II, reception of both *GSV* and *PP* has often focused on their place as a bridge: at once part of an old regionalist tradition, and the beginning of something new and innovative in form. In fact, many of the critics listed here have also analyzed the works *together* with a focus on that same dialectic. Harss and Dohmann, Keith Brower, Paulo da-Luz-Moreira, and Marli Fantini are among those who point to the two works as – in parallel – representative of the birth of the *nueva novela* with their “universal” and “modern” tendencies that lift them out of the limitations of their regionalist contexts to inaugurate a great moment in Latin American letters.

The moment of change to the “New Novel” or “Boom” varies according to critical perspective, but it often includes *PP* and *GSV* in its beginnings as a part of that moment. For instance, John King in “The Boom of the Latin American Novel” (2005) states: “Most critics would include Julio Cortázar, Carlos Fuentes, Gabriel García Márquez, and Mario Vargas Llosa in any discussion of the Boom” (69), but he mentions Rulfo as an influence (64) and *GSV* as a “precursor”, establishing a distinct “‘before’” and “‘after’ Rosa” in Brazilian narrative (68). Indeed, as has been shown, *GSV* and *Pedro Páramo* have often been critically affiliated with the Boom or New Novel, and often as belonging both to that gloried period and its regional groundwork. Several critics of both works have commented on the place of *PP* and *GSV* in inaugurating or inspiring the *nueva novela* due to their innovation in universal/modernist style and corresponding escape from the confines of their regional settings.

For their book *Into the Mainstream; Conversations with Latin-American Writers*,<sup>1305</sup> Harss and Dohmann interviewed ten writers between 1964 and 1967 whom they considered to be the first “figures of real distinction” among Latin American novelists, figures of “the true birth of a Latin

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<sup>1305</sup> Their book is viewed as having been “carried out at the height of the 1960s euphoria” and as a canonical work on the formulation of the ‘Boom’ or ‘*nueva novela*’, along with Carlos Fuentes’ *La nueva novela hispanoamericana* (México, D.F., 1969), and several others, including José Donoso’s *Historia personal del boom* (Barcelona, 1972), and E. Rodríguez Monegal’s *El boom de la novela latinoamericana* (Caracas, 1972) (Bethell 576).

American novel” (32). Harss and Dohmann speak of both works as among those that take Latin American writing “into the mainstream” by transcending earlier “pedestrian” (1) and “old-fashioned” (246) literary tendencies to bring Latin American letters “twentieth century” (24). They point to *GSV* as being revolutionary 1) in his stylistic innovation, standing “squarely in the mainstream of modern literature, with its Proustian wiring, its Joycean undertow” (140); and, 2) thematically, for Rosa “the word ‘regional’ no longer applies as a synonym for limitation.” *PP* does not receive quite the same acclaim, since they claim his work has no message and is not a “trailblazing” innovator; however, he is an “exception” to the “generic” and “exhausted” regionalist (“agricultural”) writers of the time through his verbal frugality and his candor. He is “a traditionalist unhampered by traditionalism” (272).

In further criticism, Keith Brower’s 1985 dissertation “*Pedro Páramo and Grande Sertão, Veredas*: the realization of the new novel in Latin American literature” clearly sets up the two novels – specifically, and uniquely – as representing the “turning point in the development of the New Novel” in the larger body of “collective” Latin American literature. He claims that among the examples of the “New Novel”, *PP* and *GSV* are unique in being “the first to embody fully the major characteristics of the New Novel”, and thus they are the “starting point of a period dominated by innovative prose fiction” (iii). In his work, he defines the “New Novel” by its “non-traditional uses of narrative voice, language and style, and structure and time”. The “old novel”, however, was characterized by “lengthy descriptions of geography, cultural practices, and local customs” (27-30). He claims that innovation in Latin American letters grew from 1) inspiration from their “foreign counterparts” in the “innovative maneuverings in the areas of form, structure, and style”, 2) technical devices found in poetry rather than prose, and 3) Borges, the first writer in Latin America, according to Brower, to use his imagination (43-46). Specifically, Brower focuses on the moment’s fulfillment in *GSV* and *PP* by their use of “unconventional narrative voice”, “radically non-traditional use of language”, and “complex, non-chronological structuring” (iv), and their use as well of “individualized protagonists, universally understood themes, and a multi-dimensional portrayal of reality” (227), and he analyzes the effect of these techniques on the role of the reader – a new “participatory role” (95). For Brower, then, literature was stagnant, but Guimarães Rosa and Rulfo’s successful incorporation of *learned innovative techniques* and *universal themes* led to a revitalization of the Latin American novel.

Paulo da-Luz-Moreira also looks at Guimarães Rosa and Rulfo’s works as representative of new literary parameters for both regionalism and modernism that is found also in the works of William Faulkner. In his dissertation, he analyzes short stories by Guimarães Rosa and Rulfo and also William Faulkner<sup>1306</sup> “with attention to the way these three authors dealt with two different traditions: regionalism and modernism”. Da-Luz-Moreira claims that “Modernism offered Faulkner, Guimarães Rosa, and Rulfo tools to approach innovatively the reality they knew so well” (279-280). However, he distinguishes himself from earlier criticism of the three authors – and its background of preoccupation with the writers’ having “transcended” the “confines of regionalism” (8) – by focusing on the concept of “juxtaposition” rather than “transcendence.” Thus, though he draws lines between modernism in form and the local in

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<sup>1306</sup> “Famigerado”, “Os Irmãos Dagobé”, “Corpo Fechado”, “Esses Lopes”, “São Marcos”; “¡Diles que no me maten!”, “La cuesta de las comadres”, “Es que somos muy pobres”, “Talpa”, “El día del derrumbe”; “The Tall Men”, “The Hound”, “Wash”, “A Rose for Emily”, “A Bear Hunt”.



content/context, he considers that the regional aspects of the works are not “transcended” but “transformed.” He calls this accomplishment “modernist localism” in its “more modern treatment” of traditional content, with expression of the effects of modernity on region, and its “bold explorations brought by modernism to expand the limits of representation”(279).

Brazilian critic Marli Fantini (2003) also writes of the revolutionary meeting of modernism and regionalism and the international resonance of the new novel born of that meeting. She looks not to the “Boom” or “New Novel” specifically, but points to something she calls “transnational regionalism”; nevertheless, it shares many elements with those previous canonizations of the “moment”. Fantini is a Brazilian critic who writes mainly of Guimarães Rosa but who nonetheless points to Rulfo as a member, with Guimarães Rosa, of a larger “tendency” to combine and resolve local regionalist tendencies with global (i.e. European) literary movements, through the “creative appropriation of the European avant-gardes and their unfolding in the renovating techniques of transnational regionalism”<sup>1307</sup> (31). She considers these works a part of what she refers to as “transnational regionalism”, a Latin American tendency that creatively appropriates the “aesthetic paradigms”<sup>1308</sup> of the European avant-garde movements in order to develop them locally in the revitalization of regional subject matter (31, 34).

As seen here, many critics see the works as the beginning of a new juxtaposition of innovative technique and traditional regional context, and often that tradition of “regionalism” is seen as outmoded, and the “technique” is viewed as being foreign in origin even though the moment of change is seen as a purely Latin American achievement, an anti-Imperialist gesture. Because of this complexity, the global vs. local elements of the Boom have led to generations of discourse and discord in criticism. For instance, several critics have pointed to the Latin American roots of the change; claiming that either purely or mostly local situations and tendencies that led to the possibility for that change, even though some of the techniques may have been borrowed.

Among those who look at Latin American roots of the Boom are Brower (above) who saw Borges and local poetry as stylistic factors, and, too, Brian Gollnick and John King, for both of whom the role of the novel at home was instrumental in creating the environment for change, even as the inspiration came from foreign influence according to both. Gollnick (2005) claims that the regional novel had made “advances” in the decades leading up to the Boom in “defining Latin America’s cultural modernity”; it was local development that allowed the writers to draw on “international influences and local cultures to generate new narrative forms” (44, 57). John King in “The Boom of the Latin American Novel” (2005) also looks to the trends at home in Latin America as creating the groundwork for the “New Novel” or “Boom” work, looking to the “rhetoric and realities of what economists at the time called ‘developmentalism’” and to the Cuban Revolution, which he claims promoted discussion and unity among artistic vanguards (59). These factors, plus “aggressive” publishing and a “growth in middle-class readership in Latin America” (61), nourished the Boom. Again, for King and Gollnick, the *role of the novel* at home is what led to the emergence of the Boom novel; but the Boom novel is defined by its innovation, which for most critics, has to do with Joyce, Woolf, Faulkner and others abroad, as well as with such writers as Borges at home, one of few of Latin America’s own that are

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<sup>1307</sup> “*apropriação criativa às vanguardas européias e seu desdobramento nas técnicas renovadoras do regionalismo transnacional*”

<sup>1308</sup> “*paradigmas estéticos*”

accepted broadly as “stylistic innovators” before the Boom (65). Regarding influence, King cites Carlos Fuentes saying that “Faulkner had and has a great lesson for us... Certainly many of the more modern novelists, García Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa, myself, were very influence by Faulkner”<sup>1309</sup> (65).

Gollnick, King and others laid a foundation for viewing the rise of the New Novel as a combination of Latin America’s readiness to achieve that growth, and the region’s openness to modernist influence. Some viewpoints, however, go further in establishing the authentic Latin Americanness of the moment. Ángel Rama (*Transculturación narrativa en América Latina*) concentrated, as did those above, on the textual and contextual elements of the works *GSV* and *PP*; however, he dealt critically with the associated dialectic of “universal/modernist” text and “local” context, preferring to seek the *origins* of the Boom *completely* in America, and not just, as Gollnick and King did, the development of the continent’s readiness to accept literary innovation.

Ángel Rama is mentioned in many of the works on Rulfo and Guimarães Rosa, and with good reason, since he writes about them in parallel in his much-read theoretical work. He considers them both to be canonical novels of “narrative transculturation” (*transculturación narrativa*), and sets them up as rescuing Latin American letters both from irrelevance – as the authors above claim, too – and *also*, uniquely, *from European influence* in a unique twist on the local/universal dialectics. In Rama’s estimation, both context *and* text of these two works are regional, the dialectic laid to rest. He does not deny the presence of external concepts in this new Latin American literature – only their power, for he sees the regions as capable of interpreting, choosing, and recreating the external in their own image.

Rama finds in Latin American literary history a pendulum swing between the “internal” and the “external” which often resulted in contradictory practices of seeking autonomy in the “cultural singularity of the region” even as looking to the larger Western framework of influence in expression. As a result of this pendulum swing, some literary criticism, he claims, has come to see works as “mere sociological documents, when not political proclamations,”<sup>1310</sup> while other views are “equally pernicious” in cutting works from their cultural context, ignoring representativity entirely. In opposition to these extremes of criticism, Rama claims, “literary works are not outside of their cultures, but crown them” (24), in a statement that seems to imply that a work does not need to be, as others have implied, *either* representative of its local culture *or* literary, and that being literary does not separate a work from its origins but ties it to them. Rama then proposes that there are in fact *literary answers* to the “vanguardism-regionalism conflict”<sup>1311</sup> (25) in what sounds like a literary, or at least literary-critical, manifesto:

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<sup>1309</sup> “Carlos Fuentes: An Interview with John King,” in J. King (ed.), *Modern Latin American Fiction: A Survey* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), p. 140.

<sup>1310</sup> “*meros documentos sociológicos, cuando no proclamas políticas*”, “*igualmente pernicioso*”, “*Las obras literarias no están fuera de las culturas sino que las coronan*”

<sup>1311</sup> This is yet another framing of the “external”/“internal”, “universal”/“regional” divide developed as developed in his work. On a historical level, regions were being threatened by modernization; as a result, a “*guerra literaria*” (31) formed between the extremes of regionalist and of modernist movements (*modernista* in Brazil, but avant-garde or *vanguardismo*, not “*modernista*, in the Spanish American context).

