2-2017

Subversion and Transcendence in the Latin American Modern Travel Novel (1928-1976)

Andrea Babsky

The Graduate Center, City University of New York

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

Follow this and additional works at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds

Part of the Latin American Languages and Societies Commons, and the Modern Literature Commons

Recommended Citation

https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/1854

This Dissertation is brought to you by CUNY Academic Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Dissertations, Theses, and Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of CUNY Academic Works. For more information, please contact deposit@gc.cuny.edu.
SUBVERSION AND TRANSCENDENCE IN THE LATIN AMERICAN MODERN TRAVEL NOVEL (1928-1976)

by

Andrea Babsky

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Hispanic Luso-Brazilian Literatures in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2017
Subversion and Transcendence in the Latin American Modern Travel Novel (1928-1976)

by

Andrea Babsky

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Literatures in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

____ 10/28/2016 ______________________  Magdalena Perkowsa
Date Chair of Examining Committee

____ 10/28/2016 ______________________  José del Valle
Date Executive Officer

Supervisory Committee:

Magdalena Perkowska

Elena Martínez

Francisco Soto

The City University of New York
Abstract

Subversion and Transcendence in the Latin American Modern Travel Novel (1928-1976)

by

Andrea Babsky

Advisor: Professor Magdalena Perkowska

Key words: travel, novel, Latin-American fiction, space, myth, Trickster, semiotics, voyage, subversion, transcendence, hegemonic discourses

The focus of this dissertation is the role that travel plays in Latin American novels that stem from 1928 to 1976, specifically, Macunaíma, Los pasos perdidos, El reino de este mundo, and Mascaró, el cazador americano. Departing from the fact that this period of time in history was marked by political and cultural change and upheaval, different aspects and interpretations of travel as manifested in the novels of the corpus are explored as a means of subversion and transcendence to hegemonic discourses. Travel is viewed as a means of disruption, particularly of limits and borders, be they geographical, political and cultural. The idea of a heightened sense of potentiality inherent in travel is also explored as part of the subversive and transcendent nature of travel. The beginning of the work delves into alternative spaces that are created by voyage. These spaces are described as differential spaces using Lefebvre’s definition of the term. Following a discussion of space, myth in travel is explained as an open system that resists particular power structures. Travel’s role in disseminating myths is also studied. Subsequently, the function of the Trickster as a mythological figure and as a peripatetic storyteller is analyzed. The final aspect considered in this study is the creation and the use of alternative semiotic systems that exist inside and outside of travel that subvert and transcend authoritative discourses of power.
Acknowledgements:

I would like to express profound gratitude to my adviser, Dr. Magdalena Perkowska for her dedication, patience, and guidance that helped to bring this work to fruition. Without her steadfast efforts and insights, this thesis would not have been possible. I would also like to extend my appreciation to the members of the committee: Dr. Elena Martínez and Dr. Francisco Soto for their time and their invaluable feedback that I will continue to use in future endeavors. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Lidia Santos for her commentary, insights, and for introducing me to *Macunaima*. I would also like the thank the Graduate Center of the City University of New York for giving me the opportunity to study and research topics of which I am passionate. I would like to thank Dr. Lía Schwartz for the opportunities that she generously bestowed upon me during my time at the Graduate Center. I would also like to thank Dr. José del Valle for his support and compassion. I would also like to thank Dr. Paul Julian Smith for introducing me to Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau. I would like to thank Dr. Raquel Chang-Rodriguez for her advice and for helping me to prepare for my first conference. I would like to express my thanks to Dr. Malva Filer for introducing me to *Mascaró, el cazador americano*. I am grateful for Michael DiSchiavi and Abigail Méndez for their generous help with the revisions of drafts. I would like to thank Fredy Ola, whose constant support and unwavering faith were inspirational. I would also like to thank my family, in particular, Stephen, Daria, and Cathy, for all of the love and support that they have given me throughout the years. I would also like to thank friends and family members for their encouragement which helped me to keep going. Lastly, to José (Ihor) and Oleksa, two traveling Tricksters, I love you and I miss you.
Table of Contents:

Introduction 1

Chapter One: Voyage: Space, Time, and Praxis 21

Chapter Two: Travelling Myths 89

Chapter Three: The Travelling Trickster and Mobile Memories 157

Chapter Four: Signs of Life and Alternative Semiotic Systems: Poetry, Dance, and Music in Motion 227

Conclusion 294

Bibliography 298
Introduction: Subversion and Transcendence in the Latin American Modern Travel Novel (1928-1976)

La libertad del hombre se funda y radica en no ser más que posibilidad.
Realizar esa posibilidad es ser, crearse a sí mismo.
-Octavio Paz

Travel, by its very nature, is an action of crossing boundaries and limits, and the traveler as agent, transgresses limits and boundaries by moving beyond them. Travel also creates zones of possibility and exchange where disparate elements are put into contact with one another which can give rise to coalescence and other permutations. The traveler becomes a bridge between what is known in one region and what is unknown in another. Travel is explored in this study as a means that magnifies and extends potentialities and possibilities in ways that can subvert and transcend discourses of power. According to Mary Helms, by travelling and reaching (and surpassing) the outer limits of a defined place, one obtains knowledge [of the Other] and this knowledge can render the traveler dangerous: no longer completely fitting or representing the paradigms or structures of a specific place, the traveler has gone beyond them (78-82). The patterns that these elements of interchange and exchange can take, the fusions and confusions are unpredictable, much like travel itself. The traveler embodies the freedom of possibility created by travel, of (re)creating oneself and (re)creating the world around him/her. Travel has been seen as subversive because of its disruptive potential and its unpredictability, even when carried out by those in power, since established borders are crossed, lines of division are transgressed – people are in motion, events are set in motion, quotidian rhythms are altered. Travel is what inspired the authors of the novels explored in this study to cross boundaries in their writing. These novels are: Macunaíma, by Mário de Andrade (Brazil, 1928); El reino de este mundo and Los pasos perdidos, by Alejo Carpentier (Cuba, 1949 and 1953); and Mascaró, el cazador americano, by Haroldo Conti (Argentina, 1976).¹

¹ While El reino de este mundo and Los pasos perdidos are studied, it should be noted that Carpentier has written other works that also use travel as a trope. Among them are: El viaje a la semilla (1944), in which a sense of temporal travel is emphasized, and the novel El arpa y la sombra (1979).
If possibility and potentiality are keys to freedom, and the keys to ourselves, travel creates conditions that set us outside of the usual structures to bring us into contact with new possibilities that become more numerous, obvious and real. Blinded by usual networks, webs of interaction and dynamics, we are taken outside of ourselves through travel, where potentiality, always there, always available, becomes more palpable—almost inevitable. Travel then subverts the usual structures of everyday life and the systems put in place that control, to different extents, our personal rhythms, thereby thrusting us into the realm of the unknown, the borderlands of neither here nor there, the lands of possibility and potential. In recognizing the latent states that surround us, we acknowledge the freedom within us and our capacity for transcending structures and paradigms after, venturing from place to place, we discover how random these are. For instance, Lewis Hyde observes that the traveler realizes that shame (as a mechanism of control), “varies from place to place” (162). By noticing the illusion that holds together certain systems, by raising the veil and turning around what is seen, we rise above it and have the potential to alter it. Travel also questions the position or perhaps the illusion that history is a set of determined circumstances that lead to determinable events that shape history rather than a set of possibilities that manifest themselves as rhythms or continue as possibilities. History as potentiality is a re-examination of past events, and among certain scholars, the emphasis on possibility becomes a focus of understanding history and ourselves. For example, James Clifford in Routes, deliberates on past events at Fort Ross, which leads him to question the historical currents of different chronologies:

For the forces-economic, political, environmental—that have brought us all together here are materialized as historical reality only through particular local projects and stories. These are neither uniform nor finally determined. Historical reality, what happens in nonrepeating time, is a changing set of determinations, not a cumulative process or a teleology. (302)

In the book The Many-Headed Hydra by Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, events, attitudes, political and economic structures that led to the exploitation of human beings through slavery and indentured
servitude, are presented as malleable circumstances that could have been changed: “These developments [creation of liberal capitalism and the proliferation of the slave trade etc.] were not inevitable; they were all contested” (99). Travel, exchange and exploitation are topics that are presented in Linebaugh and Rediker’s book and also in Clifford’s, which suggest that the unpredictability of history and the constant of change require us to continue to question history and the potentialities that were realized or had never been realized in a never-ending dialogue with the past, present and future. Travel exposes the complications and the risks inherent in stable and uniform interpretations of history.

The relevancy of voyage in Latin American travel novels lies in this never-ending dialogue or questioning of the past. The novels of the corpus were written at a time of intense change when dominant discourses were being re-examined, and at a moment in history when those who were silenced start to find a voice. The authors of The Many-Headed Hydra explain the reasons for past silence/invisibility:

The historic invisibility of many of the book’s subjects owes much to the repression originally visited upon them: the violence of the stake, the chopping block, the gallows, and the shackles of a ship’s dark hold. It also owes much to the violence of abstraction in the writing of history, the severity of history that has long been the captive of the nation-state, which remains in most studies the largely unquestioned framework of analysis. This is a book about connections that have, over the centuries, usually been denied, ignored, or simply not seen, but that nonetheless profoundly shaped the history of the world in which we all of us live and die. (7)

We speak today of “transcultural” notions and globalization as utterly new phenomena and yet, by reviewing history, we find that many “separated” histories have always been intertwined, and perhaps it is more important now than ever to review the connections that are a part of human history. Although there have been complex travel patterns throughout history, since the nation building eras of the past several centuries, we have come to view history by its borders and how these were created, usually by battles for dominance. Trade routes are mentioned but not the full implications of their role in cultural, political and social sharing, nor the element of unpredictability in travel that caused change in world
history by inserting new rhythms and ways of being into different lands and cultures. Underlying battles and wars of History (with a capital “H”), there were undercurrents of daily activities—specifically movements and rhythms—that slowly shifted and created our present. Currently, travel is gaining traction as a focus in a world that we consider as increasingly “global,” and yet, in many ways, has always been global in part because travel and migration have always existed. Journey and travel is our history: from humanity’s dawn in Africa to the subsequent migrations outward and inward throughout the globe. The voyages of our ancestors are stories that are embedded in our bodies, in our genes, in epigenetics where even experience is passed down, movement itself is passed down always with Derridean “difference”; where the environment can intervene along with cellular/genetic memories and stories that are inherited in a way that is far deeper than what linguistics allows and encapsulates. Memory moves, through generations, through our bodies, through time and through space, permeating (our actions, our rhythms, our thoughts) and permeable (open to nature and outside influences, external variables); invisible and yet readily apparent (in codes not readily seen and made manifest in the world); silent and yet rhythmic (voiceless in the background and yet producer of new sounds): the paradoxical Trickster within us all.

Literature can give us insight into some of these tendencies since literature provides glimpses of the reality around us, of occurrences and opportunities never realized yet imagined and of stories never told. According to Octavio Paz, it seems that creativity (both literary and ontological in particular) is a corollary to possibility (154). Travel has always been a major theme in literature, whether in fiction or non-fiction. Travel in writing becomes complex as the lines between fiction and non-fiction tend to blur, since fictional elements can enter non-fictional pieces via creative liberties, and factual elements can be hidden away in fictional narratives. Percy G. Adams, for example, dedicates an investigative book to the

2 These stories and experiences that are passed down genetically do not manifest themselves necessarily in the exact same way as they did with regard to our ancestors, hence the Derridean difference. Traces and residues of our ancestors live within us and yet due to the possible effects of epigenetics and our environment (and perhaps even more boldly, quantum physics), these traces do not appear or exhibit themselves necessarily in the same way, nor are they completely different.
fabrications and the extension of subjectivities presented in supposedly non-fictional travel stories in *Travelers and Travel Liars*. John Zilcosky explains where there is a point of consensus with regard to travel writing: “Critics agree only at the most basic level: that travel writing is a narrated account of a voyage (generally told in the first person) based on ‘actual travel undertaken’” (8); in which case, every novel of the corpus qualifies as travel writing since every author completed their respective novel inspired by their own voyages. The line between fiction and non-fiction is therefore both unstable and relative, making it difficult to provide neat definitions with definitive borders. For Pilar Rubio, for example, travel narratives are “testimonial,” while travel novels are products of the “imagination of the author” that can be “inspired” by actual travel accounts (248). The genre of travel literature can be as transgressive with regards to definitive boundaries as travel itself. The novels of the corpus continue to test these boundaries where the voyages of the authors and the voyages that take place in their novels dialogue and interact.3

The corpus analyzed in this study comprises novels written between the beginning of the 20th century and its second half (1928-1976), when certain paradigms of thinking were shifting, realities were changing (due to social and political events), and scientific discoveries and inventions altered the way we live our lives and the way we perceive the world. The novels were published during periods of immense (geo)political and cultural changes. The first author of the novels that comprise the corpus, Mário de Andrade, as a vanguard writer, helped to initiate the modernist movement in Brazil. The last of the novels of the corpus heralds the end of a modernist sensibility and marks a transition into post-modernism. The dates that encapsulate the novels being studied thus coincide with the beginning of a burgeoning and enthusiastic modernism in one region in Latin America and signals its ending. These particular novels were chosen in order to provide examples of subversive and transcendent possibilities in travel literature

---

3 Roberto González Echeverría in *Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home* asks the question if Carpentier’s *Los pasos perdidos* is “a travel journal in the process of becoming a novel, or is it an unfinished novel that will imitate a travel journal?” (186).
in Latin America, especially in light of the fact that much of early Latin American writing consisted of travel chronicles. Political, cultural, and economic processes should not be simplified for the time period studied, nor should the geographical areas where the novels were written and where their plots take place since the complexities and nuances of the time period are telling not to mention necessary for a comprehensive understanding of the era. I contend that at that moment the travel novels present an attempt to escape and defy certain predominating ideologies that in the past were connected with literature and travel. As anticipated earlier, the novels studied and analyzed are: *Macunaima* by Mário de Andrade (Brazil 1928); *El reino de este mundo* and *Los pasos perdidos* by Alejo Carpentier (Cuba 1949 and 1953); and *Mascaró, el cazador americano* written by Haroldo Conti (Argentina 1976). Rather than use travel literature as a form of dominating discourse, the authors employ the chronotope of the road (Bakhtin 243-245) to present the heterogeneity of their countries’ geography and that of Latin America in general. Macunaima, the title character of de Andrade’s novel, travels not only throughout different regions (both geographical and political) of Brazil, but also to different parts of South America, crossing different boundaries as he moves through them. In *El reino de este mundo*, the movement is varied since different characters travel and interact in various places highlighting the port as a place of transit. Ti Noel, for example, travels to and from Santiago de Cuba from Cap-Haïtien (or el Cabo Francés, as it appears in the novel) in addition to traveling to different parts of Haiti such as Bois-Caimán. In *Los pasos perdidos*, the narrator, in order to obtain certain indigenous instruments, travels from what is presumably New York to what appears to be Latin America. In *Mascaró, el cazador americano*, one of the main characters, travels first by boat to Palmares and then travels throughout (presumably) Argentina as part of an ambulatory circus troupe. It is through the motif and the narrative format of travel in their novels, that the authors offer different points of view on events showing that events (whether past or current) can always be questioned in terms of possibilities and rhythms. In these novels, travel also demonstrates the creative possibilities in man. Travel is not only a trope for the authors, the authors themselves traveled
and it is the impressions gathered during their voyages that are imprinted on the fictional space. Mário de Andrade traveled throughout Brazil, Alejo Carpentier traveled to (among other places) Haiti and Venezuela, and Haroldo Conti had traveled not only to different places in Argentina, but also Cuba. The change of pace, the change in worldview that travel offered the authors, is then transmitted to the readers by way of fiction.

Far more literary space has been dedicated to travel novels with men as protagonists. In addition, the idea of women as Tricksters has been relegated historically, literarily, and socially speaking to a reduced space, if any. Women are included only tangentially in this analysis and this is not an oversight, nor was it my intention to only include “masculine” travel novels. With regard to women, traveling presents many of the same aspects and much of what is said in this study can be applied to both male and female protagonists. And yet, the question of women traveling has particular considerations: for example, travel by women is especially subversive in many cultures where women are expected to stay at home and their movements are far more regulated. Women travelers have their own considerations in terms of political, economic, and social constructs which go beyond what has been explained here and deserves its own study with relation to the dynamics I have endeavored to present. At a time when women in some countries still are not allowed to drive, the restrictions placed on women’s movements make the experience of travel and movement much more subversive for women. Historically, there are many examples of women who have dressed up as men and have gone to other great lengths to be able to move freely throughout the world. Travel can be dangerous for anyone and yet, for women travelers, the dangers are augmented as is the subversive implication of women travelling. These and other considerations merit more study, because women as authors, protagonists, agents, travelers, movers, and Tricksters, brim with the possibility and potentiality to change the world in which they live.

Potentiality is presented not only as a way of perceiving reality, but also as a way of subverting and transcending power discourses. While travel itself magnifies and creates layers of potentialities, other
open systems of unpredictability are considered in conjunction with travel for their possibilities of subversion. These systems find ways around discourses that attempt to silence and control natural rhythms in order to exploit humanity, sometimes taking it to the extreme of committing capital crimes, at times causing a permanent silence while creating atmospheres of fear and terror. Life, as organic change and movement, is presented to counter some of these discourses. Travel, as motion, subverts static systems of control. In the first chapter, abstract space as elaborated by Henri Lefebvre is seen as lethal. This notion of the abstraction of space mirrors the “abstract writing” of history as mentioned in The Many-Headed Hydra, and the idea is to bring back the integrity of the body and its rhythms in a differential space created by travel. If travel can magnify possibilities, then myth, studied in chapter two, can magnify quotidian and actual events, providing an open and creative system for interpreting certain aspects of the world around us, and becoming a spiritual axis capable of reaching both the depths of the psyche and the transcendent heights. The Trickster, discussed in chapter three, is presented as a traveling in-between figure; (s)he is in-between myth and semiotics. The Trickster embodies potentialities and the freedom that they entail. In chapter four, alternative semiotic systems such as rhythm, music, dance, and poetry are considered when deathly silences are imposed as a means of self-expression that incorporates the body, Nature and its rhythms in order to express signs of life. The ideas that have been outlined thus far will be further developed in detail in the four chapters that follow, each with its own focus with regard to subversion and transcendence through voyage. In each chapter, the four novels of the corpus will be analyzed based on the theoretical frameworks that introduce and guide the chapter.4

4 *El reino de este mundo* is the only novel not included in chapter one because it is the only novel of the corpus that deals strictly with historical events as opposed to the present of the author. If Lefebvre’s triads are chronological, the jump in historical time makes the topic more complex and would require an analysis dealing with multiple times, the time of representation (when the novel was written) and the time of the represented events, an endeavor that goes beyond the scope of this project. *Los pasos perdidos* is not analyzed in chapter three since the narrator never fully realizes himself as Trickster even though he has the capacity to become one. The narrator is between two worlds, never able to move freely among them.
Chapter 1: Time and space. If voyage entails a movement in space and time, this chapter also considers voyage as a praxis in time and space, (but with a social dimension). I read the novels through Lefebvre’s historical triad of social space in order to understand how the travel novels of Latin American literature create a differential space through travel. Lefebvre’s triad of absolute, abstract and differential space are briefly defined as follows: absolute space is a space where politics and economics still have close ties with Nature, inscribing themselves upon Nature and forming a social space; abstract space is less concrete than absolute space in that the visual and illusory is the primary focus and it is also a space that distances itself from Nature; finally, differential space evolves from the contradictory space and implies a reappropriation of one’s own time, rhythms, and Natural spaces. Lefebvre affirms that none of these spaces disappears entirely and one space serves as an underpinning for the next. I suggest in chapter one that perhaps travel has always provided some degree of differential space. This differential space tends to be more subversive and unpredictable in its differentiality transcending the lethality inherent in abstract space, which moves away from the body, looking farther towards domination, in a sense that resembles Mary Louise Pratt’s ideas exposed in Imperial Eyes. According to Lefebvre, there are three formants of abstract space: 1) Geometric 2) Phallic 3) Optical. This last formant “hypervisualizes” and reduces everything to a visual plane and this plane is reduced from three to two dimensional. The abstract space formed in Europe, and was then transplanted into the “New World” shaped unbalanced discourses of power based on exploitation. In the early 20th century, around the time of Picasso, Lefebvre notes a break in thinking and observes that Picasso’s paintings are reflective of the “breaking up” or deconstruction of past ideas that were once taken as a given. This “breaking up” or deconstruction is both part of the process and the result of a “trial by space”, where past ideas are brought into question. The

---

5 This is true even when voyage is used for the purpose of growing and maintaining imperial power in ways that tend to reflect the characteristics of abstract space since voyage is inherently unpredictable and the outcome can result in having the opposite effect or have unintended consequences with regard to power balances and the discourses that frame them.
questioning of the past creates a new space for “counterhistories” that reappropriate space and reincorporate nature. Lefebvre states that differences can be found on the margin and it is here where we can find the initiators of resistance movements: of subversion and transcendence. Life itself is opposed to the lethality of abstract space, and in a differential space there is a return of the sensory and the practical as the “fleshly (spatio-temporal) body is already in revolt” (201). As a spatial practice, travel presupposes an “energy” that is not so strongly subjected to representations of spaces as more stabilizing practices are. The lived spaces, or “private representational spaces” are no longer limited to a certain space- lived space travels- life travels. Lefebvre mentions that we can access representational spaces through leisure/travel/beach. Travel breaks through the “unifunctional”; it pluralizes and diversifies potentialities and rhythms, and brings us closer to the horizons that speak of new possibilities. With regard to time, Lefebvre notices time perceived as personal, taking on a fullness which is resistant to abstract space.

In Macunaíma, São Paulo is presented as an abstract space which contrasts with the absolute space of the Amazon region. Macunaíma, at different parts of the novel, seems to be betwixt and between absolute and abstract space as he travels throughout Brazil and South America, giving us perhaps the first glimmers of differential space, if we take Brazil, and in a larger context, South America as a whole. Mário de Andrade questions what it means to be Brazilian and what it means to be South American and in so doing, provides us with a continuous flow of images which have elements of an absolute, an abstract, and ultimately, a differential space, where the unity is in the disparate. In Los pasos perdidos, the narrator feels hopelessly lost in what appears to be abstract space. The narrator likens the atmosphere around him to a prison. This space contrasts with the absolute space he finds in Latin America. In addition to absolute space, it can be argued that the narrator also creates a sort of differential space for himself, as do the other voyagers, re-appropriating their time and the space around them. Lived space and spatial practices are more open since representations of space are subject to less control and are more
communal. Ultimately, the narrator is a sort of agent for abstract space, since he carries the space with him and cannot escape it. He also carries a differential space with him to the city, yet he cannot enact any changes. In *Mascaró, el cazador americano*, the action of the novel takes place in the regions of Argentina that are relegated to the margins, areas which in and of themselves tend to be expanses of resistance where differential space is formed. The circus itself, in its constant motion from place to place, forms a collective of disparate creative acts forming a heterogeneous and differential space. We can also speak of a heterochrony, where the circus is also a “break in time.” The space created by the circus is spread through rhythms or the harmonious movements of the circus. This space is then truncated by violence when Oreste, the protagonist, is taken to jail, an extreme restriction of space where spatial practice is curtailed.

Chapter 2: Myth. In this chapter myth is analyzed with regard to its fluidity, its openness and its ability to cross borders as it interacts with social, political, and religious spaces. Many a myth has the theme of travel at its center describing the voyages of what may have been an actual person, or the metaphorical movement of the characters. Movements that cross (and by crossing, subvert) and transcend borders and boundaries are especially prevalent in mythology, creating dangerous zones because the realm of possibility expands, and security is less certain. These areas of uncertainty will be discussed in light of theories developed by Mary Helms and Joseph Campbell. If travel is a separation from the quotidian and the unequivocal, travel itself then is imbued with the mythical.

Myth is peripatetic and its open system makes it unpredictable and fluid; the combination of these factors reveals the possibilities of living that can be made manifest by magnifying the quotidian, since myth and reality feed into or off of each other. Myth, moving fluidly between political and social constructs, creates boundaries and destroys them (much like Trickster does, as explained in chapter 3); it creates order out of chaos, and chaos out of what can appear orderly since myth can define -and is defined by- social constructs, and yet can also subvert and transcend them. Myth is able to circulate partly
because it exists and functions between the collective and the personal; myth is the magnification of life’s events where the real can become mythological in ways that bypass authoritative systems. Therefore, myth is unpredictable in the same way that life, Nature and the imagination can be. Myth can be conceived of being on a vertical, interior plane of subversion and transcendence, and voyage, on a horizontal plane of movement. The vertical component is comprised of lower regions that represent the depths of the soul while the upper regions represent aspirational qualities of imagination interpreted by Bachelard as a “progressive passage from water to air,” where the characteristics of one element spill into the other, vertically (Air and Dreams 150).⁶ Taking Mário de Andrade’s idea of degeographization as a point of departure, I envision myth as divided into mythemes, which can be local or extensive, disjointed and brought together, in ways that are conventional or novel. People traveling to other regions may take with them preconceived mythical notions, with Cortés as an example, who came to the ‘New World’ imbued with Western mythological conceptions, while the Mexica had their own mythological traditions. This “meeting” of notions created a rupture in both viewpoints of the world. In the beginning of the 20th century in Latin America, a renewed interest in the myths of the marginalized was stimulated, which led to the incorporation of these myths into canonical literature in ways that at the time were novel and paradigm-breaking. In Macunaima, Mário de Andrade degeographizes Brazilian space and this degeographization is analyzed with regard to mythology. Through this degeographization, different mythical forms with varying origins are juxtaposed. Not only are places degeographized, but time is also disjointed as the mythical past finds its way into a present that is in the process of modernization. The idea of degeographization is then applied to a spiritual vertical axis of submergence and transcendence. Carpentier shows in El reino de este mundo that at a time when movement is restricted on the horizontal axis or when movement goes against one’s volition and leads to exploitation, a spiritual, vertical axis

---

⁶ The citation alluded to briefly mentions the link between water and air and its vertical relationship. These ideas are more fully developed throughout Air and Dreams and Water and Dreams.
becomes a means by which subversion and transcendence can occur. The tension between horizontal and vertical voyages is explored with regard to slave systems. Voodoo in particular, as a spiritual system that combines elements from mythological and spiritual systems from different parts of the globe, is examined as a manifestation of faith. In *Los pasos perdidos*, the idea of *degeographization* explored first in *Macunaíma*, is applied to three different mythical schemes or conceptions of separation and junction: 1) areas of contingence 2) polarity 3) the archetypal. The first term results in a type of estrangement, where different mythical entities are juxtaposed together; the second notion refers to opposites that are pitted against each other in a way that reconciliation is not possible (myths that are alive vs. myths that are dead); the third term explores the fusion created by social and geographical archetypes as presented in the novel that attempts to get to the root of myth. In *Mascaró, el cazador americano*, a changing of the quotidian rhythms and an entrance into the realm of the mythical occur by crossing borders into the realm of the unknown (Campbell), specifically the desert and the ocean as liminal areas, each with their poetic resonances and associations with myth. As authoritarian power (represented by the *rurales*) and those who wish to maintain the status quo attempt to contain the population through impositions, the circus acts in reverse expanding both upward on a vertical axis with aspirations of flight, and outward, a movement that becomes ever more dangerous.

**Chapter 3: Trickster.** If voyage is a physical movement and myth is a movement both within oneself and outside of oneself, the Trickster represents the personification of movement and *possibility*. The protagonists of the novels are analyzed through the lens of Trickster as a liminal figure capable of subverting and transcending boundaries. The Trickster is a subversive, transcendent, and multifaceted figure that transgresses borders as both creator and destroyer within as well as outside structures and paradigms, including those of a linguistic nature. The Trickster represents moving potentialities where, if we attempt to pinpoint one aspect, we tend to lose sight of the others. The Trickster is an in-between figure that travels, subverting boundaries by crossing and un-crossing them. Thus, he becomes a
dangerous figure at the crossroads possessing knowledge and information from the areas beyond the realms of limitations. The Trickster, typically considered a mythical figure, also finds him/herself between myth and semiotics, and, between God and man, as translator and messenger. In this movement between myth and semiotics, the Trickster defies definition and moves among worlds and among words. Travelers can also be Tricksters by moving beyond borders to the territories of the unknown, gaining information and becoming an interstitial figure. The transmission of this knowledge can be dangerous to dominant powers. The idea of the traveler who crosses borders as a powerful and dangerous figure is viewed in the context of the work of Mary Helms and Joseph Campbell. In addition to the Trickster’s movement as traveler, the Trickster also creates movement in language as a storyteller and it is through storytelling that (s)he also possess the capacity and potentiality to change the world. The Trickster as memory waits for \textit{kairos}, an opportune moment, to enact change. With this idea in mind, writers can also be viewed as Trickster figures by telling stories and sharing memories; authors also find themselves in between the worlds of fact and fiction weaving their stories among them, transmitting ideas, images, and information while (re)creating language. Lastly, we take a brief look at the manifestations of the Trickster figure from different sources in Latin America. In my reading of \textit{Macunaima}, Mário de Andrade as author and traveler is viewed in the light of the Trickster, as are the translators of his works. Macunaima himself is a typical, archetypical Trickster figure taken from the Pemon Trickster cycles. As he travels, he demonstrates his capacities to transform both in destructive and creative ways. As is typical of the Trickster, the obtaining of food and taking care of survival is of utmost importance. Macunaima is also analyzed as part of a triad that includes his two brothers; he is also compared with Venceslau Pietro Pietra, who rather than being presented as an enemy, functions as another Trickster in the novel. Through the \textit{macumba} scene, one observes that everyone possesses the capacity to be a Trickster. In \textit{El reino de este mundo}, Carpentier demonstrates that the Trickster has long been a figure used against discourses of those in power, in particular those discourses that have slavery embedded in their rhetoric and practices. The Trickster
restores the integrity of the body and the spirit using the power of memory and voice, telling stories that otherwise should not be said due to the shame instilled by discourses of power. Travel is dangerous, and this inherent danger is discussed in conjunction with the ideas of Lewis Hyde regarding the way the Trickster slips through the traps of shame. Ti Noel is presented as a mediator with the power of memory, interacting with the environment around him. Mackandal is also presented as a mediator between spirits/loa and the people. They are both storytellers, transforming the world around them, rejecting the shame of silence and saying what needs to be said. As in Macunaima, in Mascaró, el cazador americano there are three Tricksters presented as a unity confounding univocity and simplistic definitions. As Tricksters and as cazadores, the three begin to transform those around them into Tricksters, becoming spiritual alchemists. The Tricksters of the circus reach states of transcendence when they reach the height of their capacity. Haroldo Conti is himself a Trickster/alchemist who by using words, tells the stories and gives voice to those who were on the margins and/or silenced.

Chapter 4: Signs of Life. If in the first chapter, I discuss the lethality of abstract space with differential space as a type of antidote, in this last chapter I argue that hypervisualization of the abstract becomes more pronounced when hegemonic discourses of power attempt to silence other voices and control natural, corporeal rhythms. The absence of sound mimics a silence of an unnatural “death.” In chapter three, the Trickster speaks when speaking is forbidden; in chapter four, I explore alternative semiotic systems and modes that counter the silence imposed by certain hegemonic discourses and counter the “hypervisualization” of abstract space by providing differential and alternative modes of signification. Contrasting this imposed silence are the signs of life: the living are never truly silent, whether by heartbeat or by breath. These sounds are of particular interest in this chapter as a percussive sound and a “wind” sound respectively. The sounds of the body and a repeating focus on the corporeal integrity of the body serve as the base of such semiotic systems as music, dance, and poetry (which can be spoken or visual, yet the visual is a (de)formation, creating new potentialities). A distinction is made between
naturally occurring silences in music and poetry which are pregnant pauses full of potentiality waiting for kairos, and the deathly silences which attempt to quash any realization of latent subversive states in order for power to make manifest its own will. Rhythm is discussed as “measured movement,” with biological rhythms underlying certain semiotic systems which tell more faithfully the stories of the body. I turn to the text, Rhythmmanalysis by Henri Lefebvre, as a starting point to describe the functions of rhythms in subversive and transcendent ways. I also analyze the function of certain modes of self-expression in light of Octavio Paz’s thoughts articulated in El arco y la lira. If in the first chapter travel indicates a displacement, or a break in space and time according to Lefebvre, in chapter four I take this idea a step further to show that travel is not only a question of space and time, but also a question of natural rhythms that become altered and changed through travel. Travel produces alternative rhythms and provides a means through which signifying systems can be shared, permitting messages and information to become understood in a way that is more immediate and visceral. There is also a spontaneity to these systems that underscores their unpredictability and potentiality since like travel and myth, they are open and fluid systems. The signs of these systems not only demonstrate opportunity, but amidst systems that conspire a deathly silence, they speak as signs of life. In Macunaíma, Nature is presented as a Trickster with its own polyvalent semiotic systems. Macunaíma’s interaction with and perception of these semiotic systems are discussed through, for example, petroglyphic inscriptions and epitaphs on rocks. With regard to sound, at the beginning of the novel, Macunaíma enters a world resonant with sounds, but towards the end, he finds an incomprehensible and unintelligible silence. He counteracts this silence by telling his stories, and it is this retelling of the stories that resurrect the memory of him. Also, at various moments throughout the novel when Macunaíma dies, it is the power of breath, the sound and the essence of air that brings him back to life. The analysis of El reino de este mundo begins with an exploration of musical languages that allowed people on ships to mutually understand each other. Lenormad de Mezy’s whistling and Mlle. Floridor’s theatrical performance is contrasted with the music produced by Ti Noel;
namely the former is a reproduction of what could be thought of as “dead music,” with little to no meaning, while the latter is “live” and spontaneous. The sound of the drum and the shell are studied together with their role and significance in the rebellions that led to eventual freedom. Nature and her symbols and signifying systems are also studied including the role of the body. Visual and aural aspects are linked in order to observe what happens when instead of hypervisualization, the senses function together. In Los pasos perdidos the narrator describes a “deathly” and stagnant atmosphere which will be contrasted with the moving and life-affirming way of living he will experience after travelling to a country in Latin America. Music is also studied in terms of “dead” music that has lost its meaning versus “live music,” or rather the Treno, a type of music described as trying to protect life from death. The act of creation is highlighted whether via procreationary activities with women (Mouche and Rosario), through the creation of a master musical work, and through the narrator’s attempt to recreate himself and thereby resurrect himself from the stagnant repetition that didn’t allow for the realization of the protagonist’s self-fulfillment. In his resurrection, the narrator is able to “breathe” again and different types of breathing are analyzed. In Mascaró, el cazador americano, the body as semiotic system communicates signs of life at a time and place when death and torture are a constant peril. Maruca, in particular, is the focus of a corporeal semiotics, as are tangentially, the characters of Carpofofo, Boc Tor and Perinola. The presence of music, breath and heartbeat, wind and percussive sound, is manifest from the beginning of the novel to its end, as evidenced by the presence of a bracelet made of shells and the sicu, an indigenous flute. The varying signs of life in the novel demonstrate polyrhythmic possibility; voyage and movement become signs of life.

Since travel literature transgresses boundaries of genre and technique, (which also reflects the questioning of boundaries that began in the early 20th century), lately the field of travel literature, both fictional and non-fictional, has been expanding. In the case of Latin America, the theme of travel is especially relevant because some/many scholars consider early travel chronicles about the “New World”
as markers of the beginning of what can be called a literature that is Latin American. Stemming from this literary history, in addition to many other orientations of critical analysis, there tend to be two analytical “motions” of analysis: one that tends to look (or move) backward toward the conquerors and colonizers who projected their myths and dreams upon a virgin America searching for a utopia, with variations on this theme. The other motion of analysis tends to be a present or forward motion with a more dystopian view of a voyage that leads nowhere, particularly those that focus on the postmodern era. Variants of this last motion include parodies of the voyages of the conquerors and colonizers from previous eras. Some studies trace an evolutionary pattern in Latin American travel literature that begin from the chronicles of Columbus onward. Ottmar Ette, for example, begins his *Literatura de viaje de Humboldt a Baudrillard*, by proposing different dimensions of travel based on Claude Lévi-Strauss’ work in *Tristes Tropiques* (Ette 15-25), and later continues another vein of structural analysis by defining certain “hermeneutic movements” with regard to travel literature (51-70). For Ette, like for many others, the voyages of Columbus begin the projection of the Western world onto the “New World” (81) and through Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio’s *Le rêve mexicain*, Ette reiterates that the “New World” becomes the dream of the “Old World,” the “sueño americano” dreamed by Europe that would be the cause of much violence and bloodshed (99). He compares and contrasts these projections with *Amérique* (1986) by Baudrillard (103-108). In *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, Neil L. Whitehead explains that South America “has been largely imagined through such travel writing” beginning with Columbus and those who marveled at the new world to those who came to South America in order to catalogue it (122). In the introduction to *El viaje en la literatura hispanoamericana: el espíritu colombino – Homenaje a José Luis de la Fuente*, Sonia Mattalia, Pilar Celma and Pilar Alonso also explain that travel literature in Latin America originates from Christopher Columbus, who, according to them, is

---

7 Ette also explains that in addition to the “dreams” of the Europeans, Le Clézio presents the dreams of the indigenous people of Mexico: that of the return of Quetzalcóatl and the disappearance of their Empire (99).
“el primer escritor hispanoamericano” (15). The chroniclers that came after him “serán contemplados como los auténticos iniciadores de personajes, ambientes y formas narrativas que se han desarrollado en toda plenitud” by such famous writers as “Jorge Luis Borges, Juan Rulfo, Gabriel García Márquez, Abel Posse entre otros” (16). In a different introductory essay, Leila Gómez delineates a three-part schematic that organizes articles that analyze travel in Latin American literature: “The Arrival” which deals with the exploration of the construction of Latin American otherness by foreign travelers (6-7), 2) “The Return” which explores the mode in which lettered Latin-American travelers redefine their locality including a redefinition of center and periphery (8-9), and 3) “The impossible return” which explores the idea of travel in terms of the impossibility of return (10). This idea of the “impossible return” of a frustrated and alienated traveler reflects postmodern writing and criticism with regard to travel, which is further explored in the enumeration of the analyses that follows. For Marc Augé in “El viaje inmóvil,” images and simulacra (spread by television or the Internet, for example) have become insufficient substitutes for traveling and encountering the Other; they become un “viaje inmóvil.” Augé stresses the importance of travelling to encounter the Other, and by extension, to encounter ourselves (15). Angélica Gorodischer presents in “Viaje hacia ninguna parte” postmodern dystopian visions of certain types of travel in her analysis of three contemporary novels. Rosana Díaz-Zambrana in “De fantasmas y hecatombes: los viajes espectrales de fines de milenio” also presents a dystopian, post-modern view of travel that she contrasts to Fernando Álvaro’s *Los buscadores de utopía*. She cites Jean Franco when she writes: “Los viajeros no descubren nada. Vuelven sobre sus propios pasos” (153). Jean Franco in “El viaje frustrado en la literatura hispanoamericana contemporánea” explains how authors like Gabriel García Márquez, Julio Cortázar and Mario Vargas Llosa, utilize the “ya consagrada estructura del viaje de descubrimiento” in order to “destruir la estructuralización convencional de las experiencias” (365-366). Franco explains that the goal is to “desconcertar al lector haciéndolo salir de sus costumbres mentales” (370). I will make note of three other analyses that provide other perspectives. Claire Lindsay in *Contemporary Travel Writing of Latin*
“America,” examines journeys taken by people in Latin America in their own country who then describe it for themselves: “where vast distances, variegated geographies within and across nation-states as well as a strong tradition of regional and ethnic identities mean that home territories are not always necessarily very well known, familiar or even considered home at all to the regional traveller” (6). Margaret Heady in Marvelous Journeys: Routes of Identity in the Caribbean Novel, describes the differences and evolutions from the modernist Marvelous Realism to the postmodern Magic Realism citing a change from an “ontological” perspective to that of “literary technique” (3). Pilar Rubio in “Nuevas estrategias en la narrativa de viajes contemporánea” delineates the boundaries between narrativa de viajes and literatura de viajes, mentioning that at times the “frontier” between fact and fiction becomes almost “invisible,” but still argues that it is necessary to seek the truth (255).

In this study, I attempt to investigate voyage as an open movement, and the open systems that tend to be a part of this movement, such as myth and alternative semiotic systems, yet without glossing over their dynamic complexities. I study these systems both in the context of the literature of the corpus and the past upon which this literature is based. These systems are polyvalent and I do not attribute positive or negative valorizations to them, but rather focus on the praxis and use of these systems and how they can be (and have been) used to effectuate change, particularly in dominant and repressive systems. Using the time period between 1928-1976, a time of radical questioning of the past, I consider how these different systems, tropes and techniques have been used in literature as a way of questioning, subverting and transcending hegemonic discourses. I also delve into how some of these techniques have been used or perceived historically and the manifestations they take in the novels of the time period studied. This confluence of time periods becomes important in the present day as we continue to question and reconsider the past in order to shape a more equitable present and conceive of a just future.
Chapter 1: Voyage: Space, Time, and Praxis

Many a trip continues long after movement in time and space have ceased.
- John Steinbeck

To begin exploring subversion and transcendence in the Latin-American travel novel, a look into space, time, and praxis is necessary, since it has been considered that the substantial change in space and time is what characterizes voyage, differentiating it from other human activities and practices, while travel itself is the movement or practice in space and time. Adding to this basic definition is Claude Lévi-Strauss’s assertion that: “Travel is usually thought of as a displacement in space. This is an inadequate conception. A journey occurs simultaneously in space, in time and in the social hierarchy. Each impression can be defined only by being jointly related to these three axes, and since space is itself three-dimensional, five axes are necessary if we are to have an adequate representation of any journey” (Tristes Tropiques 85).

In other words, space is three-dimensional, time is the fourth dimension, and a social “hierarchy” or aspect is the fifth dimension. This conceptualization of voyage as multi-dimensional is going to be key as we consider how travel can be subversive and transcendent, since subversion and transcendence operate in multiple dimensions either by producing openings in systems or by using openings that are already existent in certain systems. For example, travel makes the social hierarchy more fluid which provides liberating openings for travelers. Ottmar Ette observes the opening in social hierarchy created by travel: “La quinta dimensión del viaje de la que habla Lévi-Strauss es la dimensión social. El viajero se mueve entre los diferentes grupos y capas sociales del país al que llega con una libertad negada a los propios habitantes . . .” (22). The focus of the analysis in this chapter will stem from the social aspect of travel in conjunction with the other axes of space and time. This social aspect of travel literature will be considered within the context of Henri Lefebvre’s The Production of Space. In his work, Lefebvre emphasizes the

---

8 In Literatura de viaje de Humboldt a Baudrillard, Ottmar Ette adds four more dimensions to Lévi-Strauss’ five: a sixth dimension of imagination and fiction, a seventh dimension of literary space, an eight dimension of genre and a ninth dimension of cultural space (23-25).
social aspect of producing space, rather than limiting the conception of space to its “geometrical and Euclidean” variation. In addition, Lefebvre states:

. . . energy, space, time - can be neither conflated nor separated from one another. . . . When we evoke ‘energy’, we must immediately note that energy has to be deployed within a space. When we evoke ‘space’, we must immediately indicate what occupies that space and how it does so: the deployment of energy in relation to ‘points’ and within a time frame. When we evoke ‘time’, we must immediately say what it is that moves or changes therein. (12)

Voyage as a “deployment of energy” (and the “moves and changes” it provokes), will be considered an act that has a liberating potential since voyage itself represents a sense of potentiality. Voyage as praxis contains within it the possibility of producing a Lefebvrian differential space or an open space. This chapter begins with an exploration of these theories that will then be applied to travel fiction in the context of Latin America, specifically in order to (re)read Macunaíma, Los pasos perdidos, and Mascaró, el cazador americano. These texts will be analyzed in terms of their idiosyncratic usages of space and time and the resulting effects on the structure and the narration and how these offer a subversive and/or transcendent perspective in a social context.

1.1.1 Space, Time and Spatial Practice According to Henri Lefebvre

In addition to the triadic conception of space, time, and energy, it would be beneficial to clarify several other spatial concepts that Lefebvre uses throughout his work. In The Production of Space, as the title suggests, social space is presented as a social production, which Lefebvre distinguishes from physical space, otherwise defined as nature (30). Space is formed generally by social practices and interactions and “every society – and hence every mode of production with its subvariants (i.e. all those societies which

---

9 According to Lefebvre, natural space “juxtaposes – and thus disperses” whereas social space “implies actual or potential assembly at a single point, or around that point. It implies, therefore, the possibility of accumulation” (101). Travel produces a hybrid of these spaces since it also juxtaposes, disperses and is also a social space that can also revolve around a paradoxical singular area of dispersal.
exemplify the general concept – produces a space, its own space” (31). Lefebvre delineates a history of space since “If space is produced, if there is a productive process, then we are dealing with history . . .” (46). The history of space describes the change that leads from one mode of production to another and it is this change in modes of production that forms a new space (46). The different spaces that Lefebvre lists in chronological order are: absolute space, abstract space, and contradictory space (which is brought about by the contradictions of abstract space).

This spatial history begins with the space of nature and the social practices that stem from nature since these mark the beginning of absolute space:

*Absolute space* was made up of fragments of nature located at sites which were chosen for their intrinsic qualities (cave, mountaintop, spring, river), but whose very consecration ended up by stripping them of their natural characteristics and uniqueness. Thus natural space was soon populated by political forces . . .

Absolute space, religious and political in character, was a product of the bonds of consanguinity, soil and language, but out of it evolved a space which was relativized and *historical*. (48)

As society moves away from nature and closer to the world of image and signs, an abstract space is produced. Abstract space tends toward centrality as it is a space of domination (49). As a way of rebelling against abstract space, Lefebvre foresees the formation of a new space: a differential space whose movement subverts the centrality of abstract space. Differential space is the final chapter (both literally and figuratively), with regard to the history of space as presented in Lefebvre’s work although perhaps it can be posited that there is no final chapter with regard to the production of space. Differential space will be of particular interest when we link it to subversion in travel novels in Latin American literature later in this chapter.