The only way in which the name of Latin American isn't invoked in vain, is when internal cultural accumulation is capable of providing not only "raw materials", but a worldview, a language, a technique for producing literary works. There isn't anything here that resembles autarkic folklorism, laughable in an internationalist age, but there is an effort at spiritual decolonization, through the recognition of the capacities acquired by a continent that has already a very long and fecund inventive tradition, that has mounted a persistent fight to constitute itself as one of the rich cultural sources of the universe.<sup>1312</sup>  
(25)

Rama is seeking to prove that there is a Latin American literature that is indeed founded on local/internal specificity, but *not* as a source of autonomy artificially mined – and undermined – through European-learned discourses; instead, it is the source of a Latin American form of narrative that is "spiritually decolonized". The term "transculturation" – coined by Ortiz as a combination of "acculturation", "desculturation", and "neoculturation" (39) – points, for Rama, to the American power of "cultural plasticity"<sup>1313</sup> (45) of selection and invention, or "capacity for elaborating with originality"<sup>1314</sup> (41), that marks the internal, regional territories of Latin America as those "rich cultural sources" that can lead to inventive literatures of their own. All ideas need not be purely local in origin, but writers from these decolonized regions can *choose* influence from abroad and from home in a process of "losses, selections, rediscoveries and incorporations"<sup>1315</sup> (47) that lead to "high creation".

Rama cites *PP* as a work that "unifies" text and language in order to speak *from* his singular linguistic community, rather than about it, thus restoring the regional view. In other words, *PP*'s linguistic innovations are *local* and *oral*; and, too, *PP* was written in *opposition* to the "compartmentalized story"<sup>1316</sup> of Huxley (52). He claims that *GSV*, too, is written in a *local* tradition of "discursive monologue"<sup>1317</sup> with oral roots, in *opposition* to the influence of "stream of consciousness" of Joyce and Woolf (52). Thus, he disaffiliates these two authors – often seen as "modernist" and "regionalist" – from any foreign influence. He also claims that, though previous regional literature looked to the regions for the permanence of tradition (61), writers such as Rulfo and Guimarães Rosa found therein an incessantly *inventive* culture that had been hidden in earlier literary approaches, a "vigorous and persistent nourishing source" that is the result not of a literary elite but of "the enormous effort of vast societies constructing their symbolic languages"<sup>1318</sup> (17). This is, according to Rama, a culture with its own fluidity and

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<sup>1312</sup> "La única manera que el nombre de América Latina no sea invocado en vano, es cuando acumulación cultural interna es capaz de proveer no sólo de "materia prima", sino de una cosmovisión, una lengua, una técnica para producir las obras literarias. No hay aquí nada que se parezca al folklorismo autárquico, irrisorio en una época internacionalista, pero sí hay un esfuerzo de descolonización espiritual, mediante el reconocimiento de las capacidades adquiridas por un continente que tiene ya una muy larga y fecunda tradición inventiva, que ha desplegado una lucha tenaz para constituirse como una de las ricas fuentes culturales del universo."

<sup>1313</sup> "plasticidad cultural"

<sup>1314</sup> "capacidad para elaborar con originalidad"

<sup>1315</sup> "pérdidas, selecciones, redescubrimientos e incorporaciones"

<sup>1316</sup> "relato compartimentado"

<sup>1317</sup> "monólogo discursivo"

<sup>1318</sup> "vigorosa y persistente fuente nutricia" "el esfuerzo ingente de vastas sociedades construyendo sus lenguajes simbólicos"

transmutability, oscillation and ambiguity; what appears to emulate modernism, he claims, in fact comes from *within* America to *exceed* modernism.

Rama concludes that “transculturative” works such as *GSV* and *PP* (and the works of Arguedas, on which he concentrates) are an answer *both* to the limitations of earlier regionalism *and* to the cosmopolitan creations of modernist influence (65), and create a third possibility in which the regional authors have everything they need right there to create “high literature” and to do so in a way that mediates between the “interior-regional” and the “externo-universal” (54). “Guimarães Rosa is not uprootable from his Minas Gerais... nor is Juan Rulfo from Jalisco”<sup>1319</sup> (110) he states; they share their affiliation to their local origins, and in Rama’s argument, they take foreign influence as a challenge and respond in kind, but with *American* elements, and, thus, without a loss of “soul”.

Rama’s attempt to separate *GSV* and *PP* from any implication of modernist influence by finding their language, structure and ideology to be completely *different, autochthonous* gestures is interesting, but appears at times to be exaggerated. Indeed, the writers use many elements of local dialects and storytelling tropes, such as the Brazilian *caso*; and, too, both works are written to appear unmediated by a judging narrative voice. It would be difficult, however, to prove that the works are completely born of deeply hidden local sources rather than echoing in part the global influences of which the authors were aware. In fact, more than difficult to prove, the gesture in itself risks reducing the novels to representatives of a phenomenon in order to save their “soul” of local authenticity.

Nonetheless, Rama’s book has been critically contagious in terms of its generation of responses and citations, and in fact many of the critical commentaries on *PP* and *GSV*, or more generally on Rulfo and Guimarães Rosa, mention or even respond to Rama’s unique consideration of “*vanguardismo*” (avant-garde) vs. “*regionalismo*” (regionalism) of form in their analyses, including Pereira, Maciel, and Torres. For instance, Prisca Rita Agustoni de Almeida Pereira agrees with Rama in her work “*De Comala Para o Sertão: Diálogos Entre Juan Rulfo e Guimarães Rosa*” (“From Comala to the *Sertão*: Dialogues Between Juan Rulfo and Guimarães Rosa”) (2006), finding that both novels “discovered how to exploit the poetic potentiality contained in the popular speech of the respective regions in an unmistakable manner, each one in his language, each one inside his own literary tradition, both contemporarily,” recuperating and

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<sup>1319</sup> “*João Guimarães Rosa es indarraigable de su Minas Gerais... o Juan Rulfo de Jalisco.*” As Ángel Rama explains in *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina*, the multiplicity of “*regiones*” and “*minirregiones*” in Latin America has its origin in the conquest and colonization of Latin America, in which city centers barely governed their vast “hinterlands”. These regions all developed their own autonomous practices through their ethnic make-up, economic activities, adaptation to the environment, and interaction with the “suprarregional” order – and some regional outlines/definitions/ are still very much in place today, in countries including Mexico and Brazil. Rama continues to say that the combination of geographical, economic, historical, ethnic and social components that delineate these spaces deeply affect those who are raised within their borders, leaving “*peculiaridades culturales*”, “*la marca profunda con que los ha moldeado su cultura regional*” (108-109). Even those writers who leave for the city or elsewhere never lose that “mark”, says Rama; although they may be creative in other ways, and are not tied to conformity to stereotype, “*João Guimarães Rosa es indarraigable de su Minas Gerais... o Juan Rulfo de Jalisco*” (110).

re-elaborating popular sources<sup>1320</sup> (72). For Pereira, as for Rama, the “text” of the works separates them from previous incarnations of regionalism, but not through – as many would argue – external literary influence; rather, the textual innovations are in fact *authentic* and *ancient local influences* that are finally fully represented in these novels.

Maria Virgínia Oliveira Maciel also engages with Rama in her conference article (2007), indicating that any comparison of Guimarães Rosa and Rulfo must follow and acknowledge the importance of Rama’s theory of “transcultural” writers. However, she criticizes his assertion that the authors’ works have local roots, but also have universal significance as “high literature.” She claims that the views of “high” and “universal” are Europeanist, and flawed; the significance should not be compared to the “high” or “universal.” In her 2009 dissertation “*Formas de mediação nas obras de Juan Rulfo e João Guimarães Rosa*” (“Forms of Mediation between the Works of Juan Rulfo and João Guimarães Rosa”), Maciel continues to engage with Rama, finding in a selection of works<sup>1321</sup> by Rulfo and Guimarães Rosa evidence that there is a fundamental dissonance in Rama’s theory about Latin American literature, given that these melancholy pieces do not seem to point to a salvation for peripheral culture in universality but rather, and tragically for Arguedas, they use anthropology to view the self.

Mario René Rodríguez Torres (2009) also engages critically with Rama in his work. He writes of Rulfo and Guimarães Rosa as authors who purport to be humbly provincial and even anti-intellectual but who nevertheless write of the “hinterlands” *for the city*, and educated visitors to the backlands despite their roots. Torres explains that in this and in being “modern,” the works are not, as Rama claims, literarily autonomous from Europe. Maciel and Torres, though they distance themselves from Rama’s vision of the regional/universal dialectic, nonetheless engage with the texts according to those criteria: criteria of the novels as representatives of the “local” and “universal,” and, especially for Torres, as “text” and “context” in separation, the dialectic stands, though it is always complex and never the same for two critics.

Beyond these text/context and universal/local dialectics, though often in conversation with them, other critics have found deeper similarities between the works either in text/technique, or in message, or in other areas: Fiorussi draws parallels between the works’ techniques of “naturalizing artifice” in order to create narrative draw, Dixon draws parallels between their uses of ambiguity in non-linear structures, finding irreconcilable conflict between the works’ form and content, and Bañales looks to their use of metaphor. However, even in separating themselves from explicit participation in that debate, some of these critics (see Dixon) still turn to using the works as representatives or case studies of a larger concept rather than as complex works with much more to offer than a stepping-stone in literary history – and, too, Fiorussi, even in choosing to concentrate on text over context, states that *PP* and *GSV* – both works that marked a “reorientation” in Latin American Letters – “dialogue with narrative genres associated with regionalism (the novel of the Revolution in Mexico and the “regionalism of 1930” in Brazil),

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<sup>1320</sup> “souberam explorar a potencialidade poética contida na fala popular das respectivas regiões de uma maneira inconfundível, cada um na sua língua, cada um dentro da própria tradição literária, os dois contemporaneamente”

<sup>1321</sup> “Sarapalha”, “Corpo fechado” and “A terceira margem do rio” by João Guimarães Rosa and “Luvina” and *Pedro Páramo*, by Juan Rulfo.

abdicating partially from the realist and testimonial tendency of their models in favor of more daring flights in the plane of language and of narrative structure”<sup>1322</sup> (1-2).

As seen above, many of the critics/theorists who have written about both works together have done so within the context of the regional/universal dialectic of categories, either specifically with regards to literary genres and movements (regionalism, the avant-garde, etc.) or more generally as gestures of Latin American identity in a dichotomous world of periphery vs. center. These studies generally point to a much-acknowledged boundary-crossing tendency of both novels, and often conclude – as the critics of individual works have done (Parts I, II) – that the works’ value lies in their development of aesthetic innovations even as they use regional settings, elements whose sense of conflict is often reinforced by the long-standing concept of banality or formal stagnation in regional genres. For some, the subject matter is “local” and the narrative “universal”; for others, both are local, which gives the works “universal” (or otherwise) value and acclaim, but many concentrate on their *fundamental difference* from regional precursors, and their *formal innovation*, in which that form is separate from the land. Even Rama, who seeks to place the origin of the form *in* the regions, nonetheless focuses on that “local” form as separate from the local settings.

The dialectics discussed here have been very important in the criticism of the two works, setting them up within a conceptual framework that is concerned with the inward vs. outward leanings of the works in reference to their “inward” textual styles/innovation/depth and their “outward” contextual apparatus, or in reference to their “inward” (Latin American) vs. “outward” (global) relevance and influence. Many of these discussions use the works fruitfully as tools for understanding literary history in Latin America and the world, and the works’ perceived place in Latin American literary history. The two novels make for useful case studies for intra-American literary parallels and divergences, or for Latin American gestures of autonomy, and especially for the emergence of the New Novel or Boom. However, although many of the above interpretations have a lot to offer, and some deeply question aspects of the universal/local, aesthetics/setting dialectic in engaging with it, I differ in my work with many aspects of these analyses, both in the frequent separation of text/context/content, and in their use of the novels as case studies for larger questions of periphery and center. I find instead that the works’ narrative structures are deeply tied to their uses of regions and to those regions’ human and symbolic elements. These critics have found what I have founds: that *GSV* and *PP* share something in form and content. However, my work does not seek explicitly to place these authors at the forefront of regionalism or of the New Novel, nor does it seek to explain how their formal innovation liberates them from their landscapes; instead, I look beyond genre and dialectics to see the works as a *unity* of elements, innovative in their use of *space* – literary, narrative, regional, all at once.

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<sup>1322</sup> “reorientação... dialogam com gêneros narrativos associados ao regionalismo (a novela de la revolución no México e o “regionalismo de 1930” no Brasil), abdicando parcialmente da tendência realista e testemunhal de seus modelos em favor de vôos mais ousados no plano da linguagem e da estrutura narrativa”

## 2. CONCLUSION:

Both Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* and Guimarães Rosa's *Grande Sertão: Veredas* depict with care the "telluric force" of their regions (in Albuquerque's words, 35). The figures, creatures, scenery, and words of their regions are present there, in minute detail, in documentary precision. And, too, the authors are from the rural places about which they composed their works: Guimarães Rosa grew up in Minas Gerais witnessing wonders, and describes himself as "of the *sertão*"; and Rulfo grew up in Jalisco on an *hacienda*, where he witnessed both the rural lifestyle and the period's violence firsthand. However, the authors are erudite city-dwellers and regional men alike, and in reflection of their complexity, the works are also much more than what their documentary features proclaim, even as they are very much made up of these. Using parallel techniques, both novels create of the works more than "region," and do so *through the region*, instilling within the works a paradoxical (meta)physical *space*, and within the readers, a literary/psychical *space* of integration and participation.

The works' gestures and tools, their use of narrative and spatiality, and even their themes of human evil are all very much in parallel. In fact, as has been explored here, despite the very apparent differences between the spare, concise Mexican work and the eloquent, epic Brazilian one, there are remarkable similarities between them in myriad respects. They are parallel in their uses of innovative language, non-linear structure, multiplicity and division in narration, unreliable narration, and *lacunae* for reader participation. They are parallel in their uses of archetypes and historical representation, in representations of the land and its connection to mankind, in its lack of boundaries and its oneiric possibilities. They are parallel in conclusions about the human source of evil, implicit or explicit; in the use of paradox in word and work and characters; in Diadorim and Susana, both between worlds (man/woman, sane/insane), both impossible loves at the root of male protagonists' choices; in the *spatiality* of the texts. They are in fact even similar in that both Riobaldo and Pedro Páramo end their journeys as a pile of stones.<sup>1323</sup>

In another parallel, the works also both contain towns that are barren through violence. Comala we have explored; in *GSV*, there is "Paredão," the place of the final battle between all *jagunços* in the *sertão*, brought there by anger and believed bedeviling, by Riobaldo's own actions and Diadorim's drive for vengeance. Paredão is now abandoned, Riobaldo tells us, with murmurs and flapping batwings, like the handkerchiefs of mourning at dusk; the church is being returned to nature, covered in grass. The dogs are not domestic friends, but creatures that lick blood daily with their wagging tongues. It is a wild place without people, though Diadorim is buried there. In many ways, it is like Comala; a town destroyed, with murmurs and mourning. The space is even, in a way, outside of time, just like Comala: it is so quiet that "*ali passa o sussurro de meia-noite às nove horas*," "there the whisper of midnight happens at nine o'clock" (113). However, the differences between these two towns point in part to the differences in the works; despite parallel gestures of narrative, spatiality, and themes, each novel has a very unique voice and

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<sup>1323</sup> Riobaldo, resting after the war and his loss of Diadorim, "*estava um saco cheio de pedras*," "was a sack full of stones" (618); Pedro Páramo, as his spirit walks away with Damiana, falls. Then: "*se fue desmoronando como si fuera un montón de piedras*," "he was crumbling as if he were a heap of stones" (178) – differing, perhaps, in that for one the sack is still full, and it is he alive who will contemplate his actions, whereas the actions of the other are contemplated by his victims.

statement to make. Riobaldo's Paredão has bats, and cows rubbing up against the wall; it has dogs, and memories, but it has no ghosts. It is a stop in Riobaldo's journey of discovering his own role in his actions, a place of tragic loss; but it is no death-realmed Comala, and doesn't speak for itself. Both towns point to the fact that violence is a human evil and is destructive, but Paredão represents for Riobaldo his *rua da guerra*, where the *demônio* grew in his own heart's *redemoinho*-journey of anguish and vengeance. Comala is a different metaphysics, where the poison in the land is *communal*, and even the metaphysical realm is part of that human poison.

There are many differences in the works, but this points to a large one: in *PP*, the Church is mercenary, and so may God be, if He is even there; He may only be the larger moral compass that determines the weight of evil on Earth, if that.<sup>1324</sup> The metaphysics of the land is not so much a material *mysticism*, as in *GSV*, but a tragic result of the *cacique*'s cruelty and the complicit Church's twisting of the place into a trap for the desperate souls of its dwellers and their playing out of their pain. The paths in Comala are scars on the landscape; in *GSV*, however, the paths – the *veredas* – are places of beauty in a harsh landscape, and places of choice. In *GSV*, it is not only tragedy that is hidden in the land and revealed in the novel. It is, instead, the possibility that our earthly journey is also an inner journey through grace, there whether or not we can find it; and it is the exploration of evil, there only if we make it. Both works are complex in their (meta)physical spatiality, but land for *GSV* is full of mystical possibility and connection, and for *PP*, it is full of manifest memories of a violent past, a reflection perhaps of the fact that the authors share a parallel childhood of rivers and earth, priests and education – but with one childhood bright and the other tragic.

These novels are, then, bracketed in difference – they are different at first glance, and after much analysis of their parallels, they are different in certain core messages and assumptions. However, those parallels are deep, strong, and illuminating. The novels are works in tune with one another, both illustrating the power of literature to infiltrate the space of a reader's mind and co-create a potent and abiding (meta)physical and human landscape, one useful for their critical and philosophical explorations. These works use remarkably similar narrative techniques and telluric gestures to express their land-visions in a (meta)physical and participatory fashion, giving weight and clarity through imagination and narration to what can only be illustrated, suggested, traveled, never simply told.

These are novels of land, and in an amazingly complex way. The regions they write about are regions that were changing at the moment of inscription, and are changing still. Modernity brought changes in labor and economics, changed regional centers and paved landscapes in “progress”; in fact, both authors commented on the loss of the landscape, in nostalgia/solastalgia. Rulfo explained part of that loss to Harss: Jalisco was a place that produced “corn to feed the

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<sup>1324</sup> The only apparent connection between Comala and an external power for good is the fact that the town appears to be on a cosmic scale. If there were no objective “good” to oppose to “evil”, then nature would not have followed Comala into its abyss; but the very fact that the earth and stars themselves, and all the elements, dried up and failed at the moment when the weight of human cruelty overwhelmed the good, indicates that there is an objective, external, better way to be. When the priest knows that he, and everyone, will pay for his sin, he says “*Está bien, Señor, tú ganas*” – “It’s okay, Lord, you win” (87). Although he has created a disconnect with God, Father Rentería nonetheless, as Solanilla points out, “*espera el juicio último de Dios*” – Expects God’s final judgment (179).



whole Republic of Mexico,”<sup>1325</sup> but corn is “a great destroyer of the earth. So, the earth is destroyed” (Harss 63).<sup>1326</sup> There was a river in his childhood: “...There was a river. We went to bathe in the dry times to the river. Now this river brings no water...”<sup>1327</sup> (Rulfo, Harss 64). Due to these observations, Harss concludes, “Rulfo writes the epitaph of those lands”<sup>1328</sup> (Harss 73). Guimarães Rosa, too, wrote about a time of free wandering *jagunços* that was rapidly becoming past legend, and, as mentioned in Part I, he was aware of its loss, of the encroaching new way of life – as was Riobaldo. However, neither Rulfo nor Guimarães Rosa was in fact writing the “epitaph” for his region; they were not embalming the regions in archival glory. Instead, as has been shown in this dissertation, they were literarily “*dwelling*” in the lands to make of them what they could really be: spaces to which we are forever bound in identity, spirituality, and memory, and which can speak to us about our deepest concerns – in the books, those of evil and its human source – in order to create a better future.

Both João Guimarães Rosa and Juan Rulfo wrote about their region in such a way as to “rescue” it, but not by merely painting its picture; instead, they *rescue it into being*, as Heidegger’s term “dwelling” implies; they “dwell” in the earth to “rescue” it, to “free” it “into its own way of being” (17): as a simultaneity of stories-so-far, a repository of memory, a material metaphysics. In fact, in many ways, what these authors accomplish in their works is to show a reality that is generally symbolic/felt, but to show it much more explicitly – as they see it. Juan Rulfo has claimed to interviewers that “the imagined characters” ... “give me the reality that I need” (Garrido 755);<sup>1329</sup> and that his works are “apparently real things, but they aren’t based on reality”<sup>1330</sup> (Klahn 423). His “imagined” characters and realities are, to Rulfo, as he was several times trying to explain, *more “real”* than what could be found in “reality.” What these apparently confusing interview statements imply is that his work’s careful construction of a speaking tomb, and careful drawing of the reader into that tomb, are, though imaginary, an elaboration of his own view of the *real* immanence of history in the space we inhabit in the world. Guimarães Rosa, too, expresses in the complex metaphysics of the *sertão* that the physical is our way into experiencing the divine and mystical, “*a verdadeira realidade*,” “the true reality” (Camacho 48); and, too, that our connection with the landscape can both inspire us, and can color our “real” experience of the world with our own perceptions. Both works show a deeper “reality” *through* their construction of (meta)physical realms in their places of felt identity. The singularity of the local is expressed in an entirety that roots the works to the specificity of the soil itself, in order to better evoke what truly resides in that soil in its interaction with human perception of the sacred and of memory: in *GSV*, the spiritual realm, in *PP*, the specter of violence.

Rather than finding it “paradoxical” (“2.b... self-contradictory absurd, or intrinsically unreasonable”) that the works should be both regional and innovative, I instead find region and innovation in *harmony* in both of these novels, and I find it marvellously “paradoxical” (“2.a...

<sup>1325</sup> “maíz para alimentar a toda la República Mexicana”

<sup>1326</sup> “un gran destructor de la tierra. Entonces, la tierra está destruida.”

<sup>1327</sup> “Había un río. Nosotros nos íbamos a bañar en tiempo de secas al río. Actualmente ese río no trae agua...”

<sup>1328</sup> “Rulfo escribe el epitafio de esas tierras”

<sup>1329</sup> “los personajes imaginados” ... “me dan la realidad que necesito” ... “Recreaciones de la realidad que se alimenta de una realidad imaginada”

<sup>1330</sup> “Recreations of the reality that feeds from imaginary reality.”

*apparently* absurd... self-contradictory... counter-intuitive... nevertheless... well-founded”) that the physical and metaphysical are *one*, as constructed through the innovation of the text and the human relationship to land. In the construction of these realms, text and context function seamlessly and creatively: the novel *GSV* is the *sertão*, which is Riobaldo and is its metaphysical overlay, and by inviting the reader in through textual form, the work is a productive psychical geography in the mind of the reader. The novel *PP* is Comala, which is its dwellers and their pain, and by inviting the reader in through textual form, the work creates in the reader his/her own Comala of speaking pain, crying out to be acknowledged and dealt with.

Key aspects of Riobaldo’s and the reader’s experience of the land in *GSV*’s *sertão* reflect Heidegger’s concept of “dwelling” as “unfolding” land, rescuing into being. They reflect also Plotinus, Ruysbroeck, and other material mystics’ visions of earthly existence as not just reflective of but essential to the human experience of the “realm-realm,” “*reino-reino*.” The connection of “place” between Riobaldo and the land of the *sertão* is vital, because the mystical interactions with the *sertão* are integral to Riobaldo’s *redemoinho* in tale and physical wandering, and vice versa. In *Pedro Páramo*, too, the land and its connection to its dwellers is vital to the work; the novel takes seriously such concepts of “place” as “simultaneity of stories-so-far” (Massey) and as “repository of memory” (Tuan), creating what is to Juan Preciado a physically experienced “reality” of what is generally part of the psychically “felt” part of geography. Literally, memories remain to haunt the living; literally, the stories of the past and present exist in simultaneity. This connection creates of rural Jalisco a space in many ways like that of the *sertão*, though also different: a space of confluence of past/present, material/experiential... and a space to which the reader is a burdened witness.