---

10 Italics used in citations, unless otherwise stated, are not mine.
A unique characteristic of Latin America when compared with other Western countries with regard to Lefebvre’s history of space, is that while Lefebvre does mention that one space serves as an underpinning for another space, in Latin America, I think it is reasonable to posit that absolute space as an underpinning has had a much stronger and lasting influence, and has continued to function on various levels along with abstract space. This will become far more obvious in the analysis of Los pasos perdidos. According to the definition provided in the previous section, absolute space is a space where natural elements are used for religious and/or political means while abstract space is the space that follows chronologically. Abstract space brings about contradictions that produce a contradictory space which in turn, leads to differential space. In the larger context of Latin America, examples of absolute space can be found in the temples of Tenochtitlán or the site of Machu Picchu. Elements of the cultures that produced these places continued to live on, as did absolute space. In the meantime, when the Spaniards came to the “New World,” they brought with them a specific plan and organization for the new towns with the purpose of controlling and extracting wealth.\textsuperscript{11} Thus abstract space was implanted into the “New World.” Lefebvre states: “The main point to be noted, therefore, is the production of a social space by political power – that is, by violence in the service of economic goals. A social space of this kind is generated out of a rationalized and theorized form serving as an instrument for the violation of an existing space” (151-152). In the case of the “New World” abstract space was superimposed onto absolute space. Whereas the change in Europe was gradual from absolute to abstract, there was a violent rupture in the case of Latin America where one space did not fall quietly to support the other.

\textsuperscript{11} While I feel it is a fairly well-known fact that Spain had planned and designed the towns that they were constructing or controlling, Lefebvre elaborates:

The Spanish-American town was typically built according to a plan laid down on the basis of standing orders, according to the veritable code of urban space constituted by the Orders for Discovery and Settlement. . . . These instructions were arranged under the three heads of discovery, settlement and pacification. The very building of the towns thus embodied a plan which would determine the mode of occupation of the territory and define how it was to be reorganized under the administrative and political authority of urban power. (151)

For more information, see Angel Rama’s La ciudad letrada, chapter 1: La ciudad ordenada.
1.1.2 The “Eyes” Have It: The Link Between Vision and Space in Discourses of Power

Michel de Certeau emphasizes certain “strategies” of dominance that have parallels in the ideas of Mary Louise Pratt and Lefebvre which are to follow. These strategies create a place of power that stands opposite an “other” and derives part of its power from this division. According to de Certeau, this division or rupture has certain effects, the first of which is “a triumph of place over time” (36) which is similar to Lefebvre’s ideas about abstract space in that time becomes “subordinated” and dominated. The second “effect” is the “mastery of places through sight,” where the “eye can transform foreign forces into objects that can be observed and measured,” which as we shall see, is also resonant in the work of both Mary Louise Pratt and Lefebvre (where sight and vision are linked with discourses of power). The third “effect” is the “power of knowledge,” which possesses “this ability to transform the uncertainties of history into readable spaces” through this far-seeing visual aspect (36). De Certeau also names subversive tactics that can undermine these discourses of control which will be discussed later in the chapter.

Mary Louise Pratt speaks in her seminal work, Imperial Eyes, of an “anti-conquest” that began in the eighteenth century when Europeans --with the goal of obtaining information-- went to the Americas to observe and to classify what they saw (for seemingly benign purposes, and using supposedly benevolent methods). She explains: “The main protagonist of the anti-conquest is a figure I sometimes call the ‘seeing man,’ . . . he whose imperial eyes passively look out and possess” (9). In this way, sight is linked with power and the dominance of possession, specifically of a space. As a person looks out onto a space and begins to name and classify, dominance is slowly being established while the one who names and classifies is actively imposing his (or her) view upon the space.

For Henri Lefebvre, a space that is defined by the fact that it is visual by its nature is abstract space (284-287). Lefebvre distinguishes three components that create abstract space and calls them

---

12 To explain what is meant by “anti-conquest” in Pratt’s own words: “The term ‘anti-conquest’ was chosen because, as I argue, in modern travel and exploration writing these strategies of innocence were constructed in relation to older imperial rhetorics of conquest associated with the absolutist era” (9).
“formants”: the geometric formant, the optical formant and the phallic formant (285-287). The geometric formant refers to the “reduction of three-dimensional realities to two dimensions” (285). The phallic formant “symbolizes force, male fertility, masculine violence” (286-287). The optical formant renders the visual the predominant sense (286). The result is a “hyper-visualization” and a reduction of things to the visual plane. Since, according to the geometric formant, three dimensions are reduced to two, there is a double reduction in play: one that reduces reality to the realm of the visual, and a second one that reduces the visual further from three to two dimensional. The powers that be are symbolized by the all-seeing Eye, which can effectively control as it finds itself in a centralized position while simultaneously reducing all else through its gaze.

The historical factors that allowed for abstract space to be produced occurred between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. These would continue to impact the world with the discovery of the Americas and later, following the time of conquest (the time period with which Pratt begins her study) up until a rupture that occurs in the early 20th century. In particular, Henri Lefebvre mentions the painters of Tuscany and their contributions to linear perspective as providing a new optic from which to view the world: “The point is merely that some artists and men of learning arrived at a very different representation of space: a homogenous, clearly demarcated space complete with horizon and vanishing-point” (79). Henri Lefebvre directs his attention to Erwin Panofsky’s book with regard to “visual logic” where Panofsky applies his analysis to gothic architecture. Lefebvre’s interpretation of Panofsky’s idea is as follows: “That the religious edifice, by rising higher, receives more light; that its naves no longer have the compact and sombre atmosphere of so-called Romanesque churches . . .” (259). Lefebvre expounds upon Panofsky’s ideas as he feels that these can be extended toward a deeper and fuller

---

13 The rise of the visual realm at the expense of the other senses is an observation that Lefebvre credits to Nietzsche, along with the metaphors that represent the concept of the dominance of the visual in the abstract realm (The Production of Space 139).
14 Pratt also notes said rupture, which happens to be one of the foci of the last chapter of Imperial Eyes.
meaning with implications that reach beyond architecture and can be used to explain the production of abstract space and the negative characteristics that Lefebvre will attribute to this space. Lefebvre explains that:

The production of a luminous space and the emergence of that space did not as yet, in the thirteenth century, entail either its subordination to the written word or its mounting as ‘spectacle’. Still, to the extent that he is accurate, Panofsky is describing a threatening gambit. The trend towards visualization, underpinned by a strategy, now came into its own – and this in collusion on the one hand with abstraction, with geometry and logic, and on the other with authority. (261)

Here, Lefebvre is anticipating the space of the abstract and the realization of this space. The constituents that would come together and coalesce to produce abstract space were already forming. What was to follow this process as a production of a new space, was a time of violence and dominance where the visual was a tool in the arsenal of authority:

In the space to come, where the eye would usurp so many privileges, it would fall to the Phallus to receive or produce them. The eye in question would be that of God, that of the Father or that of the Leader. A space in which this eye laid hold of whatever served its purposes would also be a space of force, of violence, of power restrained by nothing but the limitations of its means. This was to be the space of the triune God, the space of kings, no longer the space of cryptic signs but rather the space of the written word and the rule of history. The space, too, of military violence - and hence a masculine space. (262)

Authority would soon be linked with economy as medieval towns began to accumulate goods in one locale and soon after, capital, which would allow capitalism to begin to gain ground and energy (53). Lefebvre associates capitalism with abstract space: “Capitalism and neocapitalism have produced abstract space, which includes the ‘world of commodities’, its ‘logic’ and its worldwide strategies, as well as the power of money and that of the political state” (53). What allowed capitalism to grow and become a global system
of networks is the original voyage of Christopher Columbus and the colonizers that were soon to follow. For Enrique Dussel, the year 1492 marks the beginning of modernity when Europe pitted itself against the “Other” or those that it colonized:

But modernity as such was “born” when Europe was in a position to pose itself against an other, when, in other words, Europe could constitute itself as a unified ego exploring, conquering, colonizing an alterity that gave back its image of itself. This other, in other words, was not “discovered” (descubierto), or admitted, as such, but concealed, or “covered up” (encubierto), as the same as what Europe assumed it had always been. So, if 1492 is the moment of the “birth” of modernity as a concept, the moment of origin of a very particular myth of sacrificial violence, it also marks the origin of a process of concealment or misrecognition of the non-European. (66)

There then exists a sort of double violence that the subsequent conquests exerted. The first type of violence is found in the physical violence of war and then forced slavery. If Lefebvre finds abstract space to contain within it an inherent violence, then the imposition of a slave system on the indigenous peoples became a second type of violence. The goods of their labor were then shipped thousands of miles away to lands most of them would never see. Lefebvre states:

To summarize: before the advent of capitalism, the part played by violence was extra-economic; under the dominion of capitalism and of the world market, it assumed an economic role in the accumulation process; and in consequence the economic sphere became dominant. This is not to say that economic relations were now identical to relations of power, but merely that the two could no longer be separated. We are confronted by the paradoxical fact that the centuries-old space of wars, instead of sinking into social oblivion, became the rich and thickly populated space that incubated capitalism. . . . What followed was the establishment of the world market, and the conquest and plunder of the oceans and continents by Europeans – by Spain, England, Holland and France. (276)

The chronicles of the explorers and conquerors of the New World bore traces of the space which they helped to produce. In many texts, there was an inherent exploitative discourse as the explorers and
conquerors wrote of the riches that they had found. As private property was set up in the Americas along with a system of labor known as the *encomienda* (what would in reality perhaps become a metonym for slavery), an exploitative system dug its roots into the Americas. The indigenous people were presented sometimes benignly, other times malevolently, but always as Other.\(^{16}\) The Spanish hegemony which established dominance over the indigenous peoples, was codified using the written word. For Lefebvre the written word is a particularly dangerous manifestation of abstract space:

> Perhaps it would be true to say that the place of social space as a whole has been usurped by a part of that space endowed with an illusory special status – namely, the part which is concerned with writing and imagery, underpinned by the written text (journalism, literature), and broadcast by the media; a part, in short, that amounts to abstraction wielding awesome reductionistic force vis-à-vis ‘lived’ experience.

> Given that abstract space is buttressed by non-critical (positive) knowledge, backed up by a frightening capacity for violence, and maintained by a bureaucracy which has laid hold of the gains of capitalism in the ascendant and turned them to its own profit, must we conclude that this space will last forever? (52)

Lefebvre answers his own question in the negative as he will suggest a subversive orientation that will be delineated further along in this chapter. The writings of the *conquistadores* will serve to establish and maintain their power. This hypothesis is taken even further by Ángel Rama in *La ciudad letrada* where writing is given a special status of power as the colonizers settle into the New World and set up methodical cities in order to preserve hierarchies and structures of power and authority (4-9). When Rama explains that with regards to cities, “Las regirá una razón ordenadora que se revela en un orden social jerárquico

---

\(^{16}\) This is a simplistic description to be sure, as the subject and processes of agency are historically more complex than the rough generalities and trends described here. Some of these complexities will be broached in proceeding chapters. In particular, if travel was used to transport and establish power in certain places, there was also a destabilizing element to travel where “transporting and establishing” power was never a guarantee. In addition, the routes of travel used to “transport” power were also used to communicate and extend subversive ideas as delineated in *The Many-Headed Hydra* by Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, and *The Black Atlantic* by Paul Gilroy.
transpuesto a un orden distributivo geométrico,” his observations affirm the aforementioned geometrical formant of abstract space and its imposition on the Americas (4).

1.1.3 Rupture and “Trial by Space”

It borders on tautology that travel has been an oft repeated motif in Latin American literature since its inception. The authors of colonial Latin America, for example, continue to exert their influence even until today. Travel literature in Latin America has undergone evolutions through time as events occurred that brought about new ways of thinking and these changes had their marked effect on literature. For Lefebvre, a turning point with regard to art begins with Pablo Picasso shortly after the turn of the 20th century. This turning point will have a continuous impact, not just on painting, but on literature as well. According to Lefebvre:

It was at this time [1907] that Picasso discovered a new way of painting: the entire surface of the canvas was used, but there was no horizon, no background, and the surface was simply divided between the space of the painted figures and the space that surrounded them. . . .

It was thus also (and above all) disquieting, evoking neither pleasure, nor joy, nor calm - only intellectual interest and most likely anxiety. Anxiety in face of what? In face of the shattered figures of a world in pieces, in face of a disjointed space, and in face of a pitiless ‘reality’ that cannot be distinguished from its own abstraction. . . .

Picasso’s space *heralded* the space of modernity. . . . What we find in Picasso is an unreservedly visualized space, a dictatorship of the eye – and of the phallus . . . carried to the point of self-parody. . . . And Picasso, . . . inevitably glimpsed the coming dialectical transformation of space and prepared the ground for it; by discovering and disclosing the contradictions of a fragmented space . . . the painter thus bore witness to the emergence of another space, a space not fragmented but differential in character. (301-303)
Picasso, and other artists that were considered avant-garde, broke with classical canons and paradigms.\footnote{Alejo Carpentier, as quoted in Roberto González Echeverría’s \textit{Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home}, notes a similar crisis in the novel of the 1920’s which attempts to break “the molds that had shaped it during the entire nineteenth century,” in part by utilizing “evocative elements . . . which perform in the narrative the function of Picassian collages. . .” (67).} This marked a time of rupture, and an absolute change of the past. Also of note is the fact that the visual aspect of space as presented in Picasso’s work differs tremendously from the Renaissance perspective that was mentioned previously. The geometry and logic that characterized Renaissance art is smashed into pieces in Picasso’s art. The clear horizon that shaped the Tuscan landscape in the Renaissance paintings has also disappeared thus, disorienting the viewer and the view. Abstraction reaches an apogee since it has no reality to which to anchor itself. All of these differences distort the perspective that was the hallmark of Renaissance painting while shaping a new reality, one that perhaps can be labeled as “differential,” where silenced voices are starting to organize and gain recognition.

Mário de Andrade, whose most famous work, \textit{Macunaima}, will be studied in this chapter, was a leader of the avant-garde of São Paulo and his work is part of the rupture that heralded a new space and a new time. This break with all former canons will pervade the literature of the century and will continue to have lasting effects to include what is being written today. This tear has become a permanent rupture that has had long lasting implications. Rosana Díaz-Zambrana, who studies Latin American travel novels, has noted an intensifying effect in this rupture in postmodern times:

\begin{quote}
En nuestra somera aproximación al motivo del viaje en las postrimerías del milenio, el espacio continúa ratificando su fuerza desestabilizadora y hostil, al mismo tiempo que colapsa la estructura tradicional de los circuitos que conformaban la jornada heroica tales como el aprendizaje, el desarrollo, la revelación o el engrandecimiento. (159)
\end{quote}

In the above citation we see the effects described by Henri Lefebvre with regard to events and cultural movements that began in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century that are still affecting us today. These radical changes that had formed, have allowed for a complete re-evaluation of the past.
One of the results of this utter break with what came before, is that these particular texts are currently putting prior texts through what Lefebvre denominates a “trial by space,” whereby the past is judged from a modern viewpoint. Lefebvre states:

Today everything that derives from history and from historical time must undergo a test. Neither ‘cultures’ nor the ‘consciousness’ of peoples, groups or even individuals can escape the loss of identity that is now added to all other besetting terrors. Points and systems of reference inherited from the past are in dissolution. Values, whether or not they have been organized into more or less coherent ‘systems’, crumble and clash. Sooner or later, the cultivated elites find themselves in the same situation as peoples dispossessed (alienated) through conquest and colonization. These elites find that they have lost their bearings. Why? Because nothing and no one can avoid trial by space - an ordeal which is the modern world’s answer to the judgement of God or the classical conception of fate. . . .

Trial by space invariably reaches a dramatic moment, that moment when whatever is being tried – philosophy or religion, ideology or established knowledge, capitalism or socialism, state or community – is put radically into question. (416-417)

From the time of Mário de Andrade, travel novels in Latin America have been doing precisely this: questioning the works that came before. Travelogues, chronicles, etc. written by the conquistadors, explorers and scientists, have all been put under a microscope and have been reformulated and/or deconstructed. Modern texts have taken apart the writings of the past like pieces of a puzzle and have rearranged them. In doing this, they have been creating a new space and new modes of discourse. In other words, if according to de Certeau, the power of knowledge “transform[s] the uncertainties of history into readable spaces,” these texts retransform these readable spaces into uncertainties (36).

This “trial by space” has an element of the subversive to it, as it is the voice of authority that is being questioned. Mary Louise Pratt also echoes this sentiment:
The indigenous nations of the Americas are finding in the quincentennial an opportunity to assert a counterhistory, revindicate their lifeways, and consolidate present day struggles for territory and autonomy. Intellectuals are called upon to define, or redefine, their relation to the structures of knowledge and power that they produce, and that produce them. (xi)

These “counterhistories” require a new space that allows for marginal voices to be heard. Paradoxically, they create and produce a new space that is differential in nature and allows for a plurality that was once silenced by an overpowering centrality.

1.1.4 A New Space: Subversion and Transcendence

After outlining the characteristics of abstract space and elucidating how power maintains its position by manipulating time and space, Lefebvre calls for a differential space or rather the quest for a “counter-space” (383). However, given that spaces can never vanish, abstract space cannot disappear and will serve as the underpinning of this new space. Lefebvre suggests the creation or production of a new space and he delineates the nature of that space in the chapter titled “From the Contradiction of Space to Differential Space” (352-400). As a matter of fact, the project of his book, The Production of Space is a “different society, a different mode of production,” hence, a different space (419). Part of what drives Lefebvre’s suggestion for a new space, is an “orientation” towards a new space, a unifying “planet-wide space as the social foundation of a transformed everyday life open to myriad possibilities” (422). A description that Lefebvre provides for differential space is an active description that highlights the activity and action of the space itself as opposed to merely being passive and static:

I shall call that new space ‘differential space’, because, inasmuch as abstract space tends towards homogeneity, towards the elimination of existing differences or peculiarities, a new space cannot be born (produced) unless it accentuates differences. It will also restore unity to what abstract space breaks up – to the functions, elements and moments of social practice. (52)
The process of “restoration” underlines a participatory and active space; it becomes a motion or movement resisting the static gaze of abstract space.

We have now arrived at appropriated space and/or reappropriated space. Lefebvre contrasts this space with a dominant one because an appropriated space is an alternative to the spaces created by authority. He states:

For Marx, nature belonged among the forces of production. Today a distinction is called for that Marx did not draw: namely, that between the domination and the appropriation of nature. Domination by technology tends toward non-appropriation – i.e. towards destruction. This is not to say that such destruction must inevitably occur, but merely that there is a conflict between domination and appropriation. This conflict takes place in space. There are dominated spaces and there are appropriated spaces. (343)

The previous citation speaks of an appropriation of nature and appropriated spaces. Appropriation is mentioned throughout The Production of Space as a mechanism that opposes exchange (368) and some of the characteristics that Lefebvre attributes to capitalism-namely death and domination (348). To counteract that which is dead in capitalism, Lefebvre suggests the answer is “through the production of space” (348). Lefebvre explains that, “In and by means of space, the work may shine through the product, use value may gain the upper hand over exchange value: appropriation, turning the world upon its head, may (virtually) achieve dominion over domination, as the imaginary and the utopian incorporate (or are incorporated into) the real” (348) whereby “real” in a sense refers to the physical as opposed to the abstract and its optical illusions. Perhaps the best place to look for these spaces of appropriation is on the margins of society.

There is a proliferation of differences on the margins and these differences are anathema to the centrality and totality of power for even though there are differences within abstract space, there is an attempt to keep the space, at least on the surface, a primarily homogenous one. The margins have a
tendency to re-appropriate space since they are generally lacking a space of their own within society.\textsuperscript{18} If we are looking for a new space that subverts domination, this may be where to find it. As Lefebvre states:

Differences endure or arise on the margins of the homogenized realm, either in the form of resistances or in the form of externalities (lateral, heterotopical, heterological). What is different is, to begin with, what is excluded: the edges of the city, shanty towns, the spaces of forbidden games, of guerrilla war, of war. (373)

Lefebvre lists the shanty towns of Latin America as an example of appropriation and argues that the “spontaneous architecture and planning (‘wild’ forms, according to a would-be elegant terminology) prove greatly superior to the organization of space by specialists who effectively translate the social order into territorial reality with or without direct orders from economic and political authorities” (374). On a larger scale, since Latin America has been considered part of the periphery, it can then be fertile ground for such movements.\textsuperscript{19}

Life is one of the main characteristics of this new and appropriated space as opposed to the lethality of abstract space. When we speak of life here, we speak of human life along with nature itself, and when we speak of death, it is a natural death as opposed to abstract death. Lefebvre references Marx’s belief that, “nature was the only true wealth” (350). He expounds upon this notion when he says: “This idea remains true and profound, provided always that secondary (produced) space is not arbitrarily divorced, as if it embodied some particular significance, from the primary space of nature, which is the

\textsuperscript{18} For Michel De Certeau, power tends to carve out its own place (which according to de Certeau is a static area as opposed to a space which is a “practiced place”) and uses strategies to hold on to this place and to eliminate threats to its power. While power has place and strategies, the marginalized have time and tactics, where a tactic “is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. . . . The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power. . . . This nowhere gives a tactic mobility, to be sure, but a mobility that must accept the chance offerings of the moment, and seize on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any given moment” (\textit{The Practice of Everyday Life} 36-37). Using time, the marginalized can re-appropriate and create their own space.

\textsuperscript{19} On a literary level, Roberto González Echeverría in \textit{Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home} states that: “Latin American literature is revolutionary and modern because it corrodes the core of Western tradition from its fringes. . . .” (30).
raw material and the matrix of production. The supreme good is time-space; this is what ensures the survival of being, the energy that being contains and has at its disposal” (350). In this space, nature returns in a practical and sensory way. There is also a call for the return of the practical and sensory of the body, since the body is a part of nature. Lefebvre suggests the “science of space would concern itself primarily with the material, sensory and natural realms, though with regard to nature its emphasis would be on what we have been calling a ‘second nature’” which includes “the city, urban life, and social energetics” (368). This particular science, Lefebvre continues, would also favor “appropriation” and “use” as opposed to “exchange and domination” (368). This science then can be used to understand past events that led to certain spaces and can then be used to produce new ones- in particular, a physical space. Lefebvre explains:

Indeed the fleshly (spatio-temporal) body is already in revolt. This revolt, however, must not be understood as a harking-back to the origins, to some archaic or anthropological past: it is firmly anchored in the here and now. . . . Its exploratory activity is not directed towards some kind of ‘return to nature’. . . . Its object is ‘lived experience’ – an experience that has been drained of all content by the mechanisms of diversion, reduction/extrapolation, figures of speech, analogy, tautology, and so on. . . . social space is the locus of prohibition. . . . This fact, however, can most definitely not be made into the basis of an overall definition, for space is not only the space of ‘no’, it is also the space of the body, and hence the space of ‘yes’, of the affirmation of life. It is not simply a matter, therefore, of a theoretical critique, but also of a ‘turning of the world upon its head’ (Marx), of an inversion of meaning, and of a subversion which ‘breaks the tablets of the Law’ (Nietzsche). (201)

As Lefebvre understands it, and is readily apparent in the works of other critics such as Bakhtin, there is already a desire to return to the material as experienced by the body. The inherent violence of absolute space is felt acutely. A space that promotes this return to the senses is perhaps what is being sought.
The space that can be associated with a lived space when we consider Lefebvre’s tripartite division of space between spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces, tends to be the latter. Spatial practices are the practices that create social space. This implies a certain energy or movement. Regarding the actual spaces these spatial practices create, we have on the one hand representations of space, that is, “conceptualized space” which is “the dominant space in any society” (38-39). This particular space tends toward logic and the visual realm and has an abstractness about it -- though it should not be confused with abstract space, given that the latter is a category of space as perceived in historical terms-- (41). Representational spaces, on the other hand, have something of absolute space (though they should not be viewed as its equivalent as they can exist in any period of history). It is characterized as the “space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ . . . . This is the dominated . . . space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (39). Representational spaces are the intimate and lived spaces that are “alive”, “qualitative,” “fluid,” and “dynamic” (42). These spaces, being dominated, can often be found on the margins.

Another way of accessing representational space that seeks to appropriate, is through leisure. According to Lefebvre, the one space in “nature” which is devoted to leisure is the beach (384). Leisure can imply a trip or sojourn as one searches for natural spaces in which to pass time of leisure, away from the realms of work and labor. This is where the body “takes revenge” on capitalism as leisure is not productive, rather it consumes (384). For Lefebvre, spaces devoted to leisure are part and parcel of the “control of the established order” since leisure is a part of it in the guise of scheduled vacation time with an “industry” devoted to it (383-384). And yet, spaces of leisure are also areas of contradictory space for Lefebvre. This is because, although leisure spaces are linked with the “established order,” they also help to restore the body to wholeness, while also providing a space for alternative rhythms:
Thanks to its sensory organs, . . . the body tends to behave as a differential field. It behaves, in other words, as a total body, breaking out of the temporal and spatial shell developed in response to labour. . . .

In and through the space of leisure, a pedagogy of space and time is beginning to take shape. . . . this is no more than a virtuality . . . but it nevertheless indicates a trend (or rather a counter-trend).

The space of leisure tends – but it is no more than a tendency, a tension, a transgression of ‘users’ in search of a way forward – to surmount divisions: the division between social and mental, the division between sensory and intellectual, and also the division between the everyday and the out-of-the-ordinary (festival).

This space further reveals where the vulnerable areas and potential breaking-points are: everyday life, the urban sphere, the body, and the differences that emerge within the body from repetitions (from gestures, rhythms or cycles). The space of leisure bridges the gap between traditional spaces with their monumentality and their localizations based on work and its demands, and potential spaces of enjoyment and joy; in consequence this space is the very epitome of contradictory space. (384-385)

Leisure space is an in-between space; an alternating and alternative space. Travel reaches this contradictory space; travel is a movement among spaces that brings change and possibility with every encounter. As movement among spaces, travel can have a destabilizing effect on spaces; it can also be creative or destructive. Within travel lies the possibility for subversion and transcendence (both terms imply movements in their own right) as a movement that creates openings in barriers, be they social, political, economic, linguistic etc. If for Lefebvre “Relations between the three moments of the perceived, the conceived and the lived are never either simple or stable” (46), travel (and movement in general) further destabilizes these spaces, or perhaps is the reason they are inherently unstable. Movement makes such categorizations changeable, along with the passage and flow of time.
When one travels, the scenery, customs, political systems, and languages may all change, yet there is perhaps one constant in travel: the horizon. The horizon is charged with great metaphorical value stemming from its position as an in-between space of earth and sky or water and sky. The horizon has been viewed as a place of danger, and it is also a place of hope. In the following citation, Lefebvre describes the horizon to allude to what he foresees as the “dawning” of a new age:

On the horizon, then, at the furthest edge of the possible, it is a matter of producing the space of the human species – the collective (generic) work of the species - on the model of what used to be called ‘art’; indeed, it is still so called, but art no longer has any meaning at the level of an ‘object’ isolated by and for the individual.

The creation (or production) of a planet-wide space as the social foundation of a transformed everyday life open to myriad possibilities – such is the dawn now beginning to break on the far horizon. (422-423)

The light shining from the sky on the sea, mixing sea and sky and implying a horizon is the final space of Mascaró. The horizon is representative of a final space of many contemporary Latin American travel novels. It is on the horizon where we find the answers and approaches for the creation of a new space. The conclusions of the novels tend to be open-ended to facilitate the creation of new possibilities, as opposed to static, definitive and limiting endings. These latter quantifiers are the characteristics of abstract space. It is on the horizon where we find a new space; it is to the horizon where we must set our new sights.

1.1.5 Time

A discussion of space would be incomplete without an analysis of time. Time, according to Lefebvre, “has been murdered by society” as it is sold off in parcels in subordination to abstract space (96). We have seen that centrality and authority require fixed loci, which then implies space is of the
essence and the place of domination. Time wasn’t always conceived of in this way. Lefebvre reminds us that:

In nature, time is apprehended within space - in the very heart of space: the hour of the day, the season, the elevation of the sun above the horizon, the position of the moon and stars in the heavens. . . . Until nature became localized in underdevelopment, each place showed its age and, like a tree trunk, bore the mark of the years it had taken it to grow. Time was thus inscribed in space, and natural space was merely the lyrical and tragic script of natural time. (95)

It is interesting to note that time was inscribed on Mayan buildings in the Yucatán peninsula in México. The Maya marked time in space by building structures with apertures that, during the equinoxes and solstices, would allow the light of the sun to enter the building in a particular way, marking the passing of the year. This is in stark contrast to the way time is perceived in the modern-day Western world. The calendar in the Mayan world was dual: one was to mark the passage of time (which was deemed cyclical), and another marked the days of ritual or sacred days. This Mayan time is neither cold nor abstract; it is pregnant with meanings that are weaved into the cycles of natural life and death.

As I have mentioned before, the essence of life and the “lived” element is in direct contrast to abstract space which is fatal at its core. It is the “lived” that seeks more of a voice in this new production of space. To elaborate further on the idea of “lived time,” Lefebvre comments:

With the advent of modernity time has vanished from social space. It is recorded solely on measuring-instruments, on clocks, that are as isolated and functionally specialized as this time itself. Lived time loses its form and its social interest - with the exception, that is, of time spent working. Economic space subordinates time to itself; political space expels it as threatening and dangerous (to power). The primacy of the economic and above all of the political implies the supremacy of space over time. (95)
This robbery of time has created a disconnection between time as marked by nature and time as marked by political and economic factors. The lived and experienced time has been subordinated to the designs and the will of authority. Lefebvre continues by saying:

> It is thus possible that the error concerning space that we have been discussing actually concerns time more directly, more intimately, than it does space, time being even closer to us, and more fundamental. Our time, then, this most essential part of lived experience, this greatest good of all goods, is no longer visible to us, no longer intelligible. It cannot be constructed. It is consumed, exhausted, and that is all. (95-96)

The manifestation of this perceived loss of time appears in many different ways -- as does its recuperation.

Time is something to be experienced, yet the experience is never repeated.

Time does offer resistance to the imposed subordination to space by the powers that be. Time’s essence does not lend itself to authority – authority tries to manipulate time or our perception of it, yet time is resistant to abstract space. To demonstrate this point, Lefebvre states: “It is, rather, the time needed for living, time as an irreducible good, which eludes the logic of visualization and spatialization.. .” (96). In this quote, Lefebvre is explaining why time must be expelled (or subjugated) in modern times by the authority in power. It is because time does not fit the program of abstract space, because it cannot be reduced to an image, especially one of two dimensions. In another section Lefebvre asserts:

> Time might thus be expected to be quickly reduced to constraints placed on the employment of space: to distances, pathways, itineraries, or modes of transportation. In fact, however, time resists any such reduction, re-emerging instead as the supreme form of wealth, as locus and medium of use, and hence of enjoyment. Abstract space fails in the end to lure time into the realm of externality, of signs and images, of dispersion. Time comes back into its own as privacy, inner life, subjectivity. Also as cycles closely bound up with nature and with use (sleep, hunger, etc.). Within time, the investment of affect, of energy, of ‘creativity’ opposes a mere passive apprehension of signs and signifiers. (393)
Here, we see that time, while subordinated to space in abstract space, cannot be fully dominated nor controlled. It is not a reducible entity. According to de Certeau, if place is the locus of power, time is then used by the dominated in order to escape control through the use of tactics. The dominated, lacking a “proper place” have the benefit of a “tactic mobility.” Tactics are described by de Certeau as:

procedures that gain validity in relation to the pertinence they lend to time-to the circumstances which the precise instant of an intervention transforms into a favorable situation, to the rapidity of the movements that change the organization of a space, to the relations among successive moments in an action, to the possible intersections of durations and heterogeneous rhythms, etc. (38).

Tactics are also associated with play (39), wit and trickery (37). This association links time and tactics with the Trickster figure which will be introduced later in this work. Travel, being by definition a “displacement in space and time,” subverts the power established by a “proper place.” Travel, since it brings together different heterogeneous elements and changes in rhythm, is more intimately related with time, creating ruptures and possibilities, thus subverting dominant structures, schemes and strategies.

It is interesting to note that in Latin American travel novels, the more a protagonist becomes intimately aware of time through travel, the more a sense of ‘timelessness’ pervades the novel, as occurs in *Los pasos perdidos* or in *Mascaró*. In *Macunaima*, we can distinguish the rhythms of the city versus the rhythm of the Amazon. The rhythm in the city has a markedly modern feel that reflects the perception of time, as noted above, with regard to modernity. Through this observation, we can also notice the inseparable link between time and space. In a natural setting, it appears to us that time does not exist because it is not measured by clocks or calendars, hence the feeling of *timelessness*. In a bustling city, time is marked, set aside for certain activities. Time is reserved. Returning to the idea of *timelessness*, it is not so much that there is no time in these novels, such a thing is impossible. Time does, however, recover its *wholeness* and its entirety. It is full because it is perceived as such. Therefore, it is not so much a *timelessness* that is experienced, but rather a *timefullness* wherein time’s essence is restored. Time is
not subordinated but rather coincides with space. In *timefullness*, time’s resistance to the abstract is complete: it is experienced as an entirety and not piecemeal.

If we spoke above about appropriating (or re-appropriating) space, time should be considered an important factor in the creation of this new and counter space. We see this in the following quote from Lefebvre:

> Appropriation itself implies time (or times), rhythm (or rhythms), symbols, and a practice. The more space is functionalized – the more completely it falls under the sway of those ‘agents’ that have manipulated it so as to render it unifunctional – the less susceptible it becomes to appropriation. Why? Because in this way it is removed from the sphere of *lived* time, from the time of its ‘users’, which is a diverse and complex time. (356)

Perhaps we can also add *full time* to “diverse and complex time.” A restoration of *timefullness* and of *lived* time is called for here, or time as it is experienced during leisure or during travel. Hence, travel time can be a subversive time. It has more of the “lived” experience since it is not productive *per se*. Travel time is not as easily controlled nor subjugated during travels: events can occur that cause delays and ruptures. There can be detours, meetings, and encounters that have the power to change the outcome and the flow of events. Travel can also stimulate interior reflection, providing “ample space” for an interior and affective time. This interior time doesn’t produce anything that could be consumed or sold. Travel in itself is a rupture in time: it is a departure from the quotidian in more ways than one— it is a departure in space and in time.

1.2 *Macunaima*

Time and space, when approached separately, must converge upon examining certain elements closely. In this section, we will explore certain peculiarities of time and space as presented in *Macunaima* in order to ascertain their function in the work and also to glean different meanings and perspectives, dealing in particular with subversion and transcendence.
1.2.1 Space: A Rhapsody of Spaces

Mário de Andrade spent time travelling around his native Brazil, expanding his knowledge of the country and its people. It was after having travelled and during a period of leisure that the break in routine necessary for the novel Macunaíma to be written, occurred:

É [Macunaíma] um livro de férias escrito no meio de mangas abacaxis e cigarras de Araraquara, um brinquedo. Entre alusões sem malvadeza ou seqüência desfatiguei o espírito nesse capoeirão da fantasia onde a gente não escuta as proibições os temores, os sustos da ciência ou da realidade – apitos dos policiais, breques por engraxar (217).

Away from what could be interpreted as abstract space which Mário de Andrade describes as “realidade,” he finds a sense of freedom that distance has created, and it is precisely in this space, in this break in time, that he writes his novel. If Mário de Andrade travelled to different parts of Brazil, the title character of the novel Macunaíma also travels, not only throughout the country, but throughout the South American continent. Macunaíma’s travels both parallel and extend de Andrade’s movements. The travels of both the author and the title character generate a time and space that allow for questioning what it means to be Brazilian, which entails creating breaks in certain norms and other aspects of quotidian life along with pointing out societal and cultural contradictions. This self-questioning and self-reflecting contrasts with the perspective of the European explorers, conquerors, and scientists, who would come to Brazil and write their own travelogues, describing what they saw. In those writings, both structures and discourses were imposed upon the land and its inhabitants. We had mentioned that the sense of sight is closely linked with discourses of domination. Mário de Andrade, by seeing Brazil with his own eyes, changes and subverts discourses of power. Many travel novel writers who wrote after Mário de Andrade, would also re-appropriate the space of Latin America as seen through the eyes of a native, as opposed to the vision of a conquistador or a colonizer. Mário de Andrade conceived of his novel as a rhapsody, or a musical piece, which further undermines the visual aspect of the dominant. A technique of subversion observed
in travel novels is that of re-appropriating one’s own space from those who sought to dominate it. In this process of re-appropriation, differences would emerge from what previously had been homogenous viewpoints of Latin-America and one way of expressing these differences has been through travel writing.

With regards to the rewriting and re-appropriating the spaces that travelogues and novels seemed to encompass, it is worthwhile to mention a study done by Cecilia Pedrosa, who analyses a poem by Mário de Andrade (while comparing it to Macunaíma). In this study, Pedrosa encounters what she denominates an "anti-voyage" whereby instead of a voyage to an exterior place, the anti-voyager travels inward toward oneself. One can posit that this inward voyage is opposite to that of the colonizers. In A Meditação sobre o Tietê by Mário de Andrade, the river Tietê does not flow out to the sea, rather it turns inward. The trajectory of the river coincides with de Andrade’s inward voyage and meditation through which he pondered what it means to be Brazilian:

Não por acaso, o rio no qual viajam poeta e poema é o Tietê, que, ao atravessar a cidade de São Paulo, contradiz a natureza e serpenteia terra a dentro, impedido de desaguar no mar pelo relevo da região. . . .

Através do tema da viagem, portanto, Mário de Andrade sobrepõe à euforia do movimento, da velocidade, do registro visual e exotizante, característicos da vida moderna, uma antiviagem feita de imaginação reflexiva, que perturba o curso linear dos trajetos, a clareza visual das paisagens. A epifania no espaço e no tempo presente se vivifica com dúvidas, abjeções, destroços trazidos pela memória. (Pedrosa 64)

It appears that in Pedrosa’s analysis, the argument can be made that Mário de Andrade moves away from the modes of abstract space towards an interiority of a “lived” and affective space. This space is not a simplified space, but perhaps it gives us insight into the contradictions that come from abstract space by using the image of the river Tietê that flows inward, rather than flowing out to the sea. Andrade’s line of questioning is necessary to highlight contradictions in order to understand a differential space. This idea of an antiviajante as someone who doesn´t travel out, yet travels inward to know one’s self, is reflected
in *Macunaima* via the trajectories of the protagonist in his *recorridos* of Brazil. The protagonist’s adventures will take him throughout Brazil, beginning with his home, moving through the rainforest, and finally ending in the rainforest again, in a sort of mythical Eternal Return. Like the author, the protagonist goes about from place to place in Brazil, getting to know the various landscapes and regions of the country. In either case, be it author or protagonista, there is an exploration of oneself via an exploration of a country.

By writing about Brazil, Mário de Andrade is re-appropriating discourse (in addition to the space that is Brazil itself). By doing so, de Andrade wrests both discourse and Brazil from the hands of the colonizers. The space of Brazil is explored and written about by a Brazilian who questions if he is even Brazilian, and poses the question of what it means to be Brazilian in all of its complexity: "(Dizer também que não estou convencido pelo fato simples de ter empregado elementos nacionais, de ter feito obra brasileira. Não sei si sou brasileiro. É uma coisa que me preocupa e em que trabalho porém não tenho convicção de ter dado um passo grande pra frente não)" (220). He creates an amalgam of different voices, texts and sources, revealing the complexity of Brazil, reversing de Certeau’s description of power of knowledge which has the ability to “transform the uncertainties of history into readable spaces” (36) by changing what were considered “readable spaces,” into “uncertainties,” where even the author’s own uncertainties are reflected in the novel. Mário de Andrade, by travelling throughout Brazil himself and presenting various aspects of space in the novel, re-writes the dominant discourses and provides a way of expressing a type of differential space as defined by Lefebvre. As the protagonist travels through Brazil, we notice different land regions, peoples, customs, legends, and beliefs. In his novel, Mário de Andrade paves the way for a differential space with the inclusion of the differences that encompass his native country.

At first glance, the rainforest from where the protagonist hails in *Macunaima*, seems to represent an absolute space, whereas abstract space will be found in cities such as Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. This dichotomy between absolute space and abstract space has become the basis of a pugnacious polemic
in Latin America articulating itself as an opposition between “barbarism” vs. “civilization” and rural vs. urban space. In *Macunaíma*, Mário de Andrade confuses these social spaces as he confuses geographical spaces by “degeographizing” both Brazil and the South American continent. Abstract space will enter absolute space and vice versa, each affecting and changing the other in irrevocable ways. The inclusiveness in the novel signals a pathway toward differential space via heterogeneous characteristics.

Here I will list the reasons why I believe it is appropriate to posit that the Amazon where Macunaíma is born and grows up, can be thought of at first, as an absolute space. If absolute space is taking the natural world and imbuing it with religious and/or political symbolism, in several instances, Macunaíma (as the emperor of the forest) and his brothers are agents who instill religiosity in natural objects. When Macunaíma’s mother dies, she is buried under a rock where an inscription will be drawn by Macunaíma’s brother, who happens to be a shaman: “Madrugadinha pousaram o corpo da velha numa rede e foram enterrá-la por debaixo duma pedra no lugar chamado Pai da Tocandeira. Maanape, que era um catimbozeiro de marca maior, foi que gravou o epitáfio” (27). A glyph follows the citation. In this example, a space is rendered sacred by a shaman and the glyph serves as a manifestation of its sacredness. Also, after the death of Macunaíma’s and Ci’s (Macunaíma’s consort) child, Ci gives a *muiraquitã* to Macunaíma, which is a carving made of jade, or clay. *Muiraquitãs*, “São artefactos cuidadosamente esculpidos, em mineral ou rocha verde, normalmente jade *nefrítico*, que tinha um grande valor simbólico, usado para vários fins, mas principalmente como amuleto” (Marcondes Lima da Costa, Anna Cristina Resque Lopes da Silva and Rômulo Simões Angélica 487). These amulets, while not places *per se*, show the fashioning of objects found in nature (in this case, jade, clay, and other substances) for religious purposes. By carving the *muiraquitã*, nature is being infused with religious meaning. These amulets were worth a lot of money, especially in Europe. Macunaíma’s *muiraquitã* is stolen by a man named Venceslao Pietro Pietra and Macunaíma will spend much of the novel trying to re-appropriate his talisman. Macunaíma will have to venture to abstract space in order to retrieve his amulet.
São Paulo is representative of abstract space and because of rapid changes in the city, its abstractness becomes more evident. The differences in spaces are manifest in the letter that Macunaíma writes to the women of the Amazon about the city of São Paulo. This industrial city where *A Semana de Arte Moderna* had taken place in 1922, is one of change and supposed progress. Macunaíma describes the city as a place of progress to his followers and asks them to emulate the *paulistanos*. Mário de Andrade is (of course) offering a tongue in cheek critique of the city. Interestingly enough, when referring to the city, Macunaíma also describes how the streets cut into the space; architecture, and progress (i.e. capitalism), all cut in and leave little room for people: “Toda cortada de ruas habilmente estreitas e tomadas por estátuas e lampiões graciosíssimos e de rara escultura; tudo diminuindo com astúcia o espaço de forma tal, que nessas artérias não cabe a população” (104). There is no room for people or life here because space is blocked and closed in. One of the critiques that Lefebvre offers with regard to abstract space is its lethality and its antagonism to life. In the description of the São Paulo that Macunaíma offers, we see clearly this antagonism. De Andrade mentions the “aguerrida e vultuosa Polícia,” emphasizing the authority and control that characterize abstract space (105). The “numerário dessa Polícia avulta” maintain the order that the streets carve into the land (105).

Macunaíma confuses absolute space and abstract space by introducing elements of one into the other, using his movements or travels and his wit to do so. He introduces absolute space into abstract space by the praxis of imbuing objects of the city with supernatural explanations that are more in step with absolute space. If we take a car for example, Macunaíma’s first encounter with this abstract object leaves him puzzled:

As onças pardas não eram onças pardas, se chamavam fordes hupmobiles chevrolés dodges mármons e eram máquinas. Os tamanduás os boitatás as inajás de curuátás de fumo, em vez eram caminhões bondes autobondes anúncios-luminosos relógios faróis rádios motocicletas telefones gorjetas postes chaminés. . . . Tomou-o um respeito cheio de inveja por essa deusa de deveras forçuda, Tupã famanado que os filhos da mandioca chamavam de Máquina. . . .
Here the car, --not a living entity, but a symbol of abstract life--, a machine that allows one to travel the roads that cut through nature, is puzzling to Macunaíma as he listens to the paulistanas state that there are no gods. The paulistanas give evidence of the abstract space in which Macunaíma now finds himself. As he acclimatizes to São Paulo, he will imbue the automobile with a mythical and supernatural quality before he leaves the abstract space to return to the forest. He first compares the Máquina to the Mãe-d’água, stating that the former is “mais cantadeira” than the latter by producing “bulhas de sarapantar” (53). He then provides to the driver and the young couple, a mythical origin for the car, explaining that the vehicle is the result of the transformation of a onça that is attempting to run away from a tigre preta. As part of this metamorphosis, the onça consumes an engine, and then ingests fireflies, which will become the headlights of the car (166-167). While in absolute space, mythical and religious qualities are given to nature, in this case, Macunaíma is imbuing abstract space with mythical and religious overtones. The young couple cries out of emotion upon hearing the story. The illusion of abstract space is broken where abstract and absolute space merge, and this fusion brings the young couple to tears in a flood of emotions, a sign of life in opposition to the lethality of abstract space.

When Macunaíma returns to the mato, he finds the forest changed. Perhaps it is due to the letter that he had written to the Amazonas, introducing abstract space to absolute space, and this abstract space, which causes death and destruction, may be the reason why in the end Macunaíma himself will die. He will, however, live on as a mythical being in the sky. In this way, he transcends space and becomes myth.

1.2.2 Time: Biological time and lived time vs. abstract time
The action of the story develops in a chronological fashion. There are neither flashbacks nor any other such temporal techniques that would come to characterize modern and post-modern Latin American literature. This is not to say that time in *Macunaima* is simple or one-dimensional. Although chronological in terms of action, time has many manifestations in this novel. In the first chapter, the time presented is a biological time that marks the development of Macunaima from baby to boy, to adolescent, to man. These stages serve as temporal markers for the first few chapters of the novel. Time, in this case, is lived biologically. It does not have the lethality of abstract space, nor is time killed off as it is in abstract time, where time is divided in order to enhance productivity. This biological time (let us recall that the prefix *bio* means life) also coincides with the space of the dense Amazonian forest, whereas abstract time will be associated with the city. Time is perceived in the natural development of a human being as opposed to being marked by hours and days. The body and nature co-exist.

Beginning on page thirty-nine and continuing throughout the novel, the temporal marker “no outro dia” will be repeated quite frequently and associated with the sun. Minutes and seconds are not marked; only the biological and natural time marked by the sun and the earth’s rotation are used as a way of showing progression in the development of the plot. Many chapters begin this way because the following day always brings a new adventure and a new episode to the plot. The sun, as a marker of daytime, has an anthropomorphic quality along with a mythical quality in *Macunaima*. The sun has human characteristics and often communicates with Macunaima. It is interesting to note the manifestation of the aforementioned anthropomorphism when Macunaima is in the forest. The sun disappears when Macunaima is in São Paulo, and does not return until Macunaima is in Rio de Janeiro (where, apparently, the sun lives). The sun then disappears again (as a character) when Macunaima goes back to São Paulo, and returns when the hero travels to the forest.

Folk ideas about time are also prevalent throughout the novel. For example, when Macunaima feels upset that he has not been able to retrieve his amulet, the moon becomes a sign, signifying that this
may not be the best time to repossess his muiraquitã, as articulated in the following refrain: “Quando mingua a Luna não comeces coisa alguma” (75). This time harkens back to an agricultural time, and is not in step with modern times, when time is supposed to be controlled and used by those in authority. This phrase is a reconnection to nature as a deciding factor for when things take place, which is opposed to a social dominant hierarchy that dictates when things are to take place. This also brings us back to the idea of absolute space, where nature is still an integral factor in people’s lives. Religion and politics mingle with nature in order to create this absolute space where nature was the time keeper.

The first and only official date appears in chapter nine, “Carta pras icamiabas” in which Macunaima writes a letter to the Amazon women back home when he is in São Paulo. As mentioned before, the city represents abstract space so it is only fitting that while in the city, Macunaima now partakes in time, not biologically, but rather chronologically using the dates and times recognized by official standards. The date reads as follows: “Trinta de Maio de Mil Novecentos e Vinte e Seis” (97). This date represents official time; it is the time that belongs to the city and to a bourgeoning capitalism. The letter itself is a description of São Paulo and economic concerns, and is of particular interest because one of the purposes declared in it is the request for money (or rather, cocoa beans to be traded for money). It is interesting to observe how time before this letter was marked by nature, myth, and the body. After being in the city, Macunaima writes this letter to the Amazonians in an elitist manner. When referring to the time of the Amazonas, Mário de Andrade doesn’t use the specific time as had been marked by Macunaima in his letter. Amazon time cannot be tamed: it cannot be parcelled out and will not be subjected to the authority of space. Time retains its fullness in nature. Macunaima also states the date that he lost his amulet as the “dos idos de maio do ano translato” (97). This Latinized version, supposed to show his erudition, is yet another manifestation of authority over time. In the letter, Amazonian time is also compared to the time of the women of São Paulo in terms of their activities: “Mas heis de saber, senhoras minhas, que por cá dia e noute divergem singularmente do vosso horário belígero; o dia começa quando
para vós é o pino dele, e a noute, quando estais no quarto sono vosso, que, por derradeiro, é o mais reparador” (100). He thus compares the schedule of the paulistanas with the schedule of the Amazonas or icamiabas; the latter begin earlier in the day while the former both start and end their schedule much later. This letter, which on the surface appears to be praising the women of São Paulo, is of course, a mockery. In it, an indigenous emperor and Trickster is appropriating the colonizing discourse along with its conception of time. It is Mário de Andrade’s sharp critique of what was considered to be dated conceptions about language. It is, of course, an ironic point of view of the progress of São Paulo.

When Macunaíma returns to the forest, time returns to its fullness. The Sun, as vengeance, is beating down on Macunaíma (206). He decides to go into the river, yet there is a siren Uiara waiting for him. When he falls into the water, we observe a time change at the end of the paragraph: “Era o pino do dia” (206). There will be continuous time changes which are noted at the end of each paragraph. Time thus stays in the reader’s mind. Macunaíma leaves the water and realizes his body has been maimed. After this realization, “Entardecia” (206). In the next paragraph, he discovers he has lost his gun and his amulets: “O herói pulou dando um grito que encurtou o tamanho do dia” (206). The more Macunaíma continues to suffer, the later in the day it becomes. He then poisons the lake: “Era de-tardinha” (207). He then takes out all of the guts of the dead fish looking for his amulet: “Era a boca-da-noite” (207). He finds everything except for his leg and his amulet, as the blood of the fish begins to cover everything: “E era de-noite” (207). These references to time show a decadent fall into the night and into darkness. In this instance, biological and natural time are connected. As Macunaíma’s body becomes physically weaker and he approaches death, the day becomes darker until it is night. A parallel between the decadence of Macunaíma’s body and the time of day is thus created. It was also night when Macunaíma was born, and when he died; he returns to the chaos that is symbolized by night. A symbolic temporal structure is disclosed to the reader: absolute time, abstract time and then, absolute time again.
Macunaíma will continue eternally as a star where time will no longer have any meaning or power over him. At the end of the novel, Macunaíma transcends both space and time.

1.3 Los pasos perdidos

There have been many studies of *Los pasos perdidos*, with those of space and time being particularly numerous.\(^\text{20}\) While none that I have seen utilizes Lefebvre’s theories, I believe that analyzing *Los pasos perdidos* in the context of Lefebvre’s work can shed new light on an oft-repeated topic. In this analysis, I shall consider time and space in terms of Lefebvre’s history of produced space and how they appear subversive in the novel.

1.3.1 Space: Abstract Space as a Prison and Differential Space as Movement

The six chapters of *Los pasos perdidos* can be divided among the places where the plot occurs: 1. an unnamed city (characterized by a prison-like atmosphere);\(^\text{21}\) 2. Latin American city (where violence occurs); 3. Highlands and plains; 4. Rainforest; 5. Santa Mónica de los Venados (founding of a city); 6. return to unnamed city followed by a frustrated return to Santa Mónica. The first and last chapters are demonstrative of an abstract space while the middle chapters lean towards an absolute space, while also exhibiting the possibilities of differential space. A few distinctions can be drawn between the appearances of these spaces in the novels *Macunaíma* and *Los pasos perdidos*. While Mário de Andrade focused on specific places in Brazil and South America in a process of *degeographization*, mimicking or mirroring...

---


\(^{21}\) In “Las cárceles imaginarias de Sísifo: Visión de la urbe arquetípica en *Los pasos perdidos*,” Santiago Juan-Navarro writes an analysis of the city space in *Los pasos perdidos* by both taking as a given that the city being described is New York, a claim he substantiates by citing studies linking the city described in the novel with New York, and considering the city as an archetype due to its lack of a proper name in the novel (167-168).
places where Mário de Andrade’s own travels took him throughout the country, Carpentier, having travelled to Europe, Haiti, and Venezuela, never specifically names places in Los pasos perdidos. The places presented in both novels and the manner of their presentation or orientation reflect travels taken by both authors and their perceptions of these places and changing circumstances. The protagonist in Carpentier’s novel will travel inversely in comparison with the protagonist in de Andrade’s novel, who traveled from absolute space to abstract space, inserting abstract space into absolute space and vice versa. The protagonist in Los pasos perdidos will travel from abstract space and then to absolute space, and in the interim of the voyages between these spaces, glimmers of differential space are evident. In Macunaima, the presence of abstract space reflects the changes in Brazilian society and its economy toward industrialization. In Los pasos perdidos, the protagonist finds himself in a space that is already paradigmatic of abstract space from which he longs to break free. Unknowingly at first, in order to free himself from the grip of abstract space, the protagonist will go to a space that he will eventually perceive as a “going back” in time, both in terms of his personal life by returning to the place of his birth and by arriving at the birthplace and time of both music and man, to a zone of pre-manifestation where possibilities have not been made manifest.

In the beginning of the novel, the narrator seems to find himself in a space that is abstract: from the presence of simulacra, represented by the theatre (19), the “verticalidad” of the buildings (25), and the “funeraria de infinitos corredores” (25), which all evidence the overwhelming presence of the optical, geometric and phallic formants, with the last example even evoking a certain lethality attributable to the space. When the protagonist uses other senses to perceive the space, such as the olfactory, the smells wafting through the air are, “vahos químicos, que demoraba en patios olientes a desperdicios. . .” (25). This further emphasizes, if not an implication of lethality, then an unnatural space of decay. This abstract space as just depicted, seems like a prison to the protagonist as evidenced by the repetition of the words preso and cárcel in the beginning of the novel. It is this repetition of images that highlights the
monotonous spatial practices that both produce and sustain abstract space in a way that is dehumanizing and mostly devoid of nature:

. . . pensando en lo dura que se había vuelto, para Ruth, esta prisión de tablas de artificio. . . . (20; emphasis added)

¡Y era por favorecer esa carrera en sus comienzos desafortunados, por ver feliz a la que entonces mucho amaba, que había torcido mi destino, buscando la seguridad material en el oficio que me tenía tan preso como lo estaba ella! (22; emphasis added)

Había grandes lagunas de semanas y semanas en la crónica de mi propio existir; . . . días en que todo gesto me producía la obsesionante impresión de haberlo hecho antes en circunstancias idénticas—de haberme sentado en el mismo rincón, de haber contado la misma historia, mirando al velero preso en el cristal de un pisapapel. (23-24; emphasis added)

. . . me vería invadido muy pronto por el estado de depresión que he conocido algunas veces, y me hace sentirme como preso en un ámbito sin salida. . . . (29; emphasis added)²²

These words are used metaphorically to represent a lack of vitality and an imposition from outside forces upon one’s decisions and one’s life. There is a feeling that one’s life is not one’s own, which later on will be attributed to divisions of time. The repetition of the word prisoner and imprisonment, applied by the narrator to Ruth, himself, and stationary objects (perhaps as symbols), portrays an imprisonment that is not limited to the protagonist. Like a prisoner, the people in this society do not have a particular identity since, to those who are in control, the people are interchangeable and seemingly faceless and voiceless as the protagonist notes: “Habíamos caído en la era del Hombre-Avispa, del Hombre-Ninguno, en que las almas no se vendían al Diablo, sino al Contable o al Cómitre. . . . no veía donde hallar alguna libertad fuera del desorden de mis noches. . . .” (24). From these citations, we can glean a sense of hopelessness and stagnation that permeates the air as exemplified by the protagonist, his wife and the other Hombres-Avispas, who work in a metaphorical prison without truly living. Thus, abstract space and its debasing

effect is clearly described by Carpentier’s idea of *Hombre-Avispa* or *Hombre-Ninguno*: where man becomes no-man and is dehumanized into a wasp, whose only function is to labor for those who run the system. Another perspective of prisons in the novel is conjured by a dream the protagonist has which is reminiscent of Piranesi’s labyrinthine prisons: “Anoche soñé que estaba en una prisión de muros tan altos como naves de catedrales. . . . El colorido de aguafuerte de todo aquello me hizo pensar, al abrir los ojos, que algún recuerdo de museo me había hecho cautivo de las *Invenzioni di carceri* del Piranesi” (229).

Piranesi’s prisons as images demonstrate characteristics of abstract space as a hyperrealization: the images highlight the visual aspect as something that is seen and this power of the visual is demonstrated by the protagonist when he feels that he has been made “captive” of the image itself. The vertical lines exalt the geometric formant while the height implies the phallic formant entrapping the viewer (and the protagonist) in abstract space. Santiago Juan-Navarro notes a dichotomy of nature, one that paradoxically seems unnatural and “technical” (which can be linked to abstract space), represented by the prisons of Piranesi and the anonymous city versus nature itself:

> En ambos lugares (las cárcelón de Piranesi y la ciudad de la noche terrible de Carpentier) no hay naturaleza, sino sólo civilización. El hombre (o su sombra), se halla atrapado por una segunda naturaleza, producto de la técnica, que el mismo ha creado, y en la que se ha sumergido, aislándose de la naturaleza originaria (ese paraíso perdido que en la novela encarna Santa Mónica de los Venados). (174-175)

Finding himself in abstract space, alienated and isolated from nature, natural rhythms and himself, the protagonist feels an urge to escape or transcend his limitations and yet feels powerless to do so until a fateful encounter with the *Curador* intervenes.

To the protagonist, nature presents an escape which begins as a desire or longing for the natural world: “Hastiado de tener que elegir caminos entre tanta gente que andaba en sentido contrario,

---

23 This “second nature” that Juan-Navarro describes should not be confused with Lefebvre’s “second-nature.”
rompiendo papeles plateados o pelando naranjas con los dedos, quise ir hacia donde había árboles” (27). This longing for nature and for a deeper connection to something or to someone is occasionally realized by the protagonist during brief periods of leisure, which allow him the opportunity to find a spot in the countryside in order to restore and refresh the natural rhythms of the body. He remembers a similar feeling after sexual relations with Mouche since both occurrences restore the protagonist’s rhythms and he is able to experience a deep and restorative sleep: “me cerraba los ojos al regreso de un día de campo –esos muy escasos días del año en que el olor de los árboles, causando una distensión de todo mi ser, me dejaba como atontado” (37). These “free” days of leisure offer a brief respite from the imprisoning nature of abstract space and yet, according to Lefebvre, spaces of leisure are still a part of the system that supports abstract space. If this is the case, then during these periods, the protagonist is not completely free since he is still enmeshed in the system, even though according to Lefebvre, a potentiality exists in the space where the body finds itself again as a “total body” (Lefebvre 383-385). In order for the protagonist to free himself, he must travel elsewhere, where the net of systems that imprisons him does not operate. Shortly after his tryst with Mouche, the protagonist feels a desire to go “donde había árboles,” and he remembers, “esas gotas cayendo sobre mi piel en deleitosos alfilerazos, como si hubiesen sido la advertencia primera . . . del encuentro” (27). The pleasure of feeling the rain drops and the audible thunder foreshadow the entrance of the protagonist into a space of exuberant nature, one that will free him from the traps of abstract space. The initial yearning of the protagonist reaches its zenith in Santa Mónica de los Venados where the inner stirrings of the protagonist will be realized, providing him with a sense of freedom.24

---

24 The “distensión” produced in the protagonist via his relations with Mouche and his brief sojourns into the countryside becomes a healthy “tensión” that he feels not only in his desires towards Rosario, but manifests in his body that has become “escueto, preciso, que de músculos ceñidos a la estructura” (189). This latter tension rather than leaving him “atontado” will renew and reinvigorate the protagonist with artistic inspiration to create a musical piece called the Treno.
The narrator travels to his birthplace in Latin America, and it is there that he once again finds a corporeal rhythmic harmony, freed from the prisons of abstract space. With regard to where specifically in Latin America, Carpentier himself clarifies the issue at the end of the novel. It is important to note that the towns mentioned in the following chapters up until Puerto Anunciación are “prototypes” or archetypal Latin American towns (247):

El río descrito que, en lo anterior, pudo ser cualquier gran río de América, se torna, muy exactamente, el Orinoco en su curso superior. El lugar de la mina de los griegos podría situarse no lejos de la confluencia del Vichada. El paso con la triple incisión en forma de V . . . existe, efectivamente, con el Signo, en la entrada del Caño de la Guacharaca. . . .

La tormenta acontece en un paraje que puede ser el Raudal del Muerto. La Capital de las Formas es el Monte Autana, con su perfil de catedral gótica. Desde esa jornada, el paisaje del Alto Orinoco y del Autana es trocado por el de la Gran Sabana, cuya visión se ofrece en distintos pasajes de los capítulos III y IV. Santa Mónica de los Venados es lo que pudo ser Santa Elena del Ua’irén [sic.]. . . . (247)  

As can be extrapolated from the quotation, Carpentier’s travels to Venezuela influenced and served as inspiration for the choice of places mentioned in the novel. An example of this influence is demonstrated by the fighting that occurs in the city (presumably Caracas) that took place in the 1950’s. While many of the places described represent actual and specific places in Venezuela, another more collective perspective is also relevant here. Salvador Arias quotes Carpentier himself with regards to Venezuela: “‘ya que este país es como un compendio del Continente: allí están sus grandes ríos, sus llanos interminables, sus gigantescas montañas, la selva’” (11). Thus, although specific, the places in Los pasos perdidos represent a collective of Latin American geography, not quite as a synecdoche because the places are made to be somewhat vague in the novel as a way of approaching a type of Latin American geography.

---

25 This quotation is taken from a note written by Carpentier that is found after the conclusion of the novel.
universality. This universality also extends to the characters of the novel since the protagonist is never named directly and as shown by Arias who states that Carpentier was trying to portray a man of the times “situado en un contexto colectivo,” citing Carpentier (10). Lefebvre suggests a collectivity as a way of resisting abstract space and the powers that benefit from it. By presenting a collective, Carpentier resists the dichotomies and contradictions that abstract space produces. Even though each town and area in Los pasos perdidos is different, there is a universality in this collectivity that hints of a differential yet unified space, contrasting with the abstract space presented in the first chapter.

Another aspect that contributes to the idea that these towns represent the beginning of a differential space is the fact that in them, people live, or more specifically, life is lived. Again, the idea of life contrasts with the lethality that Lefebvre attributes to abstract space and reinforces the notion of use, as opposed to exchanges that occur in abstract space. Lefebvre states:

The user’s space is lived – not represented (or conceived). When compared with the abstract space of the experts (architects, urbanists, planners), the space of the everyday activities of users is a concrete one, which is to say, subjective. As a space of ‘subjects’ rather than of calculations, as a representational space, it has an origin, and that origin is childhood, with its hardships, its achievements, and its lacks. Lived space bears the stamp of the conflict between an inevitable, if long and difficult, maturation process and a failure to mature that leaves particular original resources and reserves untouched. It is in this space that the ‘private’ realm asserts itself, albeit more or less vigorously, and always in a conflictual way, against the public one. (362)

The word user (in French usager) denotes the idea of someone using a generally public service or place. I think this can be applied appropriately in the case of these towns, especially in Santa Mónica, since nature is public in the sense that it belongs to no one, and the people use what is found in nature to survive as a collectivity. To further corroborate the idea of a lived space, Jorge Rodrigo Ayora describes the space of Santa Mónica as, “un ambiente que clama que se lo viva y se lo asimile como vivencia. Ese mundo hay que vivirlo . . .” (889). Going back to Lefebvre’s idea of lived space, we can see how this quote reflects on
the protagonist. He (the protagonist) travels to the lived space of his childhood --his origins-- where he feels more free and alive. As mentioned earlier, Lefebvre explains that “relations between the three moments of the perceived, the conceived and the lived are never either simple or stable” (46). It stands to reason then that each moment exerts influence upon the other, and yet in the abstract space presented in Los pasos perdidos, representations of space affect the lived sphere disproportionately, whereas representational and lived spaces have a diminished effect on the former (46).\footnote{Lefebvre draws parallels between the two triads of perceived-conceived-lived and spatial practices, representations of space and representational spaces where the latter triad describes the former in “spatial terms” (40).} By travelling to areas where the net of abstract space is not so tightly woven into the fabric of society, representational and lived spaces now enter into a new dynamic with representations of space and spatial practices, namely a more fluid and open one that still is latent with possibilities.

The deeper the protagonist goes into the forest, the closer he gets to absolute space. If chronologically, according to Lefebvre’s history of space, absolute space precedes abstract space, as the protagonist perceives a “going back in time,” he edges closer to absolute space. The sequence of events that highlight this retrograde motion begins when the protagonist arrives at an indigenous village and finds the instruments that were the purpose of his voyage. The protagonist then perceives a regression of time toward a primordial beginning or Genesis. This moving back in time coincides with a funerary ritual held for a recently deceased indigenous man:

```
Estoy en morada de hombres y debo respetar a sus Dioses. . . . Detrás de mí, bajo un amasijo de hojas colgadas de ramas que sirven de techo, acaban de tender el cuerpo hinchado y negro de un cazador mordido por un crótalo. . . . Sin embargo, el Hechicero comienza a sacudir una calabaza llena de gravilla -únic instrumento que conoce esta gente– para tratar de ahuyentar a los mandatorios de la Muerte. (167-168)
```
In this example, nature is used for religious purposes as corresponds to absolute space. This house of men, whose gods need to be respected, is made of leaves and branches and will become a sacred site to perform this funerary ritual. A gourd will become a sacred instrument by which the ritual is performed. The protagonist feels he is witnessing the birth of music yet he is also witnessing absolute space (168).

To summarize, absolute space, in addition to being an “underpinning” for abstract space, is still found in the depths of the forest, far removed from the city, which appears in Carpentier’s work as the epitome of abstract space. Among these two spaces, we have seen glimpses of differential spaces where space is appropriated for everyone’s use and everyone has a different, albeit important function. Travelling itself produces a type of differential space, a heterogeneous space, as evidenced in the following example:

Con su carga de toros bramantes, gallinas enjauladas, cochinos sueltos en cubierta, que corrían bajo la hamaca del capuchino, enredándose en su rosario de semillas; con el canto de las cocineras negras, la risa del griego de los diamantes, la prostituta de camisón de luto que se bañaba en la proa, el alboroto de los punteadores que hacían bailar a los marineros, este barco nuestro me hacía pensar en la Nave de los Locos del Bosco: nave de locos que se desprendía, ahora, de una ribera que no podía situar en parte alguna, pues aunque las raíces de lo visto se hincaran en estilos, razones, mitos, que me eran fácilmente identificables, el resultado de todo ello, el árbol crecido en este suelo, me resultaba tan desconcertante y nuevo. . . . (113-114)

Travelling brings together heterogeneous elements into motion, creating areas of contact where the union of the spatial act of travelling along with differing elements form a differential space and potentiality and possibility (especially of new life and new elements) become characterizing features that contrast with the lethality of abstract space. In the chapter following the protagonist’s foray into absolute space, and his travels that produce a differential space, the character known as the Adelantado will take the protagonist and a few fellow travelers to Santa Mónica de los Venados, a town that the Adelantado is founding. Ayora describes Santa Mónica de los Venados in this way: “A la postre, Santa Mónica de los
Venados viene a representar lo opuesto a lo presentado en el primer capítulo, un sistema social en que cada poblador labora espontáneamente en lo que le aconseja su vocación o el bienestar común” (889). Here, we have an example of differential space where everyone works together as a collective, each contributing in their own way to the life and vitality of the town.

The protagonist starts a life in this town and will eventually leave, because abstract space has “found him” via his lawful wife, Ruth, who asks a newspaper to find her missing husband in order to take him back to the unnamed city. The protagonist also has a desire, namely for paper, from the world/space he left behind. He will attempt to return to Santa Mónica in vain because he will not be able to find the marking that will allow him passage, the water having risen too high. He also finds out that Rosario, the woman he left behind in Santa Mónica, is pregnant with another man’s child. The protagonist doesn’t realize that his attempt to create a life for himself in Santa Mónica, away from abstract space, is doomed from the start. The protagonist is of abstract space: he carries this space with him. The protagonist sees in the same vein as the scientists in Mary Louise Pratt’s Imperial Eyes, and therefore he does not truly live the way those around him do, because he is too concerned with analyzing what he is seeing (Pratt 9). The following quote underlines the link between the scientist in Imperial Eyes and the protagonist in Los pasos perdidos: “...mi cerebro se ha puesto a tra... Hay mañanas en que quisiera ser naturalista, geólogo, etnógrafo, botánico, historiador, para comprenderlo todo, anotarlo todo, explicar en lo posible” (189). Ayora explains the tendency toward analysis in the protagonist:

Convencido de que ha salido victorioso de las pruebas que exige el ingreso a esa nueva vida, no se ha percatado sino hasta ese instante de que la tentación de alejarse en busca de papel y tinta fue la última y suprema prueba – y la que no pasó. Su vulnerabilidad a esa tentación la encuentra ahora él muy significativa de dos cosas. Primero, que ese mundo primitivo pero armonioso lo disfruta él intelectualmente, observando y observándose; este incesante vigilar introduce un elemento anómalo en ese mundo: un discurrir intelectual en un ambiente que clama que se lo viva y se lo asimile como vivencia. (889; emphasis added)
This *seeing*, remits us to Lefebvre’s concept of abstract space since the sense of sight is part of how abstract space maintains its power. We must not forget the optic formant that composes abstract space. In this observing and analyzing, the protagonist cannot separate himself from abstract space. The protagonist then is an agent of capitalism and abstract space, and by entering a space that is not abstract, he is infecting it with his inherent abstractness. Ayora mentions the impossibility of *unlearning* or *unread*ing books that exalt a high level of analysis to understand reality intellectually (890). This learning that took place in abstract space cannot be undone, or if it can be, it is not apparent in the novel.

Frances Wyers takes these ideas to another, more accusatory level, by implying that the acts of the protagonist resemble that of the colonizers (87). If we notice that the protagonist continues to show traits inherent to abstract space via the optical formant, we can also add the phallic formant, since the protagonist tries to possess not just space, but a woman (or woman in general) as well. Wyers explains: “If nature is cast in a man-made mold, so too is sexual experience; it is totally acculturated, fully circumscribed by a male scheme of domination and submission. The narrator will possess Rosario” (89). And yet, this possession is never complete since already being married, the narrator cannot marry Rosario nor does Rosario have any wish to marry the narrator. It is by not marrying the narrator that Rosario slips any institution that would keep her bound to him (or to anyone) and leaves her free to leave as she pleases, much to the chagrin of the narrator. While the language used by the narrator to describe his relationship with Rosario is one of dominance, (seemingly in the sense that the narrator feels such discourse is “natural”) Rosario is the one with the final say (201-202). In a world where women’s voices have been silenced, the movement of leaving becomes a form of speech.

---

27 It is interesting to note a parallel here between what Wyers explains about the protagonist and what Mary Louise Pratt has to say about Carpentier. While declaring Carpentier’s attempts to decolonize the neocolony that is Latin America, Mary Louise Pratt also says this about Carpentier: “Indeed, more than once, Carpentier identifies with the conquistador” (229).
While still bound to abstract space by observing and analyzing the world around him, the narrator at one point moves from seeing to listening and tries to convince himself not to think, but to feel, in an attempt to integrate himself into the world around him. The narrator explains: “No estoy aquí para pensar. No debo pensar. Ante todo sentir y ver. Y cuando de ver se pasa a mirar, se encienden raras luces y todo cobra una voz. Así, he descubierto, de pronto, en un segundo fulgurante, que existe una Danza de los Árboles” (189-190). In this example, a conflicted narrator is attempting to leave behind vestiges of abstract space, moving from seeing to looking which is then united with an auditory element when “everything obtains a voice.” He then “discovers” (a word that can be charged with imperial overtones) the “Dance of the Trees.” It is shortly after this point when the narrator feels that “within” him and birthed from his “spirit,” is an inspired musical work that: “para mis ojos abiertos o cerrados, suena en mis oídos, asombrándome por la lógica” (191). It is interesting to note the bi-possibility of eyes both open and closed (awake or dreaming) and yet the piece is heard from within the ear, subverting the dominance of the optical formant and a phallic exteriority.28 The narrator’s return to abstract space in order to retrieve paper to finish his musical oeuvre will cost him the work itself.

These formants of abstract space that the protagonist embodies will not allow him to return to Santa Mónica. Wyers believes that the protagonist is not only a carrier of capitalism, but rather a “supreme capitalist,” where the “experience of nature becomes ownership” (90). In this way, Wyers states that the protagonist is no better than the conquistadors by applying to Santa Mónica the same planning principles that were used during the founding of the Latin American cities. Paradoxically, according to Wyers, this planning scheme will only lead the new society to develop into the society that the protagonist has fled (92). While I agree with Ayora and feel that the protagonist is in certain ways a carrier of abstract space, with respect to Wyers, I think the intentions of the protagonist, along with the

28 According to Lefebvre: “Despite its anachronistic aspect, the return to immediacy, to the organic (and hence to nature), gives rise to startling differences. Through music – indecisively, clumsily, yet effectively – rhythms reclaim their rights” (384).
Adelantado’s policies, differ from those of the conquistadors. The Adelantado, for example, punishes an infraction of the law by having all of the villagers give the culpable person the silent treatment. The Adelantado is also fervently against the presence of gold-seekers in his town (a sentiment echoed by the protagonist): “Pregunto al Adelantado qué haría si viese aparecer en Santa Mónica, de pronto, a algún buscador de oro, de los que manchan cualquier tierra con su fiebre. ‘Le daría un día para marcharse’, me responde” (188). The protagonist views these gold-seekers as people who “stain the earth with their fever,” and this is why I do not think he is the supreme capitalist, but rather is a product of his formation in abstract space. The narrator tries to distance himself from abstract space in both space and time, but in the end, it is not enough.

1.3.2 Time: Lived time

In the beginning of Los pasos perdidos, the protagonist conceives of time both as a musician and as a resident of abstract space, which is to say, that for him, time is measured and parcelled out. For the protagonist as a musician, time is broken into pieces in a system that makes music intelligible and repeatable. For the protagonist as a working member of abstract space, time is regulated by a work schedule. Even sex is not spontaneous for the protagonist and is scheduled to take place every Sunday. While travelling to and around Latin America, his concept of time changes as evidenced by his journal writing and the records of his travels. His journal begins with specific dates and their corresponding day of the week. While he ventures further into nature, time becomes what is lived as opposed to what is measured, and his journal ceases to name a specific date and day of the week. Lived time is measured by the cycles and rhythms of nature in contrast to time being measured by a clock and a calendar. These latter aspects of telling time lose their relevance and meaning. Time becomes an entity that is felt and the intimacy that Lefebvre refers to, is restored.
Alejo Carpentier creates a sense of *timefullness* (as defined earlier) that is experienced by the protagonist. My viewpoint on *timefullness* is echoed by Isabel Alicia Quintana, in “Tiempo, recurrencia y conocimiento en Los pasos perdidos de Alejo Carpentier” where she states: “se plantea dramáticamente el desgarramiento de quien se encuentra condenado a no vivir un presente pleno” (65). We can think of the *presente pleno* as *timefullness*. Quintana describes the protagonist as stuck in between the mother’s world associated with instinct and the father’s world associated with logic while trying to live in the time of his fellow travelers, “que viven sumidos en su tiempo en armonía absoluta con aquello que los rodea” (65). This last quote adds to the definition of “presente pleno” as living in harmony with the rhythms of nature. Quintana also makes note of the convergence of different times in one instance, which presents itself as a “richer “way of experiencing time:

Para el héroe el pasado en tanto momento “único” constituye una instancia inabordable. El pretérito se diluye en el presente. Todas las edades se dan cita y se confunden en esta nueva realidad. En las tierras de acá todas las epopeyas se repiten y se aglomeran en una simultaneidad temporal: la búsqueda del Dorado, las fundaciones de ciudades, y también las revoluciones. Ahora, el héroe intenta *vivir* esta nueva temporalidad presente, mucho más abarcativa y rica que el simple retorno hacia el pasado. Además, si bien el viaje iniciático se constituía en una recuperación del origen, la imposibilidad de tal empresa no lo detiene en su camino, sino, por el contrario, lo vuelve distinto. (66)

Time is what changes the protagonist, both by its passage and his changing perception of it. There is a reclaiming of and returning to one’s own time, which is what the protagonist does in Santa Mónica de los Venados: “En Santa Mónica de los Venados, mientras estoy con los ojos abiertos, mis horas me pertenecen. Soy dueño de mis pasos y los afinco en donde quiero” (236). At one point, the narrator stops counting the days because he is able to live them fully given that they are not truncated by impositions other than natural ones. While in chapter one, the imprisonment of the protagonist was felt, described and perceived, and yet the *mal* that is felt cannot be thoroughly explained nor does there seem to be a
resolution, in chapter six, the narrator is aware of what irks him, having experienced *timefullness* far away from abstract space. This awareness is demonstrated when the *Curador* tells the protagonist to take some “leisure” time off, the protagonists feels: “casi indignado de que se atreviera arrogarse todavía alguna potestad sobre mi tiempo” (218). The “leisure” time isn’t pure “free time” since it is a directive given to him, rather than a choice, which somewhat reflects what was said earlier about spaces of leisure. The protagonist notices the *mal* and is able to recognize it in the people around him:

> De los caminos de ese cemento salen, extenuados, hombres y mujeres que vendieron un día más de su tiempo a las empresas nutricias. Vivieron un día más sin *vivirlo*, y repondrán fuerzas, ahora, para vivir mañana un día que tampoco será *vivido*, . . .
>
> . . . veo muchas caras y pocos destinos. Y es que, detrás de esas caras, cualquier apetencia profunda, cualquier rebeldía, cualquier impulso, es atajado siempre por el miedo. Se tiene miedo a la reprimenda, miedo a la hora, miedo a la noticia, miedo a la colectividad que pluraliza las servidumbres. . . miedo a las *fechas*. . . Porque mi viaje ha barajado para mí, las nociones de pretérito, presente, futuro. No puede ser presente esto que será ayer antes de que el hombre haya podido vivirlo y contemplarlo; no puede ser presente esta fría geometría sin estilo, donde todo se cansa y envejece a las pocas horas de haber nacido. . . . No acepto ya la condición de Hombre-Avispa, de Hombre-Ninguno, ni admito que el ritmo de mi existencia sea marcado por el mazo de un cómitre. (224, 226; emphasis added)

The protagonist intuits the geometrical formant of abstract space and rejects it. He will attempt to travel back to Santa Mónica to escape the lethality of abstract space and the destiny/lack of destiny of the people around him that live in fear. This fear impedes the *Hombre-Avispas* from truly living their lives. Now that he has experienced time in its plenitude, the protagonist feels himself distinct from the *Hombre-Ninguno*, since time and space have effected changes in the protagonist, who now sees the traps of abstract space. Time is not merely a date on the calendar nor an appointment, and that is why the protagonist rejects the “present” time that abstract space produces: a “present” quickly becomes past because it is never truly
experienced nor lived fully. Truly living counteracts these diminishing effects that abstract space has on time because living “fleshes out” time and allows it to regain and maintain its fullness.

Although the protagonist has experienced time in a “complete way” towards the end of the novel, the musician will not be able to retrace his steps back in time, because time, which is continuous and flowing, much like a stream, cannot flow in reverse. Owning or controlling time is an illusion of abstract space, and this is perhaps the protagonist’s final lesson on his journey. We have stated before that for Lefebvre, time is the more subversive element and Carpentier’s novel corroborates this affirmation. We saw before that the issue of space becomes subversive in Los pasos perdidos when the protagonist goes to Latin America, where pockets of differential space are formed while travelling; however, the protagonist does not belong there because he is a carrier of the plague of abstract space. As much as he is a carrier of abstract space to Latin America, he carries an appropriated or differential idea of time back to abstract space. If time is killed in abstract space according to Lefebvre, the protagonist becomes acutely aware of this and we have yet to see at the end of the novel if he will act upon this realization. Will he rebel or continue as a Sisyphus? The phrase falta saber at the end of the novel leaves the possibilities open-ended.

1.3.3 Conclusion

It would be useful to review several important points made regarding Macunaíma and compare these to Los pasos perdidos in order to establish a sense of continuity. If Macunaíma represents a rupture attributable to its distinct will to appropriate and distance itself from European discourse using indigenous and African mythologies in a unique fusion (in order to re-appropriate one’s homeland while offering a glimpse into a conception of differential space), Los pasos perdidos presents us with a differential space, albeit with limited access for the protagonist. Whereas Macunaíma in his travels goes from absolute space to abstract space during the time when São Paulo was growing in economic strength, the protagonist of
Los pasos perdidos travels inversely: he starts from abstract space of what some have presumably thought is New York City, to later return to his native land where he finds a differential space and occasionally comes across vestiges of absolute space. To phrase it another way, in Macunaima the idea of a differential space is being formed by incorporating different aspects of Brazil; in Los pasos perdidos, this idea crystallizes, but with the protagonist not being able to be a full participant. Mascaró will complete this cycle, being the epitome of a realized, differential space. This space in Carpentier’s novel is somewhat problematic because the protagonist is still too chained to abstract space to become a part of a differential space, nor to conceive of a space as such. A question then remains: how can we conceive and create a differential space? This question will be answered in Mascaró since differential space tends to begin on the margins of society.

1.4 Mascaró, el cazador americano

Yo vivo aquí, esta noche, de tránsito, acordándome del porvenir -del vasto país de las Utopías permitidas, de las Icarias posibles.  
-Alejo Carpentier

On the surface, in Mascaró, el cazador americano, time and space are approached in a straightforward manner, in the sense that the events occur in a chronological order. This temporal structure contrasts with the pyrotechnics employed by the vanguard (Hugo De Marinis 337-338), using Los pasos perdidos as an example. As continuous as time and space are in this novel, this presentation of events suits the travel movements of the characters and underscores the honest profundity of the novel itself. Robert Brody states: “Y ¿qué forma narrativa más adecuada puede haber para representar esta existencia vagabunda que la de la novela tradicional en que se cuenta linealmente episodio tras episodio” (542). While the authors of Macunaima and Los pasos perdidos used various literary techniques that separate these novels from their antecedents, forming new perspectives and new ways of thinking, it is
the content itself that proves subversive in Mascaró. The simplicity of time and space notwithstanding, the plot presents numerous examples of subversion.

1.4.1 Space: On the Margins: a Differential Space

Haroldo Conti, like Mário de Andrade and Alejo Carpentier, focused his attention on the Americas and more specifically on his native country of Argentina. Emilce Cordeiro in En busca de la utopía: Haroldo Conti: Un análisis de su obra narrative, explains that Conti had traveled various times to Cuba and these trips had a big impact on him (his second trip in particular) and became influential in his last writings (18-19). After returning from Cuba and before he was kidnapped, Conti was told that his name appeared on a list of enemies of the State. Although many well-intentioned people recommended that he leave the country for his own protection, Conti refused to flee Argentina after acquiring a new appreciation for his country and Latin America in general. Gilberto Valdés Gutiérrez quotes Conti, who says that after his trip to Cuba: “Desde aquí, desde esta alta colina, diviso por primera vez en toda su dimensión histórica a América y dentro de ella a mi propia patria, que reconozco, siento, amo y padezco por primera vez como tal” (60). “Este es mi lugar de combate y de aquí no me voy,” was the phrase found near his desk written in Latin when he was taken.²⁹ Conti was abducted in 1976, during the dictatorship of Jorge Rafael Videla, whose regime fostered a repressive atmosphere that gripped the nation and culminated in the torture and deaths of thousands of Argentines.³⁰ Conti’s disappearance did not pass unnoticed by his colleagues

²⁹The phrase itself was written in Latin according to Gabriel García Márquez in his remarks about the disappearance of Haroldo Conti (Redondo 63). The original phrase is: Hic meus locus pugnare est et hinc non me removebunt. The more faithful translation would be: Este es mi lugar de combate y de aquí no me moverán.

³⁰According to Amnesty International, in a document dated July 2, 1976, 493 deaths were counted which, as the organization suggested, “only represents 30% of the actual number of deaths.” The Argentinean Anti-Communist Alliance is the group to which they attribute the cause of the largest number of deaths and “rightwing terrorists have considerable support from sectors of the security forces. . . . The possible reason for this is that these sectors are convinced that Argentina is waging a war against subversion.” According to a U.S. Department of State document written two months before, “AFTER USUAL CONDEMNATIONS OF ARGENTINE MILITARY REGIME IN WHICH 5,000-8,000 POLITICAL PRISONERS HAVE SUPPOSEDLY BEEN TAKEN, IN WHICH 18,000 POLITICAL EXILES ARE UNDER “CONDITIONAL LIBERTY” (Document: 1976PARIS14513, 1). A month prior to this document, dated April 26, 1976, there is another U.S. Department of State document that explains: “FOLLOWING VIDELA MEETING WITH SENIOR
who went to Videla to ask about him. Among those at the meeting were: Ernesto Sábado, Jorge Luis Borges, Horacio E. Ratti and Leonardo Castellani. It is in this atmosphere of repression that Conti wrote his last novel, *Mascaró, el cazador americano*, a story that was considered subversive by the Argentinean government.

Space plays an important role as a subversive element in the novel in different ways. One of these has to do with the geographic areas chosen by Conti, which have a political significance (mentioned further in chapter two of this analysis), because they are areas that historically resisted power. The other consists of creating a Lefebvrian differential space. The space is not only created, but it spreads, thus being all the more dangerous and subversive. In order to speak about the subversive geographic element, we must first examine the itinerary of the wandering characters in the novel. The novel begins with Cafuné in Arenales and then focuses on one of the main protagonists, Oreste, as he anxiously waits for the boat, Mañana, to appear. Oreste will travel, according to Antonio Benítez Rojo, “por mar, tierra y aire-que ha de hacer de Oreste un hombre libre” (89). His road is one of freedom. While travelling by sea, he meets the Príncipe Patagón, el Nuño and Mascaró, el cazador americano. Once in Palmares, they will form a peripatetic circus and add more people to their itinerant band of vagabonds. Arenales, Palmares and the first town where the circus performs, Tapado, seem to be inventions of towns, along with the fictional histories of how they were founded.

The troupe will move away from the ocean and towards the desert. Prior to doing research using electronic mapping, the consensus amongst critics was that the towns presented in the novel were

---

GENERALS IN WHICH HE MADE CLEAR HIS DESIRE THAT RIGHT-WING TERRORISM BE BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL. .

In a comment section, it is stated: “FACT THAT ARMY COMMANDERS HAVE MOVED TO CURB RIGHT-WING VIOLENCE AND HAVE GONE SO FAR AS TO ACT AGAINST POLICE SEEN AS VERY ENCOURAGING SIGN BY POLITICAL OBSERVERS” (2). Conti was kidnapped May 5, 1976 (Redondo 63).

The literary magazine *Crisis* conducted an interview with Horacio E. Ratti and the priest Leonardo Castellani about this luncheon. This interview appeared in the 39th edition that came out in July of 1976 in Buenos Aires. The interview can be found on pages three and four.
mythical and archetypal representations of Latin American towns.\textsuperscript{32} With the benefit of modern technology, some of the towns that the circus visits on the margins of society can be found in the historical and geographical region known as Northwest Argentina or NOA (Noroeste Argentina) with the exception of the towns that are located in Córdoba and Buenos Aires.\textsuperscript{33} A few of the towns that can be located are: Santa Clara (La Rioja), Naranjito (Tucumán), Jarilla (La Rioja), San Andrés (Tucumán), Madariaga (Salta), Nacimiento (Catamarca), Olta (La Rioja), Corralito (Córdoba or Salta), San Bernardo (La Rioja). The majority of these towns lie to the west of Córdoba and south of San Miguel de Tucumán. The maps and the geographical markers mentioned throughout the novel coincide. After performing in Rocha which is located in the province of Buenos Aires:

La idea del Príncipe era costear la línea del telégrafo, que pasaba por Rivera. . . . Algunas leguas más allá de Rivera, según referencias, torcía un camino rumbo a Paso Viejo, que luego se estrechaba y subía hasta las puntas de unos cerros. . . .

Sin embargo, Joselito Bembé opinó de breve que debían encarar en la dirección opuesta, o sea, el desierto. (Conti 76)

There is a Rivera Indarte and a Paso Viejo farther along if one heads northwest. Heading in a similar direction, further south and more directly west, compared with the route that leads to Rivera and Paso Viejo, one encounters Chaján which is where the troupe heads first. While I wasn’t able to locate all of

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{32} For instance, Hugo De Marinis comments: “Los sitios son parte de un recorrido fantástico, repleto de aventuras, llevado a cabo por un grupo de vagabundos” although these places, “anticipados por Chacabuco, Warnes, Bragado y Rocha en otros relatos, revisitan la historia ahora con nombres imaginarios” linking the towns that appeared in previous stories and those in \textit{Mascaró el cazador americano} (306). De Marinis also explains that: “En este recorrido por algunos caminos y poblados de la Argentina y el Uruguay latinoamericanos – poblados inferidos por el lector puesto que no hay toponimias reconocibles” (309-310). Gilberto Valdés Gutiérrez states: “Por pueblos y desertos la caravana casi vuelva entre el amor y el gozo de llevar su arte a cientos de hombres desconocidos, pueblos enterrados en el olvido” (69).

\textsuperscript{33} Córdoba may also be relevant as a possible allusion to the Cordobazo from previous years. Conti also explains that in Córdoba he had offered his collaboration to his “compañero” Agustín Tosco, as mentioned in the magazine \textit{Crisis} reproduced in Nilda Redondo’s \textit{Haroldo Conti y el PRT: arte y subversión} (62). The mention of Córdoba may also be a reference to a play that Haroldo Conti saw there. This play perhaps had an influence on Conti’s viewpoints on what was occurring in Northwest Argentina and may have oriented his works towards more collective themes (Reproduced from the magazine \textit{Crisis} in \textit{Haroldo Conti: alias Mascaró alias la vida} 158.)}
the towns mentioned, there may be several reasons for this. Some of the towns may be, as Conti writes in the novel, “Pueblitos, mierda, polvo, fantasmas,” and “Algunos eran nada más que el nombre. Olvido, muerte” (76). It is also possible that Conti included fictional towns to give examples of towns that are so forgotten and marginal, that they don’t appear on any map, nor is there any reference to their existence. The circus, by traveling to these towns, contradicts nihilistic perceptions of their survival, “making them exist” and revivifying them with art as a subversive and transcendent spatial practice.

The area that is traversed by the circus is a desert area, as reflected by the flora and descriptions in the novel: “Aquí el desierto se empareja. La arena, más oscura, está cubierta de cardones, abrojos, espinos que encubren pequeñas y duras formas de la vida que se reaniman con la oscuridad” (78). The description of the countryside and the plants is consistent with what we would expect to find in that region. The description of Olta is also consistent with what is known of the town, “Olta quiere decir pozo, y lo era, en efecto. Tan es así, que por poco caen dentro de él. Un par de leguas antes advirtieron el pasto raído, que después de unos metros se transformó en una huella” (84). This huella is known as the Quebrada de Olta and in fact, exists. Conti mixes both fictional and non-fictional towns in a way where the geography seems unrecognizable at first and then upon further inspection, the towns begin to take form with a purpose.