These spaces are created in the novels through narrative techniques that open the works up to the possibility of paradox, open their realms up to multiplicity, and then open that multiple space in the reader’s own mind, giving it further spatiality, further out of time. The narrative in *PP* is multiple in that it has multiple “beginnings,” just as *GSV* has multiple “endings”. Also, the narrators are both multiple: in *GSV*, Riobaldo is his past and present self, split in half by truth; in *PP*, Juan Preciado is also split in half by a truth in being perceived as alive, at first, and in being subsequently known to be dead, narrating his living moments not to the surprised reader but to his grave-mate – and, further, the narration is multiple simply because there are many voices. There are many other ambiguities, multiplicities, and further *lacunae* as well. The narrators are also both “divided”: Juan Preciado is both a part of and is separate from Comala’s “world,” just as Riobaldo both is and isn’t of the *sertão*. The works’ narrative ambiguities create a space for reader insertion into the text as co-creator of it, and the narrators’ divisions engage the reader by being bridges into the novels: Riobaldo, an erudite man of the *sertão*, brings literate readers into owning the wild landscape; Juan Preciado, alive in a dead world, brings our empathy with him into death, tangling us in Comala’s airless purgatory of voices. These ambiguous and attracting works become far more intimate than they could be in simple telling, and far more powerful.

Paul Dixon writes that the only way to overcome the naturally frustrating nature of ambiguous works is to interpret them as *a gesture towards an acceptance of ambiguity itself*. Our interaction becomes (1) an “intimate confrontation” with the work of art, which leads then (2) to giving up, and achieving perspective on the work as a “work of art” and then (3) adopting perspective on ambiguity as a structure in itself, and “transcending the mundane realm by

creating or beholding the impossible” (20-21). Indeed, in both *PP* and in *GSV*, the reader is asked to confront the works intimately, and asked to behold what appears to be impossible. However, I see that textual ambiguity of labyrinths and *lacunae* as aiding on the construction not of the *impossible*, but instead of the *paradoxical*, a term allowing for the possibility of *seeming* contradiction of elements in a nevertheless coherent whole. The nature of the texts’ paradoxes is one that, in fact, undermines definitions and assumptions not in the literary “art is art” plane as suggested by Dixon (20), but in the “real” one, with its materiality and its metaphysics as felt and experienced – and in the works, fully unfolded, reflecting an illuminating, not a contained, hermeneutics of paradox. These works speak to relevant and present experiences of region and spatiality by constructing, developing, and unfolding those experiences in the narrative.

These two novels contain paradox in a way that liberates regional space to be what it always has been, to the authors and to many others as well: human space, sacred space, space of memory... for one novel, a material metaphysics of mystical and mysterious connection, and for the other, an immanent past, a human metaphysics of earth-bound penance. These elements of the works’ realities are all firmly *grounded* in the earth itself, telluric and spatial, even as they are also fully expressed and created in a delinearized and participatory spatial narrative. (Meta)physical space through participatory narrative... although the novels appear at first glance to be quite different, their substance and gestures speak in rhyme about narrative, landscape, and humanity. Through the many and remarkably parallel gestures discussed here, the inclusive and spatializing narratives align us as readers with the journeys of Riobaldo and Juan Preciado, integrate us into their worlds, and make their (meta)physical/literary space *our* space, the psychological geography of the reader, self-sustaining, our gift and our responsibility. *Pedro Páramo* and *Grande Sertão: Veredas* illuminate, in parallel, the power and possibilities of space and voice: in critically circling the human source of evil, the works use narrative gestures of paradox, spatiality, and readerly collaboration to construct and share an enduring spatial (meta)physics for their regional landscapes.

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## **PART II: The Immanence of Past Suffering in *Pedro Páramo***

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**APPENDIX 1:  
LITERARY CRITICISM and the AFFINITY and DIFFERENCE between BRAZIL and  
SPANISH AMERICA**

As stated in the Introduction, the boundaries and the identity/identities of Brazil and Spanish America have long been a topic for literary, intellectual, and critical discourse, both in and outside of the regions in question. Critical approaches range from 1) considering them to be one united identity/region, to 2) considering them to be no more akin than any other two regions/cultures; however, the majority of contemporary analyses create a balance between affinity and difference.

The extremes are quite clear in their positions, though quite possibly incomplete in their conclusions. There are and have been those who would see Brazil and Spanish America as part of one seamless whole.<sup>1331</sup> However, attempts to move beyond the nomenclature of “Ibero-America” or more generally “Latin America” and into a deeper foundation for complete unity must often be done through elision of the many contrasting elements of Brazil and Spanish America. Indeed, Robert Patrick Newcomb claims in his description of his forthcoming work *Nossa and Nuestra América: Inter-American Dialogues* (Fall 2011, Purdue University Press) that several well-known Spanish American and Brazilian public intellectuals, such as Rodó, used the essay in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries to “propose transnational and continental identities for Latin America,”<sup>1332</sup> but those identities are consistently “problematic” due to Brazil’s “evolving and often conflicted relationship with its Spanish-speaking neighbors.”<sup>1333</sup> A homogenization of the “Ibero-American” category is, then, “problematic” – as are, of course, many categories, including Spanish America and every nation.

These aspects and more of the “problematic” nature of a continental identity point us towards the other extreme, that of denying commonality, embodied in an article by Gregory Rabassa, “A Comparative Look at the Literatures of Spanish America and Brazil: The Dangers of Deception” (1978). In this article, Rabassa peruses the literary and political histories of the two regions, and claims that despite the “superficial resemblance” between Spanish American and Brazilian

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<sup>1331</sup> In fact, some have called for viewing all of America as a whole due to its formative processes. UC Berkeley Professor Emeritus and Director, Emeritus, of the Bancroft Library Herbert Eugene Bolton is famous for his course “History of the Americas”, in which he “pioneered a new trend in teaching by presenting the history of the New World in unified and broad aspects rather than in dismembered parts divided along national boundary lines.” (11, Academic Senate. 1958, *University of California: In Memoriam*. University of California Berkeley, 1958. *Calisphere*. Web. 11)

<sup>1332</sup> See: “Robert Patrick Newcomb” (CV), [spanish.ucdavis.edu/people/cv/Newcomb\\_CV.pdf/](http://spanish.ucdavis.edu/people/cv/Newcomb_CV.pdf/) accessed 29. Jul. 2011.

<sup>1333</sup> Newcomb cites one attempt at suppressing Brazil/Spanish America contrast in his study of Rodó in “José Enrique Rodó: “Iberoamérica,” the Magna Patria, and the Question of Brazil” (2010), in which he states that Rodó “attempts with some difficulty to fit Brazil” into his continental vision, finding it necessary in “Iberoamérica” (1910) to resort to “logical contradictions” and “textual misinterpretations” in order to attempt to “rhetorically incorporate Brazil into the *magna patria*” (368). Rodó’s idealistic vision is shared by other writers, who likewise struggle to maintain its integrity; for instance, Lezama Lima, in his discussion of the American Baroque, uses one Brazilian example to further his discourse – that of Aleijadinho, the 18<sup>th</sup> century sculptor. However, he refers to Aleijadinho as “*la épica culminación del barroco..., con su síntesis de lo negro y lo hispánico*”<sup>1333</sup> (Lezama Lima 173), and “*la forma grandiosa de lo hispánico con las culturas africanas*” (105), in spite of the sculptors Lusitanian, not Hispanic, origins.



literatures, their histories are quite different, due to both historical divergences in the colonies and also to continuing influences from their different European sources (121-129). He points out that in the moment of the “New Novel”, there appears to be a new connection between the literatures of Brazil and Spanish America, but he warns his readers that this should not be mistaken for an indication that the cultures are truly akin, but rather that they are become *universal*. He points to *GSV*, *Cien Años de Soledad* and other novels as “mainstream” fiction with “coincidences” in their explorations and themes which “are less likely to be ascribed to a common background than to a common moment” (129-130), a universal moment, one shared with English, German, French, and other literary languages: “The similarities are universal... The cultures do remain separate, in spite of outward similarities; what they have in common is most often shared, also, with other areas of the world” (131). Their differences are shared, too, for Brazil and Spanish America can only act through the same “haze of translation” that separates all languages and, according to his reading of Pierre Menard (“every reading is essentially an act of translation”), separates every reading of every text (131). To further his exploration of the universality of literature, Rabassa comes to the “final realization... that Octavio Paz is right when he says that literature is one... In this sense, then, Brazilian and Spanish American literatures are not members of a continental subdivision, but, rather, of the whole universal body of literature.” (119)

As Newcomb (2010) explains (above), Rodó’s 1910 ideal of Ibero-America sought to elevate a single identity above the *truly heterogeneous* nature of the regions. Rabassa, on the other extreme, constructed in 1978 his ideal of de-categorized universal literature; but his is, too, nonetheless an ideal that discards details, for indeed some of that “superficial resemblance” may point to a real resemblance, and it cannot be categorically discarded. Between these two concepts lie other more complex understandings, as apparent in the many contemporary calls for a furthering of Luso-Hispanic literary analysis within America. Newcomb is one of the contemporary critics calling “for sustained comparative analysis of Brazilian and Spanish American literature, history, and culture”; in his description of *Nossa and Nuestra América*, he describes how Brazil has “historically been imagined as both *within* and *outside* the category of Latin America”, and though it is challenging to the “coherence of the overarching continentalist projects that have long been a fixture of Spanish American political and intellectual life” – and, as he describes further in his CV, there is indeed a “Luso-Hispanic divide”<sup>1334</sup> – Brazil is nonetheless “*necessarily problematic*” (his emphasis) – by which I think he implies that it is both *problematic* and yet also *necessary* for a complete understanding of the region.

Newcomb’s rhetoric encouraging a Luso-Hispanic critical approach is not unique; there are in fact quite a few recent published works that look at the traditional critical divide between Latin American and Brazilian literature and call for a renewal of critical contact. Many of these interventions for the expansion of criticism of the literary canon(s) take place within the discipline of Comparative Literature, which as a framework relies upon the transcendence of borders – borders, such as linguistic ones, which must be present in order to be crossed. Therefore, in calling for a further and deeper critical analysis of Brazilian and Spanish American

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<sup>1334</sup> From his CV: “*Beyond Tordesillas: Critical Essays in Comparative Luso-Hispanic Studies* (co-edited with Richard A. Gordon): this edited volume seeks to be the first of its kind published in English by a U.S.-based academic press. It is our hope that *Beyond Tordesillas* will inspire further academic collaborations and critical interventions across the Luso-Hispanic divide.”

literatures, a comparative critic inherently underlines their differences, even while pointing to the usefulness of their contraposition. Nonetheless, the call for communication across that divide emphasizes that the regions' mutual ignorance has been a wrong, and integration and awareness would be right. For instance, the *Revista Iberoamericana* came out with a special issue in 1998 (182-183) entitled "O Brasil, a América Hispânica e o Caribe: Abordagens Comparativas" in which every article associates at least two of these categories.<sup>1335</sup> The work attempts to redress what is seen as a historical wrong – that of mutual ignorance between Brazil and Spanish America – through active literary comparisons. In its introduction, Lúcia Helena Costigan and Leopoldo M. Bernucci write:

It doesn't cease to be an unfortunate paradox even today the fact that two geographical entities – historically, linguistically and culturally related – have been ignoring each other for a long time: Brazil and the other countries of Spanish America. The phenomenon is not recent and has profound roots in the collection of historical vicissitudes of the Continent.<sup>1336</sup> (11)

There is, according to this statement, a phenomenon of mutual ignorance in spite of real kinship, a phenomenon which is "*infeliz*", "unfortunate," needing rectification. There are, they write, linguistic differences, and countless moments in which literary aesthetics have diverged considerably; however, there are a multitude of themes of continental association open to evaluation (12). Bernucci and Costigan describe their efforts as part of a larger current project, led by such critics as Jorge Schwartz and those before him: in "Abaixo Tordesilhas" (1993), Schwartz writes of Brazil as the "enormous stranger" in the "corner of South America", in Mário de Andrade's words<sup>1337</sup> (185), but in discussing the lack of communication in the past, he lauds those efforts that have been made over the years to bring the two together towards an ideal – as seen in the title of the article – of literary awareness and integration across the continent.<sup>1338</sup> Perhaps in response to such a call, comparative critics such as Earl Fitz (2002) have called for a reexamination of critical categories for literary scholars of Latin America, in his case a triple reexamination: an inclusion of Brazil in Latin American criticism, an "inter-American" scholarship of North, Central, and South America, and a vision of Spanish America that acknowledges and explores the internal cultural divisions within that category. Fitz proposes in fact that all Latin Americanists learn Portuguese<sup>1339</sup> "so that the richness and diversity of Brazilian literature is open and available to us", and that the inclusion of Brazil in approaches to Latin American literature (as in his own and Judith Payne's inclusive approach to the New

<sup>1335</sup> See: <<http://revista-iberoamericana.pitt.edu/ojs/index.php/Iberoamericana/issue/view/260/showToc>>

<sup>1336</sup> "*Não deixa de ser um infeliz paradoxo ainda hoje o fato de que duas entidades geográficas-histórica, lingüística e culturalmente afins – venham se ignorando ha muito tempo: o Brasil e os demais países da America Hispânica. O fenômeno não e recente e tem raízes profundas no conjunto das vicissitudes históricas do Continente.*"

<sup>1337</sup> "no rincão da Sulamérica o Brasil é um estrangeiro enorme"

<sup>1338</sup> Schwarz points to Emir Rodríguez Monegal and Angel Rama as two great integrators through their work on anthologies and editorial projects and, too, criticism, in the tradition of José Veríssimo and, in spite of affirmations to the contrary, Mário de Andrade, both of them connoisseurs of Argentine literature; and subsequently Brito Broca and Manuel Bandeira (186-195). Other projects have followed which create of Latin America a "unified cultural corpus": Casa de las Américas, Unesco, and Biblioteca Ayacucho (196).