The inclusion of these regions (between Tucumán and Córdoba) is significant for various reasons: these regions found themselves marginalized and consequently, were areas of subversive activity. The Northwestern region of Argentina is known for its strong link to indigenous cultures and the influence of these cultures is demonstrated in the novel by the inclusion of details such as the town of Olta with its indigenous name and the sicu, or indigenous flute played by Oreste. In addition, a reason given for the censure of the novel was that one of the protagonists, el Príncipe Patagón “viene a representar al indio

---

34 Much like the circus “reanimates” both itself and the towns at night when it performs.
35 Olta means pozo or well in the Cacán language spoken by the Diaguita and Calchaquí tribes in northern Argentina.
This region also gave birth to the revolutionary figure Martín Miguel de Güemes who fought against the Spaniards in order to liberate Argentina. During the leadership of Onganía who preceded Juan and Isabel Perón and Jorge Rafael Videla, the rural populations in Tucumán had suffered economically as Onganía took away the protections they had, such as subsidies and high tariffs on their goods. The rural sections were not the only areas stewing with frustration; among other groups of urban citizenry, students protested against Onganía in the 1969 *Cordobazo*. The effect of this protest is not to be underestimated as Luis Alberto Romero points out, “But like the October 17th events, the *Cordobazo* was a seminal episode in the wave of social protests that followed” (181). The protests that followed:

...expressed a deep discontent and a welter of demands that, because the dictatorship had cut off the established channels of free speech, manifested themselves in recondite social spaces, ghettos, neighborhoods, or small towns. As they emerged, they ignited extensive networks of solidarity...

All this represented a chorus of protest of great diversity, heterogeneous but in unison, ruled by an inclusionary logic, to which were added the voices of other sectors that had been damaged, such as the great rural producers or sectors of the national bourgeoisie. They gave legitimacy to one another and gave shape to a social imaginary, a true “people’s spring,” growing and gaining strength – until it reached its full maturation in 1973 – as it was discovering its adversary’s weaknesses, which was by then incapable of finding a suitable response. (Romero 183)

This citation helps us to understand why small towns are the focus in Mascaró: they were key places of resistance. The spirit of collectivity is seen in the formations of various groups and during various protests that took place, whose “heterogeneity” will be reflected in the collectivity that is the circus in *Mascaró*. The *Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo* or ERP, used the area of Tucumán as a stronghold (Romero 213). The ERP had ties to the *Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores* or PRT, both being leftist groups with

---

36 Found in *Haroldo Conti: alias Mascaró, alias la vida*, with Eduardo Romano as the editor.
Haroldo Conti himself linked to the *PRT* (62). The ERP would spread out to the south and to the west, covering many of the areas mentioned in the book. In this case, small towns again became important areas of resistance as messages were carried back and forth. These clandestine activities however, were “responded” to with tremendous violence under *Operativo Independencia*, which began in 1975 in an effort to squash all resistance, especially in the Tucumán province. Conti himself would be taken from his home and was most likely tortured. Both *Mascaró* the novel and the author had been censured since according to the censors: “se aprecia una suerte de ‘solidaridad’ en este grupo, de ‘aventureros’, quienes se pasan ‘mensajes’ a través de los cuales parecen ‘entenderse y ayudarse’” (Romano 59). While in the novel the characters were passing messages amongst themselves, in an action parallel to what was happening outside of the novel, Conti himself was passing messages with the writing of this novel in an act of literary subversion. As opposed to Mário de Andrade and Alejo Carpentier who gave panoramas of countries, it seems that Conti chose particular regions of Argentina to set the travels of the circus. The Noroeste region as one of them, also happens to be historically among the most subversive and diverse regions in Argentina.

Many of these towns, with the exception of Rocha and a few others, are desolate and forgotten, with few inhabitants. Critics have mentioned the many implications of the author’s choice to present these desolate towns as the space where the circus decides to set up camp. One purpose of choosing these towns as a setting is to reflect the desolation of actual towns in the “interior” parts of Latin America as Hugo De Marinis describes them: “Poblados olvidados y alejados de la metrópoli tal como los del interior real de los países de Hispanoamérica” (324). These towns lie in the interior of Argentina and far from the centers of power, worlds apart from excess and access, and, consequently, abstract space. And

---

37 According to Nilda Redondo in her book *Haroldo Conti y el PRT: arte y subversión*.
38 The information presented on pages 53-56 was originally prepared and presented for a conference: *Intersections: Exploring the Connections between Technology and Literatures, Cultures and Languages* at Stanford University, California, Nov. 6, 2015.
yet, they are victims of it. These towns on the periphery bring into question an issue that has pervaded Argentinean history: that of center vs. periphery. Morello-Frosch states, “Conti exhuma cierta temática de la tradición cultural argentina, la historiza e invierte el valor de los signos de Sarmiento y Martínez Estrada – especialmente las polarizaciones civilización-barbarie y ciudad-campaña – y actualiza los de Arlt, en cuanto adjudica nuevas funciones a los marginados” (840). This reversal of the positions of Sarmiento and Martínez Estrada is marked by progress and this term is given new values and imbued with new meaning in the works of Haroldo Conti. These “new functions” are timely since polarizations began to intensify both politically and economically, in particular in the seventies according to Hugo de Marinis; while marginalization and polarization existed previously, the reactions to these polarizations began to change from previous years, as reflected in the works of Haroldo Conti:

En los años que las anteriores novelas de Conti aparecieron publicadas existía el problema de la marginación – obviamente existió antes y existirá después si es que el mundo no cambia – pero en la realidad exterior no se esbozaba todavía una alternativa sólida y conveniente para los desplazados, solidaria y con algún porvenir de revertir el estado de las cosas.

39 In Conti’s prior novels, particularly En vida (1971), Oreste is trying to leave what could be considered the abstract space of Buenos Aires:

Oreste renuncia al caos de un mundo exterior (Buenos Aires, orden capitalista) que ha impuesto como cotidianeidad la más absoluta enajenación social. Pero su mundo interior tampoco le ofrece el asiento seguro, aceptablemente antilógico e irracional, con el que se contenta Horacio Oliveira en Rayuela. Por lo tanto, no se lanza a la aventura metafísica. Desdeña tanto al “buen burgués” como al brujo-dadá. Se satisface con vivir y padecer la bohemia, sin necesidad de intelectualizarla. (Valdés Gutiérrez 63)

The protagonist in Los pasos perdidos attempts a similar escape from the alienating and deadening abstract space and also “desdeña tanto al buen burgués,” as exemplified by Mouche who also dabbles in metaphysics. The problem with the narrator in Los pasos perdidos, is that he cannot just “live,” he must intellectualize, as I have shown earlier in this chapter. The life and death dichotomy present in Los pasos perdidos is also present in the works of Conti when viewed as a trajectory. Valdés Gutiérrez mentions with regard to Conti’s works:

Entendiendo que lo muerto es el individuo angustiado y sin caminos en el mundo burgués; y lo vivo el abandono resuelto a otras instancias humanas, el desprendimiento de una vida cerrada en sí misma, para hallar en el conjunto social la identidad escamoteada por tanto mareo especulativo (67).

This citation fits the paradigm of abstract space as a deadening space.
El antagonismo entre los distintos sectores nacionales se perfila nuevamente - ahora con una virulencia inusitada – con la agudización de los conflictos sociales a comienzos y mediados de la década del setenta. . . . En tiempos de Mascaró la cooperación colectiva para un fin determinado y justo se observa en muchos sitios e instancias del entorno como algo factible. (Hugo De Marinis 305)

The power of collectivity to change and transform as a theme in Mascaró reflects what was occurring outside of the novel, particularly in the regions mentioned and in the towns that have been described, as a departure from what had been occurring before, both in the novels of Conti and in Argentina as a whole.

Where civilization and “barbarism” were posited as abstract space and absolute space respectively, the definitions of civilization and barbarism are being called into question when we spoke of Macunaima and Los pasos perdidos. Mascaró subverts and transcends this simplifying dichotomy through the production and realization of a differential space. We had mentioned before that differential space can be found on the margins and this is precisely the case in Mascaró. An aspect of differential space is the idea of a heterogeneous collectivity or unity of different elements. We have a sense of “collectivity” in Mascaró since the functioning of the circus requires the shared participation of everyone involved. The inclusion of the townspeople adds to the collectivity that characterizes the circus. The talents of the circus are varied and multi-faceted, thereby contributing to the heterogeneous and differential aspect that this new space is supposed to exhibit and create. In Mascaró, the protagonists constitute their own communal space, created by transformative spatial practices and unlike a centrality of power, this space has an intrinsic mobility to it. The marginalized are able to transform their circumstances whereby the circus acts as a catalyst. Progress is marked by the utilization of the creative capabilities of each individual and the freedom that these provide; together they create a new type of space. In these marginalized towns with

40 Morello-Frosch states in turn: “Si los personajes primerizos de Conti eran víctimas de fuerzas centrípetas en la ficción como en la historia, en el último libro los marginados vagabundos abandonan la inercia en favor de un plan artístico que ayude a soliviantar y radicalizar al resto de la periferia” (850).
few inhabitants, the circus has a re-populating function for these towns and infuses them with life since the actions of the circus are applied “como antídoto de la despoblación y el abandono” (Morello-Frosch 847). The circus is subversive because it finds the “richness” and potential in areas that are impoverished and marginal and does so through a joint and collective effort of the individuals of the town and the circus, opening new ways of being:

No se trata de engañar, sino de contagiar a los habitantes de pueblos perdidos en el arenal con las posibilidades imaginativas que los actores ya han percibido. Así podrán identificar la abundancia de recursos en la pobreza de elementos, multiplicando no sólo papeles, sino posibilidades, revitalizando a los pobres olvidados hasta el punto de ofrecer una función en un pueblo afantasmado, poniendo luces en estancias abandonadas para convocar a sus ausentes dueños a retornar para el espectáculo. (Morello-Frosch 847)

Remitting back to Lefebvre, if abstract space is a capitalistic space that is anti-life, the circus as differential space subverts, challenges, and eventually transcends the values and structures of abstract space by creating new values (especially of worth), in ways that are both individualized and unified, which is possible in an open and differential space. Differential praxis infuses the towns with life and vigor, transforming their perception of themselves and the structures around them, questioning them, teasing them, and transcending them. The circus is a traveling, differential space and by engaging in the spatial practice of travel, they extend the influence of their differential space which contains the possibility of new viewpoints that challenge the status quo. The circus, and those to whom it travels, are using space, living in it, transforming it and these practices produce new potentialities and possibilities both for the life of the towns and the circus itself.

The circus has no definitive “place” that would link it to power in the way that de Certeau described. As the circus travels from town to town, its power lies within its own space and praxis of space. The carromato itself can be seen as a type of differential space that spreads this differentiality. While being an example of differential space, it is also an example of a heterotopia. The carromato of the circus
is very often depicted as a boat (which in and of itself can constitute an example of differential and heterogeneous space), as reflected in the following example: “Sonia y el Príncipe duermen en el compartimento de proa del carromato, más chico pero más íntimo . . . Oreste y Perinola en el de popa, por cuya puerta se entra y se sale comúnmente. El del medio tiene una cocinita económica con la chimenea que asoma por el techo y que cuando humea acrecienta la apariencia de un barco. . . .” (57). These references to boats highlight the similarity between the two objects while also remitting us to the actual boat on which Oreste began his journey, the Mañana. In addition, the name of the circus, el Circo del Arca, serves to highlight the relation between the circus and boats. Thus Conti is creating in this novel a heterogeneous space that contrasts with the dictatorial mandates taking place in Argentina, whose directive was to annihilate any subversive element that opposed the State. The fact that this “boat” is a circus, a space where imagination and suspension of disbelief and imagination reign supreme, only serves to underscore its differential nature which creates a sense of hope, possibility, and life against the backdrop of violence, oppression, and death.

The link between the boat and the circus car becomes stronger if we consider that the ocean and desert can also be linked together according to Ottmar Ette:

La conjunción de infinitud, de un espacio casi ilimitado, y (aparentemente) despoblado, que se ofrece a la mirada del individuo lleva a comparar directamente la estepa y el desierto con la superficie del océano. Los dos conmueven de repente el alma del hombre, se convierten en paisajes del alma que se ofrecen a los ojos del lector.

Estepa y desierto, imágenes de un ‘planeta deshabitado’, son también, como el mar, espacios que piden ser cruzados y que, por tanto, exigen un movimiento y una profundización espacial y espiritual. Quieren ser atravesados y, al mismo tiempo, experimentados, pues sólo así revelan su secreto. (Literatura de viaje de Humboldt a Baudrillard 102)

The flat surface of both the “infinite” desert and the ocean creates a space for the soul to ponder itself. These areas of low population or lacking population altogether are reinforced throughout the novel as
marginal areas, and yet these lyrical and poetic descriptions reflect the inherent richness of these areas that can transmute the “soul” of man as (s)he moves along these areas. The value of these experiences contrast with the “values” that are part of the system of abstract space which makes these open spaces inherently subversive and transcendent areas. The reflection/parallel of ocean and desert has a long history in the Argentinean imaginary (and also in other parts of the world), along with other terms associated with geography and distance. According to Morello-Frosch, these “signs” like the “desert, distance” that have a charged history, are infused with new life in the novel:

...en la última novela [Mascaró] renueva la vigencia de viejos signos: el desierto, la distancia, la soledad, el subdesarrollo. Estos pueden servir para mediatizar espacios y discursos en un sistema abierto y disponible, postulando así una de las funciones más profundas y radicales de la imaginación: vislumbrar y articular lo posible para transformar el anunciado mañana en hoy. (851)

Not only have physical places and their impact on the imagination have changed and been “opened” via new signifieds, the praxis itself of travel has changed from how it has been perceived and articulated in Argentinean literature:

En Mascaró, la vastedad del arenal no imposibilita la comunicación, la dilata solamente, como la extensión del mar prolonga el arribo al puerto. Las frecuentes imágenes carromato-embarcación, arena-mar, verifican que se trata de una verdadera odisea. Al revés de lo que viera Sarmiento, la travesía no está asociada al peligro, sino a la reunión y al reencuentro. Por otra parte, el mar, una vez alcanzado como meta, será punto de partida para más amplios cruceros. (Morello-Frosch 850)

Travel, which was once considered dangerous, is symbolized in the novel by the circus and creates points of contact between the marginalized, uniting the distant towns and populations. This travel will still be considered dangerous as an act of subversion since the circus enacts a spreading change in the towns, which defy and challenge the status quo of the rurales. As the circus traverses the desert, it spreads a two-fold movement: a movement in the sense of physical momentum, as well as a creative and spiritual movement among the sleepy and marginalized towns. The desert, amplifies the initial spark that leads its
members to join in the first place by providing ample space for them to develop their talents and refine them, whereby they continue a process of transformation while changing the areas around them. There is a sense of volition in these transformations as the circus members and the townspeople begin to ponder themselves within the larger scheme and context of the issues that pervade the area, namely the guerrita. It is the open space and the praxis of travel allowing this expansion of their talents and their ideas that make them all the more subversive.

Aside from the links between the ocean and the desert, the circus also creates its own space within the tent while the crowd participates. The rules that govern the status quo outside of the tent change inside of it. According to Hugo De Marinis, the circus has a particular link with Latin America: “Feria y circo que tal vez formen parte en la contemporaneidad de nuestra América de los remanentes de la cultura popular de la Edad Media y del Renacimiento europeos de los que nos da cuenta Bajtín en su libro sobre Rabelais” (309). The circus can be subversive in the same way as carnivals described by Bakhtin, since they provide spaces and time that are subversive by reversing the established order --or perhaps even more so-- since there is more spontaneity in terms of when the circus appears and the possibilities suggested by the acts of the circus. The circus also allows for heterogeneous elements to come together. In Conti’s novel, the circus actually begins in a heterogeneous port town where different people from different walks of life come together. The town and circus both symbolize Latin American reality where mestizaje and the combinations of different elements are a way of life (De Marinis 309-310). In this book, Conti’s novel paints subversion in a positive light when it allows people to see their own capabilities and the possibilities within their own lives. As Hugo De Marinis puts it: “El rasgo individual o la transformación personal entonces no quedan diluidos en un conjunto sin rostro ni abstracto sino que son su motor vital, el creador y el origen de ese otro acto cooperativo de la solidaridad” (311). Here, there is no abstract space since each person’s contribution is part of an integral whole, meaningful and necessary. There is life and vitality to this movement that contradicts and contrasts with the abstract space of the State.
This differential and heterogeneous space provided by the circus is subversive to the status quo and to the State, and for that reason, must be stopped. The *rurales* go on to persecute the circus and anyone participating in it. An example of a subversive figure in the novel, Basilio Argimón, is a type of Icarus who made a flying contraption for himself. The *rurales* persecute him for the following reason: “Dicen que trastorna a la gente, que contribuye, que utiliza un espacio del Estado, que mea en lugares abiertos, que no se ajusta a regla ni estatuto, ni hay precedentes y que, por tanto, ni siquiera existe” (73). Basilio transgresses natural and political boundaries, “us[ing] a space of the State” or in other words, flying where a human is not supposed to take flight. It is his transformative capacity, which transgresses borders by altering them, testing them, and pushing them, that is considered subversive and intolerable to the State. The State, as part of its response, flexes its power and uses space to find the circus by affixing wanted posters on the walls of the towns. Here the State returns to what it deems its property and its control of space to try to locate the subversive circus by use of visual cues. This remits us again to the aforementioned visual aspect of power in abstract space.

Perhaps the pinnacle of abstract space and the nadir of differential space is the jail where Oreste is taken to be tortured. As a place of pain, torture, and death, the jail opposes the life and liberty that characterize a differential space. It also opposes differentiation when Oreste’s individuality is reduced to a number, or even less because his new identification is *Cero*. According to the State, Oreste, like Basilio “casi no existe” (93). The guards have numbers: no one has a name and everyone is reduced to an abstraction and thus, dehumanized. This corresponds to the actual circumstances in Argentina at that time, as demonstrated by Romero who states: “Anyone arrested, from the moment he or she entered the list of suspects, was assigned his or her own number and file” (216). There is no multiplicity of voices: it is simply the State or subversives and it is the voice of the State that dominates: the guards over the prisoners. When all is said and done, after all of the tortures and beatings, Oreste does not succumb to this abstract space.
1.4.2 Time: Time as freedom

As mentioned earlier, the representation of time is somewhat more straightforward throughout this novel since there are no special narrative effects to detract from its simplicity. Time is chronological: the events occur in a linear fashion from the starting point to the end of the novel. Even though time may seem to be presented in a direct manner, particularly with regard to the plot, it takes on a “fullness” that was discussed in reference to Los pasos pedidos, which adds depth in addition to dimension. Time flows loosely as shown both by the actions of the characters who are vagabonds and who don’t pay particular attention to measured time, and also by the lyrical descriptions of Conti (which are at times sparse and at others quite lengthy). These descriptions reflect the lyricism of the sparse and distant landscape, and give the reader an impression of the fullness of time as experienced in these areas. These impressions are vastly different from the perception of truncated and structured time that is dictated by those in power.

In the novel, time is dictated by the sun, the moon, the stars, and the journey itself. We have no knowledge of the day, the month or the year as the novel progresses since there aren’t any markers or indicators that would allow us to ascertain this information. Here is an example of how time is conceived in the novel: “Madrugada. Oreste levanta la copa y brinda. Se nace. Mañana un barco lo llevará lejos de allí, no sabe dónde, pero no hay peso ni tristeza, porque no hay historia ni pasado, sólo la noche, esa plenitud del tiempo donde el hombre recobra su centro” (6). We learn that it is sunrise. Again, time is measured naturally. As time is natural, it is also individual in the sense that in this case Oreste is (re)born on the eve of his voyage. This is not a time regulated by the State, but rather a time that is perceived by an individual. It is also not a biological birth in terms of biological time, but rather a metaphysical or spiritual birth. This individual time is based on the voyage, both literal and spiritual, of each character on their path to transcendence. The main character has no past and can live fully in the present. He can experience a timefullness as his time belongs to him and his personal journey of growth and transformation. This timefullness allows him to “recover his center” and feel whole. There are many such
rebirths throughout the novel as each person who joins the circus has his/her own rebirth and is often given a new name to go with a new, reborn self.

We can also say from the previous example that time is conceived of in terms of life. If time in abstract space is experienced as a type of death, then differential space produces a time of life. The previous quote is an example of the beginning of a life, or at least a new phase of it; the following one combines the idea of lifetime and eternity:

Por ahora en pensamientos, se eleva [el Príncipe] más y más alto, sobrevuela aquel desierto in saecula saeculorum, donde en medio de la arena se observa un bamboleante carromato y un hato de locos que marcha a la deriva, traspone pueblos, ciudades de campaña, una partida de rurales que le dispara balas de colores, un grupito de roñosas palmeras en cierta ciudad, un faro pintado a franjas horizontales sobre un peñón musgoso, se interna en el mar, repasa entera la Venezuela, saluda con una caída de ala al viejo maestro Vicente Scarpa, que toca un organito con un culebrón enroscado al cuello en una plazoleta vacía y siempre volando, volando se aleja sin esfuerzo ni fatiga rumbo a un sublime y luminoso carajo. (77; emphasis added)

While the italicized phrase is from the Vulgata and is usually translated from the Greek as “forever and ever” or “for eternity,” the Latin word can also refer to a century, or roughly the highest estimate of the lifespan of a human being. Here the prince wanders in his thoughts from place to place in what seems like a lifetime (or perhaps an eternity). He is viewing different events and periods of time because in his thoughts, time is measured and perceived differently: a lifetime of events passes in his mind, although in reality these thoughts last for only minutes. A lifetime, a century, an eternity is passing through the Príncipe’s mind. This organic perception of time contrasts with the sharp breaks in time in abstract space. And yet, if time is conceived of in terms of life, then we must remember the transitory aspect of life and how it is intimately connected with time. Part of the mutability of things is that there is a beginning and an ending:
Acerca del tiempo, el Príncipe memora con voz lúgubre su naturaleza pasajera que destruye todo lo que arrastra en su flujo, las hechuras más sólidas, los más soberbios monumentos, ¡cuánto más a los propios humanos pro forma transitables! Panta rhei! Vanitas vanitatum! Pero con todo había ciertos carismas y pertrechos del alma que hacían llevadero este tránsito y aún afirmaban perdurante esa mudable esencia. (25)

Time makes things transitory and time itself is uncontrollable and thus is the ultimate subversive element. The circus itself is a symbol of transition since it never stays in one place for very long, always signaling a time of transformation and change.

Heterotopias were mentioned with regard to space and with regard to time, heterochronies are ruptures in time or perhaps are differential times. Time as heterochrony appears as part of the fourth principle of what constitutes a heterotopia according to Foucault, which he views as an “absolute break with their [men’s] traditional time” (6). Foucault lists a festival as an example of a heterochrony, which can apply to the circus (7). A festival or circus is a break in routine or “regular time” when time is no longer under the yoke of a structured time, and it is a time of enjoyment and gaiety. Throughout the novel, Oreste and the circus break the routines that characterize the towns and the State in order to free their time and themselves. Hugo De Marinis explains:

Uno de los objetivos reales, una quimera vista desde la perspectiva de la convencionalidad, es alcanzar una libertad casi perfecta en el ejercicio de la trashumancia. Tal práctica, además de distribuir esperanzas en otros espíritus, contribuirá a operar en él mismo (y también en los otros actores) una metamorfosis para romper con las cadenas de la rutina que lo sujetan, acción reveladora y alusiva, que en la novela y en la vida se transforma asimismo en algo decididamente subversivo. (313-314)

As Oreste no longer subjects himself to a daily routine and joins the circus, whose members also do not follow a routine (even their artistic program was spontaneously subject to change), he and the circus bring along with them, a spontaneity and a break in monotony. Morello-Frosch states: “Con el correr del tiempo
se multiplican las transformaciones posibles de los actores para enriquecer y diversificar el programa. Esto facilitará también asumir vidas libremente elegidas, verdaderos enriquecimientos vitales en los que la función, o el disfraz, no acaba cuando se apagan las luces” (847). As she explains, time, which facilitates change, “multiplies the transformations.” There is an inherent freedom to these changes in time, which experienced by the circus, then inspires the townspeople to choose their own fates and destinies. If in Los pasos perdidos, the people in abstract space were seen by the protagonist as lacking in destinies because they worked in accordance to the schedules and parcels of time they were given after they sold their time and by extension, their lives, the people of the towns in Mascaró are moved by the circus to create their own destinies and their own lives in accordance with their own time.

There is a disruption of differential time effectuated by abstract time at the moment when the protagonist is taken against his volition and put in jail. He cannot see the sun, the moon, nor the stars, and therefore has no way to distinguish natural time; time becomes a routine of episodes of torture: “Las sesiones se repetían a espacios regulares, posiblemente días, porque Oreste no tenía una clara noción del tiempo. Mejor dicho, tuvo que acomodarse a otra relación y medida. Por empezar, jamás veía la luz del sol, a no ser en sueños…” (93-94). This quotation shows how Oreste’s perception of time had to change in accordance with his surroundings and the new impositions on his time. His time was no longer his own, nor were his own bodily rhythms permitted to be in sync with the natural world; the jail as a type of abstract space imposed an unnatural time, a time of reduction and absence versus the fullness of time as experienced in the circus or on the Mañana. These routines of torture are the antithesis to spontaneous life and can kill in different ways: by physically killing the person and by breaking the person down. The purpose of the routine of torture is to wear down Oreste and break him physically, mentally, and emotionally, until he believes himself to be a Cero and gives over to the State, the identities of the subversive figures that participate in the circus. Oreste is eventually released from the prison and the
scheduled torture ends when the State decides that Oreste has no valuable information to offer. It is then that he returns to *el camino* and time is once again restored to its fullness.

**1.5 Concluding Remarks:**

Travelers, by virtue of travelling, can create a differential space. New situations arise from travelling, forming new dynamics. However, what differential space is created in the act of travelling, once a space is taken over for the purpose of domination (which partly entails structuring a self-enforcing, regulatory and regulated space), then absolute space is established. With regard to the novels, the travelers create their own differential space as they travel. In *Macunaima*, we begin to see a departure or at least a questioning of how space is conceived on a national and even continental level. The seed of differential space is planted within the novel where abstract and absolute space coincide. The author begins to present Brazil as a type of differential space to the point where he asks – what is Brazil? These queries arise perhaps as a result of the questioning of the contradictions that come about with the intensification of abstract space in Brazil. In *Los pasos perdidos*, abstract space reaches its apex in one region (presumably New York), and absolute space is found in Latin America. A possible differential space is being formed in Santa Mónica de los Venados and on the boat. However, since the protagonist is “infected” with abstract space, he is closed off to any differential space. In *Mascaró*, the novel creates a differential space. There is no pitting of absolute and abstract space because there is only differential space due to the fact that the characters move on the margins. The circus is also exemplary of differential space. While abstract space tries to stamp out any subversion, and is successful in disbanding the circus, the circus has created momentum whereby the people in the villages now seek to fight against the State.

---

41 While Cortés and his group of conquistadors brought with them abstract space, the space of travelling itself tends towards the differential. The conquistadors, for example, while far away from the eyes of Spain, very often broke Spanish laws and decrees.
This is what makes this novel the most subversive of the three: the presence of differential space pervades the entire novel, on every level. The space is also contagious and spreads among the villages like wildfire.
Chapter 2: Travelling Myths

Perhaps then, this was what travelling was, an exploration of the deserts of my mind rather than of those surrounding me?

Claude Lévi-Strauss

Travel and journey carry within the possibility to highlight, subvert, and transcend physical and political boundaries through movement. Borders, be they linguistic, political, spatial, or social are called into question when movement challenges their stability and permanence. Myth interacts with social and political constructs and has borders that define it and encapsulate it on an ontological, cultural, social, and spiritual level in order to give it meaning. Myth also possesses fluidity and movement with which it interacts with these constructs, and this fluidity is an inherent quality in its structure. Myth, being part of cultural practice, is an open system that incorporates, adds, and subtracts from its repertoire in accordance with certain cultural exchanges and circumstances; it is a type of system nonetheless, with certain features and structures that give it meaning and intelligibility. There are those who, (shamans, for instance) protect the integrity or borders of myth, yet on the other hand, these guardians of myth also make changes when they feel the need and it is the open structure of myth which allows them to do so effectively. In this way, myth can have a dual role of delineating boundaries in societies and transcending these boundaries: myth can be used to create and perpetuate (through ritual) cultural and/or political institutions; yet it can also be used to modify them by subverting, transcending, or even changing them entirely at the foundation to the extent that there may cease to be a need for subversion or transcendence because the paradigms that would need to exist for such movement are no longer relevant, or no longer exist. Within myth, the boundaries between the sacred and the profane, the divine and the human, are both exposed and transgressed, often by a cultural hero be (s)he god or human. The hero, by transgressing, reveals the boundary lines while subverting and transcending them. Even the boundary

42 Not only does myth have certain borders in order to render it intelligible, but according to Mircea Eliade in Images and Symbols: “myths and rites always disclose a boundary situation,” providing a doorway to open and to close other systems and spaces (34).
between life and death becomes permeable as culture heroes can be brought back to life. In addition, myth, which is linked to Nature, is unpredictable and uncontrollable. This means that societies that use myth as a way of social organization, can be subverted by the unpredictability of both Nature and man. Harsh punishments are meted out for transgressors in order to mitigate this unpredictability. As another example of the dual role of myth, we can refer to the fact that myth can be thought to exert influence on certain agricultural cycles by providing a formulaic ritual and conception of Nature, thus effecting agricultural production. Yet myth, being based on unpredictable Nature, may require alterations to these formulas to suit the changes in Nature. Also, if myth is as unpredictable as Nature itself, it too must change and be changeable. It must be able to transcend itself.

My goal in this chapter is to focus on the subversive and transcendent aspects of myth which lie in its open structure with a tendency towards a vertical and spiritual dynamic. Myth has as one of its possible functions, the creation of a fluid order: chaos and order are never far apart in myth since they are both sides of the same coin; one flows into the other. In a somewhat similar way, journey can also be used to establish order: for example, the travel necessary to engage in trade agreements, and solidify political ties. Such purposes can also have a dark side, for example, when travel is used to impose the ideologies of empire on another culture, or when mercantile voyages are exploitative in nature (slave trade). Yet no matter how edifying a purpose a journey may have and no matter how well-planned it is, journey by nature is disruptive to order because it coalesces disparate elements in ways that can never be entirely predictable. This unpredictability resists discourses of dominance since ultimately no structure can contain such unpredictability and the discourses of dominance tend to be structure-dependent. In a similar way, according to Claude Lévi-Strauss, myth is the interaction of disparate elements.43 This

43 To elaborate further on the points mentioned, in Structural Anthropology Lévi-Strauss states: “If there is a meaning to be found in mythology, it cannot reside in the isolated elements which enter into the composition of a myth, but only in the way those elements are combined” (210). And also: “There is no single ‘true’ version of which all the others are but copies or distortions. Every version belongs to the myth” (218).
interaction occurs in ways that can never be entirely predictable and, according to Joseph Campbell, “symbols of mythology” are the “spontaneous productions of the psyche” further emphasizing the unpredictability of myth (1-2). Where travel opens up borders and spaces on a horizontal plane, myth opens spaces on a vertical plane, on a physical and spiritual level. A vertical plane of spiritual ascendance and transcendence has been noted by Mircea Eliade and Gaston Bachelard, to name only a few. This verticality contrasts with the phallic, optic, and geometric formant of Lefebvre’s abstract space that imposes itself outward. Myth’s verticality is dynamic, stemming from both an internal and external source and moving among both spaces.44

Reality serves as a springboard for myth, which in turn widens and expands reality by ascending or descending in a vertical movement.45 Myth has a reciprocal effect on reality; its origins are within reality and will dictate how reality will be perceived. This was particularly true in earlier agrarian societies, for example, when myth both was formed by and dictated concrete aspects of reality such as agriculture as exemplified by the cycles that governed the cultivation of crops in what seems to be a reciprocal feedback cycle. To put it another way: everyday actions and their origin and/or exception became the grounds for myth. Myth, in turn dictated everyday actions turning them into sublime events of transcendence during certain occasions, or trials and tribulations in the depths of the psyche.46 A voyage

---

44 Lefebvre attributes a mythical quality to absolute space where “Directions here have symbolic force: . . . but above all high and low. . . . Altitude and verticality are often invested with a special significance . . . but such meanings vary from one society or ‘culture’ to the next. By and large, however, horizontal space symbolizes submission, vertical space power, and subterranean space death” (236). Absolute space also “consecrates” implying hierophany and transcendence (236). Myth is not being analyzed with regard to absolute space in this chapter, however this citation is included to offer a differing point of view with regard to myth and directional associations.

45 Margaret Heady in Marvelous Journeys views the mythic as “innocent” and realism as a “learned voice,” and concludes that both elements have an equal role and voice in Magic Realism (99). Yet, I question the idea of the mythic as “innocent” and the point to where it is detached from realism and reality.

46 Mircea Eliade writes in Rites and Symbols of Initiation: “For the primitive, to live is to share in the sacrality of the cosmos” (103). In Patterns in Comparative Religions, he states: “Every hierophany we look at is also an historical fact. Every manifestation of the sacred takes place in some historical situation. Even the most personal and transcendent mystical experiences are effected by the age in which they occur” (2). He also explains: “For the moment we shall consider each separate thing -rite, myth, cosmogony or god- as a hierophany; in other words, we shall see each as a manifestation of the sacred in the mental world of those who believed in it” (10).
of ascent or descent was often told using a hero or god as an example. The voyage could become collective when told to a cultural collectivity, which in turn internalized it, creating thus an association between individual and collectivity.47 Myth finds itself somewhere between the social and the private domains.48 The social aspect of myth lies in the fact that it is shared by everyone (within a culture and beyond cultural borders since some myths also travel), yet it is also private, in that certain ceremonies or rituals are conducted alone and that interpretations of myth can also vary from individual to individual.49 This movement between the social and the personal, and between the cultural and the private, create intersections that allow for the development of instances of kairos.50 Kairos, as a moment of revelation and change, makes openings in the cultural and personal fabric. There is an open cultural cycle in myth: from culture to individual and from individual to culture. Myths taught by a social apparatus are internalized in the psyche and shape the worldview of the individual. In turn, people can also create myths via daring or exceptional feats. These myths then travel from individual to collective and vice versa. This system, from society to individual and vice versa, is an open system, even more so when travel forces open the system to the point where paradigms need to be shifted or recalibrated in order to account for new realities. Mary W. Helms in Ulysses’ Sail gives numerous examples of how people would go to the border’s edge, both geographically, culturally, and sometimes cosmologically, in order to obtain knowledge. Upon arriving to distant and foreign lands, the traveler, by virtue of having arrived, brings with him/her a set of information which can then be shared with the inhabitants. Upon returning home,

47 Mircea Eliade explains in The Myth of the Eternal Return: “To a certain extent, we witness the metamorphosis of a historical figure into a mythical hero” (42). He continues on to say: “the recollection of a historical event or a real personage survives in popular memory for two or three centuries at the utmost. This is because popular memory finds difficulty in retaining individual events and real figures. The structures by means of which it functions are different: categories instead of events, archetypes instead of historical personages” (43).
48 See also Lefebvre’s Rhythmanalysis with regard to the rhythm of Self and Other, since there are “multiple transitions and imbrications between these poles” in addition to myth (95).
49 See The Hero With a Thousand Faces by Joseph Campbell where he explains how certain personal events of life are “translated” into “impersonal” or social forms through ritual and customs, in which case, “By an enlargement of vision to embrace this superindividual, each discovers himself enhanced, enriched, supported, and magnified” (331).
50 Kairos and memory as explored by Michel de Certeau will be discussed further in the next chapter. For more information, see The Practice of Everyday Life on pages 82-85.
the traveler brings coveted and/or dangerous new knowledge. Whereas Helms’ analyses focus on ethnographic topics (and these often involve myth), Joseph Campbell describes a similar process in *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* in a mythological context versus an ethnographic one.

Besides being a mechanism between individual and collective, myth has a peripatetic quality and is transformed by intercultural exchanges. Recent research has shown that there has been more intercultural exchange due to travel in the past than previously thought and this includes the exchanging of mythemes. Reviewing patterns of travel and migration allows us to rethink geopolitical and cultural conceptions of our world since in recent centuries, perceptions and events have led to an “us vs. them” mentality with oftentimes destructive results. Re-examining what was considered to be paradigmatic thought that still affects the way we view and conceive the world, and studying the flows of human travel, afford us a deeper and more complex view of history and our reality where history is not seen as an inevitable trajectory of events, but a space and a time filled with potentialities, exposing an openness that has always existed.51 Cultural exchanges are thought of as a recent occurrence in the age of globalization and yet – when was the world not global? Before Columbus? Perhaps a better question is when has there not been cultural exchange? As nations constructed their narratives in order to define themselves, certain nexus of contact have been glossed over in history in favor of demonstrating nations and civilizations as entirely homogeneous entities without examining the flows and dynamics that are operational inter- and intra-culturally and politically. Myth, for example, is not a culturally specific phenomenon in that we can

51 James Clifford in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, broaches various types of intercultural exchanges citing Amitav Ghosh, who relates in a hybrid travel journal and travel “tale” in the book *In an Antique Land: History in the Guise of a Traveler’s Tale* (I) of when he went to a town of “settled soils,” only to find out that many of the inhabitants had travelled. Clifford ends his engaging studies with a meditation on Fort Ross: a former Russian outpost in California where Russians and Native Americans from what is now Alaska to California came into contact in an exploitative relationship when the Russians went hunting for sea otters. Other works of research that also discuss movement and intercultural exchanges are: *The Black Atlantic* by Paul Gilroy, which focuses on intercultural exchanges across the Atlantic from the time of slavery until today; *Ulysses’ Sail* by Mary W. Helms who shows that certain exchanges were realized with the purpose of gaining knowledge and thereby gaining more power; *The Many-Headed Hydra* by Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker who takes the mythological figure of the Hydra to demonstrate how it was used as a trope to malign any type of rebellion from early colonialism to the early 1800’s.
find examples of myth all over the globe. According to Claude Levi-Strauss, among indigenous Americans for example, there was a “seeping through” of “beliefs, practices, and customs” (*Myth and Meaning* 26). Myth, being part of cultural practice, is an open system that incorporates, adds and subtracts from its repertoire in accordance with certain cultural exchanges and circumstances. In this way, myths have travelled horizontally while being generated on a vertical axis. In the analysis of the novels, I will examine some of these underlying connections where myth is concerned. The nexus between culture and geography will be questioned in a process of *degeographization* inspired by Mário de Andrade. While focusing entirely on ascent (and descent only as inverse ascent) Bachelard describes a spiritual, transcendental psychology of ascent as a process of deformation: “While examining the dream of flight, we will find still more evidence that a psychology of the imagination cannot be developed using static forms. It must be based on forms that are in the process of being deformed, and a great deal of importance must be placed on the dynamic principles of deformation” (21). Borders, cultural and geographical, will be shown to be deformed and *degeographized* in order to demonstrate a fluidity of connections that have helped to form the world as we know it today. Deformation and *degeographization* begin as disjunctive in order to facilitate a juxtaposition of forms in *Macunaima* until it leads to an airier dissipation of forms in Mascaró, *el cazador americano*, where certain references have no loopback and thus create mythical forms anew.

---

52 In *Myth and Meaning*, Lévi-Strauss comments that for some time, the human population was not very numerous and people lived in isolated tribes rendering it only logical that cultural differences would exist. He also mentions that during the times of Columbus, the population was actually more numerous than what was thought at the time, which led to more extensive cultural sharing of these differences than had been accounted for (19-20, 26-27).

53 Claude Lévi-Strauss, in *Structural Anthropology*, states: “With myth, everything becomes possible. But on the other hand, this apparent arbitrariness is belied by the astounding similarity between myths collected in widely different regions” (208). In *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth*, Mircea Eliade explains: “But, properly considered, this history preserved in the myths is closed only in appearance. If the man of primitive societies had contented himself with forever imitating the few exemplary gestures revealed by the myths, there would be no explaining the countless innovations that he has accepted during the course of time. No such thing as an absolutely closed primitive society exists. We know of none that has not borrowed some cultural elements from outside; none that, as the result of these borrowings, has not changed at least some aspects of its institutions; none that, in short, has had no history” (20).
The interchanges between voyage and myth leave openings where deformation and degeographization can occur, yet before this process takes place, the voyager may arrive at a destination with preconceived notions due to the myths that permeate her/his mind since many ideas about journey had been based on myth. These voyagers may create their own myths if an exceptional event occurs during their travels or if exceptional tales are told upon their return. This interchange or exchange between journey and myth is not precise: the influence of one upon the other in terms of scope and depth is variable since they each have their ever-changing and shifting parameters. As an example of preconceived mythical notions that may influence a traveler, both the indigenous Americans and the Spaniards resorted to their cosmologies and mythologies in order to understand and come to terms with the Other when they first came into contact. Although the perceptions among the varying indigenous American cultures varied, the Mexica, for example, thought Cortés was Quetzalcoatl, whereas the conquistadors originally thought the indigenous Americans were exotic peoples of India. Mary W. Helms explains that, according to the cosmology of the world in that time in Europe, Asia was a faraway place of mystery and treasure that represented the unknown (213-217). According to Helms, “traditional European interest in and exploration of distant phenomena were similar to non-European approaches to the same material”; however, the “cosmological frameworks” were quite different, since “European cosmological interpretations of the nature of people from afar did not present an equally complementary framework for interaction” resulting in unequal dynamics (265). The clash between the indigenous peoples of America and the Europeans was as much of a clash of mythology as it was a political and economic and, according to Tzvetan Todorov, also a semiotic one (252).

54 A similar perspective also appears in Marvelous Journeys: “The gaps in understanding and the conflicting perceptions that resulted from the encounter of groups as different as the Europeans and the American natives or the Africans imported as slaves became fertile ground for misunderstandings and deliberately false ‘definitions’ whose sometimes disastrous effects have persisted for centuries not only in the context of issues of identity but also in such potentially devastating forms as genocide, racism, and despotism” (Heady 14-15).
This clash is a result of the shocks of the traveler (and those being travelled to) being introduced to new sights, sounds, and smells that don’t fit old paradigms of thinking. There is an attempt to find parallels between the old and the new, whereas on other occasions, new terms and identifications are introduced. This instance of rupture is where paradigm shifting can and does occur at a rate that is far more rapid than in an enclosed society. According to Joseph Campbell, myth like voyage, can also shock the senses. This shock and this break is where kairos and unpredictability can find their fullest expression and power. Potentiality is magnified and heightened. Myth and reality feed each other yet they do not form a closed cyclical system. Reality is always full and ripe with potentiality, and myth, being magnifier of reality, magnifies the potential of nature and mankind. Both are cyclical, yet open, changeable and dynamic, not to mention rhythmic, as in Lefebvre’s Rhythmanalysis where cycles (mythical) repeat over and over and yet are never the same. This break in repetition is the key to the open system of myth as also described by Campbell. Myth and voyage are not in a dialectical relationship in the Hegelian sense of becoming: there is a free and fluid movement between the two.

---

55 Both Joseph Campbell and Mircea Eliade note in mythology and ritual, an “estrangement” effect from the automatic that is similar to that produced by art as explained by Victor Shklovsky in Theory of Prose. In The Hero With a Thousand Faces, Campbell writes: “As in dream, the images range from the sublime to the ridiculous. The mind is not permitted to rest with its normal evaluations, but is continually insulted and shocked out of the assurance that now, at last, it has understood. Mythology is defeated when the mind rests solemnly with its favorite or traditional images. …” (231). Mircea Eliade sustains in Patterns in Comparative Religion that an archaic man makes simple acts sacred, “and such elementary actions … become a rite which will assist man to approach reality, to, as it were, wedge himself into Being, by setting himself free from merely automatic actions (without sense or meaning). …” (31-32).

56 Lefebvre explains: “… a long time after the action, one sees the emergence of novelty. Perspicacity, attention and above all an opening are required. In practice and in culture, exhaustion is visible sooner and more clearly than growth and innovation…” (Rhythmanalysis 15). He also affirms that there is: “No rhythm without repetition in time and in space, without reprises, without returns, in short without measure [mesure]. But there is no identical absolute repetition, indefinately. Whence the relation between repetition and difference. When it concerns the everyday, rites, ceremonies, fêtes, rules, and laws, there is always something new and unforeseen that introduces itself into the repetitive: difference” (6).

57 Claude Lévi-Strauss formulates a scheme of myth where there is repetition that contains change: “The function of repetition is to render the structure of the myth apparent. For we have seen that the synchronic-diachronic structure of the myth permits us to organize it into diachronic sequences (the rows in our tables) which should be read synchronically (the columns). Thus, a myth exhibits a ‘slated’ structure, which comes to the surface, so to speak, through the process of repetition” (Structural Anthropology 229). He continues on to say, “However, the slates are not absolutely identical. And since the purpose of myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction (an impossible achievement if, as it happens, the contradiction is real), a theoretically infinite number
Because of its fluidity and movement, we should think of myth, not as a closed system, but rather as an open one whose borders are porous and whose structure is changeable to the point of teetering on the edge of amorphousness. The borders of myth are fluid on several levels, as shown by various theorists whose studies demonstrate that myths are an open system. According to Claude Lévi-Strauss, myth is composed of the interaction of various elements. This composition of elements and the permutations of possible mixtures from these elements render the structure open. Myth, being an open system, allows new elements to be introduced, and while similar entities are often reduced to a singular version, dissimilar entities are juxtaposed or presented in other arrangements. Certain elements that are no longer considered relevant are discarded, yet never disappear. These discarded elements linger as palimpsest on which newer systems are often built. The different permutations of regional, local, and trans-Atlantic myths are numerous and can be infinite (since they are continually being created and/or recreated), and while certain structures and paradigms can be parsed out, these too are continually shifting and changing. Myth also has the potential for growth and expansion which opens a field of limitless possibilities as described by a slated system, ascending in its verticality and potentiality for expansion. Joseph Campbell suggests a structural and hermeneutic openness of myth when he states that there is no “final system for the interpretation of myths“ and with regard to its origins, as cited earlier, “symbols of mythology” are the “spontaneous production in the psyche” (329, 1-2). Thus from beginning to end, origin to interpretation, myth is variable and open. For Campbell, myth functions as an “opening” for the “energies of the cosmos” (1) and is also described as occupying a “penultimate” position before what Campbell calls “the ultimate” which is “openness- that void, or being, beyond the categories -into

of slates will be generated, each one slightly different from the others. Thus, myth grows spiral-wise until the intellectual impulse which has produced it is exhausted. Its growth is a continuous process, whereas its structure remains discontinuous” (229).

58 In The Hero With a Thousand Faces, Joseph Campbell provides a metaphor, a mythical symbol, to describe the difficulty in attempting to “pin down” myths using different systems by drawing a parallel between Proteus, god of the sea and mythology, both embodying fluidity and an ever-changing nature (329).
which the mind must plunge alone and be dissolved” (221). These depictions further highlight myth as an open system that is capable of subverting categories and transcending them, which suggests not just a structural and hermeneutic openness, but also a spiritual one.

The “open” quality of myth and journey, which makes these systems potentially subversive and transcendent, can be thought to have certain directional flows. Geographically, we can think of voyages on a horizontal axis in physical space such as a road or the ocean. Some journeys may take place physically on a vertical axis, yet generally not for any extended period of time (flight, mountain climbing, deep sea diving- although these journeys usually are on a slope which implies some movement in a horizontal direction as well). Physical travel can only occur in one direction; one cannot travel in multiple directions at the same time, yet when there are multiple travelers, there can be multiple vectors creating an open social space. Metaphorically, a vertical axis of movement has spiritual and internal characteristics attributed to it both culturally and psychologically. This vertical axis of movement representing a spiritual and internal flow or motion, is further symbolized by air towards the upper end of the axis and by water and earth towards the lower end of the axis. Mary W. Helms states in *Ulysses’ Sail*:

As a corollary I argue that in traditional societies horizontal space and distance may be perceived in sacred or supernatural cosmological terms in much the same way that vertical space and distance from a given sacred center is often perceived in supernatural dimensions and accorded varying degrees of cosmological significance, perhaps being seen as ascending (or descending) and increasingly mystical levels of the universe, perhaps identified as the home of gods, of ancestors, or of good or evil spirits or powers. I posit that just as the sky (heavens) above may seem to curve around and touch, even merge with, the land or sea at the far horizon, so geographically distant places and peoples may be included with celestially distant “locales” and beings in the overall cosmology of a traditional society. (4-5)

---

59 Mircea Eliade explains in *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*: “As we saw, the otherworld constantly enlarges its frontiers; it signifies not only the land of the dead, but also any enchanted and miraculous realm, and, by extension, the divine world and the transcendent plane” (112).
Gaston Bachelard explains, in an analysis of Nietzsche’s philosophy and poetry in *Air and Dreams*, a plunging into the depths to remove weight (matter/material) in order to become aerial: “This *duality of the vertical personality*, especially its *immediate, decisive nature*, cannot be overemphasized. . . . Here dynamic imagination asserts itself over material imagination; cast yourself up, free as the air, and you will become the matter of freedom” (145). Bachelard also links the vertical dimension with dreams, the imagination, flights of fancy, and the plunging into the depths of the psyche. These internal machinations can be both inspired by landscapes and/or projected onto them since neither process is static: a landscape can inspire and move the psyche to imagine or the psyche can project its own fascinations on the landscape or perhaps these two operations can occur simultaneously. According to Campbell, for example: “The regions of the unknown (desert, jungle, deep sea, alien land, etc.) are free fields for the projection of unconscious content” (65). Myth is both a mechanism and the expression of this movement between psyche and geography, between nature and spirit.

In Latin America, interest in myth and the reintroduction of mythical patterns into what was then a modern life of new inventions, followed a century of positivist hegemony and brought forth new paradigms of thinking. In the 1920s and the 1930s, the movements of *négritude* and *indigénisme*, which coincide with the publication of the first novel of this corpus, influenced and had as influencers Mário de Andrade and Alejo Carpentier. Conti, who writes at a somewhat later date than the previous two authors, creates a new myth. Novels written during this time and afterward, include journey and myth and their similar and dissimilar capacities for subversion and possibilities for creative change. Not a few studies mention resistance to discourse of colonial power by inversion of dialogue, using the voyage chronicles of the first European travelers to the Americas as a theme, for example in *El reino de este mundo* and

---

60 *The Myth of the Eternal Return*: Mircea Eliade: “For example, desert regions inhabited by monsters, uncultivated lands, unknown seas on which no navigator has dared to venture. . . . They correspond to a mythical model, but of another nature: all these wild, uncultivated regions and the like are assimilated to chaos; they still participate in the undifferentiated, formless modality of pre-Creation” (9).
At first glance, some of these novels present a dichotomy of Latin America versus Europe where Latin America represents a fusion of cultures and Europe is seen as a homogenous whole. Africa is also presented as a homogenous unity rather than reflecting the diversity of people and cultures of the continent and the movement of cultures within and without the continent. These distinctions only reinforce colonial discourse by staying within the parameters of the paradigms that define it. In *Images and Symbols*, Mircea Eliade affirms:

> The development in question is a part of the reaction against the nineteenth century’s rationalism, positivism and scientism which became such a marked characteristic of the second quarter of the twentieth. But this conversion to the various symbolisms is not really a “discovery” to be credited to the modern world: in restoring the symbol to its status as an instrument of knowledge, our world is only returning to a point of view that was general in Europe until the eighteenth century and is, moreover, connatural to the other, non-European cultures, whether “historic” (like those of Asia or Central America for instance) or archaic and “primitive.” (9)

European, African, and indigenous American myths are part of Latin American heritage, yet these myths cannot be cleanly separated into such neat, regional categories since there had been exchanges between and among Europe and Africa and Asia: a cultural intermingling was par for the course, even before Europe took its first step in the Americas. Concomitantly, there had also been cultural exchanges among the

---

61 For other examples see: *El arpa y la sombra* (Alejo Carpentier, 1979); *El mar de las lentejas* (Antonio Benítez Rojo, 1979); and *El entenado* (Juan José Saer, 1983)

62 In *Marvelous Journeys*, Margaret Heady traces the beginning of the 1930’s Negritude movement and the way it “reversed the polarities” which were “arbitrary constructs” of European hegemony. She then questions whether these discourses are a continuation of those constructed by the Europeans: “By exposing the arbitrary nature of these ‘naturalized’ binary oppositions [primitive and advanced], Negritude made possible new ways of conceptualizing the role of language in constructing identity” (28). However, “The assumption that the process of decolonization for all blacks required identification with an African essence eventually developed into a point of contention, particularly for certain Caribbean and American intellectuals. Could Negritude be in fact another “Africanist” discourse – that is to say, an intellectual product of a European education relying on established binary oppositions and thus, despite its intentions, essentially European in origin?” (30) Margaret Heady then continues her analysis as to what means the writers used to construct their own identity and to create their own discourses.

63 When we speak of myth, particularly indigenous myth, we need to be careful of not falling into the trap of assuming that there is what Tzvetan Todorov calls “zero degree of intervention,” or assuming that the myth hasn’t been altered or corrupted in any way: “… because the very notion of zero degree is perhaps illusory. Discourse, as has been said,
peoples of the Americas. The books, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* by James Clifford, and *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* by Paul Gilroy, show there has been much more cultural intermingling than is usually thought, after the period of nation building (the 19th and 20th century) and the stabilization of the current world map of nations. There is the tendency to think of the world as blocks of nations with unified customs and mores, since the nation is a politically whole entity, yet customs and cultures have been intermingling since their birth and have continued ever since.

During the period of time when the first novel of the corpus was written, radical changes occurred in technology and ways of thinking. Voyage and myth were being rethought and re-examined and old paradigms were questioned. There is a flow of movement between voyage and myth and one could make the argument that there has always been such an exchange given the open and fluid dynamic among them. This flow moves on a vertical axis, which is manifested in different ways in the novels and can be analyzed as a rhythm along this axis: a continuous movement of ascension and descent, of subversion and transcendence, provided by the open quality of myth and voyage. The novels in this corpus, each in its own way, explore the limits and pores of voyage and myth, teasing and testing boundaries, while the authors themselves are trying to navigate a crossroads. All of the authors mentioned travelled and wrote these novels based on their travels. The myths that preceded these travels and were refashioned after them, reflect the transforming potential of voyage and also demonstrate the malleability of myth. The authors fuse literature, myth, and voyage with the fluidity of their pen. Myth can be stretched as far as our imagination can withstand, and journey allows the imagination to reach that much further as the shock of new sights, sounds, and smells (as mentioned) jars the imagination on initial impact and proceeds

---

is fatally determined by the identity of its interlocutor; now, the latter is, in every case, a Spaniard, a foreigner, an outsider” (*The Conquest of America* 231).

64 Margaret Heady expresses in *Marvelous Journeys* with regard to the Caribbean: “It is perhaps the trope of the voyage that best expresses the back and forth between continents, discourses and ‘modernities’ . . . which seems to be so central to the Caribbean experience” (113).
to penetrate deeper into the psyche, prompting the author to delve within, while extending an invitation outward to the reader.

Chapter 2.2: *Macunaíma and Mythological Degeographization*

Mário de Andrade travelled throughout Brazil collecting information as an ethnographer at a time when there was a growing movement of recognition and reappropriation of African and indigenous traditions, in addition to an increasing foreign interest in African and indigenous cultures. *Macunaíma*, the novel, is named after an indigenous mythological figure from the Taulipang and Arekuna tribes as collected by Koch-Grünberg in *Vom Roraima zum Orinoco*. Mário de Andrade incorporates various mythological protagonists from Koch-Grünberg along with other myths, folklore, legends, popular references, and popular language to demonstrate a disparate, yet cohesive unit that represents Brazilian life. Mário de Andrade conceived of his novel as a rhapsody, whose etymology of *rhapsteini*, meaning stitch, and *oide*, meaning song, describes the musical and rhythmic quality of the work, and these rhythms are formed by the stitching together of various entities: cultures, peoples, ideas, and practices. This format provides interstices where different mythological systems, themselves open systems, are stitched together to weave one multi-colored fabric. Perhaps an inadvertent function of the text is to reveal how voyage "stitches" together disparate mythological and mythical elements. Myths, as we saw, are composed of fusions of different elements that are united, juxtaposed, and superimposed to form a unified work, and in the case of *Macunaíma*, these varying mythological systems never subsume the other. A similar process occurs in voyage, where the voyager ties in new paradigms of seemingly disparate elements. Voyage also exposes one to myth: as Macunaíma travels all over Brazil, the reader is introduced to indigenous myths juxtaposed with modern elements like cars and airplanes, (re)creating new myths. In addition, one is exposed to traditions of African and European origin.
In *Macunaima* Mário de Andrade *degeographizes* Brazil and this occurs by the confluence of different customs and traditions of the people who lived in different parts of the world and were brought together through colonization, slavery, and immigration. This flux and flow of the population is reflected in *Macunaima* by highlighting different traditions and cultural aspects while bringing them together. These aspects do not disappear in a mélange, rather, they are juxtaposed, sometimes creating something new while still retaining old forms. The combination of these elements that, perhaps, Mário de Andrade experienced in his travels through Brazil, is unified as a “homogenous entity.” Mário de Andrade states in one of several possible prefaces to the novel: “(Um dos meus interesses foi desrespeitar lendariamente a geografia e a fauna e flora geográficas. Assim desregionalizava o mais possível a criação ao mesmo tempo que conseguia o mérito de conceber literariamente o Brasil como entidade homogênea – um conceito étnico nacional e geográfico)” (220). However, this *deregionalizing* occurs not only with the flora and fauna, “o país aparece desgeograficado no clima na flora na fauna no homem, na lenda, na tradição histórica. . .” (226). Degeography goes against the positivist notions and classifying agents from a century before, much of it being used to justify racism and exploitation which Mary Louise Pratt describes in *Imperial Eyes*. Mário de Andrade’s *degeography* opens up “clear categories” by juxtaposing and uniting everything in a way where the flux and flow of things is emphasized and brought to the fore, since, as mentioned above, this movement characterizes much of history in a way that has been ignored in the wake of hegemonies that only allowed for certain edifying narratives to be expressed, while suppressing others. By journeying through Brazil, travel opens up Brazil for de Andrade, as do his ethnographic studies of Brazilian myth. Rather than a projector of myth as occurred during colonization, he is a musician of myths and due to the open system of myth, the author can rearrange these collections of myths as if they were musical notes in a kaleidoscopic fashion: myths that travelled from Africa, Europe, and indigenous Brazil. These myths, be they indigenous and having travelled throughout South America, or having travelled from Africa and Europe, create openings that allow not only other mythical systems to
interpenetrate, but also incorporate elements that are deemed “modern” and perhaps are thought to be removed from myth. Mário de Andrade challenges this notion and mythologizes the “modern” by presenting it alongside mythical elements; he magnifies the modern quotidian life thus utilizing one mechanism by which quotidian reality becomes mythical. By degeographizing myth, Mário de Andrade’s presentation of Brazilian identity is more of a questioning and fluid process than a declarative one. He states that: “Agora: não quero que imaginem que pretendi fazer deste livro uma expressão de cultura nacional brasileira. . . . É agora, depois dele feito, que me parece descobrir nele um sintoma de cultura nossa. Lenda, história, tradição, psicologia, ciência, objetividade nacional, coopeeração (sic) acomodada de elementos estrangeiros passam aí” (226). This degeography extends beyond the borders of Brazil in the novel, not only to include South America, but also to blur political and geographical lines in order to question where Brazil ends and the rest of South America begins. This extension of degeography is elucidated by the following citation that demonstrates the fact that it delights Mário de Andrade that his main character may not be from Brazil at all, but from Venezuela: “O próprio herói do livro que tirei do alemão de Koch-Grünberg, nem se pode falar que é do Brasil. É tão ou mais venezuelano como da gente e desconhece a estupidez dos limites pra parar na ‘terra dos ingleses’ como ele chama a Guiana Inglesa. Essa circunstância do herói do livro não ser absolutamente brasileiro me agrada como o quê” (226). An implication from this quote is the idea of how the indigenous Americans perceived boundaries amongst themselves before the arrival of the Europeans; it questions the superimposition of borders on conceptions of space that existed before the cataclysmic meeting of American and European cultures. A temporal line of questioning leads to the following comparison: the borders as they were when Mário de Andrade wrote the novel, the borders as they were when Koch-Grünberg gathered information from the indigenous peoples, and borders as perceived by the different tribes amongst themselves. Aside from the

65 This is something that Carpentier’s protagonist will not be able to do in Los pasos perdidos; he will not be able to find the myth in his “modern,” cold, alienated world, neither before nor after his journey.
ambiguous origins of the protagonist, he will also travel throughout the Americas, rather than limiting his travels to Brazil proper, which is another way to degeographize not just Brazil, but the entire continent. The protagonist Macunaíma travels opposite the colonizers who travelled from the ocean inward into the forest. Macunaíma not only travels the inverse route, he extends that route by traveling to Mendoza in Argentina, English and French Guyana, and Bolivia. He traverses America, thereby expressing a Pan-American itinerary and underscoring an underlying, though tenuous, united conception of the Americas before colonization. This is not to say that there weren’t separate American civilizations and cultural groups; as mentioned earlier, these groups were in contact with each other and had shared information. There is a recognition of a pre-colonial America with its own conceptions of its geography and borders that still exist as palimpsest underneath the national borders of today. In the previous chapter, Celia Pedrosa’s analysis of Mário de Andrade’s poem about the river Tietê, which moves inversely (away from the ocean) compared to other rivers, offered a unique perspective with regard to space and time. It also provides another perspective with regard to degeographization and its complexities:

À vontade de identificação nacional se mistura a consciência de distâncias e diferenças, evitando toda simplificação sentimental e ideológica. Do mesmo modo, a vontade de mergulhar na torrente humana representada pelo rio Tietê convive com a necessidade de meditar no alto da ponte, de isolar-se nas altas torres de seu coração, para conquistar mais liberdade, melhor visão, e só depois reintegrar-se. (Pedrosa 65)

In this example, degeographization occurs on several levels: not only on a geographical and cultural level (horizontal) but also on a personal and affective level (vertical), as symbolized by the act of mergulhar, or diving onto the depths, and going to the heights, symbolized by the alto da ponte or the torres de seu coração. This low and high equalizes itself at a point of “reintegration”.

In Macunaíma, Mário de Andrade creates a macumba scene in Rio de Janeiro as an example of degeography, since it combines candomblé from Bahía and pajelâncias from Pará: “Basta ver a macumba carioca desgeograficada com cuidado, com elementos dos candomblés baianos e das pajelâncias
In this chapter, the *macumba* of Rio traces many of its customs to African and indigenous belief systems that continued to develop in certain parts of Brazil, and these customs are relocated and united in Rio de Janeiro. Some of the spirits invoked at this particular ritual are: Xangô, Exu, Omulu, Iroko, Oxosse, among others. Degeography extends past the borders of Brazil yet again in the case of the Polish woman at the *macumba*, who is not just an observer, but a participant as the orixá Exu speaks directly through her. Adding to the spirit of degeography are the other attendees at this ritual whose disparate functions in society add to the motley crew feel of the event along with highlighting the rhapsodic quality of the novel. For example, among the participants are sailors who *degeographize* by linking disparate elements. Their movement to other places and contact with other peoples *degeographize* by both introducing other ways of being into foreign systems and bringing foreign elements to other places. This conjoining of different perspectives, languages, and practices tends to occur most often on a ship or in a port, but is not restricted only to these areas. Other attendees are, “marcineiros jornalistas ricaços gamelas fêmeas empregados-públicos” (76), and Olelê Rui Barbosa makes an appearance along with Mário de Andrade’s contemporaries: Jaime Ovalle, Dodô, Manu Bandeira, Blaise Cendrars, Ascenso Ferreira, Raul Bopp and Antônio Bento (83). This list has no punctuation, letting the flow of words continue rhythmically while emphasizing the juxtaposition of various entities. The cycle between journey and myth which permits this rhythmic feedback to take place (since without journey and myth, this union of disparate elements would not be possible) is in this case manifested by gathering and uniting different people, languages, and perspectives in this one setting of ritual, replete with mythical figures and symbolism now reconstructed in a mythical way: repetitive yet with difference. Where earlier

---

66 In *The Many-Headed Hydra*, the authors Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, “emphasize the interracial character of the motley crew” and how they “brought carnivalesque expectations of disorder and subversion. . .” (28). We can draw a comparison here citing the interracial character of de Andrade’s macumba and its irreverent, subversive aspects, in terms of religion, social status, and other cultural institutions.

we spoke of voyages creating a degeography, in the case of the macumba, we have a degeographizing ritual.

This degeography is testing and teasing borders politically, culturally, and socially. Mário de Andrade mentions that his intent is not to create an “antagonism” between the foreign and the national. Venceslau Pietro Pietra, who is presented in the novel as a European in Brazil, is not to be taken as a symbol of the estrangeiro, and neither is Macunaíma a symbol of the Brazilian, especially given the fact that the place of his origin is uncertain: “So não quero é que tomem Macunaíma e outros personagens como símbolos. É certo que não tive intenção de sintetizar o brasileiro em Macunaíma nem o estrangeiro no gigante Piaimã. . . . Venceslau Pietro Pietra e Macunaíma nem são antagônicos, nem se completam e muito menos a luta entre os dois tem qualquer valor sociológico” (226-227). They are not antagonistic nor do they represent a complete inverse figure of the other because they are not part of a closed system of identification. The open system presented in Macunaíma questions the singularity of hegemonic, positivist, and nation-building discourse from the prior century, which solidified national identity by exclusion. In Macunaíma, the presence of myth and journey open up these hegemonic discourses in three ways: by including those who were excluded, by referring to pre-colonial ways of conceiving groups and individuals, and by considering modern patterns of immigration and movement of people in Brazil. The degeographization invites the reader to journey in order to question borders and places of connection and disjunction.

It is possible to speak of a degeographized and vertical movement in Macunaíma in the sense that if the mythical tends to run along a vertical axis of ascensions and descents, and the manifestations of these ascending and descending movements depend on culture, due to the many mythological systems in Macunaíma, there is a constant flow of both horizontal movement (by way of the protagonist’s travel and the implied travel that was necessary for so many cultures to coalesce in one area) and vertical ascending and descending movement. There are multiple belief systems that engage in myth, which are
no longer localized in one particular area because they have traveled extensively; this is reflected in the joining of African, European, and indigenous American myths. Mário de Andrade mixes these systems together without one blending into the other; they maintain a degree of separateness yet are presented as if they were one system: homogenous yet degeographized because they are no longer located at a specific point of origin or a specific space that is reserved for the practices of these belief systems.

In one example, a Christian and deeply Brazilian holiday that recognizes the Southern Cross as a feast day, is replaced by an indigenous explanation for the origin of this constellation. Macunaíma’s explanation relating the tale of Pauí Pódole leaves the listeners surprised and inspired as they incorporate this new explanation into their own personal belief systems and thus break with paradigmatic beliefs, allowing an expansion to take place as the listeners look to the sky and see the Southern Cross and/or a figure of a bird with outstretched wings: “O povo se retirou comovido, feliz no coração cheio de explicações e cheio das estrelas vivas. Ninguém não se amolava mais nem com dia do Cruzeiro nem com as máquinas repuxos misturadas com a máquina luz elétrica” (119). Bachelard explains that: “The mission of ‘fixed’ stars is to fix some dreams, to communicate some, and to rediscover some. They prove to a dreamer the universality of oneirism” (Air and Dreams 176). The Southern Cross is a constellation that is charged with much symbolism in Brazil as a nation, beginning with how its position was used as a reference point by the European explorers and was then codified on the Brazilian flag when Brazil became a nation. The meaning of the Southern Cross for the indigenous Americans is reconsidered in Macunaíma’s telling of his story. When Macunaíma explains his version of the myth of Pauí-Pódole and the origin of the Southern Cross, the constellation is rediscovered by the people in a way that revivifies it, allowing the people to dream again. This new explanation reactivates or expands the metaphysical and vertical plane by shocking the listener with new images and new ideas, making myth vital again. These new mythological attributes add another layer of meaning to the Southern Cross as a national symbol and the Southern Cross as a mythical transcendence.
In another part of the novel, what was originally a Christian travelogue is transformed into an indigenous myth. Macunaíma is protected from the elements by birds. This element of the novel is taken from Padre Simão de Vasconcelos’s writings about the priest José Achieta who, during a trip on a river, protected those on the river from the sun calling out *Eropita de Boyaimorebo* to the birds that then shaded those on the boat until a cloud covered the sun. This particular episode, which originally was part of a travel journal, is reinterpreted and reincorporated in the novel by changing the character from a Christian missionary priest to a mythological Trickster, Macunaíma: a Christian miracle is reinterpreted as indigenous myth.

This mixture of mythological belief systems is not relegated to the metaphysical and the spiritual. Modern life in the 1920s and the 1930s, with its new technology of cars, planes, and machines, also gets a mythological makeover. In another episode of the novel, a car becomes mythical when Macunaíma explains its origin in mythological terms. The car is not merely a car: it is an onça of the rainforest, complete with its own myth cycle, giving mythical life to a lifeless vehicle. According to Mircea Eliade, “A thing becomes sacred in so far as it embodies (that is, reveals) something other than itself” (*Patterns* 13). In the case of the car, a relatively new addition to modern daily life at the time of the writing of the novel, not only is it given a history, but is brought to the level of the sacred in a profane and humorous way, since it now embodies the characteristics of a sleek jungle cat. The mythical and the modern intertwine and engage each other in complex and dynamic ways.

After having considered how *(de)geography* can occur on both the vertical and horizontal axis, let us consider the metaphysical level of mythical movement on the vertical axis within these systems. On this axis are cyclical movements of ascent and descent: a flight of liberation and transcendence, and a descent into the subversive depths of the formless. The *muiraquitã* is a powerful amulet because it

---

68 This information is gleaned from two sources, *Roteiro de Macunaíma* by M. Cavalcanti Proença (257), and *Vida do venerável padre José de Anchieta* by Simão de Vasconcelos (211).
symbolizes both movements: ascent and descent. There are many myths about the jade amulet known as the *muiraquitã*; it is usually in the form of a *rão o sã*, but in the case of Macunaíma, it is in the shape of a *yacaré*. These amphibious creatures of water and air further emphasize the movement between air and water by moving freely in and out of these environments: submerging themselves into the water and then leaving the watery realm to breathe air. The making of the amulet imitates the movement of the amphibious: according to various legends, the *muiraquitã* is created by the Amazons who take sand and use it as an abrasive on the jade in order to sculpt it into a specific form in the water. Upon completion, the amulet is taken out of the water to harden and crystallize upon coming into contact with air. Here we see the duality of the water principle and the air principle both being used to fashion the amulet: the piece is first submerged into water when the amulet is formless, and receives its definitive form upon contact with air. The vertical link between air and water is crystallized and finds form in the talisman known as the *muiraquitã*.

In Christianity, the rite of baptism leads to a transcendent entrance into the kingdom of heaven through submersion in water; in the novel *Macunaíma*, this submergence gives birth to a Brazilian myth of origin of Mário de Andrade’s creation. This baptism with distinct references to Christianity as exemplified in the following citation, “aquele buraco na lapa era marca do pezão do Sumé, do tempo em que andava pregando o evangelho de Jesus pra indiada brasileira” (50), becomes an origin myth of the nation and peoples of Brazil where Macunaíma and his brothers are all reborn into different peoples that form the country’s population. Another interpretation of this baptismal scene can be gleaned from Dr. Couto de Magalhães’ *O Selvagem*, where he distinguishes between three indigenous races. The peoples

---

69 Mircea Eliade also says in *Pattern in Comparative Religion*: “A talisman, or jade, or pearls, permanently project anyone wearing them into the sacred zone represented (that is, symbolized) by the ornament in question; and this permanence can only be effected by means of a magico-religious experience which presupposes a breach between profane and sacred” (447).

70 In *O Selvagem* by Dr. Couto de Magalhães, he distinguishes between what he says are three different indigenous races that he describes as: “1. O indio escuro, grande.
represented however, should not be thought of as separate races, rather they constitute an inseparable whole, according to Telê Ancona Lopez who states that:

Já Mário de Andrade não conhece barreiras e tabus, incorpora também o negro e tudo que o caracteriza como expressão oral, conforme as necessidades do contexto. Aliás, evita muito bem o perigo de se tornar um exemplificador de três elementos culturais (branco, negro e índio), pois torna a fusão dos três, sempre, uma dependência da espinha dorsal do enredo. (79)

Macunaíma himself, as will be explored in the following chapter, represents a fusion of these three “cultural” elements and even exceeds these boundaries, as do his brothers. This makes of them anthropomorphized versions of the degeographical movement. This baptism scene is one mythical aspect of degeograthization as it further complexes the idea of a static identity.

In Macunaíma, there are various mythical episodes of ascent and descent where the descent occurs on the vertical axis, proceeded by ascent and thus continuing the mythical rhythm. The most dramatic of these episodes occurs at the end of the novel when the protagonist is tricked into submerging himself into the water where the water spirit Uiara is waiting to devour him. Macunaíma is submerged into the water to be taken apart and when he emerges onto the beach, he realizes, “Estava sangrando com mordidas pelo corpo todo, sem perna direita, sem os dedões sem os cocos-da-Baía, sem orelhas sem nariz sem nenhum dos seus tesouros” (206). According to Mircea Eliade, water “dissolves” and “abolishes all forms” and is thus associated with death (Images and Symbols 158). Gaston Bachelard in Water and Dreams, also links water and death stating that “water is an invitation to die” (55) and also adds “only water can die . . . and yet keep its reflections” (66). Water and sky are linked due to the reflection of the sky in the water and vice versa where water and sky are muddled and confused; they are “dissolved” or “abolished” by each other. Sky is taken apart by its reflection in the water; the ripples and waves in the water break the sky into pieces; this echoes what occurs to Macunaíma. By being broken apart by the

2. O indio mais claro, de estatura mediana.
3. O indio mais claro, de estatura pequena, peculiar á hacia propiamente do Amazonas” (104).
water and in the water, he will then join the sky as constellation. By being destroyed in the water and then transcending this destruction by virtue of reflection and becoming a constellation, Macunaíma has forever freed himself from the vengeance of the sun. These three examples reflect the birth, death, and rebirth cycle of nation, identity, and myth.

2.3 El reino de este mundo: Slavery, Subversion and Myth

In *El reino de este mundo*, Alejo Carpentier chose to highlight the role that myth and spirituality played in the revolutionary events that transpired in Haiti in the late 18th and early 19th century. Carpentier, like Mário de Andrade, also showed an interest in ethnology, and studied myths and belief systems in order to link political and mythical history with the present. In addition to reading different materials and visiting Haiti, Carpentier also developed a relationship with the Haitian Bureau of Ethnology and, according to Anke Birkenmaier, “Carpentier tuvo un contacto sostenido con el Bureau d’Ethnologie Haïtienne hasta ahora ignorado. El cubano y los surrealistas tenían un vivo interés en el vodú porque éste combinaba la religión con la acción política” (17). The famous prologue of *El reino de este mundo* outlined a type of literary manifesto of the *real maravilloso*, a notion based on the faith (linked with voodoo) that Carpentier experienced in Haiti, and which would come to characterize Latin American literature in the following decades. In the prologue, Carpentier states, referring to his perception: “Pisaba yo una tierra donde millares de hombres ansiosos de libertad creyeron en los poderes licantrópicos de Mackandal, a punto de que esa fe colectiva produjera un milagro el día de su ejecución. . . . A cada paso hallaba lo real maravilloso” (*El reino de este mundo* 5). This desire for freedom and its realization via transcendence could be sustained on the vertical axis when movement on a horizontal axis was restricted by slavery. On the other hand, if physical movement is controlled, restricted, and punished, a dynamic and vertical

---

71 In *Mascaró, el cazador americano*, horizontal movement will also be restricted. The mechanism for transcendence will lie in the power of imagination and to a lesser extent, faith. In *El reino de este mundo*, the mechanism for transcendence will be in the power of faith and to a lesser extent, the power of the imagination.
movement, where the flow is free and not bound by restrictions (other than those of the imagination),
can wait patiently until eventually an opening is found and physical manifestations of subversion can take
place, or until it generates enough momentum, enough force to create its own change, its own space, to
allow this movement to push through as freely on a horizontal and physical plane as it does on a vertical
and spiritual one.

Myths, spiritual traditions, and rites from Africa served as a springboard for faith: faith in the
alteration of things on the physical and concrete plane. Many of the myths and beliefs incorporated new
elements from the Americas since myth, being an open system, makes allowances for new elements in
order to create novel permutations of old variations. This shows how myths are adaptable and yet
reflective of their environment. New myths were also created when historical events would either
become magnified or when certain aspects and/or events of quotidian life were too grandiose and too
important for day-to-day paradigms to contain them. Some of these events became instantaneous myths
through said magnifying process and these would be embedded in a much longer tradition of
transgenerational story-telling. Many of these myths and beliefs were shared and practiced in secret:
they flourished in the mountains where the cimarrones had run away and formed their own communities.
It is interesting to note the symbolic meaning of the mountain, the remoteness of which not only is helpful
in keeping away the slave masters, but, according Mircea Eliade, also has a spiritual significance. Eliade
states in *Patterns in Comparative Religions*:

Mountains are the nearest thing to the sky, and are thence endowed with a twofold holiness: on
one hand they share in the spatial symbolism of transcendence—they are “high”, “vertical”,
“supreme”, and so on-and on the other, they are the especial domain of all hierophanies of
atmosphere, and therefore, the dwelling of the gods. . . . Mountains are often looked on as the
place where sky and earth meet, a “central point” therefore, the point through which the Axis
Mundi goes, a region impregnated with the sacred, a spot where one can pass from one cosmic
zone to another. (99-100)
The mountains are where traditions, myths, and the embers of resistance and spirituality were kept alive. Voyage is subversive in the case of the cimarrones who escaped to the mountains and it could be argued that in their case, both physical and spiritual transcendence were experienced, which gave a sense of liberation and a sense of responsibility of sharing this transcendence. Stories, myths, and traditions thrived in this communal environment.72

These beliefs that would prove to be both subversive and transcendent, were not only practiced openly in the mountain, but rather everywhere in secret. Particularly at night, under the cover of darkness, people would gather to plan insurrections and also to engage in traditions that would lift the spirit.73 Jean Price-Mars explains in *Ainsi Parla L’oncle*: “Ils sollicitent le mystère de la nuit comme pour ouater à dessein le rythme de la narration et situer l’action dans le royaume du merveilleux” (54). These stories and myths became a vessel of stored vertical energy to be used when an opportunity would present itself, meaning that this vertical energy could be manifested on a physical plane, oftentimes in the form of rebellion. These rebellions, in reality, would turn into stories and this storehouse of stories would again be seen as examples to be repeated anew, in a rhythmic cycle of repetition with difference.

As mentioned above, the open qualities of myths and voyages create breaks and are entwined on horizontal and vertical axes on many different levels: historical, personal, fictional, cultural, and others. In *El reino de este mundo*, these levels, each with their own significance, add another layer of density to the novel, where myth and voyage intertwine. The following are examples of voyages presented in the novel, each reflecting a different layer of density: Alejo Carpentier’s trip to Haiti, the voyages of the

---

72 The *Ciudadel La Ferrière*, while also on a mountain, is an example of physical transcendence in terms of geography, wealth, and power and reflects the attributes of abstract space and its lethality: it is dead inside because there is not an internal vertical transcendence or movement.  
73 Another reason for telling the stories at night is broached by Jean Price-Mars in *Ainsi Parla L’oncle*. He mentions that it is taboo to tell such stories in the light of day and while questioning whether the origin of this taboo lies in Africa or Europe, he states that there are similar customs coming from the Bassoutos from Southern Africa, and also from Ireland (54). In terms of historicity, he also mentions that from 1740-1750, maroonage was intense and nocturnal meetings were numerous, called by the mysterious drum (100).
protagonists, the flight of the *cimarrones*, and the voyage on the slave ship. Some voyages are explicitly expressed in the novel such as the voyages of the protagonists and the flight of the *cimarrones*, while others are implicitly present in the background, adding to the complexity of this historical fiction, such as Carpentier’s trip to Haiti and the slaves’ voyages on the slave ships. In “The Haitian Revolution in Interstices and Shadows: A Re-reading of Alejo Carpentier’s *The Kingdom of this World*,” Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert notes the union Carpentier creates between myth and history that had been separated by the “West’s privileging of reason”: “In *The Kingdom of This World*, particularly, Carpentier experiments with the insertion of the seamless flow between the life of the body and the life of the spirit that characterizes Vodou into a chronicle of the Haitian Revolution verifiable by Western historical standards” (116). As both Carpentier and Paravisini-Gebert mention, the author went to great lengths to be accurate. The information that Carpentier gleaned in order to write his novel, both mythological and historical, was inspired and partially collected from his own sojourn to Haiti. 

Alejo Carpentier’s voyage to Haiti at the end of 1943 set the foundation for some of the ideas and information that Carpentier had been gathering and eventually presented in *El reino de este mundo*. As mentioned in the prologue, it was in Haiti where Carpentier first had learned of the story of Bouckman, “el iniciado jamaiquino,” and the role he would play in the actions that led to the liberation of Haiti (5). It was also in Haiti where the author stood in the *Ciudadela La Ferrière*, “obra sin antecedentes arquitectónicos, únicamente anunciada por las Prisiones Imaginarias del Piranesi,” and breathed “la atmósfera creada por Henri Christophe, monarca de increíbles empeños, mucho más sorprendente que todos los reyes crueles inventados por los surrealistas” (5). Finally, it was in Haiti where Carpentier, “A cada paso hallaba lo real maravilloso” (5). During the journey, the author found himself learning even more about the events and, most importantly, about the people behind the events that led to Haiti’s

---

74 It is important to note that according to Roberto González Echeverría, “In the forties, Carpentier’s places of residence-Havana, Caracas- would not leave as much of an imprint on his works as did his travels” (97).
independence, an event that would have repercussions worldwide by inspiring acts of independence, not least of all, in surrounding areas. One of the historical figures that seemed to most affect the author was Mackandal and the faith placed in him by the people: “De Mackandal el americano, en cambio, ha quedado toda una mitología, acompañada de himnos mágicos, conservados por todo un pueblo, que aún se cantan en la ceremonias del Vaudou” (7). Within the figure of Mackandal, the historical and the mythical seem to converge. If the aforementioned impressions reflect a historical perspective of Haiti, the impressions that follow reflect a mythical perspective: “Después de sentir el nada mentido sortilegio de las tierras de Haití, de haber hallado advertencias mágicas en los caminos rojos de la Meseta Central, de haber oído los tambores del Petro y del Rada, me vi llevado a acercar la maravillosa realidad” (1). Carpentier found himself enveloped by a land steeped in myth and traditions, an experience that culminated in a novel and also crystallized his ideas and perceptions about the real maravilloso in Haiti and the Americas. The personal movement of Carpentier as voyager led to the creation of a work of fiction that was rooted in Haitian historical events and mythology, with an emphasis on the subversive aspects of the latter.

Besides the author’s trip to Haiti, there are various voyages that take place in El reino de este mundo and they form a fusion of actual voyages undertaken by historical figures and fictional voyages that are the creation of Alejo Carpentier. However, even these fictional voyages reflect historical movements undertaken by actual people at the time. Two fictional characters in the novel have different trajectories. Ti Noel and Solimán both find themselves as slaves in the beginning of the novel in Cap-Haïtien or Cap Français as it was known during the time period that is represented early in the novel; during their journeys, certain changes occur. Ti Noel travels from Haiti to Cuba and then returns to Haiti, while Solimán travels to Tortuga with Paulina Bonaparte who then travels to Rome herself. This latter voyage is a fusion of historical facts and fictional details. Later in the novel, Solimán travels to Europe, Rome specifically, with the wife of Henri Christophe, María Luisa, and their two daughters Atenais and
Amatista. These travels provide a change in situation and a change in status for the characters while also demonstrating mythological syncretism. During Ti Noel’s sojourn in Santiago, Lenormand de Mezy dies, and having saved the little money that he is given, as a free man, Ti Noel pays passage to return home to Haiti. Solimán, in his travels to Tortuga, turns into the “verdadero amo de la isla, único defensor posible contra el azote de la otra orilla,” using rituals for the sickness that has befallen Leclerc (83). Irrespective of their travels, both Ti Noel and Solimán return to Haiti and find themselves in the Ciudadela La Ferrière, both working as slaves. With regard to Cap-Haitien or Cap Français, which is the locus of the first scene of the novel, every time Ti Noel passes through, the port has experienced a sort of transformation and yet remains the same: buildings and houses tend to change, however, underlying these modifications, a culture of slavery continues to persist under different guises, different names, and different leaders. The frustrating tension between these same yet different circumstances are the realities to which the characters must both adapt and which they must continually defy in order to subvert and transcend the systematic slavery in the world around them.

Yet travel is also the locus for change where people and mythical systems collide. When Ti Noel travels to Santiago de Cuba, in the church, he sees symbols in the “oros del barroco, las cabelleras humanas de los Cristos, el misterio de los confesionarios . . ., el can de los dominicos, los dragones aplastados por santos pies, el cerdo de San Antón, el color quebrado de San Benito, las Virgenes negras, los San Jorge. . .,” that are reminiscent of the altars dedicated to Damballah, the Serpent God (73). Another example of mythological syncretism that occurred via travel is presented through Santiago from Spain and his relation with Ogún Fai, “el mariscal de las tormentas,” as it appears in the novel (73). Travel and myth are also linked in El reino de este mundo through the invocations of Papa Legba. Upon Ti Noel’s return to Haiti, Ti Noel notices underneath a tree, an offering to Papa Legba, the loa of the crossroads who must be invoked before any ritual or journey since he is the one who opens the roads for the
traveler/supplicant.\textsuperscript{75} Solimán also engages in myths when travelling; when he travels with Paulina, he becomes a powerful \textit{houn{\textsuperscript{ga}}} who, when Leclerc falls ill arriving in Tortuga, uses different rituals with syncretic origins: “Paulina escuchó los consejos de Solimán, que recomendaba sahumerios de incienso, indigo, cáscaras de limón, y oraciones que tenían poderes extraordinarios como la del Gran Juez, la de San Jorge y la de San Trastorno” (82). Travel to Rome brings out the mythical power latent within Solimán and the latent desire in him when “quiso aventurarse más allá de las distancias destinadas al servicio,” a symbolic act of subversion on his part (134). By venturing further, he encounters the dead myth represented by the statue of Venus, a visual artifact that reminds Solimán of the “cadaver of Paulina Bonaparte” (136). Upon this contact with dead myths, Solimán will fall ill, yet not before invoking the god of the crossroads to let him pass: Papa Legba.

In a perpendicular movement compared to the slave ships across the Atlantic, is the flight of the \textit{cimarrones} to the mountains, which combines both a horizontal and vertical motion through space to a place, by moving on the slope of a mountain, coupled with the spiritual movement along the internal or metaphysical vertical axis. This flight is part of a historical reality and is also alluded to in the novel. Mackandal embodies this movement as he moves back and forth between the mountains and other areas, sometimes as human or sometimes as other natural beings after transforming himself in a mythical metamorphosis.\textsuperscript{76} In the mountains, both historically in the case of Haiti and symbolically, is where myth not only survives, but thrives since there is more room for movement in comparison with the plantation, and daily rhythm (biological, spiritual) is not as restricted by the confines of the dictates of slave owners.

\textsuperscript{75} In a few of Mircea Eliade’s books (for example, \textit{Patterns in Comparative Literature} 265-278, 299-300), he mentions frequently the symbol of the tree as \textit{axis mundi}, or the intermediary (not just as symbol but also as a natural reality) between the earth and the sky. The tree then could be posited as representative of Papa Legba, who acts as intermediary between humans and the \textit{loa}. In addition, Voodoo in Haiti, \textit{Santería} in Cuba and \textit{Candombле} in Brazil trace similar routes/roots (a play on words from Clifford’s \textit{Routes}) to Africa, showing diffusions and variations of belief systems that originated in Africa.

\textsuperscript{76} In the section on \textit{Macunaima}, it was mentioned how for Mircea Eliade, when someone or something is other than itself, (s)he joins the realm of the sacred; Mackandal becomes sacred for the people because they believe in his power of transformation.
According to Margaret Heady, “It was in the countryside that African cultural and particularly religious remnants were most often found...” (30). In the mountains, the people wait for *kairos*, a moment where history and myth coalesce, one that will forever define the future by descending to *el reino de este mundo* where spiritual movement on a vertical axis translates into movement on a horizontal or physical plane; where thought and inspiration turns into action, as an example of a historical and cultural aspect of movement.