<sup>1339</sup> Sophia McClennen (2002), among others, agrees, claiming that unfamiliarity with Brazilian literature leads scholars to "assume that Spanish American literature is the standard" and that they have followed parallel histories; she encourages polyglossia for a stronger base of scholarship (10)

Novel<sup>1340</sup>) paints a *complete* picture of Latin American literature rather than a partial one.

These critics and projects are constructing a growing paradigm of comprehensive Latin American comparison, in which Brazil and Spanish America are acknowledged to be both separate and yet also united in mutual relevance and ever-growing intellectual, literary, and critical contact. By accepting their differences but encouraging juxtaposition, they propose a more comprehensive approach to the canon(s), and offer a window into a critical context in which a comparison between a Brazilian text and a Spanish American one does not require validation, but is rather assumed first to be relevant. Such proposals are being echoed throughout literary criticism, and are in fact being institutionalized as well, with an increasing focus in universities on joint studies of Spanish American and Brazilian literatures. This is mirrored in the construction of majors and even departments in several universities, now combining, at least as an option, the previously separate studies of Spanish-American and Brazilian literatures.<sup>1341</sup>

This middle road accepts the relevance of contact without denoting or requiring an amalgamation of the two categories into a seamless whole, or denying the works' diverse contexts; it is a promotion of critical integration in comparison and contrast, not as one monologue, but as two (or many) in close dialogue, across complex and evolving "Luso-Hispanic divides" and united by complex and evolving kinship.

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<sup>1340</sup> See: PAYNE, Judith A., and Earl E. Fitz. *Ambiguity and Gender in the New Novel of Brazil and Spanish America: A Comparative Assessment*. Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1993. Print.

<sup>1341</sup> It is not uncommon to see such announcements as this one from the University of Georgia in 2008: "now a new undergraduate major, premiering next spring, will allow students to make connections between Spanish America, Spain, Brazil and Portugal to compare literary, linguistic and cultural traditions". The new major includes such courses as "Introduction to Ibero-American Language, Literature and Culture (PTSP 3010); Topics in Afro-Lusophone/ Hispanic Identity (ROML 4860); and Ibero-American Senior Seminar (PTSP 4900)" (Williams 2008), and it was constructed according to an ideal of a new generation of Latin Americanists, as stated by Susan Quinlan of UGA: "The new major in Ibero-American Comparative Studies is the first time students will be able to look critically at the connections between the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking worlds... The idea is to create young Latin Americanists in the purest sense of the word... We badly need students with a broad expertise that spans both worlds." As additional evidence of this trend, my own graduate program at UC Berkeley modified the Ph.D. in 2007, instituting new language requirements (specialists in Hispanic literatures or linguistics must demonstrate working knowledge of Portuguese, and vice-versa for specialists in Luso-Brazilian literatures/linguistics) and course requirements (students in Track 1, Hispanic and Spanish American literatures and cultures, must take a seminar in Portuguese, and likewise students in Track 2, Luso-Brazilian literatures and cultures, must take a seminar in Spanish) (see: <<http://spanish-portuguese.berkeley.edu/graduate-programs/the-ph-d-hll/>>)

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**APPENDIX 2:  
FURTHER CRITICAL ANALYSES of BOTH *GRANDE SERTÃO: VEREDAS* and  
*PEDRO PÁRAMO***

As mentioned in Part III, there are a number of critical analyses that, like this dissertation, approach *Pedro Páramo* and *Grande Sertão: Veredas* in parallel. These include articles by Victoria Bañales (1989), Prisca Rita Agustoni de Almeida Pereira (2006), Andre Fiorussi (2007), and Maria Virginia Oliveira Maciel (2007); and, too, dissertations by Paul Dixon (1981, UNC) (followed by a book in 1985), by Keith Brower (1985, PSU), Paulo da-Luz-Moreira (2008, UCSB), Mario René Rodríguez Torres (2009, USP) and Maciel (2009, USP), and a book by Harss and Dohmann (1967). Also, several critics have included both works in the formulation of their larger analytical frameworks, including Ángel Rama, or within frameworks that concentrate on one work, such as that of Brazilian critic Marli Fantini.

As has been explored, many critics of the two works apart or in conjunction have perceived them as central to (or case studies of) a *larger moment of change* in the universalization of Latin American letters, often with regard to their interaction with avant-garde movements from outside the region. This moment is not unlike that described by Casanova. The balance that Casanova describes (see Introduction) between the specificity of geographical context and the global influence of the separate literary realm is not just something for critics to recognize, or for authors to choose, but is something that, she explains, *literature itself* has obtained over time in separate moments around the globe: the moment in which the “accumulation of specifically literary resources... allowed literary space gradually to achieve independence and determine its own laws of operation” (37). This happened for Latin America in the twentieth century, according to Casanova:

Latin American writers managed in the twentieth century to achieve an international existence and reputation that conferred on their national literary spaces (and, more generally, the Latin American space as a whole) a standing and an influence in the larger literary world that were incommensurate with those of their native countries in the international world of politics... literature enjoys a relative autonomy when the accumulation of a literary heritage... enabled national literary cultures to escape the hold of national politics. (39)

Casanova places Rulfo in the role of “revolutionary” in her book:

With Borges, Asturias, Carpentier, Rulfo, and Onetti, the Hispano-American novel developed in violation of realism and its codes. In the early years of the “boom”, a debate developed within this transnational literary space between the upholders of literature in the service of national and political causes... and advocates of literary autonomy. (325)

As mentioned in part in Part III, Harss and Dohmann, Keith Brower, Paulo da-Luz-Moreira, and Marli Fantini are among those who point to *GSV* and *PP* as representative of that moment of change – for some, the birth of the *nueva novela* – with their “universal” and “modern” tendencies that lift them out of the limitations of their national and regional contexts to inaugurate a great moment in Latin American letters.

HARSS and DOHMANN:

In 1967, founding Guimarães Rosa's and Rulfo's place in the "New Novel" or "Boom", Luis Harss and Barbara Dohmann placed Guimarães Rosa and Rulfo among eight others<sup>1342</sup> in the role of taking Latin America "into the mainstream", unabashedly praising the works for their achievement of "universal" relevance and their bringing of Latin American letters into the "twentieth century" (24). Harss and Dohmann explain, as others have, that the novel as a literary form in Latin America was "pedestrian" and "had not yet found itself" in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, containing much "subliterature" (1,4), though there were moments of thematic depth<sup>1343</sup>. A full aesthetic and thematic revolution for the novel did not occur until the 1950s – in the works of, among others, Guimarães Rosa and Rulfo. For Harss and Dohmann, Guimarães Rosa's *GSV* "puts the 'regional' novel squarely in the twentieth century" (24). They describe the author as a man who "gallops bareback in the wind and sleeps under the stars, with an ear to the ground, where he hears the drumming of centuries", and an author who is "perfectly sui generis" (140). Beyond idealizing his authenticity, Harss and Dohmann, like others mentioned in Part I, also use the arguments of 1) his literary innovation in the modernist tradition and of 2) his thematic depth to separate his work from his predecessors as Brazil's "new leaf" (1414). In terms of innovation, Rosa does more than his predecessors to fight the "petty tyranny of the flat style predominant in Brazilian fiction", for he "not only fulfills a vision but culminates a whole literature... all the way down the road, and out the far end. He stands squarely in the mainstream of modern literature, with its complex Proustian wiring, its Joycean undertow. ... Not that he echoes anybody" (140). Thematically, to Rosa, "the word 'regional' no longer applies as a synonym for limitation. He can cover broad spaces because there is plenty of room inside him. In him outer scope is inner range." (142). Their analysis places his work in a global literary realm, taking Brazilian letters into the "mainstream", even as he is "always himself" and his work "the full measure of the man behind it" (140-141).

Harss and Dohmann also point to Rulfo as exceptional, framing him as the best example of regionalism, and its exception. Like most of their critical peers, they describe the "old-line regionalism" as "less literary than agricultural", "old-fashioned stuff of little more than pictoric interest", at best "colorful and informative", "roughly drawn" and "overly stylized", "always the same" (246-247). Its writers were "mediators between man and nature", seeking to imprint the unmarked land with man's image, and found urgency in social conflicts in "feudal fiefs, mines, tropical plantations" (246). Though the works have today, they claim, "reached an acceptable level of achievement", they are still "generic" and "exhausted", and "rarely transcend basic limitations" – with the "only [exception] today" of Juan Rulfo (247). Rulfo, according to Harss and Dohmann, is that exception due to the directness of his writing:

Rulfo's brief and bright course has been one of the wonders of our literature. He has not blazed any new trails; to the contrary, he has been content to tread along traditional paths.

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<sup>1342</sup> Alejo Carpentier, Miguel Ángel Asturias, Jorge Luis Borges, Juan Carlos Onetti, Julio Cortázar, Carlos Fuentes, Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa

<sup>1343</sup> In the realm of prose, Machado de Assis represented a single instance of "deeper outlook" (13), as did Horacio Quiroga with his "inwardness" (14) and Arlt with his "instinct for buried treasure" (16).

But his footsteps go deep. He writes about what he knows and feels, with the simple passion of a man of the land come into contact with elemental things: love, death, hope, hunger, violence. With him, regional literature loses its pamphleteering militance, its folklore. Experience is not filtered through the prism of civilized prejudice. It is laid out straight, with cruel candor... His language is as frugal as his world... He has no message... He... does not inveigh against treachery and injustice, but suffers them... It is written in blood" (257)

For Harss and Dohmann, Rulfo's work stands out from that picturesque, stylized, photographic, melodramatic, uninspiring "regionalism" not in being an innovator, but in being the most subtle of the traditionalists – in showing a reality unfiltered through moralizing prose. This effect, of course, goes back to his sparse style, his purposeful elimination of authorial interruption, and, thus, his stylistic innovation, although for Harss it has everything to do with his "connection" to the land. And, for Harss, as for his critical peers mentioned here, Rulfo's prowess is in comparison to a faded and lacking regionalism. Like Guimarães Rosa rescuing "regionalism" from being a synonym of "limitation", Rulfo is "a traditionalist unhampered by traditionalism" (272).