The novel, implicitly and explicitly, has as a historical backdrop the slave ships that would bring slaves across the middle passage over the Atlantic. The plot commences in a port city in Haiti where people are bought and sold from slave ships. At this juncture in the novel, explicitly, the author describes a port scene of horses being bought and sold, which implicitly brings to mind the dehumanizing aspect of slavery. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, some trips were used for the purpose of economic/human exploitation. In an attempt to maximize control on these ships, slaves that were brought to the Americas were dehumanized by being “cargoed” in dismally close quarters, in addition to being submitted to repeated acts of torture, maiming, and killing. The novel makes allusions to some of the horrors of these ships. For example, the chapter “El nave de los perros” begins with the scene of the mistreatment of dogs brought with the purpose of “comer negros” (76) and were treated “a latigazos” (75) on a ship. At the end of the chapter “San Trastorno,” a ship with poisonous snakes arrives from Martinica, “para que mordieran a los campesinos que vivían en casas aisladas y daban ayuda a los cimarrones del monte” (86). Taking such drastic and inhumane measures to ensure control, however, can never guarantee it; voyage and journey can never be completely predictable due to the elements being uncontainable by humans and due to the changeable nature of humans. In the example of the snakes, the snakes were not able to reproduce, an act that is attributed to Damballah, the *loa* associated with snakes (86). Along with slaves on the slave ships, myths and traditions also travelled to the Antilles, both on a vertical axis and a horizontal one, allowing an aspect of humanity to thrive in an atmosphere of terror and absolute
degradation and dehumanization. These systems of myths, with Voodoo in Haiti as an example, would provide a foundation for later rebellion and eventual freedom upending the very system that the slave traders and plantation owners tried to maintain. Against the attempt to dehumanize the slaves, an equally strong attempt to resist such cruelty arose to reclaim human dignity, and this resistance would begin to travel around the Atlantic, as noted by Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker in *The Many-Headed Hydra*. This resistance appears in the very beginning of the novel, in the same port scene with the selling of the horses, where travel, revolution, and myth all combine to show that the seeds of rebellion are being sown. Disparate items, ideas, and people, brought together by travel, are characteristic of ports and it is among the people, that a surge of rebellion and revolutionary ideas will begin to stir. If travel brought slaves to the New World, it was also travel, according to Linebaugh and Rediker, that gave abolitionary ideas a vehicle with which to circulate.77 The initial scene at the port progresses through the “area of the maritime people” whose conditions oftentimes were not much better than those of the slaves:

> Siguiendo al amo, que jineteaba un alazán de patas más livianas, había atravesado el barrio de la gente marítima, con sus almacenes olientes a salmuera, sus lonas atiesadas por la humedad, sus galletas que habría que romper con el puño, antes de desembarcar en la Calle Mayor, tornasolada, en esa hora mañanera, por los pañuelos a cuadros de colores vivos de las negras domésticas que volvían del mercado. (11-12)

The condition of the sailors reinforces the initial allusions to slavery. Sailors were known to sympathize with the abolitionist cause and vice versa; slaves would also sympathize with the situation of certain sailors. Linebaugh and Rediker state:

77 One example of many from *The Many-Headed Hydra*: “The slaves and free blacks who flocked to the British army during the revolution and who were then dispersed around the Atlantic after 1783 constituted a second, multidirectional vector of revolution. Twelve thousand African Americans were carried out of Savannah, Charleston, and New York by the army in 1782 and 1783, while another eight to ten thousand departed with loyalist masters. They went to Sierra Leone, London, Dublin, Nova Scotia, Bermuda, eastern Florida, the Bahamas, Jamaica, the Mosquito Shore and Belize. Free people of color from North America caused problems throughout the Caribbean in the later 1780s, especially on Jamaica and in the Windward Islands, where they created new political openings and alignments in slave societies and helped to prepare the way for the Haitian Revolution” (241-242).
Why did African Americans fight the press-gang? Some probably considered impressment a death sentence and sought to avoid the pestilence and punishment that ravaged the men of the Royal Navy. Others joined anti-impressment mobs to preserve bonds of family or some degree of freedom that they had won for themselves. And many may have been drawn to the fight by the language and principles of the struggle against impressment, for on every dock, in every port, everywhere around the Atlantic, sailors denounced the practice as slavery plain and simple. (228-229)

Sailors and slaves worked together to spread revolutionary and abolitionary movements throughout the Atlantic. What follows in the chapter is a list of people, items, and mythical figures all hinting at revolution in motion. “La Gaceta de Leyde para solaz de sus parroquianos cultos” (12) is a reference to the journal, that for two hundred years, recounted European current events; towards the end of its run, there was an emphasis on revolutionary ideas, particularly those espoused by the North American Revolution. Carpentier mentions, “los esclavos no entendían de letras,” which implies that the slaves could not read La Gaceta de Leyde with its revolutionary ideas (13). Between these two positions, there are many undercurrents that are not implicitly stated. La Gaceta de Leyde was thought to have many pirated copies that probably went around the Atlantic. The ideas did not necessarily need to be read, just repeated orally in order to be effective, in which case “understanding letters” was not necessary for revolutionary ideas to spread. This point that incendiary information was often passed by word of mouth is emphasized when Ti Noel remembers an irreverent mariner’s song that curses the king of England: “Ti Noel, en contrapunteo mental, tarareó para sus adentros una copla marinera, muy cantada por los toneleros del puerto, en que se echaban mierdas al rey de Inglaterra. De lo último sí estaba seguro, aunque la letra no estuviese en créole. Por lo mismo, la sabía” (17). This citation also undercuts the idea that “esclavos no entendían

78 This example will be re-examined in the fourth chapter with regard to subversion in alternative semiotic systems. Another example of news travelling by word of mouth from the novel is during Ti Noel’s stay in Santiago de Cuba: “Los negros de Dufrené traían grandes noticias del Cabo” (76).
de letras,” with a subversive play on the word letra. In addition, there were slaves like Frederick Douglass, who were taught to read or taught themselves to read in secret. Amidst the Gaceta and the “estampas recibidas de París,” (13) was a copper etching of “un almirante o un embajador francés, recibido por un negro rodeado de abanicos de plumas y sentado sobre un trono,” (14) which reminded Ti Noel of:

. . . aquellos relatos que Mackandal salmodiaba en el molino de cañas. . . el mandinga solía referir hechos que habían ocurrido en los grandes reinos de Popo, de Arada, de los Nagós, de los Fulas. Hablaba de vastas migraciones de pueblos, de guerras seculares, de prodigiosas batallas en que los animales habían ayudado a los hombres. Conocía la historia de Adonhueso, del rey de Angola, del rey Dá, encarnación de la Serpiente, . . . Arco Iris, señora del agua y de todo parto. Pero, sobre todo, se hacía prolijo con la gesta de Kankán Muza . . . hacedor del invencible imperio de los mandingas. . . . (14)

The etching evokes voyage in the fact that the artifact had been brought to the port, and the image itself evokes the migrations of which Mackandal spoke.79 Even without having travelled, in the port town Ti Noel interacts with travelers who bring with them items, ideas, and songs that stir revolutionary ideas, as do an etching of an African king receiving foreign visitors and a copla marinera that insults the king of England. The etching also alludes to the empowering history of kings that once ruled vast territories and held much of the wealth of the known world. Myth is also woven into this history in the goddess Arco Iris along with other deities as voyage, history, and myth intertwine and affect each other.

79 Jean Price-Mars problematizes the idea of race by citing the migrations from Africa to other parts of the world and questioning the “erroneous concept of race itself” (110–111). These migrations make problematic the idea of “clear-cut” distinctions and categories of race and in this way question the basis of a system of exploitation and abuse. He speaks of the diversity of the peoples of Africa: “Illos [Les Mandingues] ont été métissés à des époques très lointaines par leurs voisins Peuhls qui sont, eux, des descendants de Judéo-Syriens et par des envahisseurs Arabo-Berbères dont l’influence ethnique est si profonde dans tout le bassin du Niger” (124). This statement highlights the cultural complexities of the continent and complicate the idea of race. Price-Mars for example, posits Sudan as an intermediary between two worlds, “de la Méditerranée par la Berbérie et L’Egypte, et de l’autre aux peuples d’Orient par Suez et le détroit de Bab-el-Mandeb,” which made Sudan a crossroads of ethnic migrations which further complicates set distinctions (134).
2.3.2 Voodoo

Voodoo, a complex belief system whose origin can be traced to Africa, played an important role in Haitian independence.\textsuperscript{80} The open system of Voodoo contrasted with the closed plantation life and was able to create a rupture in the colonial system. The openness of Voodoo as a system is made apparent in the lack of strict or steadfast parameters in its practices.\textsuperscript{81} With an open and flexible structure, other cultural elements from around the globe find themselves easily incorporated and reappropriated, and this includes also Christian elements to the belief system. Similar figures in Voodoo and Christianity are sometimes reduced to one figure with ambiguous complexity:

The walls of *humfo* and sanctuary living-rooms are plastered with posters printed in Germany, Czechoslovakia, Italy or Cuba showing various saints. . . . Merely by being pinned up in a place sacred to the cult of Voodoo, these personages lose their identity as Catholic saints and become *loa*. But this mutation does not happen in an arbitrary way. It proceeds from some resemblance, in certain particulars, of the picture to the conception which the Voodooists have formed of their *loa* and his attributes. (Métraux 324)

Voodoo has at times been posited against Christianity, and at others, been in dialogue with Christianity, particularly with Catholicism, which reflects a dynamic, changing, and complex relationship between . . .

\textsuperscript{80} In *Voodoo in Haiti*, Alfred Métraux states that Voodoo can trace its roots back to Africa yet, he also traces “Haitian magic” to various areas in France: “A great many beliefs and practices in Haitian magic originate from Normandy, Berry, Picardy or ancient Limousin” (269). In contrast, Jean Price-Mars affirms that Voodoo is undoubtedly from Africa: “Mais d’où nous vient le Vaudou?” (89). He then answers: “De l’Afrique incontestablement. Cependant l’Afrique implique un sens géographique trop large. . . .” (89). Jean Price-Mars explains the various African belief systems that gave rise to voodoo and what unites them: “Il est par excellence un syncrétisme de croyances, un compromis de l’animisme dahoméen, congolais, soudanais et autre. Que s’il a pu s’assimiler les modalités de toutes ces variétés de croyances au point de leur donner une unité apparente de rites et de coutumes sous une dénomination commune, c’est qu’il résumait en soi l’essentiel, le substratum de tous les autres cultes. . . .”. And also, “En outre, le Vaudou a trouvé un facile moyen de diffusion parmi les représentants de toutes les tribus dont non seulement les croyances étaient apparentées, mais dont l’idiome était plus ou moins semblable” (96).

\textsuperscript{81} According to Métraux, Voodoo is a “complex religion with its ill-defined frontiers” (62). Métraux later says: “Considerable freedom is left to the imagination of an officiating priest. . . . The same ceremony can show many variants according to the region in which it takes place. In describing a Voodoo ceremony allowance should always be made for this personal factor – otherwise too general a value will be attributed to every detail, and significance seen where perhaps it does not exist” (158). Jean Price-Mars also explains in *Ainsi Parla L’Oncle*: “Nulle part nous ne l’avons trouvé significatif d’un ensemble de croyance codifiées en formules et en dogmes” (91).
these belief systems that reflected changing historical situations. The Church was also instrumental in the resistance movement along with Voodoo, although sometimes in conjunction with and sometimes at opposite ends of the spectrum, while both being systems that provided an inner vehicle for faith, which proved to be both a subversive and transcendental mechanism to effect political change:

Organized in mass in the mine or on the plantation... black or pan-African consciousness arose from resistance of blood and spirit, which achieved historic successes in the 1790s. The resistance of the spirit encompassed obeah, voodoo, and the black church... The resistance of blood comprised revolts in Dominica, St. Vincent, Jamaica, and Virginia, and most significantly, the Haitian Revolution of 1791-1804. Haiti was the original Black Power. (Many-Headed Hydra 334)

In this last citation from Linebaugh and Rediker, physical resistance and revolts were also linked with spiritual resistance. This spiritual resistance took on many forms and different manifestations, sometimes uniting in syncretic ways. Myth partakes and becomes part of this resistance of the spirit. Travel and movement become part of the physical resistance, spreading revolution. Haiti, was then, a successful nexus of these two converging axes of resistance.

If for the slaves, every movement is dictated and thus stilted, Voodoo as an open and flexible system is a movement that creates openings in the repressive system. Not only is the system open, it is moveable: “It is the dynamic aspect of Voodoo always evolving before our eyes which is more to our purpose...” (Métraux 61). Voodoo created breaks in history by inserting itself as a mode of resistance on a vertical axis within oneself and within the community against the tyranny of oppression, creating new history by opening up possibilities in an otherwise restrictive and restricted atmosphere. Yet it was also part of a continuous and continuing history: continuous because the practices of Voodoo could always be found in one way or another – its existence was always present even if it was in secret; continuing because
Voodoo created a break in political history and therefore was instrumental in the formation of a new nation and identity. Voodoo was a source of spiritual strength and empowerment since the practitioners had faith that divine help was on their side. In *El reino de este mundo*, Voodoo as a source of strength is apparent in the following example: “El gobernador pronunció entonces una palabra a la que Monsieur Lenormand de Mezy no había prestado, hasta entonces, la menor atención: el Vaudoux.

. . . Los esclavos tenían, pues, una religión secreta que los alentaba y solidarizaba en sus rebeldías” (66). This faith would then translate to actions on a physical level, when slaves, *cimarrones*, and workers felt empowered to make changes in the world around them, which led to a path of liberation. These changes then altered the course of history whereby Haiti gained its independence, an event that instilled fear in slave owners worldwide. The pact that took place on August 14, 1791 was a mix of myth, history, and culture. Based on historical events and eyewitness accounts of what had occurred, on a stormy night in Bois Caimán, the *loas* were invoked in a ritual believed to have given extra strength to the pact. In *Patterns in Comparative Religions* Eliade states that, “Anyone who performs any rite transcends profane time and space,” in which case, those who are participating in the pact, are transcending profane time and space joining the ranks of the mythical (430). This pact, with strong ties to Voodoo practices, then led to the physical manifestation of a rebellion.

The pact is a key event in *El reino de este mundo* since it was a historical, subversive moment rooted in Voodoo beliefs. The pact, becoming a symbol of resistance, would take on its own mythical qualities since the actual events were magnified by the faith in the *loa*, along with the leaders of the resistance, who were seen as being imbued with the powers of the *loa*. In the context of mythology, Mircea Eliade says this about faith:

---

82 Alfred Métraux explains that: “Man has always made his gods in his own image and this is strikingly true of Haiti: the *loa* have the tastes of modern man, his morality and his ambitions. They are no longer the gods of an African tribe, exotic and remote, but deities who act and think in the industrialized world of today” (365).
Faith, in this context, as in many others, means absolute emancipation from any kind of natural “law” and hence the highest freedom that man can imagine: freedom to intervene even in the ontological constitution of the universe. It is, consequently, a pre-eminently creative freedom. In other words, it constitutes a new formula for man’s collaboration with the creation . . . a freedom, that is, which has its source and finds its guaranty and support in God. *(Eternal Return* 160-161)

Eliade wrote this in the context of Judeo-Christianity, yet the syncretic nature of Voodoo allows for this conception of faith to be transferable and applicable to Voodoo. God can be substituted for a less specific divinity by metonymy. Thus the faith in the *loa* is liberating: a liberation that transcends the bounds of power held by slave masters and hegemonic discourses. Margaret Heady states in *Marvelous Journeys*: “it was largely through faith and reliance on the protection of supernatural forces, Carpentier suggests, that nearly powerless slaves were able to believe in the impossible and accomplish the only successful slave rebellion in the New World” (57). Voodoo in *El reino de este mundo* is seen as a system that both subverts and transcends the oppressive slave systems in place. The mechanics of this is effectuated on a physical plane where movement, once constricted and confined, is taken back: a signal is given via the sound of a shell, followed by another elsewhere. These signals are a call to unification for the people and signify a movement to take place and thus, a unification through movement. It also indicates a reappropriation, not just of places and things, but also of movement itself. Additionally, dance and movement themselves are key components of the Voodoo ritual. The spiritual plane (via myth, Christianity, Voodoo, a syncretic mixture of the two, or other belief systems) is an empowering force. It allows for vertical movement to continue in a state of free flow where inspiration, faith, and hope can take the place of terror.

In *El reino de este mundo* and also historically, faith and hope were placed in the figure of Mackandal, a person in whom, Voodoo and rebellion coalesce. His feats that seemed superhuman,
instilled a sense of faith and empowerment to the people around him, aiding their efforts in rebellion. Mackandal symbolizes a combination of both political and religious power, according to Jean Price-Mars in *Ainsi Parle L’oncle*:

> On connaît l’histoire de Mackandal, exécuté en 1758. Il fut le plus célèbre de ces chefs qui exercaient une véritable fascination sur leur entourage. Tous avaient la révolte pour objectif. . . .
> A cause de l’audace et de l’énergie de leur action, ils exercèrent simultanément la puissance politique et religieuse. Ainsi ils étaient en mesure de provoquer et de consommer la ruine du régime par la double influence mystique qu’ils exercaient sur les leurs. (101-102)

The rebellious, political, and spiritual stimulus that Mackandal embodied, as Jean Price-Mars explains, helps to bring about the downfall of the tyrannical slavery regime, and helped the slaves on their path towards liberation. The political and spiritual aspects also mirror the two aspects of rebellion that were noted earlier in the quote from Linebaugh’s and Rediker’s *The Many-Headed Hydra*: “the resistance of spirit” and the “resistance of blood” (334). As a historical person, Mackandal acquires a mythical aura that stems from his knowledge of plants that were used in insurrections and the powers of metamorphosis that were attributed to him. This changing form is another type of freedom of movement that is a mix of imagination and physicality. His different forms free him to move and in this way, Mackandal has broken the bonds of restricted physical movement, which is also reflected on a spiritual plane. According to the believers, his last act of transformation during the immolation is his ultimate metamorphosis. The belief that Mackandal has saved himself has the opposite effect his death was supposed to have; rather than quashing a spirit of resistance, it was only fueled even further.

Curiously enough, Jean Price-Mars mentions a Noël as a “chef” in the “movement de révolte,” not far removed from Mackandal (100-101). In the novel *El reino de este mundo*, Ti Noel is a fictional character that will first share the stories of Mackandal with his children and it is in the telling of the stories that he keeps Mackandal’s actions alive and relevant. In addition to telling stories, Ti Noel, having learned from Mackandal and Mamán Loi, practices his own supernatural abilities. Ti Noel changes form at the end of
the novel in order to escape the world around him, yet this is not a true transcendence. Ti Noel's role in the events around him will transcend him in that he is part of a history that was being made as it was lived, a constant edification and building of a new world in *el reino de este mundo*. If during Ti Noel’s life, there was a repetition in cycles of tyranny, according to Mircea Eliade, faith means “absolute emancipation from any kind of natural ‘law’ and hence the highest freedom that man can imagine” (Eternal Return 160). As Jean Price-Mars eloquently explains, faith is what unites us all:

Les croyances religieuses ne sont pas seulement l’exaltation du sentiment qui nous fait éprouver notre dépendance des forces cosmiques et, parvenu à son expression la plus élevée, nous incline à la communion universelle par l’amour, la confiance et la prière; elles ont au premier chef la vertu sociale de nous réunir en communauté, de rendre plus sensibles les liens qui attachent les uns aux autres les gens d’un même pays et, par delà les frontières, les peuples, les races dissemblables, enfin d’importantes fractions d’humanité pour le plus grand épanouissement de la foi commune qui les anime. (88)

### 2.4 Los Pasos Perdidos: Nature as the Heart of Myth

*We will understand to what an extent the imagination of the sky is falsified and impeded by book knowledge if we reread some passages in which writers have blithely lost track of dreams in exchange for ‘knowledge’ that is as poor as it is lifeless.*

- Gaston Bachelard

In the novel *Macunaima*, Mário de Andrade *degeographized* not only Brazil, but the South American continent. Alejo Carpentier extends this *degeographization* to include all of Latin America in *Los pasos perdidos*. In *Macunaima*, *degeographization* was explored via travel and mythology; the intention of the author was to “deregionalize” Brazil by “disrespecting geography,” and this *degeographization* was then used as a unifying force of heterogenous elements. By mixing “flora and fauna,” using a character of ambiguous origin and having that character travel throughout South America, the trope of travel is used as a vehicle for expressing this *degeographization*. Mário de Andrade also
accomplishes this *degeographization* by combining mythological systems and juxtaposing them in such a way that no element is erased or blended and thereby rendered invisible or obliterated. In *Los pasos perdidos*, Alejo Carpentier also uses the trope of travel, along with mythology, in a way that *deregionalizes* not only South America, but all of Latin America as well. Even if de Andrade’s and Carpentier’s novels have this in common, there are differences in the way these two texts effectuate *degeographization*: in *Macunaíma*, travel tends to be more particular because the protagonist enters areas and regions with particular names (São Paulo; Rio de Janeiro; Manaus; Mendoza, Argentina; Caerá, Paraíba) and characteristics that are oftentimes subverted by the introduction or juxtaposition of other elements. Marapatá is the doorway between named areas and unnamed areas; when the protagonist travels to and from the *mato-virgem* to Marapatá, the areas don’t have a specific designation except for the names of rivers and natural landmarks. When travelling past Marapatá, cities and regions begin to take on specific designations, as mentioned above. In *Los pasos perdidos*, the locations of travel are non-specific in that they do not have definitive names, although they do have defining characteristics. This is done purposefully in order to present the geography as archetypal since the intention of the author is not to “disrespect geography” so much as to find the essence of it. There is still a transgression of boundaries in a way that “disrespects geography” in that certain people and places are put into contact with each other creating “areas of contingence,” which tend to be regions of unpredictability.83

In *Los pasos perdidos*, *degeographization* with regard to travel occurs on several levels: 1) “areas of contingence” 2) polarity (*aquí* vs. *allá*) 3) the archetypal. In these “areas of contingence” people from different regions, along with their beliefs, perspectives, and cultural mores, travel to places where they come into contact with other peoples of different (and perhaps some similar) beliefs, perspectives, and cultural mores. These “areas of contingence” enable *degeographization* in that if we associate particular

---

83 “Areas of contingence” are not to be confused with Mary Louise Pratt’s conception of “contact zones” as defined in *Imperial Eyes*. “Areas of contingences” highlight a degree of unpredictability in places where people from different regions come into contact.
customs with certain geographical regions, then by traveling, the borders between these regions are blurred as different cultural systems come into contact with one another. Clifford seems to imply in *Routes*, that someone who has not traveled and yet has been in contact with other travelers, in a way, has traveled by means of other perspectives and cultures arriving at his/her literal and figurative doorstep (27-29). This meeting of the traveler and the person being traveled to creates a meeting space and defies cultural borders often defined by geographical and national borders, thereby engaging in a process of *degeographization*. In *Los pasos perdidos*, there are a few examples of this type of *degeographization*: in one example we read about, “una gira que Anna Pavlova llevaba a las Antillas.” Pavlova was not just a Russian dancer bringing Russia to the Antilles, but a ballerina who took el *jarabe tapatio* outside of Mexico and popularized it, thereby crossing cultural and national boundaries (86). At one point in the novel, the narrator notices that the “casa de los griegos está hecha con los mismos materiales que sirven a los indios,” linking the Greek world with a South American indigenous one (130). The character Yannes is a Greek man in the rainforest who carries a copy of the Odyssey at all times. At the end of the novel, the author suggests that his inspiration for the character was taken from a traveler bearing the same name, blurring thus the lines between fiction and non-fiction in addition to blurring national lines, since Yannes becomes the link between Greece and an archetypal South American town. Odysseus is referenced frequently in the novel and in another such instance, Carpentier will compare Ulysses’ world with Latin America in the middle of the 20th century: “Porque aquí no se habían volcado, en realidad, pueblos consanguíneos, como los que la historia malaxara en ciertas encrucijadas del mar de Ulises, sino las grandes razas del mundo...” (82-83). While there was far more “mixing” in the Mediterranean than the citation leads us to believe, this quote does highlight one of the most cataclysmic episodes of *degeographization* in human history if we reconsider and extend the term *degeographization* from a literary conception to a historical one.
If travel produces a feeling of estrangement by moving a person out of a familiar environment with familiar paradigms to an unfamiliar place thereby changing the worldviews of the traveler, the protagonist feels this estrangement keenly throughout the novel.\textsuperscript{84} This estrangement is most welcome at times since it represents a break with his routine and empty life that defined his experience before he travelled. What was once empty and devoid of meaning is filled with movement. The protagonist has to recalibrate his sense of self in this new space since personal differences, and perhaps cultural differences, become magnified/minimized before the vastness of geographical space as his perceptions are inundated with grandiosity. In this new land (from the perspective of the protagonist), the protagonist is acutely aware of his condition as a foreigner while his attempts at creating a niche for himself seem to fail, perhaps owing to the polarity described by the Adelantado that the protagonist himself adopts. In the words of the narrator: “es que la gente de estas lejanías nunca ha creído en mí. Fui un ser prestado. Rosario misma debe haberme visto como un Visitador, incapaz de permanecer indefinidamente en el Valle del Tiempo Detenido” (243). At another moment, he states, “me veía torpe, cohibido, consciente de mi propio exotismo...” (103). Not only does the land provoke a sense of estrangement towards the exterior world, the protagonist feels an estrangement within himself that he never seems to be able to rectify, neither when he finds himself aquí nor allá.

It is perhaps the narrator’s perception of his own exoticism that contributes to a widening polarity between aquí and allá. This distinction was discussed in the context of absolute and abstract space in the preceding chapter and in this chapter, a mythical perspective will be analyzed. In terms of degeography, the narrator will use the geographical conception of aquí and allá and imbue it with a cultural valorization, attributing to these terms certain judgements and characteristics, some of which were borrowed from

\textsuperscript{84} As observes Margaret Heady in Marvelous Journeys: “The exhilaration that the narrator feels is akin to the artistically liberating experience of ‘defamiliarization’ that the Russian Formalists attributed to literary language. By employing effects that ‘make strange’ our everyday use of language, literature disturbs our perception and permits us to see our surroundings in a new light. For the narrator the jungle accomplishes the same kind of liberating disarrangement” (89).
the Adelantado. Geographically, for the protagonist, when aquí corresponds to Santa Mónica de los Venados, it is given positive valorizations as opposed to when it is applied to what is presumably a city in North America, especially upon the protagonist’s return to the city. When in Santa Mónica de los Venados, allá has negative connotations and represents North America, the world that he decides to leave behind. While the protagonist assumes himself to be an exotic other to the residents of Santa Mónica and its surrounding areas (we can’t be sure of the perspective of the residents), he creates for himself a distinction between aquí, his new residence, and allá, his old place of residence. Any continuity or similarities that could possibly exist between aquí and allá are nullified as the distinction between the two is concretized in the mind of the protagonist. The protagonist is able to take with him cultural constructs and perceptions from what is presumably New York to Santa Mónica de los Venados and he is aware he has done so by citing his own exoticism, yet he is unable to take Santa Mónica to New York, and therefore he closes the system. When the narrator returns to New York, he is already aware of another way of living and finds the old way of merely existing even more intolerable than before, yet he seems to be unable to bridge that gap for himself, even if it is of his own making. The novel makes it clear that the physical, geographical boundaries between aquí and allá are real and easily breached by plane, boat, and helicopter and with patience, the narrator can reach Santa Mónica de los Venados. Yet in the mind of the protagonist, the perceived distance between aquí and allá is not as easily ruptured, if it can be at all, since aquí and allá become places associated with circumstances and people that change with time: in which case, one may never reach aquí because it is not the aquí of before. Geographically, the place remains where it stood previously, and yet mentally and socially, the place is not as it was. The narrator degeographizes the physical aquí and allá by making them mental projections. Carlos Santander T. observes the polarity between aquí and allá and demonstrates that voyage is the link between the “quotidiano” and the “marvuloso”: 
Los Pasos Perdidos [sic] hace verdaderamente polar la tensión dramática entre el “aquí” y el “allá”,
el “ahora” y el “entonces”. El viaje es el cordón umbilical de ambos y por ser la unión entre el
deslustrado mundo cotidiano y el mundo de “lo maravilloso”, su evidente simbología culmina en
un verdadero periplo mitológico. (107)

Movement links the protagonist between here and there on the horizontal or geographical axis, yet the
protagonist’s imagination cannot bridge that gap on a vertical axis. For the protagonist, there is no
opening between aquí and allá as evidenced by his comparing himself to Sisyphus at the end of the novel:
there is a rhythmic ascent and descent, yet it is never transcendent because there is no break, no
difference, no opening. The vertical axis only experiences movement and reaches an apogee after a
descent to Santa Mónica de los Venados, whereas New York is presented as lacking vitality, which is
reflected by the point of view of the protagonist who feels that myth in New York (synecdoche for the
Western world), is dead because it is devoid of meaning.\(^85\) Carpentier demonstrates this difference in the
following citation:

Buscan el haba en la torta de Epifanía, llevan almendras al bautismo, cubren un abeto de luces y
guirnaldas, sin saber qué es el haba, ni la almendra, ni el árbol que enjoyaron. Los hombres de acá
ponen su orgullo en conservar tradiciones de origen olvidado, reducidas, las más de las veces, al
automatismo de un reflejo colectivo – a recoger objetos de un uso desconocido, cubiertos de
inscripciones que dejaron de hablar hace cuarenta siglos. En el mundo adonde regresaré ahora,
en cambio, no se hace un gesto cuyo significado se desconozca; la cena sobre la tumba, la
purificación de la vivienda, la danza del enmascarado, el baño de yerbas . . . son prácticas cuyo
alcance es medido en todas sus implicaciones. (223)

\(^{85}\) The “marvelous” is found in Santa Mónica in Los pasos perdidos: “Por llevarle la contraria, le dije que,
precisamente, si algo me estaba maravillando en este viaje era el descubrimiento de que aún quedaban inmensos
territorios en el mundo cuyos habitantes vivían ajenos a las fiebres del día, y que aquí sí bien muchísimos individuos
se contentaban con un techo de fibra, una alcarraza, un budare, una hamaca y una guitarra, pervivía en ellos un
cierto animismo, una conciencia de muy viejas tradiciones, un recuerdo vivo de ciertos mitos que eran, en suma,
presencia de una cultura más honrada y válida, probablemente, que la que se nos había quedado allá” (117).
Voyage, in this case, doesn’t close the gap between aquí and allá; these two placements keep their distance internally in the psyche of the protagonist, if not made to seem even further apart than they actually are. For the narrator, the polarity between aquí and allá also expresses the difference between his perception of myths in one place and the other. In Santa Mónica and its surrounding areas, myths are alive and in New York (and the Western world) the myths are hollow, dry shells of closed systems that were once open, lively, mythical systems of living myths or mitos vivos, which are like nature: they are alive and changeable.

Carpentier introduces a degeography by archetype, meaning that certain places cease to retain specificity and what remains is the essence of place. On a semiotic level, we can think of it as if the signified remained the same, yet the signifier is changeable. This is an example of degeography in that if the aim of geography is to pinpoint certain locations, the author is making specific locations and boundaries “fuzzy,” using these locations and changeable boundaries as paradigms or forms in order to become “anyplace.” For example, there are the Tierras del Caballo, which seem to represent flat grasslands where horses and cattle are raised (los llanos and las pampas, for example) (109). Most likely these lands are a reference to the Venezuelan llanos, although the name given by the author implies a more general, archetypal reference to this type of land that can be found in many regions of Latin America. By generalizing the land with a metonymic moniker, the author degeographizes what could be a reference to a specific place, thus testing the ideas of borders. This example shows that on the one hand, Carpentier reinforces the idea of a geographic border by delimiting spaces according to the animals that best characterize the land. On the other hand, he questions national borders by making geography the focus and not nations, since the archetypal is empty of a signifier, any name of any place that matches the signified can apply. The protagonist will continue his journey into las Tierras del Perro, a name implying geographical changes, spaces, or lands that, according to the author, are better suited to dogs than to horses: there are not any roads upon which the horses could travel and the denser foliage and trees that
begin to mark the borders of the forest are best explored by dogs whose attuned senses are better suited to search through the dense brush. The Tierras del Perro serves as an archetype for the rainforest and the Ciudad del Ladrido is the archetypal city in las Tierras del Perro (115). Las Tierras del Ave, where Santa Mónica de los Venados will be founded, could be a reference to la Gran Sábana, whose elevation in certain areas brings people closer to the realm of the birds. In this place, according to the author, the mixture of leaves, birds, flowers among other forms of life, creates a “suprema confusión de las formas” (185), a different permutation of the mix of flora and fauna that Mário de Andrade spoke about with regard to deregionalization. Travelling through areas made geographically ambiguous by being “archetyped” through a metonymical naming process which focuses on the fauna of a specific location and its interaction with the land, the protagonist both degeographizes his itinerary and revivifies it, because the places to where he travels are not mere points on a two-dimensional map: they become an active “anyplace” characterized by the life and movement associated with a geographic space.

If archetype also implies a return to a beginning, Santa Mónica is made archetypal by establishing itself as the beginning of a town. From the Nota at the end of the novel, Carpentier explains that:

Santa Mónica de los Venados es lo que pudo ser Santa Elena del Uarirén [sic] . . . cuando el modo más fácil de acceder a la incipiente ciudad era una ascensión de siete días, viniéndose del Brasil, por el abra de un tumultuoso torrente. Desde entonces han nacido muchas poblaciones semejantes – aún sin ubicación geográfica- en distintas regiones de la selva americana. (247-248)

In this note, Carpentier uses the word “birth” to describe the beginning or establishment of these towns further highlighting a mythical and archetypal quality. He also mentions that they don’t have a “geographic placement,” accentuating their archetypal existence. Another element of degeography in this example consists of the crossing of borders in order to reach the town of Santa Mónica. While we

---

86 In The Myth of the Eternal Return: or, Cosmos and History, Mircea Eliade explains: “Every construction is an absolute beginning; that is, tends to restore the initial instant, the plenitude of a present that contains no trace of history” (76).
87 They do have a geographic placement, albeit they are not recorded officially.
discussed that Macunaima could have been from Venezuela and is a character in a Brazilian novel, here a Venezuelan town needs to be accessed via Brazil. If Santa Mónica “es lo que pudo ser Santa Elena del Uarirén [sic],” it lies close to the border between Venezuela and Brazil where currently Spanish, Portuguese, and Pemón languages can be heard. Carpentier mentions that “poblaciones semejantes” to Santa Elena del Uairén were also appearing throughout the American rainforest (247-248). These border towns (on the border of nature and “civilization”), whose characteristic is movement and the meeting of movements, produce an atmosphere of the unpredictability of degeography.

Degeographization also occurs on a mythological level where mythological references from different traditions flow into one another. In Macunaima, these references to myths are clustered together in large chunks of mythological units, whereas in Los pasos perdidos the references are mentioned subtly and repetitively. Carpentier alludes to many different traditions: indigenous, European, and African, among others. These mythological traditions have a ripple effect where they each extend outward and overlap each other. The narrator notices, “La portentosa unidad de los mitos se afirma en esos relatos, que encierran raptos de princesas, inventos de ardidex de guerra, duelos memorables, alianzas con animales (189),” demonstrating inherent parallels and intersections among many mythical systems. Carpentier will build upon these inherent intercrossings with his own mythical fusions.

The character Rosario embodies this movement of myths since she represents an archetypal American woman and the patron saint of Latin America, in addition to her character being inspired by an Egyptian princess. Salvador Arias cites Carpentier: “Conocía a una mujer que parecía una princesa egipcia. La convertí en la heroína de una novela mía, Rosario” (15). Further evidence that points to the Egyptian origin of Rosario is the repeated mention of the constellation Coma Berenice, named after Berenice II of Egypt. Although inspired by a woman who appeared to him to be an Egyptian princess, Carpentier plays word games with names which lead us to associate Rosario with Santa Rosa, the patron saint of all of Latin America. Her name will merge with the word and concept of river and then maternity, all woven together
Carpentier unites and traces histories and myths which necessarily evoke travel in order for these to coalesce and then be represented in one person. It highlights the fusion that Rosario represents: Egyptian history and lore is crossed with Peruvian history and lore in she who will represent the archetype of Latin America to the protagonist. This fusion of elements becomes an example of mythological degeographization. All of these references will be repeated often to reinforce each other, for example, the protagonist remembers his mother reading to him the Vidas de Santos, which again brings to mind Santa Rosa de Lima (196). In a separate example, Egypt is mentioned in relation to a dream the protagonist had: “CÁRCEL. Egipto: se afirma la posición” (229). This is the analysis of a dream the narrator has, when he wishes to return to his Berenice/Rosa, replicating the scenario of Berenice who waited for her husband to return. In comparison, Los pasos perdidos has a different ending than that of Berenice, since Rosario never married the protagonist and thus maintained her freedom to wait, or not wait for the protagonist according to her volition.

Degeographization of travel and myth fuse since they are both open systems, one easily affects and flows into the other. Separately they have a sense of the chaotic about them, which is magnified or multiplied when these systems flow into one another, producing a sense of shock or unease with the newness that is created by this entropic movement. The following quote appeared in chapter one in the

---

88 These elements combined give us a foreshadowing of different associations linked with Rosario: Rosa of Lima, patroness of Latin America, a siren of a boat on the river, maternity, “orphaned” of ornamentation. To the narrator, Rosario represents the archetype of the Latin American woman who will become more attractive to the protagonist as his companion, Mouche becomes less attractive to him. In yet another section, Rosario will represent the possibility of motherhood and fecundity: she will represent the archetypal Mother. She also loses her father in the novel. Rosario also does not use artifices to make herself more attractive to the author: she is seen as an authentic woman of the earth and thus, free of artifice.
context of differential space and here is repeated since it also shows one such instance in the novel that clearly illustrates the unpredictability of these open mythological systems:

Con su carga de toros bramantes, gallinas enjauladas, cochinos sueltos en cubierta, que corrían bajo la hamaca del capuchino, enredándose en su rosario de semillas; con el canto de las cocineras negras, la risa del griego de los diamantes, la prostituta de camisón de luto que se bañaba en la proa, el alboroto de los punteadores que hacían bailar a los marineros, este barco nuestro me hacía pensar en la Nave de los Locos del Bosco: nave de locos que se desprendía, ahora, de una ribera que no podía situar en parte alguna, pues aunque las raíces de lo visto se hincaran en estilos, razones, mitos, que me eran fácilmente identificables, el resultado de todo ello, el árbol crecido en este suelo, me resultaba tan desconcertante y nuevo. . . . (113-114)

In this example of degeographization of travel, there is a fusion of archetypal figures that one may find while traveling according to Carpentier, along with a hodgepodge of disparate elements. The juxtaposition of these disparate elements is characteristic of the unpredictability in travel and is commonly found in myths, as the narrator mentions. Semiotically and artistically, this fusion creates a type of poetry in motion, which, following Shklovsky, implies seeing things anew makes them poetic and artistic. The combinations of disparate mythological and/or religious elements abound in the novel. Tusa observes that, “Carpentier uses . . . associations with the sacred which were familiar to his readers, i.e., Catholic liturgical dates, saints’ names, and theological doctrine, in order to describe a reality that is essentially that of Afro-Cuban mysticism” (54). There are references to Greek myths, Christianity, Judaism, references to Mayan texts and Aztec gods, and oftentimes the allusions to these belief systems are found juxtaposed on the same page, in which case the reader can be said to take part in this journey. The following is a list (that is not exhaustive by any means) of many of the mythological and religious references in the novel: Tutelimundi, la Bota de Oro, el Rey Midas, el Arpa Melodiosa (54); Los Reyes

89 See note 83 with regard to Heady’s link between the jungle in Carpentier’s Los pasos perdidos and Russian Formalists (like Shklovsky).
Magos (74); Dyonisos, Adán, Minotauros (75); Chilam-Balam (paratext) (78); Siete contra Tebas (102); festividad del Corpus (112); Arete, Alcinoo (124); la Serpiente Emplumada, la Laguna de Parima, los alcázares de Manoa (135); Moisés, Agamenón (136); Sísifo (179); Apocalipsis, Génesis (226); Popol-Vuh, Vidas de Santos (228); Hidra, Cabellera de Berenice, las Rúbricas del Diluvio (235). This list shows how many different traditions are incorporated in a way that replicates the feeling of the traveler protagonist for whom everything seems to be, “tan desconcertante y nuevo” (114). The list also represents the syncretic mixing of myths that occurs in travel. It is interesting to note that the Mayan texts appear as paratext. The texts are reference points of a “before,” appearing both graphically before the beginning of the actual chapter and figuratively in that the text serves almost as palimpsest by underlying the events that will occur in the rest of the novel. It is hard to say definitively whether this was also a symbolic gesture by the author to present these Mayan texts as a palimpsest in that they continued to underlie practices and beliefs in Mayan society (much like these texts underlie praxis or the action of the novel), even though they had not gained canonical recognition elsewhere.

While the references to different belief systems, myths, and cosmologies are numerous throughout the novel, the narrator/author seems to have the desire to get to the heart or root of myth itself, and the novel seems to suggest that the origin of myth is found in nature. A similar sentiment is echoed by Lefebvre in *Rhythmnalysis*: “Nature gave place to representations, to myths and fables. The earth? Those who cultivated it loved it; they treated it as a generous divinity” (52).⁹⁰ It was mentioned that myth is linked with reality, in this case a natural reality, a sentiment echoed by one of the characters of the novel: “Para el recolector de plantas, el mito sólo es reflejo de una realidad” (133). As the novel progresses, references to myths become less particular with regard to already existent systems; rather, nature itself becomes the source for myths; there is less focus on well-established myths and mythological

⁹⁰ See also *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth* by Mircea Eliade: “For the primitive, nature is not simply natural; it is at the same time super-nature, that is, manifestation of sacred forces and figure of transcendental realities” (23).
paradigms and more focus on the components that served as the very inspiration for the creation of these myths. In some ways, this ideation is similar to what Gaston Bachelard accomplishes in his psychoanalytic works of the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water where he seeks to get to the root of our fascination and reveries of the natural elements. Bachelard however focuses less on myth and more on the imagination or rather, the mechanics of our imagination. In *Los pasos perdidos*, the growing emphasis of the presence of fire, air, earth, and water runs parallel to the movement of the protagonist as he journeys deeper into nature. The more he travels, the closer the narrator feels as if he is getting to the heart of all things: closer to an archetypal birth and death, closer to the matrix and generatrix of all living entities. The narrator demonstrates the open possibilities of myth by bringing us closer to its origins: showing myth as an open system of movement whose possibilities are unlimited.

Developed symbolism has an ironic function in *Los pasos perdidos*, especially where surrealism is concerned. Mouche embodies the parody of surrealism, the movement that first captured the attention of Carpentier, only to be reformulated or rethought as the *real maravilloso*. According to Salvador Arias, Alejo Carpentier was influenced by *La Vorágine* by José Eustasio Rivera in that nature becomes the main character. Arias cites Carpentier, "Es una obra maestra, totalmente lograda en un sentido, ya que el propósito deliberado del autor consistió en otorgar el papel capital, protagónico al paisaje" (16). The landscape does indeed play a fundamental role in *Los pasos perdidos* as the protagonist is reminded throughout his travels of nature as foundation and seed of both life and myth. On the one hand, nature plays a liberating role for the protagonist; while in what is ostensibly New York, he is always searching for nature as shown in the following example: "se me ocurrió que fuera más sano tomar un tren y bajarme donde hubiera bosques, para respirar aire puro" (26). In South America, the narrator, surrounded by nature, will feel a sense of freedom and liberation. However, nature will halt his reunification with Rosario at the end of the novel, a fact that makes nature a defining factor.

After going through several trials and tribulations and getting closer to the origin of things, what Mircea Eliade describes in *Rites and Symbols of Initiation* can apply to the possibilities of transcendence that the protagonist begins to perceive: "That is, having symbolically returned to the state of ‘semen’ or ‘embryo,’ the novice can do one of four things. He can resume existence, with all its possibilities intact. . . . Or he can reimmerse himself in the cosmic sacrality ruled by the Great Mother. . . . Or he can attain to a higher state of existence, that of the spirit . . . or prepare himself for participation in the sacred. . . . Or, finally, he can begin an entirely different, a transcendent mode of existence, homologizable to that of the gods. . . ." (102).

See works of Santiago Juan-Navarro and John M. Barry.

Heady explains in *Marvelous Journeys*: “Despite his ties with the movement and the influence that he acknowledges it had on him, Carpentier felt that Surrealism was a vain intellectual attempt to revive a psychological component of human reality which had long been dead in Europe” (34).
some symbols have a functional use of weaving together and unifying the plot. In order to go past these
developed symbol structures, the author attempts to reach the origin of symbols themselves: nature. This
process of delving deeper into nature leads to more frequent references to water, air, earth, and fire. The
narrator in the novel attempts to remove himself from stale and/or artificial myths, as symbolized by his
ever-growing hostility towards Mouche, and as he does so, the vertical interior mythical movement begins
to flow more freely and natural rhythms are recovered. Towards the end of the novel, before he returns
to his old world, the protagonist experiences complete liberation; he has transcended his circumstances
and the life of the Hombre –Avispa. According to Bachelard, “habit is the exact antithesis of the creative
imagination. The habitual image obstructs imaginative powers” (Air and Dreams 11). The habits and the
repetitiveness in the world of the protagonist that he initially leaves behind were slowly killing any sense
of creativity, imagination, and spontaneity. Habits have a closed rhythmic quality, yet rhythm need not
be only a closed form. Allá (the “Western” world that the protagonist leaves behind), there is a rhythm
of gestures and rituals that have lost their meaning, which closes the system; there is no difference in the
rhythm: “ignorantes de la simbólica milenaria de sus propios gestos” (223). A rhythm that is alive has
movement and is changeable. The vertical mythical rhythm that the protagonist will experience and that
will increase the longer and the farther he travels into nature, is reflected first in the terrain:

Cuando saliéramos de la bruma opalescente que se iba verdiendo de alba, se iniciaría, para mí,
una suerte de Descubrimiento. . . . barranca . . . las montañas . . . Todo lo circundante dilataba sus

Arias posits: “Lo anterior permite al autor toda una superestructura de referencias culturales que enriquece y, a
veces, parece ornamentar la narración, pero que en realidad cumple la función de series de *leitmotiv* (motive
conductor) simbólicas, que comentan y estilizan el significado de los aconteceres. Ya desde el primer capítulo
aparecen estos elementos, que no sólo confieren profundidad a los hechos de la acción novelesca, sino que sirven
para conferirle unidad a todo el texto mediante significativas repeticiones. Señalemos al respecto el mito de Sísifo
‘subiendo y bajando la cuesta de los días, con la misma piedra al hombro’, . . . como reflejo de la propia existencia
del protagonista en la gran ciudad, para concluir . . . ‘Hoy terminaron las vacaciones de Sísifo,” and “El contrapunteo
con obras artísticas transcendentes es perenne, y como obras literarias dominantes están la *Odisea* de Homero y
el *Prometeo Unbound* (Prometeo libertado) de Shelley, presentes con sus significados del hombre en sus búsquedas
y luchas más vitales pero también imbricadas en los quehaceres de la trama. . . ” (12-13).
The protagonist describes his discovery using a capital letter, giving it an archetypal importance or gravitas. The narrator’s perception of the geographical forms that he is seeing for the first time widens and expands in relation to the contours of the land. As the forms of the earth seem to change before the narrator’s eyes, so does his view of himself in it; as the verticality is presented on a grander scale, the human becomes smaller by comparison. In the sentence that follows this citation, the author continues by saying, “Éramos seres ínfimos...” (79). Nature is magnified, begins to assume a main role in the novel and becomes mythified. At some points in the novel and as noted, when height and depth become indistinguishable, the verticality of Bachelard’s *Air and Dreams* will become overwhelming to the protagonist: “...se perdía la noción de la verticalidad, dentro de una suerte de desorientación, de mareo de los ojos. No se sabía ya lo que era del árbol y lo que era del reflejo. No se sabía ya si la claridad venía de abajo o de arriba, si el techo era de agua o el agua suelo; si las troneras abiertas en la hojarasca no eran pozos luminosos conseguidos en lo anegado” (148). This is vertical movement at its most dizzying where a certain amount of risk is implied; this obfuscation between above and below, ascent and descent, perhaps represents a metaphysical leap of faith which leads to the protagonist experiencing the sublime the very next day. Octavio Paz’s statement that “La experiencia poética, como la religiosa, es un salto mortal: un cambiar de naturaleza que es también un regresar a nuestra naturaleza original,” can help to elucidate the experience of the protagonist who undergoes a change that borders on both the religious and poetic (137). The narrator of *Los pasos perdidos* has taken the leap of faith and emerged on the other side. From this initial observation of ascent and descent which marks a noticeable change in the protagonist, namely the reviving of the energetic movement on a vertical axis as the protagonist travels, he will become more conscious of the rhythm or eurythmia of nature and consequently, his own rhythm will change:
At this junction, the protagonist notices the rhythm around him, the rhythm of the origin of myths that reflect a different space/reality. These rhythms mark a difference/difference, yet in order to distinguish the difference, a regular rhythm must also be noted.