Idealistically, Harss and Dohmann see the novel of the 1950s/60s in Latin America as vanishing the "old problems and distinctions that bothered generations past", including the "regional" and the "urban", claiming that the one is no longer "parochial" nor the other "worldly"; they are simply "setting", and all with "breadth and relevance", now that the novelist as shortened "the distance to his material" (23). However, as is seen in later critical writing, that distinction is not gone. Indeed, as John King describes, a year after the publication of Harss and Dohmann's English-language book, a polemic grew between Cortázar and Arguedas, in which Cortázar attacked "telluric" nation-representative literature as the death of a writer, and Arguedas responded that the "provincial" is better than the "universalists" who "were in danger of losing, through their experimental novels, their connection to the real problems of the continent". Arguedas killed himself in 1969, so that argument ceased, but the polemic remained – and remains (King 77). As explored above, text and context abound in criticism in a state of conflict in the exploration of the "newness" of the 20<sup>th</sup> century narrative as much as in that of previous literatures.

#### BROWER:

Keith Brower (1985) defines the "New Novel" by its "non-traditional uses of narrative voice, language and style, and structure and time". The "old novel", however, was characterized by "lengthy descriptions of geography, cultural practices, and local customs", in which the human being was of "secondary importance", resulting in flat characters (27-30). "Literary quality" was also of "secondary importance" (32). Protest novels were no more literary; they simply added "graphic violence" (34). He explains that Spanish America underwent "initiation... as a world citizen" due to ramifications of World War II, and began to be concerned with its "place in the modern world" and with the "individual" (36-37). A newfound introspection brought up existential concerns that religion couldn't always answer (38). In this context, the Spanish American novelist "discovered from his foreign counterparts [including Joyce, Faulkner, Woolf,

Dos Passos, Proust, Kafka] that certain innovative maneuverings in the areas of form, structure, and style could make major contributions toward lifting the novel form from the stagnant state in which it found itself at the end of the 1930s” (43). Local poetry also affected the novelist, allowing him/her to find “the technical devices necessary to elevate prose out of the confines of conventional language usage” (44). The third influence was Borges, Brower claims; for he was the first to feel equal to foreign writers and simply use his imagination (45-46). Brower delineates much more of literary history, including stories of “partial success”, but from these changes he points to the moment in which the “new novel” was truly born in the writings of Guimarães Rosa and Rulfo, the first “complete practitioners” of a novel that answered all of those concerns and successfully incorporated those influences and devices that would mark the moment.

#### DA-LUZ-MOREIRA:

Paulo da-Luz-Moreira (2008) considers that Rulfo and Guimarães Rosa, along with Faulkner, represent new literary parameters of both regionalism and modernism in something he calls “modernist localism.” He claims that the authors are united in the marginal position of their homelands within America, and that they all avoided the “traps” both of idealizing and of barbarizing their regions; rather, they elaborated on the “tensions and problems” caused by modernity (1-2). He considers that all three have “renovated” Regionalism by creating “a unique brand of combination of localism and modernism”. In defending the comparison, he is careful to explicitly state that he places none above the other in importance or influence (4).

Da-Luz-Moreira explains that the authors “invented their own remarkable literary worlds” both through both regional and modernist means: they “lovingly collected” material and “attentive observation” as “insiders”, and also through (and “strengthened” by) the “bold explorations brought by modernism to expand the limits of representation”. He terms their accomplishment “modernist localism”, and determines that through their literature of juxtaposition they end the previous “segregation” of “country and city, oral and written, literate and illiterate, landowner and peasant cultures” that had been reinforced through realism (279). Their “more modern treatment” of the situations, themes, character types etc. of their local literary traditions include “exploration of techniques such as changing focal points, narrative voice, time shifts, and language,” as well as a “penchant for the paradoxical” (15), and also, most important, expression of the conflict between the form of “pre-enlightenment modernity” established in the interior regions, and the “successive waves of modernity” affecting them (281). He states: “This encounter” – of modernism in form, and the local in content and context – “enables a transformation of the parameters that govern regionalism as literary genre” (280).

#### FANTINI:

As mentioned in Part III, Marli Fantini (2003) also creates a term with which to refer to Guimarães Rosa’s work, and which she applies to Rulfo’s as well: “transnational regionalism.” She points to both authors as members of a larger “tendency” to combine and resolve local



regionalist tendencies with the “aesthetic paradigms”<sup>1344</sup> of the European avant-garde movements, through the “creative appropriation of the European avant-gardes and their unfolding in the renovating techniques of transnational regionalism”<sup>1345</sup> (31).

Regarding Guimarães Rosa’s work specifically, she points to the author’s role of frontier-crossing in both his life and work: in life, he was linguist, traveler, intellectual, diplomat, doctor, as well as *sertanejo* (and, ironically, “Chief of the Service of Demarcation of Frontiers” (“*Chefe do Serviço de Demarcação de Fronteiras*”)); and his work crosses such boundaries as “oral and written, popular and erudite, mythopoeic knowing and epistemological knowing, intuition and reason”<sup>1346</sup> (30), altogether creating a “poetics of frontiers” (29) and a “plurilingüistic and transnational vocation”. Stylistically, she sees his work as borrowing from the poetic resources of the “European avant-gardes,”<sup>1347</sup> while maintaining “the local color of our naturalist regionalism” and the “discursive formations of tradition”. It is a “creative conjunction between the traditional discursive formations and the poetic resources of the European vanguards” (34).

These dual elements create, according to Fantini, *translatability* in Guimarães Rosa’s work, *universality*: it has “the conditions of universal translatability”<sup>1348</sup>, and “intellectual retranslation”, placing it in the “gallery of universal literature” alongside Euclides da Cunha, Graciliano Ramos, Juan Rulfo, Gabriel García Márquez, Jorge Luis Borges, and Miguel Ángel Asturias – all consecrated as a part of the “gallery of universal literature” through their utilization of aesthetic techniques (34). “Universal” for Fantini implies global reading relevance having especially to do with innovation in style, and “regionalist” implies “local color”. Guimarães Rosa, the “boundary crosser”, from a heterogeneous, hybrid, postcolonial nation (33), is both – and in this, a part of a larger Latin American tendency, a moment.

The writers above generally point to the aesthetic influence as being European, though Brower points also to Borges and local poetry as stylistic factors. Other writers look to America for the sources of the boom, at least with regards to the development of the region’s readiness, such as Brian Gollnick and John King, as mentioned in Part III; Ángel Rama goes beyond.

#### GOLLNICK:

In this vein, Brian Gollnick (2005) sought to understand the roots of the “new novel”, finding evidence of foreign influence and, too, of changes in the *role of the novel at home* that laid the

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<sup>1344</sup> “*paradigmas estéticos*”

<sup>1345</sup> “*apropriação criativa às vanguardas européias e seu desdobramento nas técnicas renovadoras do regionalismo transnacional*”

<sup>1346</sup> “*oral e escrito, popular e erudito, saber mitopoético e saber epistemológico, intuição e razão*” ... “*poética de fronteiras*” ... *vocação plurilingüística e transnacional*

<sup>1347</sup> “*vanguardas européias European avant-gardes*” ... “*a cor local do nosso regionalismo naturalista*” ... “*formações discursivas da tradição*” ... “*criativa conjunção entre as formações discursivas da tradição e os recursos poéticos das vanguardas européias*”

<sup>1348</sup> “*as condições de traduzibilidade universal*” ... “*retradução intelectual*” ... “*galeria da literatura universal*”

groundwork for the novel's development in Latin America. Gollnick traces the progress of "what came to known as the Boom novel" to the "advances made in the preceding decades" in the regional novel, claiming that it is the "regional novel from the first decades of the twentieth century" – such as the "*novela de la tierra*" – that "marks a turning point in Latin American narrative", and that without their advances, the Boom novel "would not have been possible" (44). He agrees with many critics that the "time has long passed when the regional novel could be taken to represent the maturity of Latin American literature through the successful expression of national identities" (56), but nonetheless he writes that they were the "groundwork" for later innovation (57) and are, as Carlos Alonso claims, "crucial" in "defining Latin America's cultural modernity" (44). He looks to the political and economic institutions and developments in the region as setting the scene for those regionalist writers to draw "on international influences and local cultures to generate new narrative forms" but also to, more than anything, create for the novel a "central place in Latin American intellectual life" and participation in "broad dialogues on the major issues of their day" (57).

#### ÁNGEL RAMA:

Ángel Rama goes beyond the search for Latin American roots for the New Novel in the role of literature, to search for those local roots even in the aesthetic innovations associated with the New Novel.

In *Transculturación Narrativa en América Latina* (1982) Rama frames his argument, which includes *PP* and *GSV* as vital case studies, in a large historical sweep. He begins by setting up the conflict for Latin American letters between their local origins and their Iberian past (15). He explains that the young society's writers contributed to the conflict founded by their colonizers by turning for literary inspiration to Classicism and Italy, then France and England, without identifying these as new colonizers or understanding their own complicity in their new colonization (15). The impulse for independence led writers to turn for subject matter to their "raw materials" ("*el desvalido indio, el castigado negro*"), but in a contradictory manner, utilizing those subjugated groups rhetorically as a pretext for demands for autonomy, but continuing to socially, economically, psychologically, and even physically injure those communities in a search for modernity according to European standards, and continuing to frame their works in European discourses. Flagrantly 'free' of Iberian influence in their subject matter, that "vigorous and persistent nourishing source" that was the cultural peculiarity of the interior and its associated symbolic language, these writers at the same time affiliated themselves to Western literatures in their attitudes and styles, with "internationalist eagerness"<sup>1349,1350</sup> (16-17). Rama relates this issue too to the historical dialectic of "originality" and "representativity" ("*la*

<sup>1349</sup> Even in rejections of the "decadent" Europeans and, later, North Americans, Rama claims that the very nature of that ethical principle ("*principio ético*") was also of foreign origin ("*procedencia extranjera*")

<sup>1350</sup> "...en la originalidad de la literatura latinoamericana está presente, a modo de guía, su movedizo y novelero afán internacionalista, el cual enmascara otra más vigorosa y persistente fuente nutricia: la peculiaridad cultural desarrollada en lo interior, la cual no ha sido obra única de sus élites literarias sino el esfuerzo ingente de vastas sociedades construyendo sus lenguajes simbólicos" (17) (in the originality of Latin American literature is present, in the role of guide, its restless and novel-oriented internationalist zeal, which masks another more vigorous and persistent nourishing source: the cultural peculiarity developed in the interior, which hasn't been the work only of its literary elites but the enormous effort of vast societies constructing their symbolic languages.)

*originalidad*”, “*la representatividad*”), in which writers sought originality in the literary representation of regions which were “notoriously distinct from the parental societies”<sup>1351</sup> in their “physical environment”, “heterogeneous ethnic composition”, and “different level of development” from that European model that was “visualized as the only model of progress” (18). In its very evocation of difference, the literature looked abroad while representing the most picturesque of “home”. This contradiction in the writing of “local color” is in fact easily noted in Latin American literary history.<sup>1352</sup> Rama finds it in regionalism, indigenism, and even urban avant-gardes and other movements,<sup>1353</sup> changing from the national-romantic to the sociological in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but nonetheless continuing to theorize the “local color” as a “condition of originality and independence,”<sup>1354</sup> and continuing to do so in the shadow of contradictions with external influences. Rama cites Pedro Henríquez Ureña (1928) on the concept of a literary pendulum in Latin America between the poles of the internal and the external. The region’s literature was integrated into the larger Western framework of influence even as it sought its “foundational stone” of autonomy in no other place than the “cultural singularity of the region”; the result was a pendulum swing between the two poles of attraction<sup>1355</sup> (23).

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<sup>1351</sup> (“*notoriamente distinta de las sociedades progenitoras*”) (“*medio físico*”, “*composición étnica heterogénea*”, “*diferente grado de desarrollo*” “*visualizaba como único modelo de progreso, el europeo*”)

<sup>1352</sup> This is practice that long outlives the need for political independence. Much of Latin American literary development lies in an illusive arena of identity containing such constructed dichotomies as “original” vs. “secondary”/“derived”, “universal” vs. “local”, “civilization” vs. “barbarism”, etc. Many approaches have attempted to assimilate both local figures/sceneries and European cultural inheritance, often with inherently problematic approaches. For instance: the scenery was defined by its colonizers as lacking in culture, and the colonized subject, therefore, was defined by others and the self as derived; the literary act of carving out a uniquely American identity by utilizing the same simplistic, exotic images of the local communities and landscapes (see *indianismo* in Brazil, *gauchesca* in the Southern Cone, etc.) result in a kind of hypocrisy: the local “other” is apparently appreciated, but this is in the abstract; they are reduced, epistemologically attacked, and often placed artificially in the past for easy glorification as a nostalgic and autochthonous archetypal origin, while their contemporary counterparts are cleared away in the search for modernization according to European models (see Josefina Ludmer on some of these aspects of the *gauchesca*). These auto-ethnographic identity-performative writing acts reduce and confuse the local “other” and the “self”; the rural peoples are used doubly as a foil for a modern America, and a mask for a unique America. Traces of these contradictions and problematics are found in many more recent examples of regionally or ethnically oriented works as well. It can also be argued that more recent literary acts that use these tropes of the local-exotic ironically – as in, for instance, the assimilative power of Oswald de Andrade’s *antropófago* and Mário de Andrade’s *Macunaíma*, or of aspects of the Carpentier’s and Lezama Lima’s *neo-barroco*, or Retamar’s rebellious Caliban – nonetheless simplistically inscribe themselves and their local ethnic groups, albeit in new terms... as a sort of oneiric chimera, packaged according to the colonizers’ old gaze even as flung back at him.

<sup>1353</sup> “[c]riollismo, nativismo, regionalismo, indigenismo, negrismo, y también vanguardismo urbano, modernización experimentalista, futurismo”,

<sup>1354</sup> “*el criterio romántico del “color local” aunque animado interiormente por la cosmovisión y, sobre todo, los intereses, de una clase, la cual, como es propio de su batalla contra los poderes arcaicos, hacía suyas las demandas de los estratos inferiores. Criollismo, nativismo, regionalismo, indigenismo, negrismo, y también vanguardismo urbano, modernización experimentalista, futurismo, restauran el principio de representatividad, otra vez teorizando como condición de originalidad e independencia, aunque ahora dentro de un esquema que mucho debía a la sociología que había estado desarrollándose con impericia. Esta sociología había venido a sustituir, absorbiéndola, la concepción nacional-romántica*” (20)

<sup>1355</sup> “...nacida del rechazo de sus fuentes metropolitanas, [la literatura latinoamericana] había progresado gracias al internacionalismo que la había lentamente integrado al marco occidental y al mismo tiempo seguía procurando una autonomía cuya piedra fundacional no podía buscar en otro lado que en la singularidad cultural de la región.

Specifically, looks at language, structure, and worldview (*Lengua, Estructuración literaria, Cosmovisión*) as the elements through which a transculturative work finds a solution to the destructive impact of external modernizing influence. In literary *language*, “transculturation”, for Rama, is that which leads from the typical reduction of characters to an imitated popular speech, a scrutinized exception to the distant and discordant hierarchically superior narrative, and leads to the local characters being instead the narrative voice itself: a voice that “spans... the totality of the text”<sup>1356</sup> (50), speaking *from* the singular linguistic community. Despite the fact that such a narrative quality is generally not an organic outcome of the author’s place in the community but rather the conscious choice of a literate person to take on the voice of the observed in a subtle and careful way, Rama, without addressing this possibility, considers such an act of “unification” of text and language to be an “authentic” restoration of the regional view and identity. Rama cites *Pedro Páramo* as such a work (51).

Structurally, regionalist works were built, according to Rama, on a 19<sup>th</sup> century naturalist model, and therefore were difficult to adapt to the *vanguardista* structures. The “solution” in this instance, Rama claims, is the return to equally effective but nonetheless traditional forms of narrative: the popular and oral. He claims that *GSV* is written in the ancient form of “discursive monologue”<sup>1357</sup> with oral roots, in *opposition* to the influence of “stream of consciousness” of Joyce and Woolf; and that *Pedro Páramo* was written in *opposition* to the “compartmentalized story”<sup>1358</sup> of Huxley (52). Though many critics would disagree with this disaffiliation of Rulfo and Guimarães Rosa to modernist influence, Rama seeks in it evidence of a powerfully positive and internally created art form. He is not alone in seeing in both authors the status of “continuator-transformer”<sup>1359</sup> (54) of their local regionalist genres, and echoes many others in determining their importance in changing their inherited genres, but many would disagree about the works’ antagonistic stance toward European letters.

In reference to worldview, the seat of ideology and values, Rama argues that modernization brought cosmopolitan irrationality, plurality and ambiguity, and a new view of the myth and the archetype as they were taken up anthropologically and psychologically with new significance (57-60). The response of regional literature was to seek refuge in the perceived permanence of tradition (61). However, writers such as Rulfo and Guimarães Rosa found therein an incessantly *inventive* culture that had been hidden in earlier literary approaches, a culture with its own fluidity and transmutability, oscillation and ambiguity – again, the modernist proposal incites, according to Rama, a Latin American response which, though it appears to emulate it, is not acculturated but instead comes from *within to exceed it*. (64)

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*La perspectiva de sus dos últimos siglos revelaba un movimiento pendular entre dos polos, uno externo y otro interno, respondiendo, más que a una resolución libremente adoptada, a una pulsión que la atraía a uno u otro* “...born from the rejection of its metropolitan origins, had progressed thanks to the internationalism that had slowly integrated it into the Western framework and at the same time continued searching for an autonomy whose foundation stone could not be sought elsewhere than in the cultural singularity of the region. The perspective on its two last centuries revealed a pendular movement between two poles, one external and one internal, responding, more than to a freely adopted resolution, to a drive that attracted it to one or the other”

<sup>1356</sup> “abarca... la totalidad del texto”

<sup>1357</sup> “monólogo discursivo”

<sup>1358</sup> “relato compartimentado”

<sup>1359</sup> “continuator-transformador”

Rama also allows – in the “transculturative” literary dynamic – for foreign influence, but it is an influence that is not blindly received but instead used defensively: the tools of the cultural colonizer used to save the very culture that has been threatened by modernity, and doing so without a loss of “soul”. It is the hybrid literature of emancipation.

His distinctions are at times subtle, since they both allow for foreign modernist influence, and yet do so in a patricidal fashion relatively common as a Latin American gesture<sup>1360</sup> - and combine this with attempts to seek local origins for his chosen works. It appears to be very important to him to separate these works – among them *GSV* and *Pedro Páramo* – from any implication of modernist influence, so much so that his affirmations of the language, structure and ideology being *different, autochthonous* gestures appear stretched. Language: Yes, the language of *GSV* and *Pedro Páramo* is no longer mediated by a distanced narrator but instead fills the book to the rim with its own voice and perspective, both reminiscent of the “authentic”; however, they are not the “authentic” voice of the popular. They are the voice – authentic, of course, as that of an individual – of the author, perhaps in these cases a participant/observer instead of an observer only, mediating between the local-specific and a global literary audience, but in a complex way. Structure: *GSV* does a kind of monologue-dialogue which has similarities to popular *casos* and an oral story-telling tradition; it also reflects the author’s awareness of global literary trends, and in no moment have I seen Guimarães Rosa state his opposition to those trends; likewise, Rulfo claims neither affiliation nor opposition to modernist literary trends, but uses structures which run counter to traditional chronological storytelling, an act with multiple interpretations. In reference to the ambiguity, uncertainty, and fluidity of both texts: Rama believes it important to know that they come from a deeply-hidden local authentic source of wise and elaborate techniques, and are not mere echoes of the similar global questioning that he admits they coincide with.

Despite possible exaggerations and conjectures, Rama’s bold theories force a new perspective on the local/universal and associated dialectics, and have engaged many other critics in conversation. Pereira, Maciel, and Torres all respond to Rama in their comparative studies of Rulfo and Guimarães Rosa’s works.

#### PEREIRA:

In Pereira’s exploration, she turns to Rama’s work to confirm his theory of the novels’ literary “*recuperação*” (“recuperation”) and “*reelaboração*” (“reelaboration”) of popular sources, in answer to the conflict between the permanence of rural regions and the advance of urban modernization. In parallel to Rama’s explanation, yet building on it, she considers that the works provide a literary transformation of their realist/regionalist heritages, poetically and thematically. Poetically, one work “imploded” language, while one “exploded” it, imitating their expressed lands (Comala vs. *sertão*) and their social realities (*caudillo* vs. *jagunçagem*). Thematically, though one uses pacts and another uses murmurs, she sees them as converging in their journey

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<sup>1360</sup> see Retamar’s formulation of Latin America as Caliban, learning a language from Prospero but using it to spite the teacher; and see *antropofagia* in Brazil, the rebellious consumption-yet-reformulation of Europe by a young, voracious, creative America.

towards the “center of the labyrinth” (*“centro do labirinto”*) of the “ontological condition of the human being as ‘being-in-the-world’”<sup>1361</sup> (71-72): the “heroes” journey in disquietude from a collective to a personal identity, finding themselves in a crossing (73).

Pereira ties these conclusions back to Rama’s proposal in claiming that the works’ achievements come down to their usage of folklore not to *“enfeitar a narração”* (“decorate the narration”) as in *costumbrismo* or *naturalismo*, but instead they use the very “structured thought of the popular culture”<sup>1362</sup>, the popular “vision of the universe”. In Brazil, she explains, the linguistic, syntactic, and narrative forms, such as the fragmented and nonlinear narration, and the worldview in general are reflective of “oral stories of the population from the interior of the state” (Minas Gerais) (74). And in Mexico, she explains, the superposition of temporal planes that creates such ambiguity and uncertainty reflects the worldview of the “popular culture, where the simultaneous occurrence of elements disparate among themselves cooperate in the composition of the cosmos... That is why the universe of the dead interacts with that of the living, just as facts remembered from the past reactualize themselves in the present and project themselves in the future”<sup>1363</sup> (74). The flux in the texts, to Pereira, “yields the breaking of the hegemonic order, Western, linear and urban, in the representation of time and space”<sup>1364</sup> (75). For Pereira, as for Rama, the “text” of the works separates them from previous incarnations of regionalism, but not through – as many would argue – external literary influence; rather, the textual innovations are in fact authentic and ancient local influences that are finally fully represented in these novels.

#### MACIEL:

Maria Virgínia Oliveira Maciel (2007) engages Rama in a critical way in both of her works on these authors. Among other criticisms, in her conference article, she points to his assertion that the two novels (among others) are representative of a new wave of literature that is rescuing Latin American letters from irrelevance by creating a “high literature” of universal significance that, while reminiscent of European works, has local roots. She argues that this assertion is dependent on a definition of high literature that is still Europeanist in its leanings; why, if not, choose works to be Latin America’s literary saviors that are akin to those foreign norms, even while jealously guarding them as the region’s own? She argues that the popular literary manifestations known as “folklore” are not any less “high literature” than a work that transforms their elements into an “elevated” discourse. Maciel, then, works within the same system of a regional/universal dialectic, but adds meaning to these. To Maciel, “universal” is – as stated by Cornejo Polar in her citations – a European model to follow, or indeed, as stated by Bhabha and Chakrabarty, is “local” to Europe; and its application to a “local” achievement in America is a

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<sup>1361</sup> *“condição ontológica do ser humano como ‘ser-no-mundo’”*

<sup>1362</sup> *“pensamento estruturado da cultura popular” ... “visão do universo” “relatos orais da população do interior do estado”*

<sup>1363</sup> *“cultura popular, onde a ocorrência simultânea de elementos dispares entre si concorre para a composição do cosmos... Eis porque o universo dos mortos interage com o dos vivos, assim como fatos lembrados do passado se reatualizam no presente e se projetam no futuro”*

<sup>1364</sup> *“remete à quebra da ordem hegemônica, ocidental, linear e urbana, na representação do tempo e do espaço”*

false gain (8-9)<sup>1365</sup>. She adds that, according to Silviano Santiago's views, any critical effort to find an 'original voice' or influence for Latin American literature engages with the practice of transforming those works into lesser copies of 'great' European productions and norms. Rather than engage with Rulfo and Guimarães Rosa in terms of their "universal" vs. "local" qualities, she chooses to read two works by the authors – Guimarães Rosa's "Sarapalha" and Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* – through the lens of modernization, tragedy, and nostalgia<sup>1366</sup>.