Fueling this vertical movement is the protagonist’s interaction and interpretation of water, air, earth, and fire in his environment, with earth and water representing the lower aspects of the vertical axis and air representing the upper part of the axis. Fire is the dynamic link between earth and air: it is in-between. Getting to the heart of nature and these elements is the first step towards creating one’s own myth, which seemed to be the goal of the protagonist. While the protagonist of Los pasos perdidos was only somewhat successful in creating his own myth, a more fully autochthonous myth will be developed in Mascaró, el cazador americano.

2.5 Mascaró, el cazador americano: Deformed and Diffused Aerial Myths

Mascaró, el cazador americano gives us the creation of a new myth in actu: the myth is being formed simultaneously with the reading of the text. Macunaima gave us myth verbatim with episodes of the Makunaima cycle from Koch-Grünberg’s Roraima zum Orinoco; El reino de este mundo also presented mythological themes already formed and based on the work of Moreau de St. Méry; the protagonist of Los pasos perdidos went in search of myth. Mascaró, however, breaks ties with prior myths in order to create its own. Links with other myths are disassembled as soon as the reader reads a context that seems to dissolve. Mascaró, in many ways charged with the potentialities of its own history, breaks with preconceived mythological figures. It highlights the unifying act of (re)creation when the text is read and
recreated anew. There are occasional references in Mascaró to other books and other cultural constructions, yet these are deconstructed to the point of being almost unrecognizable. This deconstruction paves the way for a (re)construction of a new myth, in which the personal and the collective are entwined. Perhaps we can speak less of a deconstruction and more of a dissipation of certain myths and the weight that they carry; this dissipation allows the reader to travel more freely with the caravan without being weighed down by pre-conceived notions. The third page of the novel has airy references that evoke a dissipation of forms:

La arena que levanta el viento lo vela y aun lo borra y hasta lo remonta por el aire. Después se despega de la Punta, vira, se hincha y, por fin, se convierte en una ciudad que crece a cada paso. . . . Camina envuelto en arena, salpicado de espuma, sacudido por el viento, encogido en la cavidad de su cuerpo. La línea movediza de las olas lo despista, lo adormece. Se agacha y recoge un caracol blanqueado por el sol y lo arroja al mar con un grito. El grito no sale de su boca sino algo más adelante y se aplasta contra el viento. (3)

Eventually Arenales (the town) comes into view, eventually forms can be determined. On the other hand, these forms are continuously changing; movement is a constant in Mascaró and so is transformation when old forms dissipate as evidenced by the images of sand, spray, wind, the moving line of the waves. Conti sheds any added weight from other references that are charged with the weight of history and tradition by breaking them down. Oreste is not the Orestes of Greek myth although the name is evocative of the Greek character. Solsona, whose name conjures the image of the sun, is associated with Basilio Argimón, a man who invented a contraption that allows him to fly. The combination of Solsona and Basilio Argimón evoke the myth of Icarus and Daedalus, but certain details are absent and this fact allows a (re)filling of the myth with new details and new contexts (72). Myths are evoked, dissipated and what is left is a hollowness, a lightness that is then filled by the author. In Los pasos perdidos, there was the inverse situation of empty signifiers, which leaves a space allowing them to be filled or replaced, thus creating a semiotic archetype. In Mascaró, incomplete signifiers or signifieds that bear resemblance to others
without ever mirroring them, are emptied of meaning and, to make a spatial comparison, become much like the desert and the ocean, empty spaces that have yet to be occupied by the machinations of the imagination. In the other novels, the mythical tropes and figures that were used were still complete on a one-to-one basis, although the links between references and the actual myths become more tenuous chronologically and through this corpus. By the time of Mascaró, there are bare traces left of myth, much like el Circo de Scarpa and the Príncipe who comes along not so much to revive this old circus, but rather to make a new one: Conti is not attempting to revive old myths, he is creating a new one out of the ghosts of the old.

The dissipation occurs not only on a mythological level, but also on a geographical one because towns and regions in Argentina become unrecognizable and therefore can be imbued with myth. Conti creates mythical beginnings for some of the fictional towns, like Arenales. Yet, not all the towns are necessarily fictional – as delineated in chapter one. In addition to both the political importance of these towns, they perhaps bear a personal significance for Conti from when he travelled to Córdoba to see a performance that was based on events and circumstances in Tucumán. Conti fictionalizes and mythifies the performance and its troupe by magnifying it and turning art into ritual. In the Argentinean magazine Crisis, published in 1975, Conti describes his experience with a theatre troupe:

Meses antes, a propósito de otro viaje a Córdoba, había oído hablar del proyecto. Los muchachos ya habían estado en Tucumán y tenían todo el material, incluso estaban trabajando sobre él.

Entonces me pregunté, y hasta el momento en que empieza a hablar Julio me preguntaba todavía cómo diablos iban a hacer para darle forma teatral. . . .La respuesta comenzaba a desplegarse ante mis ojos y de alguna manera salía de mí mismo, pues a lo largo de hora y media yo me sentí surco

---

96 The degeography and transculturation present in the other novels is not necessary here since in Mascaró everything has lost its “references,” the only constant is a coming and going, although we still see the fusion of different elements coming together, particularly with regard to music. For example, in the port of Arenales is a band that plays “Polca, marote, zamba, chotis, valseado, pachanga, cositas de retozo como Corazón de canela o Adiós Mariquita linda” (3).
y caña, melaza, miseria, Tucumán. El proyecto nació un año atrás cuando el grupo, en su búsqueda de un teatro-documento, se planteó la posibilidad de investigar la realidad tucumana. Se trataba, fieles a la línea que se habían trazado desde un comienzo, de relevar rigurosamente una realidad determinada, analizarla, criticarla, cuestionarla, descubrir sus contradicciones, para luego volcarla en un lenguaje teatral adecuado y proponerla a los protagonistas de la historia: el pueblo. Estas ya no son mis palabras sino que copio una nota de Los principios que reproduce a su vez una declaración del grupo LTL. Yo también estoy llegando a la nota colectiva... El grupo LTL, que tiene bastante de circo vagabundo, se instaló al final del camino, es decir, en Tucma que en quechua quiere decir justamente “el fin del camino”... (Haroldo Conti: alias Mascaró, alias la vida 157)97

Conti replicates in Mascaró the landscape and the hardship of Tucumán, which were exhibited in the performance that he had seen. The circus troupe in the novel are the “performers” from the theatre that will use art in an attempt to communicate a story of the people and for the people. Through the nebulous cloud of sand and sea spray, the city begins to take shape as we see through diffuse figures that give us clues to explain why such a diffuse landscape was depicted in the novel with various towns scattered in the backdrop.

While the towns have political significance in both a subversive and transcendent sense (along with becoming spaces for transformation), the desert and the ocean take on a significance of their own that is more imaginative than political, although one does not need to preclude the other. The ocean and desert are open spaces that provide ample room for new myths to be created. Not merely the backdrop of Mascaró, el cazador americano, but rather much like in Los pasos perdidos, nature plays a central and defining role; the desert and the ocean are not only traversed by the characters, the movement in these areas causes profound changes within the psyche. Ottmar Ette explains most eloquently the effect the

97 Taken from Haroldo Conti: alias Mascaró, alias la vida. The original text appeared in Crisis n. 21, Buenos Aires, in January, 1975, pp. 48-50.
desert and the ocean have on those who traverse them, in addition to explaining how the desert and the ocean mirror each other:

Muchos escritores europeos y americanos se sirven de los paisajes desérticos para situar la acción de sus novelas, narraciones y relatos de viajes. Y son precisamente los autores que podríamos llamar posmodernos los que prefieren estas áridas formaciones paisajísticas. Donde debiera haber plenitud aparece aridez y vacío. Un vacío que naturalmente no sólo lleva al individuo a confrontarse consigo mismo, intensificando así el análisis de los procesos individuales de formación de la identidad, sino que exige construcciones de identidad en el ámbito de lo colectivo, con lo que ofrece nuevos planos de proyección – también para nuevos sueños americanos. . . . La conjunción de infinitud, de un espacio casi ilimitado, y (aparentemente) despoblado, que se ofrece a la mirada del individuo lleva a comparar directamente la estepa y el desierto con la superficie del océano. Los dos conmueven de repente el alma del hombre, se convierten en paisajes del alma que se ofrecen a los ojos del lector. (101-102)

In Mascaró, we see a literary example of Ottmar Ette’s analysis: the empty space of the desert and the ocean gives room for the creation of new “identities” with regard to oneself by “confronting” the self and also by locating oneself within a “collectivity.” In Mascaró, the characters, whether on the water or in the desert, accomplish precisely this; they create new identities based on latent talents, memories, hopes, and dreams. To coincide with this change in identity, the characters will also change their name since the open space of the desert and the ocean can empty both signifier and signified of their contents thereby reconstructing significations. In the novel Conti writes, “El mar bulle en las sombras, más cerca, más lejos. Se pierden las referencias”; and “Todo el mar es misterio resonante… nada hay a espaldas de él, nada hay delante” (4, 20). The expanse of the sea and of the desert causes one to “lose references” and in this novel, words, myths, and stories also lose their references since they are vacuous spaces. In this empty

---

98 Ette explains that the “plenitud” that was associated with the desert changes to “la aridez y al despoblamiento” in the second half of the twentieth century (101). The circus, as mentioned in chapter 1 citing Morello-Frosch, becomes the “antidote” to the “aridez” and “despoblamiento.”
space, new myths are created and the protagonists are creating them and themselves in the process. Oreste, the vagabond, becomes first Tesero, the animal mimicker, and then becomes a bird. Maruca, the hotel owner becomes Sonia, the exotic dancer, to name just two of these transformations. This is an interior change on the vertical axis, a profound inner movement that occurs while travelling and is projected outward towards the empty space—sometimes quite literally as many of the towns they visit are “despoblados.” It is not only the space and movement, but also the dynamic within the collectivity that spark this change, making the troupe dangerous and subversive because of its potential to bring about change.

Underlying the voyages undertaken in this novel and the transformations these voyages facilitate, is the character Cafuné. I propose to read him as a palimpsest since the novel begins with a scene of him playing the flute, yet later he appears nowhere else in the text, rather he literally disappears. He doesn’t travel with Oreste neither on the boat nor on the carromato in the desert, yet he is always present in some way: he is evoked in the flute-playing of the protagonist, or his essence is present in the wind, or in the bracelet/amulet of caracoles that he had given to the protagonist which he shakes every so often. In other words, Cafuné travels everywhere as essence without ever having left. He is not only a mythical figure, but he sets the tone for myth as the embodiment of it. Cafuné means the caressing of the hair, a word used in Brazil, possibly of African origin, hinting at a possible reference to Brazil or even to Africa as precursor.⁹⁹ Cafuné never caresses anyone’s hair yet his own hair is mentioned on several occasions: “Una vincha de goma le sujet a el pelo, gris, cerdoso, que flota por detrás de su cabeza” (3-4); “Cafuné marcha a la cabeza con la melena revuelta” (5). This last example seems to evoke the meaning of Cafuné and this action occurs after the text states, “Todo sucede en acuerdo, según parece” (5), meaning that the actions correspond with what is expected, in this case, with the name. Yet, Cafuné is capable of

---

⁹⁹ Cafuné, a term used in Brasil of quimbundo (an Angolan language) origin, means according to the Dicionário Contemporâneo de Português: “Ato de acariciar levemente a cabeça de alguém para fazê-lo dormir.”
metamorphosis and it is one of the ways that Cafuné is a “precursor” to the transformations of the other characters in the novel. Cafuné is described as pájaro, pez, centauro, precursor who plays the flauta, is in the viento, and gives the protagonist a bracelet/amulet of caracoles. Perhaps Cafuné is meant to represent that which is indigenous, ambiguous, and polyvalent, which serves as the foundation for all of Latin America. What is clear is that, as mentioned elsewhere and according to Eliade, anything that is other than itself is sacred; Cafuné is not only the sacred, he is the sacred essence that the protagonist travels with wherever he goes.

Historically, mythological notions had been projected upon Argentina, on the geography and the indigenous people. In Mascaró, rather than projecting preconceived notions and myths, the caravan, by travelling from town to town and creating a heterogeneous space as was described in the last chapter, projects nothing, imposes nothing – rather it invites and it is a call to creation. Even the name of the boat, Mañana, evokes an atmosphere of possibility. Barco and carromato, carromato and barco: interchangeable since the author compares the desert with the sea throughout the novel. The space, be it ocean or desert, is full of potentiality where the myth has yet to be written. It is a myth in motion, myth in medias res and always in medias res, always unfolding because it is always moving. While we can never fully escape pre-conceived notions of any sort since we all bring our experiences and our thoughts to our comprehension of a book, Mascaró, with its enveloping empty space, asks the reader to leave these behind and participate in the fictional circus with one of the most obvious functions, that of being a spectator. In a way, a reader is a spectator of the events that unfold in a novel. Yet, spectators of the circus, eventually become participants in a variety of different ways: they donate to the circus which allows the circus to prolong its circuit, they animate the circus with their applause of approbation or their
reactions of shock and disbelief when the circus members break from the expected. In the same way as journey and myth change the perception of the expected, shock and jar the imagination and question old paradigms, the moving circus changes preconceived notions of what is possible and what is impossible. The spectators are thrust into the realm of imagination since the sights that are seen transgress concrete, quotidian realities. This rupture that smacks of a divine irreverence blurs the distinction between self and community: the individual acts as part of a whole, each individual perceiving each act in a unique way yet still part of a unified audience. The audience’s reaction becomes part of the spectacle in a reciprocal dialogue that mimics the self/social dynamic inherent in myth.

As we move towards a more active spectrum of spectator participation, the next role is that of imitator. As the circus heads from town to town, some of the townsfolk begin to imitate its acts, envisioning themselves as performers. We have moved past shock and deeper into the realm of imagination where the townspeople dare to dream themselves beyond their daily role: they dream of possibilities. Further along the spectrum, the spectator becomes a part of the circus itself; (s)he makes a place for her/himself by taking a latent quality within themself and magnifying it, as myths are wont to do (myths magnify the quotidian), becoming a myth of themselves. They travel with the circus sharing their personal myth with others, creating thus a community of mythical figures that renews itself and its communal myth in every town where they set up their tents. This participation is acted out on three different levels: 1) in the plot of the novel itself 2) in the hermeneutics of the novel 3) in reality. As has already been mentioned, the characters themselves participate in the circus by joining it and becoming a mythical version of themselves. On a second level, the readers are asked to reimagine themselves, since they too are spectators of the circus. They have been shocked and awed on a literary level and a mythical
one. The readers are invited to dig deeper past this shock and awe to create their own myth as they simultaneously participate in the creation of the myth on the page.101

On yet a third level, the readers are asked to use this reimagining of themselves in order to create change in the world around them. Haroldo Conti had written this novel after viewing a theatre piece in Córdoba about the political and economic situation in Tucumán. Conti found himself participating in the spectacle more than the usual spectator does. Philosophical discussion about the reader/author dialectic aside, perhaps it could be said that Conti in this novel is directly advocating for community participation in the events in Argentina, or, at the very least, this is how he (re)imagined himself trying to replicate the profound effect the artistic performance piece had on him as part of a call to artistic transformation.102

Making a myth out of oneself by magnifying the self is empowering in regimes where one is made to feel smaller, insignificant, and powerless. In the novel, Oreste is called Cero when he is brought to a prison to be tortured. The imprisonment and torture begin and continue with a dehumanization of the person, who is made to feel and perceive him or herself as less than insignificant so that (s)he cannot realize his/her own power. In a way, regimes demythify (not in the sense of demystify, or clarify), they make the individual smaller and inhibit him/her. They attempt to restrict the movement on the vertical axis between subversion and transcendence, sometimes successfully and sometimes not. One way of accomplishing this is to confine someone physically prohibiting movement, particularly forms of movement that transgress boundaries, such as voyage. By confining someone to a small space and

101 Ottmar Ette affirms that "Leer es también una forma de viajar" (30), and "El juego entre el viaje y la lectura, entre el volar y el sobrevolar, se presenta rico en relaciones y plagado de guiños. Dicho juego nos conduce de nuevo a la materialidad de los signos gráficos sobre la página, signos que el lector debe recorrer con un movimiento lineal de los ojos. El movimiento que se produce es análogo, en su linealidad, a los movimientos que llevó a cabo la mano del escritor y a los del cuerpo del viajero" (31).
102 Hugo de Marinis explains Conti’s shift toward the collective: “El sino marginal y delictivo de este personaje [Boga] podría interpretarse como una prolongación del sentimiento de frustración emanado del fracaso colectivo del segundo gobierno peronista (1952-1955), que implicó consecuencias desfavorables para las mayorías populares y democráticas (Benasso 26). En los años que las anteriores novelas de Conti aparecieron publicadas existía el problema de la marginación . . . En tiempos de Mascaro, la cooperación colectiva para un fin determinado y justo se observa en muchos sitios e instancias del entorno como algo factible” (305).
restricting physical, horizontal movement, the vertical internal motion has fewer access points and fewer means of expression. This does not mean vertical movement is altogether impossible: there are countless survivors of horrible cruelty (Holocaust, Holodomor, among countless, senseless examples) who kept their humanity intact, whose vertical internal movement was able to sustain them. While in prison, it is the imagination of the protagonist, particularly in his dreaming mind, which gives him a sense of solace: “Oreste sueña unas veces que actúa en una gran función a beneficio, en un pabellón de dos puntas a franjas de colores que resplandece con una luz jubilosa, la cual inflama los cuerpos, los despoja de todo peso y materia, los reviste de una alegría que no hay poder en la Tierra capaz de arrebatársela” (94). It is in his imagination where the protagonist finds freedom and peace. He temporarily transcends his captivity in his dreams, and freed from the weight of bondage and misery is a fierce resistance in a part of his psyche against the dehumanization that he is subject to in his waking life. These flights of imagination and fancy, while seemingly trite and aerie on the surface, on a deeper level are the wellsprings of hope that keep people alive and human.

These flights of imagination are possibly a universal image of transcendence and freedom. Gaston Bachelard states that the dream of flight is “very frequent, very common, and almost always very clear” (22). The movement of flying produces varied effects in the novel and these affects all serve to reinforce the idea of freedom and expansion, particularly stemming from the idea that these can originate within the creative forces in the imagination to produce physical and concrete external changes in the world around them. To analyze the function of the trope of flight in the novel, the following idea from Gaston Bachelard proves to be elucidating: “While examining the dream of flight, we will find still more evidence that a psychology of the imagination cannot be developed using static forms. It must be based on forms that are in the process of being deformed, and a great deal of importance must be placed on the dynamic principles of deformation” (Air and Dreams 21). The movement and motion of flying is then a deforming practice that partially explains the dissolved myths that were mentioned earlier. The aerial aspect is
reinforced by references to a levity that deforms: “Cafuné sopla y sopla la flautilla de hueso. Es un chorro
de aire. . . .”; “Está en el aire, livianito. . . .”; “Vida sin peso” (2-3). Throughout the novel, this sentiment
of a deforming, or perhaps a diffusing levity, evokes a transcendence that is within reach of the
protagonists, allowing them the space to create new forms and new aerial myths. The history of the
characters is hardly mentioned. According to Bachelard, “Every aerial image is essentially a future with a
vector for breaking into flight” and this would mean that the focus of the aerial protagonists is the future,
which, in essence, has yet to be formed (21). This idea of “future” is strengthened by the name of the
boat, the Mañana. The boat itself “floats” or “glides” through the water, verbs that are also used to
describe aerial actions. As mentioned earlier, the forms of sea and sky can become confused, in which
case the boat can appear to be sailing in the sky.103

The act of flying in the imagination is what is key here; not as simplistic metaphor but as an
experience felt in dreams and experienced as aspiration, linking physical sensations, vertical aspirations,
profound respiration and textual representation.104 According to Bachelard, we feel flight in dreams; the
sensation of flight is real even if there is no actual physical flight when “A clear awareness of being able
to fly develops in the dreamer’s soul” (20). This sensation progresses to an aspiration of ascension, of
upward movement of the imagination. Flights of the imagination are physically manifested throughout
the novel as exemplified by Oreste, the Príncipe, and Basilio Argimón, all of whom spend much time in
the novel attempting and/or appearing to fly and actually flying. Each character demonstrates a different
method of flying. In Ad Astra, a short story written by Conti before he wrote Mascaró, el cazador

103 In addition, Gaston Bachelard posits: “The principle of continuity in the dynamic images of water and air is none
other than oneiric flight” (42).
104 In Air and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Movement, Bachelard explains the psychology of oneiric flight
from direct dreaming experience: “Anyone who has had this experience will recognize that the dominant oneiric
impression is one of a really substantial lightness involving the whole being, a lightness in-itself that has no cause of
which the dreamer is aware. Often the dreamer is filled with wonder, as if he had suddenly been given a gift. Only
the slightest impulse is needed to activate this lightness that pervades his whole being. It is easy, and very simple:
striking the heel lightly on the ground gives us the impression of being set free. This slight movement seems to free
a potential for mobility in us that we had never known, but that our dreams revealed” (28). With regard to metaphor,
see page fifty-five in Air and Dreams.
**americano**, Basilio Argimón is the protagonist who experiences a modicum of success trying to fly only to come crashing back down to earth, falling on a hotel. In Mascaró, the figure of Basilio reappears as a secondary character who, this time, flies successfully. At some point the Príncipe will also attempt to fly via mechanical contraptions, like Basilio, yet it is more of his inspiration of wanting to fly that resonates with this Bachelardian desire to fly in a reader since “the dream . . . creates the soaring spirit before creating the bird” (*Air and Dreams* 73). In the novel, the desire for freedom and for transcendence precedes a physical manifestation of flight and is accompanied by a “lightening” of a load, whether as the weight of the past or the weight of material things. Oreste does “fly” in the circus: his talent is the imitation of animals, particularly birds. He soars above the audience imitating a bird in flight much to the delight and awe of the spectators.105 His “flight” in turn, inspires others. It is this ascending flight of inspiration that is also an act of subversion: the change it provokes in others, the change the circus provokes in others, will cause the *rurales* to hunt the circus down. Yet of all of the members of the circus, the one who is taken is Oreste, interestingly enough, while in the middle of flight. Bachelard relates ascending to Nietzsche’s idea of the *übermensch*, the overman or the superman.106 In his ascension, Oreste makes himself far more dangerous than the rest of the circus (the *rurales* are also after Basilio), perhaps unwittingly, as he edges ever closer to the status of *übermensch*, and farther away from the ground that represents stability, solidity, and the status quo. These flying figures are also dangerous for being interstitial figures: they move between earth and sky, from self to community, from human to animal. There is another sense of liminality that we can attribute to these figures: they are in between

105 The flight or imitation is reminiscent of an episode in *Tristes Tropiques* when a chief begins imitating a bird: “And suddenly I realized what it was we were hearing: Taperahi was performing a play, or to be more accurate, an operetta. . . . The play was a farce, and its hero the *japim* bird. . . . The plot centered round the adventures of the *japim* which, after being at first threatened by the other animals, tricked them in a variety of ways and eventually got the better of them. . . . As the night wore on, it became clear that poetic creation was accompanied by a loss of consciousness and that the performer was being subordinated to his characters. His different voices became foreign to him; each acquired such a distinctive nature that it was hard to believe they were all coming from the same person” (Lévi-Strauss 359-360).

106 “To one who triumphs over weight, to the superman, will be given a super-nature—that very nature that is imagined by an aerial psyche” (Bachelard, *Water and Dreams* 158).
logic and dreams. According to Gaston Bachelard, “To see birds of flesh and feathers fly, the dreamer must climb back up toward day and assume once more his human, clear, logical thoughts. But if the clarity is too great, the spirits of sleep will disappear” (73). In order for the artifices of the flying figures to become real, a human desire for freedom and transcendence needs to be the fertile ground for these artifices or images to “take flight.” This “flight” occurs, as mentioned, on the border of logic and dreams: the mind both imagines and rationalizes the motion creating a twilight stage between night and day. This in-between space becomes a space of possibilities making it all the more dangerous for the status quo. The title character, Mascaró does not attempt to fly, vertically anyway, as he is far more grounded than the Príncipe and Oreste. One can say that he is the grounded counterpart of the trio. What he lacks in altitude, he makes up for in speed as he “flies” like the wind on his horse, being a jinete. He is pure action, dynamic movement across the desert. Conti wanted to mix the creative act along with acts not just in the imaginative realm, but also in real life. Mascaró, the protagonist, ties the creative, imaginative forces that are embodied by Oreste and the Príncipe by being their earthly manifestation yet still very much a transcendental aerial figure of energy symbolizing freedom.

2.6 Conclusion: While myth and history are linked and intertwined with one another, since myth takes its cues from reality and reality in part becomes defined by its myths, there is an element of repetition in myth (with a difference), yet history is not inevitable (as described in The Many-Headed Hydra by Linebaugh and Rediker and Routes by Clifford). In Macunaima and Los pasos perdidos, Mário de Andrade and Alejo Carpentier respectively, present contemporary issues and a contemporary sensibility. Through degeographization, these novels break down both linear and cyclical thinking as incomplete. History is a potentiality of many factors, components, variables and most of all, movement. Macunaima and Los pasos perdidos begin to give us a glimpse of a new sensibility of historical potentiality and movement that will begin to gain more traction in the 1980s. In El reino de este mundo, contemporary history is not the
focus, but rather the past is reinterpreted using a contemporary lens of a rhythmic cycle of difference.

Subversion and transcendence, potentialities in *Macunaíma* and *Los pasos perdidos*, gain more force in *El reino de este mundo* as potentialities become the openings necessary for revolution. In *Mascaró*, there is a vague history and plenty of open space giving the illusion or possibility of almost limitless potentiality. The idea that history is not inevitable is shown best at the end of the novel when the protagonist heads for the open water, like in the past, except that this time, there is nothing except for *Mañana*. 
Chapter 3: The Traveling Trickster and Mobile Memories

The Trickster is a subversive and transcendent figure in as many ways as (s)he is polyvalent. The ubiquity of the Trickster figure in myths and folklore throughout the world, from early civilizations until the present time, points to the necessity of a figure that embodies dynamic movement and change, and questions the static structures from their very foundation. Paul Radin, in his seminal work about the Trickster, explains that:

Few myths have so wide a distribution as the one, known by the name of *The Trickster*, which we are presenting here. For few can we so confidently assert that they belong to the oldest expressions of mankind. . . . We encounter it among the ancient Greeks, the Chinese, the Japanese and in the Semitic world. Many of the Trickster’s traits were perpetuated in the figure of the mediaeval jester, and have survived right up to the present day in the Punch-and-Judy plays and in the clown. (xxiii)

In between myth and semiotics, the Trickster is the interstitial mythical and semiotic figure that moves between subversion and transcendence. (S)he transgresses different borders that identify things as such, which is why Trickster is the ultimate “destroyer and creator” (Radin 169); (s)he moves everything, whether into existence or out of it, by shifting the boundaries that are necessary to identify or classify an entity. In a way, a modern conception of the Trickster can imply that (s)he is both poet and poetry in motion, by being both a creator of language, the mechanics of language and the subject of language. An organic entity, not subject to rules and paradigms, (s)he is not just outside or above these, but rather both within and without, constantly moving, shifting, morphing, changing, and transforming. The Trickster figure is not just ambiguous or a point of ambiguity, but rather contains a multitude of (un)likely possibilities and in this way, reminds us of the nature of things: of the present as an eternal becoming, full of potentialities. Trickster awakens us to these possibilities mediating between nature and humans, whether (s)he is forced by circumstances or by volition. Defining the Trickster bears some of the intricacies of the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle which roughly states that if we know the location of
an electron, we cannot be sure of its velocity and vice versa; with regard to the Trickster figure, in a metaphorical comparison, if we pinpoint one aspect of the Trickster, we tend to lose sight of the others. But then again, “as soon as things are known and handled, fitted into the primitive cosmos, they lose all power to upset the order of things” (Eliade, Patterns 16). Irrespective of the complexities of trying to define the Trickster as a totality, different aspects of the multifaceted Trickster will be analyzed separately with the prior aviso that all of these aspects function as a whole. First and foremost, Paul Radin provides these descriptions in The Trickster:

Trickster is at one and the same time creator and destroyer. . . . (xxiii)

Basically he possesses no well-defined and fixed form. . . .(xxiv)

All the incidents connected with the transformation of the amorphous figure of Trickster as well as those that lead unconsciously to the creation of the new psychical orientation and environment, naturally belong to the original Trickster cycle. (168)

The symbol which Trickster embodies is not a static one. It contains within itself the promise of differentiation, the promise of god and man. For this reason every generation occupies itself with interpreting Trickster anew. No generation understands him fully but no generation can do without him. Each had to include him . . . despite the fact that it realized that he did not fit properly into any of them, for he represents not only the undifferentiated and distant past, but likewise the undifferentiated present within every individual. . . . And so he became and remained everything to every man- god, animal, human being, hero, buffoon. . . .(168-169)

I’d like to underline Radin’s ideas that the Trickster is neither “static” nor does (s)he possess a “well-defined form.” In contrast, Lévi-Strauss in Structural Anthropology places the Trickster in between two oppositions as mediator:

The trickster of American mythology has remained so far a problematic figure. Why is it that throughout North America his role is assigned practically everywhere to either coyote or raven? If we keep in mind that mythical thought always progresses from the awareness of oppositions toward their resolution, the reason for these choices becomes clearer. We need only assume that
two opposite terms with no intermediary always tend to be replaced by two equivalent terms which admit of a third one as a mediator; (224)

. . . the trickster is a mediator. Since his mediating function occupies a position halfway between two polar terms, he must retain something of that duality-namely an ambiguous and equivocal character. (226)

Lévi-Strauss provides the example of the carrion eater coyote as an “intermediary between herbivorous and carnivorous” (225), which he then compares to the mist as an entity between “Sky and Earth” (225). In these examples, the Trickster finds himself in-between two extremes, without belonging to one or the other. Whereas for Lévi-Strauss, the Trickster occupies a specific place of “in-between” as an interstitial figure, in my analyses of the Trickster, I follow more Radin’s conceptualization, focusing on movement itself as part of its ontological essence since the Trickster figure moves among, in-between, inside and outside different systemic configurations.

There are various alternate conceptions of the Trickster as envisioned by different theoreticians. The following examples are simplified for brevity’s sake: for Lewis Hyde, one of the manifestations of the Trickster figure is that of an artus worker, or joint-worker who rearticulates and makes joints moveable and flexible as a metaphor (252-264). For C. W. Spinks, the Trickster is an artist with regard to language (184-187) and a “cultural [and perhaps semiotic] vortex” (Semiosis 177). He also delineates the idea of a T point (Trickster point) or a point of “transition” from “Object reference” to “Interpretant forming,” and the “transcending ratio” between the potentiality of a sign and its becoming (Semiosis 199-202). Spinks also explains that within the Peircean semiotic triads, “the major semiotic function of Trickster is a matter of Firstness” or a sign in its “becoming” or potential stage, although Trickster functions and interacts at all stages of a semiotic system (Semiosis 192-201). According to Gerald Vizenor, “Freedom is a sign, and the trickster is chance and freedom in a comic sign; comic freedom is a ‘doing,’ not an essence, not a museum being, or an aesthetic presence” (285). These depictions and conceptions of the Trickster all imply a sense of motion and movement (and transcendence), and it is this peripatetic nature of the Trickster figure
which makes it inherently resistant to definition and also allows for these different notions of the Trickster to be applicable to the Trickster figure. Barbara Babcock-Adams adds: “For centuries he has, in his various incarnations, run, flown, galloped, and most recently motorcycled through the literary imagination and much of the globe” (158). The Trickster is the (con)summate traveler, capable of movement in all directions since Trickster is movement incarnate. When outside structures are imposed, the Trickster moves and therefore is not relegated to subverting one particular paradigm: (s)he subverts them all, including definition itself.

The Trickster, being both a mythological and semiotic entity, is being analyzed between these fields. As a **mythological figure**, the Trickster is the sacred and the profane, the sublime and the perverse. The Trickster often serves as an intermediary between the gods and man, acting as a messenger of the gods. Mircea Eliade explains in *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, the union of the sacred and profane as a union between god and the world:

> This coming-together of sacred and profane really produces a kind of breakthrough of the various levels of existence. It is implied in every hierophany whatever, for every hierophany shows, makes manifest, the coexistence of contradictory essences: sacred and profane, spirit and matter, eternal and non-eternal, and so on. . . . God is free to manifest himself under any form- even that of stone or wood. . . . the sacred may be seen under any sort of form, even the most alien. (29)

The Trickster then is an intermediary between the sacred and profane, between God and man, and can be interpreted as being from both realms, and thus traversing them, often with an unexpected fluidity, Trickster is hierophany. As to who can be deemed a Trickster, there are many mythological traditions that include this figure, yet depending on the critic or theoretician, opinions vary as to which figures may be considered part of the Trickster tradition. Among some of the most prevalent Trickster figures are: hare, monkey, Hermes, Prometheus, twins, Papa Legba, Anansi, fox, and raven. The confusion as to which characters can be considered a Trickster is perhaps the crux of the Trickster question; Tricksters by nature defy and befuddle their own categorizations, as Lewis Hyde states: “. . . he [Trickster] is the archetype who
attacks all archetypes” (14). In between mythology and semiotics, Trickster is the gateway for communication between the divine and man, because Trickster facilitates direct communication with the divine. Hermes, the winged messenger and Papa Legba, god of the crossroads (as is Hermes), open the road providing a space for communication to take place (Hyde 260-261). The Trickster also acts as translator, with the word translator, which means to “carry across” being particularly appropriate; it is the Trickster that carries messages across, to and from the divine and man, sometimes speaking in tongues, sometimes creating his own language, and sometimes as bringer and provider of language.

Just as in mythology, the depiction and interpretation of Trickster as a semiotic figure are highly dependent upon the persons stating their case. Some of the examples mentioned above that demonstrate the moving quality of Trickster can also apply to his/her semiotic function. For example: according to Vizenor, the Trickster is a sign that “does”; as stated previously, C.W. Spinks discusses the Trickster as Firstness in a semiotic triad and also coins the term T point or Trickster point, the point of ambiguity; Lewis Hyde posits the Trickster as the hinge of articulation both in terms of movement and linguistics (252-264). The Trickster can be seen as the line between signified and signifier, playing right at the razor’s edge of meaning. (S)he is Derrida’s difference/differance, the liminal figure that with a slight twist, changes everything from the slip that sometimes is barely perceptible. According to Gerald Vizenor, “the trickster is opposed by silence and isolation” and also “The trickster is a communal sign, never isolation; a concordance of narrative voices” (284). One of the defining characteristics of Trickster is that (s)he speaks, even when it is not appropriate, breaking social and linguistic conventions if needed in order to bring about change, since oftentimes, the Trickster’s speech has a generative/destructive power that can create simply by uttering things into existence, and (s)he destroys them by similar means. (S)he also reflects the human capacity for creating meaning and thus creating existence by using words. Trickster speaks the unexpected at unforeseen times and situations, causing him/her to often say what according to convention should not be said. This unexpected speech act becomes subversive when Trickster speaks
what cannot be said when authoritative paradigms, rules, and conventions attempt to create an atmosphere of silence: Trickster will find a way through in order to communicate his message.

Trickster can be viewed as not just as a means of transmission and translation, but also as the act of transmission itself; (s)he moves freely among signifier/signified/interpretant, shifting their borders and even redefining their function within the production of the sign and within semiotics. If the word sign is understood in Saussurean terms as a signifier and signified, can the Trickster, whose signifier and signified change so radically and who causes changes amongst these terms, truly ever be a sign? How stable must the link between signifier and signified be in order for a sign to be deemed so? How could the Trickster be capable of his/her semiotic trickery if it were a stable sign? Or does a sign operate from within the system whereas Trickster proceeds to move fluidly outside the system as well? Does the Trickster need to be inside the system in order to find its way outside the system? Is this part of his/her paradoxical semiotic function/game? I don’t pretend to know the answer; I’m not even sure if one exists because Trickster always seems to “slip the trap,” particularly linguistic ones. Again, I remit to the Uncertainty Principle, the closer we get to one aspect of the Trickster, the farther we get from another. Perhaps, a comparison can be drawn to Campbell’s definition of myth, or rather his idea that there can never be a “final system for the interpretation of myths,” presented in the part of the epilogue aptly entitled “The Shapeshifter.” Similarly, together with Campbell, I don’t believe there can ever be a final definition or interpretation of Trickster; the minute the attempt is made, (s)he has already morphed into something else (329).

As mentioned, Trickster can be interpreted as pure movement and change as (s)he moves among definitions, among worlds and words, as a variable traveler. Inversely, a traveler can take on Trickster-like characteristics by becoming the “in-between” figure between worlds, nations, and borders of any

---

107 The phrase is borrowed from chapter 9, “Hermes Slips the Trap,” in Lewis Hyde’s Trickster Makes This World: Mischief, Myth and Art.
kind, be they cultural, linguistic, and/or political. According to Mary W. Helms, the traveler can be viewed as sacred or supernatural by moving to and from and through foreign lands (12-13, 82). Because of the distance, there is much unknown about lands that are foreign and this being the case, both benefic and malefic attributes are associated with said lands; even when benefic, these places may be viewed as dangerous because the knowledge and forms of living may potentially upset the ideological structures of other places (50-51). Therefore, anyone who travels to unknown regions and territories also becomes dangerous and yet revered because (s)he is now in possession of knowledge from distant lands; with this powerful knowledge, a traveler engenders curiosity, fear, wonder, and animosity (Helms 79, 82). During his/her journey, the traveler comes into contact with different forms of communication and oftentimes becomes a translator among different peoples. Much like the Trickster and the messenger gods who travel between the divine and human (earthly realm), travelers move between different realms and themselves become the gateway of communications: the in-between, the hinge between cultures. Written language especially has a touch of the mystical about it, and was seen as a “magical talent” (Helms 12). However, the traveler is not just a go-between with regard to language, rather, the traveler engages with different kinds of knowledge: geographical, cultural, personal, political, religious, among many others. 108 Having knowledge of different systems, the traveler can negotiate among different places and is also capable of transmitting this knowledge of the Other to another Other. Transmitting this knowledge can either make the traveler a powerful person in society or forces the traveler to be cast out of society for being a threat or a danger. Another danger in being the traveler is that by having multiple systems through which to interpret the world and the universe, one is more likely to upend the status quo by questioning it and comparing it to that of others. Lewis Hyde states with regard to the social mechanism of shame: “The claim is always made that aidos is inborn in the noble soul, but the traveler who has visited the groves of foreign gods and felt no inhibitory awe soon wonders if that is really so” (162). The traveler

108 For specific examples, see pages 68-76 in Helms’ Ulysses’ Sail.
is then dangerous because (s)he may cease to revere authority figures and authoritative structures
designed to maintain arrangements of power. On the other hand, the world becomes fluid when the
traveler sees with new eyes and communicates with new speech and shares these perspectives with
others.

Travel is also a requirement for Joseph Campbell’s hero figure in myth, which in certain aspects
bears resemblance to the Trickster. The Trickster has been described as either as a culture hero or an
anti-hero, and/or both. The anti-hero depiction is usually used when the Trickster is viewed through a
Western lens. Campbell’s hero and the Trickster figure seem to coincide at certain points and have in
common a cross-connection between the divine and non-divine, a connection that is established through
travel. Campbell’s hero must leave the threshold and all that is familiar in order to travel on a path that
will lead to apotheosis. The threshold as described by Campbell is similar to the depictions offered by
Helms with regard to different cultures’ conception of what lies within and beyond the threshold: “The
regions of the unknown (desert, jungle, deep sea, alien land, etc.) are free fields for the projection of
unconscious content. Incestuous libido and patricidal desrudo are thence reflected back against the
individual and his society in forms suggesting threats of violence and fancied dangerous delight-not only
as ogres but also as sirens of mysteriously seductive, nostalgic beauty” (Campbell 65). Travelers were
regarded as heroes, according to Helms, because of the risks that travel involved (238). In Campbell’s
sequence of events, after achieving apotheosis, the hero will be given a “boon” to take to those who
hadn’t left the threshold. The boon may take many forms: knowledge, enlightenment, a skill etc.
Campbell’s hero, after reaching apotheosis, is no longer fully of this or that world. The hero finds the self
on the edge of the world within the threshold and becomes master of both worlds: “Freedom to pass back
and forth across the world division, . . . - not contaminating the principles of the one with those of the
other, yet permitting the mind to know the one by virtue of the other-is the talent of the master” (196).
Having mastered both worlds, the hero is capable of establishing him/herself as a mediating figure
between this and that world and as such, can transmit and share the boon received. This journey and apotheosis and the resulting mastery of two worlds is similar to what occurs in Trickster cycles, although generally speaking, there tends to be more humor in Trickster stories. This humor adds fluidity to the story in the sense that the appearance of the absurd and unexpected is always in constant motion and moves both the Trickster and the story along; yet, in another way, Campbell’s hero also demonstrates fluidity, one that is divine and that challenges the status quo which the hero must break: “Transformation, fluidity, not stubborn ponderosity, is the characteristic of the living God. The great figure of the moment exists only to be broken, cut into chunks, and scattered abroad. Briefly: the ogre-tyrant is the champion of the prodigious fact, the hero the champion of creative life” (289-290). Creativity and destruction are the hallmarks of the Trickster; (s)he generates possibilities because travelling allows him/her to see(k) opportunities, and be able to come into contact with them. These creative possibilities are not only generated from without; they can also be generated from within.

The Trickster not only crosses exterior borders as a traveler, (s)he also crosses interior borders as a transformer and shapeshifter. That Trickster is often (re)transforming is one of the reasons it is difficult to define the Trickster in precise terms, although it is this transformational quality of the Trickster that paradoxically defines him. One of the most common transformations that the Trickster undergoes, especially in traditional stories, is that of an animal. The type of animal form that the Trickster adopts is dependent upon the region and culture; the Trickster often takes the form of a local animal that exhibits certain traits or characteristics that are worthy of imitation or mockery. Regardless of their positive, negative or ambivalent connotations, these characteristics reflect particular capabilities of the animal itself. The idea of animals originating from a human ancestor and vice versa, and the resultant ambiguity of origin, are mentioned in both Macunaima and El reino de este mundo; this conception is not unique to these novels, but rather reflect earlier belief systems where the origins of man and animal are often seen as interrelated. Campbell explains the possible origins for these beliefs:
For the primitive hunting peoples of those remotest human millennia when the sabertooth tiger, the mammoth, and the lesser presences of the animal kingdom were the primary manifestations of what was alien—the source at once of danger, and of sustenance—the great human problem was to become linked psychologically to the task of sharing the wilderness with these beings. An unconscious identification took place, and this was finally rendered conscious in the half-human, half-animal figures of the mythological totem-ancestors. The animals became the tutors of humanity. . . . Similarly, the tribes supporting themselves on plant-food became cathected to the plant; the life-rituals of planting and reaping were identified with those of human procreation. . . .

Today all of these mysteries have lost their force. . . . (336)

For Campbell, the link between humans and animals began as more of a terrestrial need for survival yet for Mircea Eliade, this association with animals can be a transcendent experience where, by adopting the spirit of the animal, the human can transcend the limitations of the human physical form by spiritual means. Eliade states:

The powers of turning themselves [shamans] into animals, of killing at a distance, or of foretelling the future are also among the powers of spirits; by exhibiting them, the shaman proclaims that he shares in the spirit condition. The desire to behave in the manner of a spirit signifies above all the desire to assume a superhuman condition; in short, to enjoy the freedom, the power, and the knowledge of the supernatural beings, whether gods or spirits. The shaman obtains this transcendent condition by submitting to an initiatory scenario. . . . (Rites 154)

Eliade demonstrates the relationship between shamans and the spiritual world, and while the word shaman does not stand in for the word Trickster, parallels and similarities can be drawn between the two. Tricksters are sometimes interpreted as a satire of the shaman and yet similarities have been posited between the shaman and the Trickster figure, especially with regard to the connection between the divine and human that each are capable of, in addition to the idea that some shamans are in and of themselves considered Trickster figures. Eliade discusses a human “desire” for transcendence while referring to
shamans, although I believe that what is stated above could easily apply to the Trickster figure as well: “The desire to behave in the manner of a spirit signifies above all the desire to assume a superhuman condition; . . . to enjoy the freedom, the power, and the knowledge of the supernatural beings” (Rites 154). The Trickster, in trying to obtain this supernatural status, and attempting to satisfy an earthly appetite and sexual needs, becomes a border figure between the human and the divine. There are always obstacles and impediments to the Trickster’s most treasured goals and the Trickster often finds it necessary to make changes in his environment which may also require a transformation on his/her part. By changing his form or changing within, the Trickster manages to make changes without. The outcome is not necessarily the result that the Trickster was expecting, reinforcing the unpredictability of things including the Trickster him/herself.