In her dissertation, she engages with Rama again to claim that the works do not save peripheral culture. She is interested in the issue of writing and its relationship to power and order, and turns to Derrida's concept of "phármakon" to illustrate how literature can be violent in its dictation of norms and, too, in its negation of its father; paradoxical like that "phármakon" that is both a poison and its antidote, literature's "universality" is inherently ambiguous and paradoxical, impossible to mediate. She explains that Arguedas' suicide was a reflection on this paradox, for he saw the tragedy in using anthropology to view himself.

TORRES:

Mario René Rodríguez Torres (2009) writes of Rulfo and Guimarães Rosa as "*provincianos*", ("provincials") a term applied to them (and to himself) by José María Arguedas. Torres writes within such dichotomies as tradition/modernity, oral/written, rural/urban, and defines Rulfo, Guimarães Rosa, Arguedas and García Márquez as writers who purport to be humbly provincial and even anti-intellectual but who nevertheless write of (and supposedly from) the "hinterlands" *for the city* in order to preserve those spaces "in the literary... in reaction to the modernization process that seems to condemn the cultures of those regions to disappear" (Abstract). He refers to them as the "figure of the provincial writer"<sup>1367</sup> (3) and explains that the "'provincial' writing is a

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<sup>1365</sup> "Rama trabalhava com a idéia de literatura universal e dizia que autores como Juan Rulfo e Guimarães Rosa haviam conseguido transformar a literatura nacional de seus países em alta literatura, conseguiram elevar as discussões regionais à categoria de universal. Cornejo Polar, no entanto, revela que este tipo de pensamento tem como pressuposto um modelo a ser seguido e, este modelo é visivelmente a literatura européia, considerada como 'alta' literatura. / Os estudiosos indianos, tais como Homi Bhabha e Dipesh Chakrabarty, pensando sobre a realidade de dominação da Índia, acabaram revelando que o conceito de universal tomado por todos é, na realidade, local. Ou seja, o que nós tomamos como universal não passam de questões muito peculiares e próprias da Europa." (9) (Rama worked with the idea of universal literature and said that authors like Juan Rulfo and Guimarães Rosa had achieved the transformation of the national literature of their countries into high literature, had managed to elevate the regional discussions to the category of universal. Cornejo Polar, however, reveal that this type of thinking has as an assumption a model to be followed and, this model is visibly European literature, considered to be 'high' literature. / The Indian specialists, such as Homi Bhabha and Dipesh Chakrabarty, thinking about the reality of domination of India, ended up revealing that the concept of universal accepted by all is, in reality, local. That is, what we take to be universal doesn't go beyond questions that are very particular and proper to Europe.")

<sup>1366</sup> Both stories, she claims, look at rural towns abandoned due to the "*sonho burguês da vida moderna*" ("bourgeois dreams of modern life"), destroyed as result of the "*processo de modernização das grandes cidades*" ("process of modernization of the big cities"), and whose remaining inhabitants struggle to reconcile their nostalgia for the past with its failed glory – the "*falácia de um passado feliz*", ("fallacy of a happy past") marked by slavery and subjugation (5-6).

<sup>1367</sup> "*figura do escritor provinciano*" ... "*escrita 'provinciana' é uma escrita feita desde, para e contra as cidades, por isso, apesar de que nela sejam apropriadas produções culturais das regiões interiores, não devem ser tomadas por uma destas*"

writing made from, for and against the cities, and thus, even though there may be in them appropriated cultural productions of the interior regions, they should not be taken for one of these” (94). According to Torres, these writers “resurrected by invocation” their regionalisms, after the identification of these as “bad literature” (36), but not in the sense claimed by Rama. He joins Rama in considering the same novels to be written from the perspective of a primarily oral culture and to be quite different technically from their regional predecessors, but is, with Alberto Moreiras, skeptical of the fact of “literary autonomy” in those same works, for in being “modern”, they are *not* creating Latin America’s “own expression”. He finds Rama’s conclusions “unsatisfactory” (3). The works are innovative, he agrees, and resurrect regional contents, but their gestures of belonging to their respective regions ring false: they are still the “*doutor*” that travels the provinces to learn them, even as they are ruined in the process (95-97).

Beyond these text/context and universal/local dialectics, though often in conversation with them, other critics have found deeper similarities between the works either in text/technique, or in message, or in other areas, including, as mentioned in Part III, Fiorussi, Dixon, and Bañales.

#### FIORUSSI:

André Fiorussi’s “The Well-told Lie: Narrative Voice and Verisimilitude in Rosa’s and Rulfo’s Novels” (2007) concentrates on the narratives’ uses of styles and techniques, rather than on their places in Latin American literary history, but nonetheless he writes of technique within the established framework of the works’ foundational place as regional affiliates with novel techniques. He claims explicitly to write without “taking into consideration possible relationships between the writer’s life [sic] and their literary creations” (10), but though he eschews biographical context in his study, however, he does not eschew *literary* context, claiming to make a “reading that privileges technical and stylistic resources of both texts in association with their context of production”<sup>1368</sup> (3). Fiorussi, in fact, claims as others have that “The means of approximation towards the two novels that has become the most well-known is that of narrative transculturation, formulated by Ángel Rama”<sup>1369</sup> (2), and that he takes some of Rama’s suggestions into account. It is apparent that the aspects of Rama’s conceptualization that he is adopting are those reflecting the works’ innovative narrative techniques, and their ensuing place in Latin American literary history – for, like others above, Fiorussi mentions the same concept of these works’ place in a “moment”, saying:

In the middle of the decade of 1950, two publications mark a reorientation of Latin American narrative: the novels *Pedro Páramo* (1955), by Juan Rulfo, and *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (1956), by João Guimarães Rosa. Both dialogue with narrative genres associated with regionalism (the novel of the Revolution in Mexico and the “regionalism of 1930” in Brazil), abdicating partially from the realist and testimonial tendency of their

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<sup>1368</sup> “*leitura que privilegia recursos técnicos e estilísticos de ambos os textos em associação com seu contexto de produção*”

<sup>1369</sup> “*A via de aproximação dos dois romances que se tornou mais conhecida é a da transculturação narrativa, formulada por Ángel Rama*”



models in favor of more daring flights in the plane of language and of narrative structure.<sup>1370</sup> (1-2)

Specifically, Fiorussi's article looks at the narrative technique in the works that "naturalize artifice" in order to bring the reader closer to the fiction, obligating the reader to "*abdicar de sua posição de turista*"<sup>1371</sup> and participate "*ativamente do processo de geração dos sentidos*" (10). He points to *Pedro Páramo* as containing a narrative that "*leva o leitor até Comala e o faz vagar também pela cidade abandonada*" (5). He points to *GSV* as likewise bringing the reader in, but through the illusion of orality: this illusion enables the author to evade linearity and at the same time give the reader no time to organize events, so the enunciation itself becomes the action of the work (6). Once more, critical analysis points to the works as departing from traditional regionalism in their narrative techniques and thus foundational to a new Latin American novel, but Fiorussi's focus is more directly on narrative, concentrating fundamentally on aspects of the *texts* rather than on a larger ideal about their representativity.

#### BAÑALES:

Victoria Bañales (1989), also largely textual in focus, looks at the river metaphor in four stories: "Es que somos muy pobres" by Rulfo (Mexico), "A Terceira Margem do Rio" by Guimarães Rosa (Brazil), "By the Waters of Babylon" by Stephen Vincent Benét (USA), and "Der Dichter" by Hermann Hesse (Germany). Her analysis does not use the stories as case studies for their national origins, but instead looks at the uses of the river in the works. She explains that rivers are linear and confined and yet infinite in time and space, life giving and yet destructive; as such, they serve as metaphors for transition, paradox, changes of state, and the fleetingness of human life together with our desire for immortality. Her work exemplifies a comparatist view with primarily textual concerns, such as Rabassa's expressed ideal, for although the works' contexts may illuminate their use of metaphor, those contexts are not the focus of study.

#### DIXON:

Paul Dixon's *Reversible readings: ambiguity in four modern Latin American novels* (1985) is also a work that avoids concentration on that dialectic, creating instead a corpus of works based on purely technical aspects of the works. Dixon's work considers *Pedro Páramo* and *GSV* together with Machado De Assis's *Dom Casmurro* and Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien Años de Soledad* as case studies to illustrate a precisely formulated definition of ambiguity in the novel, generally – in his terms, a "kind of structurally determined genre". He states up front that he treats the works as "case studies of this phenomenon" and makes "very little effort to compare

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<sup>1370</sup> "Na metade da década de 1950, duas publicações marcam uma reorientação da narrativa latino-americana: os romances *Pedro Páramo* (1955), de Juan Rulfo, e *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (1956), de João Guimarães Rosa. Ambos dialogam com gêneros narrativos associados ao regionalismo (a novela de la revolución no México e o "regionalismo de 1930" no Brasil), abdicando parcialmente da tendência realista e testemunhal de seus modelos em favor de vôos mais ousados no plano da linguagem e da estrutura narrativa."

<sup>1371</sup> "abdicate from his/her position of tourist" ... "actively in the process of the generation of meanings" ... "takes the reader to Comala and makes him/her wander also through the abandoned city"

them with each other” (xv), beyond the implicit comparison of inclusion within a tightly defined literary subgroup. Dixon’s is also, however, besides being based only on Latin American works, a purely *textual* analysis, concentrating on what he terms “authentic ambiguity” (13) and its techniques of construction in the works.

Dixon’s concept of “authentic ambiguity” (13) in a text is defined as the state of having coexisting but “mutually exclusive, reversible readings” (xii), readings in “disjunction” (8) which are not the result of imprecision or “undercharging” of textual orientation (10) but are instead – far more than intuited – textually founded (13). In both works studied here, this ambiguity is found, according to Dixon, in their expression/design-oriented readings vs. their narrative/plot-oriented readings. In *Pedro Páramo*, Dixon finds a “figure-ground” ambiguity, in which the reader must choose between “competing structures” much like in a drawing in which “figure” and “ground” paint different pictures. These structures are analogous to the work’s two titles: *Pedro Páramo* asks the reader to seek a coherent narrative by reordering the text, whereas *Los murmullos* – the novel’s working title – asks the reader to instead accept the incoherent surface structure as the work’s true expression.<sup>1372</sup> *Grande Sertão: Veredas* for Dixon has ambiguity between the work’s design and its narrative, much like *Pedro Páramo*, but in the case of *GSV* the analogy is that of the veil or scrim, a device that with lighting creates illusions, given that both plot and voice are intertwined and yet one can obscure the other (127). For Dixon, language itself is the veil that alternates in presence with what it *represents* (128): “The language of *Grande Sertão: Veredas* presents both of these mutually exclusive properties by telling a story, and yet creating a strong potential for obscuring the same” (129). The reader is constantly torn between the design – which asks to be pored over – and the underlying narration, both present, both mutually exclusive, “form and content... at odds” (131, 136). In fact, as he explains, the language and plot, signifier and signified, are both ambiguous in themselves, as well as in juxtaposition.

Both works are, then, shown by Dixon to be containing of mutually exclusive and yet coexisting readings, in an ambiguity based on narrative elements strongly developed in the texts. This is a heavily structuralist textual approach to the two works, but nonetheless one that treads ground similar to that of many other critical approaches. Although content is the contrasting agent here, rather than context, but nonetheless the critic sees an conflict brought on by the works’ *forms*, which places the novels in a new international genre grouping.

As seen above, many of the critics/theorists who have written about both works together have done so within the context of the regional/universal dialectic of categories, either specifically with regards to literary genres and movements (regionalism, the avant-garde, etc.) or more generally as gestures of Latin American identity in a dichotomous world of periphery vs. center. As explored in my dissertation, I differ from these approaches in concentrating not on how the coexistence of textual/contextual elements in the works makes them bridges from traditional regionalism to the universalism of the New Novel, but rather on how the textual/contextual elements of both *PP* and *GSV* are part of one unified literary gesture concerning the metaphorical, spiritual, and real possibilities of regional space.

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<sup>1372</sup> A third “competing structure” is one that obscures both story and voice: the chiasmus found upon mapping on a graph repeated elements in the work.

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