Using her/his quick wit and wordplay, the Trickster rearranges the world by transforming language in equally unpredictable ways whereby the Trickster becomes something of a story-teller, known for telling tall tales. The Trickster figure has a lengthy history as told by storytellers who speak of Trickster’s own tales and deeds. The inverse, storytellers being perceived as Tricksters, is also possible since it is the Trickster, after all, who spins tall tales thus uniting storytellers and Tricksters as shapers of this world. Oftentimes, shamans have been the keepers of the stories that have been passed on from generation to generation, where storytelling is seen as a sacred act and in some cases even borders on prophecy. Storytelling can be a countercurrent in areas with limited access to formal literacy, particularly in societies that marginalize people by restricting their access to literacy. Storytelling has also been used to produce counter-stories to hegemonic explanations and conceptions of history and current events. In this way, storytelling is subversive when used as a form of creative resistance. For Michel de Certeau in The Practice of Everyday Life, storytelling can be a transformative act that threatens stasis, the status quo, and the

---

109 La ciudad letrada by Ángel Rama provides a fascinating look and insightful commentary on how literacy was used as a way of maintaining hegemony and control.
proper place.” First and foremost, storytelling is a motion, a voyage: “The storyteller falls in step with the lively pace of his fables. He follows them in all their turns and detours, thus exercising an art of thinking”; and “The story does not express a practice. It does not limit itself to telling about a movement. It makes it” (81). For de Certeau, storytelling has transformational capabilities: it can change exterior systems. De Certeau explains that it does this in a way that is similar to the Greek conception of mētis, the using of the mechanism of stored memories which form a vast “encyclopedia” that lie in wait for kairos, an opportune moment, a “rupture” or “break” to be “produced” (79-85). This particular setup serves as a base for stories, because according to de Certeau, “This schema can be found in any number of stories. It is, as it were, their minimal unit” (85). Memory waits invisibly as an interiority hidden from an exteriority, to produce a possible effect on the exterior level (82-83). This invisibility is particularly potent since memory can remain hidden and protected until the moment for change arrives. In addition to its invisibility, memory’s mobility also gives it power: “Its [memory] mobilization is inseparable from an alteration. More than that, memory derives its interventionary force from its very capacity to be altered-unmoored, mobile, lacking any fixed position” (86). De Certeau explains that this alteration consists of the process that occurs when an event provokes or initiates a memory and then memory recalls this event, taking the place of the event without actually being the event itself, which then leads to the conclusion that “Memory comes from somewhere else, it is outside of itself, it moves things about” (87). De Certeau then traces an outline of an “art of memory” which has the capacity of “always being in the other’s place without destroying itself through it” (87). De Certeau explains that this “ability” of the “art of memory” “has rather been given the name of authority: what has been ‘drawn’ from the collective or individual memory and ‘authorizes’ (makes possible) a reversal, a change in order or place, a transition into something different, a ‘metaphor’ of practice or of discourse” (87). Some of the procedures of this “art” are: “the play of alteration, the metonymic practice of singularity and (but this is ultimately only a general effect), a confusing and guileful (retorse) mobility” (87). The change of a little “detail” or a difference helps
to cause an alteration in the storytelling when the stories are already common, and can also, by extension, cause an external shift:

The significance of a story that is well known, and therefore classifiable, can be reversed by a single “circumstantial” detail. To “recite” it is to play on this extra element hidden in the felicitous stereotypes of the commonplace. The “insignificant detail” inserted into the framework that supports it makes the commonplace produce other effects. . . . The finely tuned ear can discern in the saying the difference introduced by the act of saying (it) here and now, and remains attentive to these guileful tricks on the part of the storyteller. (89)

This citation can explain the mechanisms by which the Trickster also effects changes in the outside world. Not only does the Trickster employ memory, but (s)he also becomes part of popular memory as do his/her tricks or “little details.” His/her repertoire becomes our repertoire. In Trickster tales, the Trickster is known for creating change by altering a detail that in turn, rearranges or “rearticulates” the world.110 Conversely, the storyteller himself becomes a Trickster as (s)he rearticulates the world using his/her own invisible stores of memory at the opportune moment. This can be extended further in the sense that the storyteller can also be an outside factor for someone else, activating their memory and creating an occasion which (if normally an event activates memory, in this case, the storyteller is the activator) produces a shift or change in place. This shift in place becomes more subversive when de Certeau uses the image of a bridge and frontiers to describe the interactive and dynamic quality of a story in contrast to a map which is depicted as a static entity of geographical knowledge. The way a story “marks out frontiers” is that it “multiplies them, but in terms of interactions among the characters—. . . the acting subjects. . . divide up among themselves places as well as predicates. . . and movements” (126). Trickster stories, being stories that focus on a figure that transgresses limits and frontiers, possess a movement and “ambiguity” that de Certeau attributes to bridges, frontiers, and also to stories.

---

110 I refer to what was mentioned earlier with regard to Hyde and his idea of the Trickster as artus-worker: (252-264).
In contrast, the story privileges a “logic of ambiguity” through its accounts of interaction. It “turns” the frontier into a crossing, and the river into a bridge. It recounts inversions and displacements: the door that closes is precisely what may be opened; the river is what makes passage possible; the tree is what marks the stages of advance; the picket fence is an ensemble of interstices through which one’s glances pass.

The *bridge* is ambiguous everywhere: it alternately welds together and opposes insularities. It distinguishes them and threatens them. It liberates from enclosure and destroys autonomy.

. . . As a transgression of the limit, a disobedience of the law of the place, it represents a departure, an attack on a state, the ambition of a conquering power, or the flight of an exile; in any case, the “betrayal” of an order. But at the same time as it offers the possibility of a bewildering exteriority, it allows or causes the re-emergence beyond the frontiers of the alien element that was controlled in the interior, and gives ob-jectivity (that is, expression and re-presentation) to the alterity which was hidden inside the limits, so that in recrossing the bridge and coming back within the enclosure the traveler henceforth finds there the exteriority that he had first sought by going outside and then fled by returning. (128-129)

The Trickster himself represents a “logic of ambiguity” as a figure of motion and movement that shifts borders and frontiers. Trickster is the figure within and without: providing a bridge that allows for intermediary crossings. The Trickster stories are bridges that provide mental shifts in our (pre)conceptions. We all tell stories and in this way, there is a resident Trickster within us all, creating our world around us: both within us and outside of us. These stories begin to intertwine with fluidity, sometimes juxtaposing, sometimes as encounter, sometimes as opposition and sometimes in displays of unity as people’s stories intersect.

By creating change both within himself and outside of himself, the Trickster sets him/herself as author by “writing” the world around him. Trickster navigates both the spoken and the written word.

Conversely, an author or a writer can be considered a Trickster figure in that (s)he may change the world
around him/her by transforming language to generate new visions of the world. An author, like Trickster, is a transmitter of messages, images, words, ideas and/or sentiments. The author finds him/herself enmeshed between two worlds: both the literary and the non-literary world. These two become infused within the author since no author can truly separate them: the non-literary experiences of the author, by manifesting as thoughts, opinions, ideas, and feelings, will eventually find their way onto the page. History and geography also form these thoughts and feelings within the author, in which case, even if not directly stated, history will enter into the literary realm. The line between the literary and the non-literary is a moveable one that shifts, leaving the reader to sometimes wonder in a given story, how much is fiction and how much is fact? Where the author begins and ends has been the subject of many debates and will pose important questions for the novels in this corpus. An extreme case of ambiguity is that of the Portuguese author Fernando Pessoa, and his character Bernardo Soares. If we compare the two last names, an unscrambling of the letters gives us Ressoa, in which case, graphically, it is only the diagonal line extending outward from the letter ‘P’ that differentiates the letter ‘P’ and ‘R,’ and thus, also between the character and author. The graphic line could be interpreted as symbolic of the character being an extension of Pessoa.\footnote{With regard to the first name, inversely, ‘B’ is a graphic completion of ‘F’ (in the first letter) and ‘n’ is the completion of ‘r’ in the sixth letter. The names complete one another.} A similar issue, I believe, occurs with the Trickster figure. We mentioned briefly the questioning of the line between shaman and Trickster, however Trickster as archetype (that destroys archetypes) versus an actual human being is a distinction that is often made, yet can be problematic. Humans generate the Trickster, and by creating him, become a Trickster figures themselves. Where is the line drawn between the humans that inspire the creation of the Trickster figure and the Trickster as a completely mythical and imaginary figure? Can we draw such a neat distinction between a mythical Trickster and a human being, when myth is sometimes based on actual events? Trickster here is also a liminal figure somewhere between fact and fiction, thus blurring the lines and questioning them in order
to bring about confusion or elucidation: usually both and oftentimes at the same time. Or perhaps there is a fluid movement between the real figures that influence the mythical and the imaginary, and vice versa, as explained in the previous chapter. I feel that the following citation from Lewis Hyde best describes this double function of the Trickster and also explains this ambiguity of myth and reality, if we accept Hermes as an example of Trickster:

Hermes of the Dark is the enchanter or hypnagoge who moves us into the underworld of sleep, dream, story, myth. This darkening motion is a precondition of belief; with it Hermes delivers you to one of the gods and puts you under his or her spell. He dissolves time in the river of forgetfulness, and once time has disappeared the eternals come forward. Hermes of the Dark is the weaver of dreams, the charmer who spins a compelling tale, the orator who speaks your mother tongue with fluid conviction.

Hermes of the Light is the disenchanter or awakening angel who leads you out of the cave. There the bright light prepares the ground for doubt. There he kills and roasts the sacred cattle. He dissolves eternals in the river of time, and when they have disappeared, the world becomes contingent and accidental. Hermes of the Light translates dreams into analytic language; he rubs the charm from old stories until they seem hopelessly made up and mechanical. He walks you inland until you stop dreaming in your mother tongue.

Hermes himself is neither one of these alone but both at once. He is neither the god of the door leading out nor the god of the door leading in—he is the god of the hinge. (208-209).

This quote also relates to the author as Trickster who can give us truths masked in fiction and also presents fiction as if it were a truth. The Trickster as hinge also reinforces the idea of the Trickster as a bridge: a mediating figure between “in and out,” and between the opened and the closed. The author, making memory visible, also serves as a bridge or hinge between fiction and non-fiction as representations of realities and as discourse. If we also include the reader as part of this matrix, where the reader, using memory, also reconstructs the world that the author projects in his/her work in ways that are often
unpredictable to the author who created the work, we have something of a Trickster trifecta of overlapping motions of transmission and hermeneutics.

The author transfers knowledge from memory to Other similarly to the Trickster who as Traveler and Communicator brings, carries, and “travels” messages of the divine/inspiration/memory to share with others. The writer can also be considered a transformer by sparking a memory at the right moment, provoking a change in the reader in light of the ideas of de Certeau regarding memory and *kairos*. Writers, like the marginal Trickster figure, can also find themselves to be marginal either geographically, culturally, and/or politically. The writer also bears some similarity to Campbell’s hero who leaves the safe threshold, heads to the unknown, and comes back with a boon to share with others. Just as the hero is sometimes viewed as dangerous, so can the writer, by having a glimpse into culture and into society before his/her time – bringing a boon of knowledge that can at times almost seem “otherworldly.”

In the above pages I have presented some of the different modes of Trickster as both mythological and semiotic figure, in myth and in literature. The polyvalent yet singular, complex yet simple figure of the Trickster is culturally dense in the sense that while many cultures have their own versions of Trickster figures, some of these incorporate, oppose, and/or fuse with other Trickster figures when travelling facilitates the sharing of cultures. The history of the Trickster figure becomes quite layered, especially since details vary from person to person, transmission to transmission, with changes in the “little details.” The history of the Trickster in Latin American literature is not from a singular source. The Trickster has a long history on every continent that precedes the formation of a Latin America. From Europe and Spain in particular we have the tradition of the pícaro in novels like *Guzmán de Alfarache* and a Latin American pícaro in *El Periquillo Sarniento*. In European folktales that predate Columbus’ voyage, the Trickster figure also appears. These tales may perhaps trace their ancestry from Arabic tales, from the Visigoths or any number of peoples that inhabited Europe. How did these traditions fuse, or did they maintain a sense of separation? The sharing of tales becomes a complex interconnected web where it is difficult to separate
each strand: with regard to tales from Africa, what parts of Africa do they originate from? How wide is their extension and how do Trickster figures co-mingle, or do they remain separate? There was also travel between Europe and Africa that predates Columbus’ voyage. Were such tales shared then? Jean Price-Mars writes regarding African and European folktales: “J’y vois mieux qu’une comparaison, il y a peut-être une filiation entre eux!” (58). Is the African Arabic Trickster similar to the Arabic Spanish Trickster? For the indigenous people of the Americas, the Trickster appears prominently in their lore (Makunai‘ma as an example). There are variations and similarities among the Tricksters of the different American cultures which shared information, as mentioned in the previous chapter. These different Trickster figures from different continents encounter each other in the Americas oftentimes with unexpected and unpredictable results, much like the Trickster himself. The Trickster becomes particularly subversive amidst the positivist discourse whose focus is to bind the world into categories, at a time in history when political and ideological boundaries in the 18th to 20th centuries began to concretize into the world we know today. During a deconstructive phase beginning in the 20th century, Trickster, yet again, provides a way, even in our modern age, to deconstruct discourses in order to (re)construct from the remaining fragments. In the 20th century the Trickster continued to be a relevant and transformative figure as a testing ground for new ideas and paradigms, in structuralism and deconstruction, and this time period coincides with the phase in history in which the novels of this corpus were written. The Trickster is a character that subverts and then transcends the hegemonic discourse of the day in a way that is far from singular. For each of the novels in the corpus, an argument can be made that the Trickster has three incarnations, representing three aspects of a singular entity, and in Mascaró, this number multiplies because the Tricksters become uncountable, undefinable and limitless, much like the Trickster himself.

3.2 Macunaima: The Trickster as Unifying Disunity (or Disunifying Unity)
Macunaima is a literary Trickster taken from a series of Pemon Trickster cycles (Taulipang and Arekuna) that were collected by Koch-Grüngberg and compiled in *Vom Roraima Zum Orinoco* as mentioned previously, yet it bears repeating here to emphasize that de Andrade’s Trickster as a literary creation stems from a Trickster cycle with its own tradition.\(^{112}\) The tales of the Pemon were written as Koch-Grüngberg understood them.\(^{113}\) In the stories of Makunaíma, this Trickster figure demonstrates his capacity for change and transformation which Mário de Andrade uses as inspiration for his character, taking some sections verbatim and making additions and subtractions to the original texts, symbolized by the orthographical change from *Makunaíma* to *Macunaíma*. This spelling change marks a transformation, which is appropriate given that Macunaíma displays characteristics that seem to apply to early twentieth century Brazilian life and transmits the zeitgeist of the era. The Trickster however, as one of the oldest of mythical figures, is ever-present and ever-transforming himself in accordance with the times. Radin, as mentioned previously, indicates that “every generation occupies itself with interpreting Trickster anew. No generation understands him fully but no generation can do without him” (168). This affirmation explains that the Trickster would inevitably reappear in the early 20\(^{th}\) century, and in Brazil he did so in the character of Macunaíma as a way of expressing the contradictions of the era.

In a less conventional use of the term compared with the moveable parameters that can define a Trickster as such, and stretching the boundaries of the term Trickster even further, it can be posited that the author Mário de Andrade himself can be considered a Trickster. Mário de Andrade, as traveler, journeys to different areas in Brazil, placing himself in contact with different regions and different peoples. Travelers change and are changed by the movement of their travels and it was during such a movement,

\(^{112}\) Macunaíma, spelled with a ‘c’ is the spelling adopted by Mário de Andrade and will refer to his character. Makunaíma, spelled with a ‘k’ is the spelling utilized by Theodor Koch-Grüngberg and will be used to refer to the Pemon mythical figure from his ethnological work.

\(^{113}\) As mentioned in the introduction of chapter two in this analysis, there is no such thing as zero degree of intervention and we must assume some degree of mediation between the teller of the tales and the written work published by Koch-Grünberg.
when Mário de Andrade was away from home, that he wrote *Macunaíma*. The information gleaned from his travels and his interests in ethnology accumulates in kaleidoscopic arrangements in *Macunaima*, in a way that mirrors movement itself and the information that such movement can provide. By wandering and traveling, the Trickster, as mentioned, can become a dangerous and subversive figure because the information he acquires allows him free symbolic movement among different realms. In the preface of a Spanish edition of *Macunaíma*, Héctor Olea describes poetry as motion and explains the modernists’ “interest in mobile traditions,” which thus links the theme of motion of both de Andrade’s creation and his interests (from popular memory):

> Libro libre: <poiesis>. *La libertá es así, movimentación.* (18)

> *Reconstrucción y restauración* de la literatura oral o popular son constantes en la obra del escritor modernista. Sus estudios etnológicos y de musicología son fiel muestra de su interés por las *tradiciones móviles*” (25).

According to Olea, by moving “leyendas indígenas a un contexto urbano, Mário de Andrade no hace otra cosa sino recrear movilizando la tradición” (25). Mário de Andrade then uses the mobility of memory in order to “restore” and create a work that is an amalgam of different traditions (25). If in the last chapter we looked at myth as an open system, in Olea’s statement “mobile traditions” are open systems due to the contact created in and through transit. The Trickster figure has long been one of the oldest figures that appears in folklore as both a mobile figure and tradition. Mário de Andrade is not only a traveling writer, but a writer that makes fiction and “tradition” travel by using and combining words from different languages, different regions, and different registers, as pointed out by two critics of *Macunaíma*:

> Las jergas cariocas y paulistas, resumen de inmigraciones, fueron asimiladas a la mezcla verbal de tangos y milongas. (Olea 34)

> En este campo, el virtuosismo literario de Mário de Andrade, que mezcla varios registros de la lengua del clásico erudito al del pedestre y elocuente del pueblo o de la calle o de la selva, resulta una feliz y magistral creatividad. . . . el vocabulario de origen indígena (tupi, especialmente, que
Mário de Andrade’s characters travel and move among different linguistic and cultural lines within the text, as he does himself when writing the actual text. Trickster is not only a mediator among different elements, but also a generator, especially of solutions, ideas, languages, and worlds. The author creates a world, mediating between culture, history (both personal and cultural), language, poesía, and the imagination, much like Trickster does, meandering and wandering through the labyrinths oftentimes of his/her own making.

As authors shapeshift literary and linguistic boundaries (and depending on the author, oftentimes cultural and historical paradigms), the characters they create serve as an important vehicle or mechanism through which these shifts can occur. Macunaíma, for example, embodies these shapeshifting transformations, although he is not the only one in the novel to do so. Macunaíma himself begins as a polyvalent character. According to Lucía Sá, certain characteristics of Macunaíma can be attributed to other figures that appear in Vom Roraima Zum Orinoco, whose episodes are included in Mário de Andrade’s Macunaíma as if they were part of the original Makunaíma Trickster cycle. Among them are: Kalawunseg, Akalapijeima, Konewó and Etetó’s brother-in-law (7). Macunaíma, then, embodies multiple Trickster figures in one literary Trickster character, a fact which confuses the borders of Trickster identity even further. It can be argued that Macunaíma is not the only Trickster in the novel: Macunaíma’s brothers along with Venceslau Pietro Pietra, and Tia Ciata, among other characters, are all Tricksters in their own way. Sometimes Venceslau Pietro Pietra is presented as the antagonist of the novel, although according to Mário de Andrade, Macunaíma and Venceslau Pietro Pietra are not intended to be polar opposites, thus making ambiguous the protagonist/antagonist and hero/villain theme common in
Western literature. Lucía Sá states that “A trickster like Macunaíma, however, is closer to the contradictory and de-centered characters of 20th century fiction than to traditional models of heroism,” which partly explains why the neat Manichean paradigm of hero/villain is not presented in the novel (10). Macunaíma is oftentimes interpreted as an anti-hero, who defies cultural expectations of what a hero should be. Yet whose cultural expectations? On the other hand, Macunaíma is presented as a culture hero of the Pemon. Throughout the novel, he is labelled a hero, although his heroism is at times called into question. As Trickster, he can be both, either at the same time or at different times; he can also be neither by transcending such dualities of good and evil. We must also consider that such dual paradigms and conceptions don’t always exist in other cultures. The Trickster is too fluid for the characterizing label of (anti) hero to stick. The moment one tries to label him (her) as such, (s)he has already morphed and moved on. This difficulty in labeling the Trickster reveals itself in the nature of Trickster as transformer.

In the novel, although Macunaíma is the protagonist, he travels more often than not in the company of his brothers who, at different times, transform Macunaíma and are transformed by him. Each brother has certain characteristics attributed to him, and these characteristics are occasionally undermined in the text: Jiguê, for example, is “na força do homem” (13) and “muito bobo” (17), while Maanape is a “feiticeiro” (26) and “velhinho” (13), and Macunaíma is a “herói” (39), but also “muito manhoso” (40). Respectively the three brothers can be thought to represent strength, spirituality, and intelligence, yet the undermining of some of these characteristics posits a fluidity among the characters and an overlapping of one brother into the other, so that perhaps we can speak of three characters in one. For example, Jiguê, “na força de homem,” who seems to have the responsibility of hunting and catching fish using physical capabilities as opposed to magical ones, hasn’t obtained a danta or tapir: rather, “chegou com a corda de curauá vazia, encontrou todos tratando da caça,” the caça that Macunaíma had caught with his trap (16). On the other hand, Macunaíma tests his strength in the forest.

114 It is uncertain whether he has actually caught any fish in the phrase: “Jiguê já chegava de pescar de puçá” (14).
before resolving to kill Venceslau Pietro Pietra: “Saiu da cidade e foi no mato Fulano experimentar força. . . . Enfiou o braço na sapopemba, deu arranco e o pau saiu da terra não deixando nem sinal” (161). He trades places with Jiguê with regard to physicality even though in the end, Macunaíma will use his astucia to kill the giant. As for the description of “bobo” being applied to Jiguê, it is Jiguê who towards the end of the novel is able to obtain food by watching a sorcerer and taking his magical articles, thus becoming “manhoso” like Macunaíma. The characterizations of the protagonists are made fluid by continuous inversions, and as manhoso as Macunaíma is, he eventually falls prey to the Uiara spirit, leaving him mutilated without the aid of his brother Maanape, who twice before had brought Macunaíma back to life. Macunaíma’s last death results in his ultimate transformation as apotheosis, when Paú-Pódole transforms Macunaíma into a constellation in the sky.

In addition to transforming into one another by adopting the appropriate characteristics, the brothers experience other metamorphoses throughout the novel. Macunaíma, born Amerindian, is turned into a white man with blue eyes in a sort of “baptism” or ablution and later, during the macumba scene, becomes the son of Exu, a deity of African origin, thus embodying and incorporating different peoples in one (50, 80). During the “baptism,” if Macunaíma turns white, Jiguê turns bronze and Maanape remains a dark, black color. Macunaíma experiences the most changes throughout the novel, Jiguê occasionally transforms, whereas Maanape doesn’t transform at all; rather he is the transformer and the one who brings Macunaíma back to life twice. Maanape, the older brother that engages in shamanic activities, tries to keep the peace among the brothers by pacifying the anger of Jiguê and keeping Macunaíma honest. He is the mediator and balancer of the two brothers. Even with Maanape, the brothers still both help and argue amongst each other in ways that demonstrate both a creative and destructive capacity. While fighting amongst each other, they will “invent” the three plagues. It is curious to note the word “invent” that Mário de Andrade uses. Usually associated with constructive pursuits, here the word is juxtaposed with the “plagues” that are the invention of the three brothers. In paradoxical
Trickster fashion, the three brothers then create destructive plagues. It begins with Macunaima turning a “colher” into a “bichinho” to bite Maanape while he is drinking coffee (63). He also turns a “cabaceiro de algodão” into a “tatorana branca” to suck Jiguê’s blood while he is sleeping (63). These insects are the first two plagues that are created. The brothers, in an attempt to rid themselves of the insects, exclaim “Sai, praga.” Their words transform these insects into plagues on a semiotic level while trying to show their annoyance on another semantic level (63). Even though it is Macunaima who transforms these objects into the insects, the three brothers will be credited with inventing them, because they are the reason for their invention and perform a semiotic action of calling them plagues. Jiguê, in an act of vengeance, transforms a brick into a ball and passes it to Maanape who kicks it to Macunaima, thus inventing football/soccer which the author presents as another plague of Brazil (63-64). Macunaima creates one last plague by turning bricks, stones, shingles, and ironwork into içás or queen ants that take over São Paulo for three days: “E foi assim que Maanape inventou o bicho-do-café, Jiguê a lagarta-rosada e Macunaima o futebol, três pragas” (64).

Towards the end of the novel, we see another instance (because plague is also an example of “destruction and creation” or destructive creation) of the Trickster’s capacity for destruction and creation, a capacity that is not a simplistic duality, but a constant potentiality and fluidity. Macunaima starts about the destruction of his family, and ultimately his own destruction on earth, when he thwarts Jiguê’s attempts to obtain fish or game. This sets in motion a series of events whereby his family becomes a shadow of what they once were. Macunaima will be mutilated, an act that may be interpreted through a Freudian psychological, analytical perspective as the ego destroying Macunaima and his family. However, as a last act of creation that will enable him to transform and transcend, Macunaima plants a seed that will grow and allow him to enter the heavens and become eternal.

Among other transformations, Macunaima turns himself into a prince and then by mating with Ci, the mother of the forest, he becomes Emperor (15-16, 32). He continuously transforms throughout the
novel without leaving any aspect behind or destroying any aspect, and he does this both terrestrially and cosmologically (being both the son of a woman and the son of a deity, albeit separately). He is capable of doing this because he contains within him the potential for change, to change into anyone and everyone by crossing over into the Other and back again fluidly. As an example, Macunaima turns himself into a French woman, albeit not magically or organically, but rather by the use of various “máquinas” (both machine and machinations) and artifices: “a máquina ruge, a máquina meia-de-seda, . . . a máquina decoletê úmida de patchuli. . . . Era tanta coisa que ficou pesado mas virou numa francesa tão linda. . . ” (64-65). Macunaima is crossing into the territory of the Other and yet to retain the Self, “se defumou com jurema e alfinetou um raminho de pinhão paraguaio no patriotismo pra evitar quebranto” (65). As Trickster, Macunaima can manage these two identities (at least two identities) at the same time; he adopts a different gender and nationality. This transformation was purposeful in order to trick Venceslao Pietro Pietra, as opposed to other transformations that seem to occur spontaneously, such as the conversion during the “baptism” and the becoming of a constellation.

One of the main causes or purposes of the transformations and wanderings of Macunaima is the fundamental sensation of hunger. In *Trickster Makes this World*, Lewis Hyde states: “The trickster myth derives creative intelligence from appetite,” in which case we can attribute Macunaima’s creative transformations to his hunger or appetite (17). Hyde ties the Trickster’s hunger to the trick of baiting a fish using a worm: “the victim’s hunger is the moving part. The worm just sits there; the fish catches himself” (19). Macunaima’s hunger is “the moving part;” it is what makes Macunaima move, as seen in one of Macunaima’s first instances of travel when he moves his mother’s house from one side of the river to the other in order to have access to more food. He will move the house back to the other side of the river when he is angered by his mother’s decision to share the food with Macunaima’s brothers. Forced to travel again when his mother takes him to Cafundó do Judas (signifying anyplace), he tries to meet the needs of his appetite again. After Macunaima shoots his mother in an attempt to obtain food and
mistaking her for an animal, he wanders with his brothers (26-27). Not only does the search for food cause Macunaíma to wander, but also once satisfied, Macunaíma must travel because the food he has received comes at a cost or comes with a consequence. For example, when Macunaíma went hunting and accidentally killed his mother, the cost was the life of his mother. When Macunaíma switched houses from one side of the river to the other, the cost was the continued hunger of his brothers. In another episode, Macunaíma is able to obtain fruit from Volomã using words that cause the fruit to fall. Volomã is angry and “Pegou o herói pelos pés e atirou-o pra além da baía de Guanabara numa ilhota deserta” (87). By satisfying his hunger, Macunaíma has angered Volomã and is subsequently “exiled.” In another scene, Macunaíma takes the food that Oibê has prepared and out of vengeance, Oibê decides to scare Macunaíma. Out of fear, Macunaíma travels to morro do Estrondo, then he nears Santo Antônio do Mato Grosso, and later travels to the “firme pontudo do Araguaia” (180–182). Lewis Hyde comments that one of the goals of the Trickster is to “slip the trap of appetite” to where food is no longer needed; towards the end of the novel, when Macunaíma has begun to die and eventually goes to the sky, he has transcended his appetite and no longer travels nor transforms, although he is still an intermediary by proxy: the birds at the end of the novel continue to tell his story.115

In the previous chapter that deals with myth, I discussed Mário de Andrade’s *degeography* of Brazil. From another perspective, Macunaíma is a *degeographizing* factor through his movement, since travel and motion have the potential to *degeographize*. “Este héroe incaracterístico y <<desgeograficado>> -sin coordenadas fijas, que tiene hábitos, creencias, alimentación y lenguaje exentos de algún trazo regional predominante” (Olea 29), is not only “desgeograficado” but is indeed a *degeographizing* agent as he travels all over Brazil, to Bolivia, to the Andes, and he himself may perhaps be from Venezuela. M. Cavalcanti Proença explains one of the purposes of the voyage: “A viagem em que

---

115 Lewis Hyde describes in chapter 1 of his book (pages 32-34), how Hermes slips the trap of appetite and transcends his hunger in order to receive something other than food for the belly: access to the food of the gods and the realm of the divine.
passam pela cidade das Flôres, Rio das Amarguras etc. é freqüente nos contos populares, como forma de indeterminação já assinalada por Lindolpho Gomes nos *Contos Populares*" (170). The Trickster traveler is the agent who by traveling, *degeographizes*, since travel is a “form of indetermination”; the Trickster blurs borders as an unsettling, traveling figure.

Like Macunaíma, Venceslau Pietro Pietra is also a traveler that *degeographizes*. Venceslau Pietro Pietra is from Perú; he has traveled to Brazil and at some point he travels to Europe and then returns to Brazil. His collection of artifacts at home reflects this *degeographization* and the contacts made throughout his travels. Our first encounter with Venceslau Pietro Pietra and his home tells us that he “morava num tejupar maravilhoso rodeado de mato no fim da rua Maranhão olhando pra noruega do Pacaembu” (54). Without leaving his home, Venceslau’s interest expresses a *degeographizing* perspective as he eyes a Norwegian woman from Pacaembu. Venceslau’s appetite, like Macunaíma’s, leads him to travel, although his appetite is not for food *per se*, but rather for material things since he is a collector. Within his house, there are articles that have a *degeographizing* effect since they are from disparate and distant places: “turquesas esmeraldas berilos . . . grigris rochedos elefantes petrificados, colunas gregas, deuses egípcios, budas javaneses, obeliscos mesas mexicanas, ouro guianense, pedra ornitomorfas de Iguape, opalas do igapó Alegre . . .” (66). It is interesting to note that the first items that are found are not listed with an origin, and these are followed by items with a listed international origin, and then by precious Brazilian objects. In another instance of *degeography*, Peruvian Venceslau apparently is the giant Piaimã, thus he is both a Peruvian collector and a giant in Pemon mythology. In yet another example, Venceslau is transformed in the *macumba* episode when Macunaíma asks Exu to extract vengeance on Venceslau for attempting to kill Macunaíma. Exu, already in the body of a Polish woman, demands that Venceslau’s “self” enter the orisha: “Exu. . . mandando o eu de Venceslau Pietro Pietra vir dentro dele Exu pra apanhar. Esperou um momento, o eu do gigante veio, entrou dentro da fêmea” (81). In this example the body itself becomes a space of *degeographization* via mythical means since within the Polish woman
will reside Exu, the orisha of African origin and the “self” of Venceslau Pietro Pietra. The appetites of both Tricksters coincide when both desire the *muiraquitã* for different reasons, the only object that Venceslau will not trade. Macunaima has an opportunity in Venceslau’s home to take the *muiraquitã*, yet Trickster seldom opts for the simplest solution. Macunaima is jealous of Venceslau’s collection and wants to be a collector himself (although at one point in the novel, Vei the Sun will offer Macunaima a stone that will change into fire and Macunaima trades it for a picture), but since stones are far too weighty, Macunaima chooses to become a collector of “ugly words” (profane words). The “lightness of words” and their constant “movement” highlight Macunaima’s transformative communicative capacity as Trickster while also evoking and exhibiting the fluidity and motive nature of words and language. Among the languages from which Macunaima derives the “ugly words” are Greek, Latin, and Italian. Aside from the variety of languages, Macunaima’s lexical collection, particularly in Italian, “era completa, com palavras pra todas as horas do dia, todos os dias do ano, todas as circunstâncias da vida e sentimentos humanos” (71). From this previous citation, we can deduce that in Macunaima, as a Trickster figure, resides a linguistic chaos of potentialities that can be plucked at the right moment, quite like the mechanism of memory and *kairos*. Another interpretation could be that the Trickster can choose inadequate words and by a linguistic “trick”, or by enacting a situational shift, inadequate and profane words become sacred. In other words, Macunaima may not have the words for “todas as horas do dia,” but he can create them, change them or change the situation in order to make inappropriate words, appropriate and vice versa.\(^{116}\) Of all the words in Macunaima’s repertoire, the “jóia da coleção era uma frase indiana que nem se fala” (71), much like the *muiraquitã* is the indigenous gem of Venceslau’s collection *que nem se dava*.

Traveling creates contact points with different countries and peoples. These interactions sustain a flow of exchanges and changes transforming the traveler and the world around him/her. We have seen in the previous chapter how Macunaima was able to transform the quotidian into myth, especially with

\(^{116}\) See the example of the *ojal* on page 114-115.
regard to the *máquinas*, a word that, ironically, Macunaima came to use for anything that was unfamiliar to him and that he would then transform into the mythical. It is by actively engaging and exchanging with the *máquinas* and the world around him that Macunaima, a figure in between myth and literature, is able to mythologize, helping to create the world around him as he in turn is created by it. In contrast, it is not until the end of the novel when Macunaima decides to no longer engage in the world, when the world disappears leaving him in a desert of silence shortly before his last death. In the original Pemon myths, the encounters that involved Makunaima were more cosmological in nature, as Makunaima interacted with the Sun, the Moon, the stars, and other natural entities. In *Macunaima*, these encounters are still prevalent, yet they are also mixed with encounters of different people, different modes of expression, different cultural contributions that make up Brazil/South America and the world, as a way of testing, teasing, making, and deforming boundaries. These encounters change Macunaima and force him to adapt; in return, Macunaíma changes his environment with his transformations.

In between these contact points and exchanges, the Trickster oftentimes serves as a transmitter or a mediator (not just necessarily among two entities or hybridities, for this structure is too limiting) in a web of exchanges and not necessarily diametrically opposed poles. Macunaíma is not only a mediator amongst people, he also mediates among animals and mythical creatures. Amidst these contact areas, Trickster moves and changes boundaries: “What tricksters like is the *flexible* or *movable* joint. If a joint comes apart, or if it moves from one place to another, or if it simply loosens up where it had begun to stick and stiffen, some trickster has probably been involved. In several different ways, tricksters are joint-disturbers” (Hyde 256). One of the ways that Trickster “disturbs joints” is by “rearticulation” (256). Even when Macunaima is no longer on the earth to transmit messages, birds will become an extension of the Trickster figure as a transmitter and a mediator of messages; they will rearticulate. Macunaima, as mediator between the Amazon region and São Paulo (although, as mentioned, he is a mediator in other places as well), rearticulates the boundaries between the two. One of the most commonly cited sections
of the novel that demonstrates this rearticulation is the letter that Macunaima writes to the icamiabas, where transposals of the discourse of the colonizers and colonized abound via linguistic inversions and subversions, particularly between written and spoken language and in swapping registers that use more antiquated expressions. Because of Macunaima’s travel, he obtains information, which makes Macunaima as a traveling figure an intermediary one, by possessing information that grants access to different worlds. The information that Macunaima obtains by means of travelling rearticulate the world in writing when he pens the letter to the icamiabas; his memories rearticulate the world orally when he tells stories to the paulistanos. Macunaima goes to the edges of his known world in order to retrieve his muiraquitã both explaining and having had things explained to him, exposing different perceptions of what is known and unknown. It is at this border between the known and the unknown that Trickster rearticulates.

After discussing transformative acts, we now turn our focus to transforming language. Macunaima plays with words, creating new meanings on the borders of signification, “rearticulating,” and generating new ways of saying and seeing things. When all added together, different phrases, various languages, varying registers, and the numerous lists of things are not only ambiguous, but open up the playing field to facilitate unexpected permutations, appearances, disappearances, juxtapositions, where the possibilities aren’t so much endless as they are moveable and infinitely changeable. At the beginning and at the end of the novel there is a silence: Macunaima spends the first six years of his life in silence and, at its end becomes a constellation. In the interim, Macunaima plays with words and language. As a mediator and transformer, Macunaima turns his brother Jiguê into a telephone and this is perhaps the most frequently repeated transformation in the novel. Jiguê then acts as a means of communication. Macunaima would choose Jiguê to become a telephone since Jiguê was described as na homem da força, the solid, earthy and physical brother who is the mechanism or máquina by means of which
communication is carried out. Macunaíma, the mediator, transforms Jiguê into a mediator of communication.

With Pemon mythology acting as a narrative base, in addition to Tupi words, which mixed with the Portuguese language were part of the língua geral or língua brasileira, the novel includes words in French, English and African languages. Even a made-up child’s language has a space when Macunaíma speaks Limpim guapa, in which certain syllables are added to the word in order to “disguise” its meaning except for those who know how to decode the language. For example: Limpim guapa is língua and within the name, directions are given as to how the “language” is to be articulated and translated; the syllables are separated and certain letters are added producing new sounds for familiar words. By playing with language, both Macunaíma and Mário de Andrade demonstrate the mobility and fluidity of language and how we are all creators and articulators of language.

Everyone in de Andrade’s novel embodies the potential to be a Trickster. In the case of the macumba ritual, Macunaíma becomes a transmission site between god and human, though he is not the only one nor did he have to be chosen as an intermediary. A European woman is also necessary for the transmission since Macunaíma’s petition to the god is carried out through her. Tia Ciata begins the transmission line to the god, then the god chooses through whom he wishes to speak. The person chosen can be anyone, reflecting the possibility of how anyone can be an intermediary between the gods and man. Exu chooses Macunaíma as his son and acts through a Polish woman in order to take vengeance upon Venceslau. The Polish woman also acts as a Trickster or intermediary figure between Macunaíma and Venceslau. The macumba takes place in Rio de Janeiro and the sheer number of people from different walks of life that attend the macumba and the fact that any of them could be called to serve as intermediary highlight the fluidity of contact:

. . . gente direita, gente pobre, advogados garçons pedreiros meias-colheres deputados gatunos . .
. marinheiros marceneiros jornalistas ricaços gamelas fêmeas empregados-públicos . . . Olelê Rui
Barbosa . . . advogados taifeiros curandeiros poetas o herói gatunos portugas senadores . . .
médicos padeiros engenheiros rábulas policias criadas focas assassinos Macunaíma . . . Tia Ciata . . 
. vendedores bibliófilos pés-rapados acadêmicos banqueiros . . . Os ladrões os senadores os jecas 
os negros as senhoras os futebóleres . . . (75-80)
The lack of commas underscores the unity or conjunction of these disparate figures since the Trickster 
embodies the potential that resides in everyone; this potentiality unites as it also separates since 
potentiality will eventually take different forms and shapes. This paradox of both separation and unity, 
along with the paradox inherent in Macunaíma, is within us all since, according to Cavalcanti Proença, 
“Uns mais, outros menos, todos somos Macunaíma, êsse ilógico Macunaíma indivíduo, terrivelmente 
lógico como conjunto” (33).

3.3 El reino de este mundo: Movement, Mediation and Memory

The Trickster figure has a history of being used in anti-slavery discourse as a way of inverting 
power by stepping inside and outside of power’s parameters and moving/altering boundaries. While 
having existed before the Atlantic slave trade, in Africa, the Americas, Europe, and Asia, the Trickster has 
been a figure well-suited for subversion in dynamics where the balance of power has been grossly uneven, 
because the Trickster as movement can shift these power imbalances. Lewis Hyde explains how the 
African trickster traveled to the Americas: the “African tricksters traveled west in the slave trade and can 
still be found in African-American storytelling, in the blues, in Haitian voodoo, and so on. I have been to 
a Yoruba diviner in Oakland, California, and seen the seventeenth palm nut set aside for the trickster Eshu” 
(9). The mythological essence of the Trickster can also appear in literary figures since elements of 
mythology often enter the literary realm due to a fluid dynamic between mythology and literature. On 
another note, the relationship between the mythological Trickster and humans is equally fluid and also 
quite complex: people can exhibit the characteristics of the Trickster while some of the Trickster’s
characteristics are based on the paradoxes of the human psyche. Lewis Hyde adds to this complexity when he states that, “At the start of this book, I said that trickster is a mythological character; there are no human tricksters. Human beings participate in this mythology, but they simultaneously participate in others, and in history” (244). On the one hand, it is important to keep in mind with regard to history the Trickster-like mind that can awaken during different periods in response to the structures, in history and in the present, that have a limiting capacity (227), yet at the same time, there is also the mythologizing character of the psyche that magnifies events and people, creating folklore and myths, a phenomenon that tests the borders of history since humans not only participate in mythology, they are the creators and generators of it, in the same way as they are the creators of history. In a way, humans are the ultimate Tricksters since they are the creators of the Trickster and this fluid dynamic problematizes a separation between human and Trickster. In the chapter about mythology, the line between fiction and non-fiction, the mythical and the real (where myth is reality magnified) was discussed with regard to how a neat distinction becomes difficult to define precisely; with the Trickster, this line becomes even more moveable. In El reino de este mundo, we have a mixture of fact and fiction: the text is a work of fiction based on historical events and people. In Ainsi Parla L’oncle, Jean Price-Mars observes the link between actual historical people and the legends they inspired:

A la vérité, la légende n’habite pas toujours de telles cîmes, encore qu’elle traite les grands et les humbles avec la même familiarité et la même bonne humeur. Ainsi, elle illustre de gloses tragiques la vie des précurseurs et des fondateurs de notre nationalité. Toussaint Louverture, Dessalines, Pétion, Christophe autant que Dom Pèdre, Mackandal, Romaine-la-Prophétesse ont fourni d’immenses matériaux à la légende. L’imaginationpopulaire en a tiré des fables fantastiques et même quelques-unes de nos plus farouches superstitions. (64-65)

117 The idea of the Trickster-like mind stems from Lewis Hyde (227).
While these figures exhibit a Trickster essence by pushing and changing boundaries, they also inspire a continuation of Trickster tales since these tales provide a continuation of both a history, a method, and a moving and moveable *imago* of subversion and resistance. Yet as Lewis Hyde points out, some people do not become Trickster-like by choice; events may force their hand or they are placed in a marginal position which reinforces the idea that anyone can become a Trickster:

> The birth of a Hermes-like threshold consciousness is partly a matter of temperament and partly a matter of setting. Put on the threshold, trickster mind may awaken in almost anyone. Those who are given to the pleasures of liminality may actively seek out such settings (as have artists like Duchamp or Ginsberg), but such settings will also leave their mark on persons not otherwise predisposed. (227)

On cultural and political margins, it is far too easy for voices to become silenced. Oftentimes in this case, Trickster appears when silence becomes too great of a burden to bear and voices clamoring to be heard find in Trickster a means, a movement, and a voice.

In *El reino de este mundo*, Carpentier chronicles various power struggles that took place in Haiti towards the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries. Those in power had in common the imposition of silence with regard to their authority, particularly where opposition and dissent were concerned, and differing opinions were often cruelly and permanently quieted. In such cases, Trickster finds a way to speak, to utter what otherwise cannot be said. Lewis Hyde explains: “You and I know when to speak and when to hold the tongue, but Old Man Coyote doesn’t. . . . They’re all the same, these tricksters; they have no shame and so they have no silence” (153). In the novel, when the Arzobispo Cornejo Breille is sentenced to die in order to keep silent the secrets he knows of Henri Christophe, the silence of everyone who knows what is occurring in the town is broken by the shriek of a newborn, the one who knows not of what is happening around him: “El silencio demasiado prolongado de una ciudad que ha dejado de creer en el silencio y que sólo un recién nacido se atrevió a romper con un vagido ignorante” (109). It is the newborn who breaks the silence of death. This scene will be evoked shortly
after, when Henri Christophe is haunted by Cornejo Breille who returns as a spirit or as a delusion or perhaps both; his appearance leaves Christophe without words:

Frente al altar, de cara a los fieles, otro sacerdote se había erguido, como nacido del aire. . . .

Mientras el semblante iba adquiriendo firmeza y expresión, de su boca sin labios, sin dientes, negra como agujero de gatera, surgía una voz tremebunda. . . .

El nombre de Cornejo Breille se atravesó en la garganta de Christophe, dejándolo sin habla. (112-113)

The archbishop is compared to the newborn whose scream pierced the silence of death, since the newborn doesn't know of death. Cornejo Breille, just “born out of the air” pierced the air with a shriek, a sign of life from the silence of death. Subversion of silence begins with a primal scream, a shriek, a vocal breath to show a sign of life.

In addition to particular individuals who were silenced, entire swathes of populations were to remain quiet and supplicant while being exploited, in an atmosphere of silence and shame, which as history proves over and over again, is a death trap. Lewis Hyde explains the mechanics, or rather the semiotics, of how such silence was produced and maintained and how Trickster manages to reject such systems, subverting and transcending them:

The construction of the trap of shame begins with this metonymic trick, a kind of bait and switch in which one’s changeable social place is figured in terms of an unchangeable part of the body. . . .

Once the verbal tricks are invisible, the artifice of the social order becomes invisible as well, and begins to seem natural. (170)

[Trickster] . . .who knows that the sign of something is not the thing itself, and who is therefore a better escape artist with a much more playful relationship to the local stories. The heavy-bodied, literalizing attempt to escape from shame carries much of the trap with it - the link to the body, the silence, and so on. Inarticulately, it takes the sign for the thing itself, imagining racism inheres in the color of the skin. Wise to the tricks of language, the light-bodied escape from shame refuses
the whole setup-refuses the metonymic shift, the enchantment of group story, and the rules of silence—and by these refusals it detaches the supposedly overlapping levels of inscription from one another so that the body, especially need no longer stand as the mute, incarnate seal of social and psychological order. All this, but especially the speaking out where shame demands silence, depends largely on a consciousness that doesn’t feel much inhibition, and knows how traps are made, and knows how to subvert them. (171)

The “changeable social place” which interests us is that which has slaves as part of its social order, in particular, the slavery that was part of the colonial hierarchy in the Caribbean, while the “unchangeable part of the body” is skin color. According to the authors of the Many-Headed Hydra, skin color was used purposely to divide people that were otherwise united in their subversive efforts. The authors list many situations where disenfranchised Europeans, indigenous Americans, African and African-American populations would coalesce and band together in order to subvert the status quo and the hierarchies that attempted to control various populations in order to achieve financial and political gain. White or lighter-skinned persons of color were forced to work inside the house and darker-skinned persons of color were forced to work outside, a division that was created in order to snuff out insurrection. Travel helped to facilitate some of the insurrectionary and incendiary ideas, along with providing a means for people to band together.118 By dividing people, not just by skin color, but also by placement and by limiting

118 The ship, while a vessel used to transport slaves, was also used as a vessel for some to escape slavery. If the Middle Passage carried slaves, abolitionary ideas and movements were also transported by water, according to Rediker and Linebaugh in The Many-Headed Hydra. Here are two examples that illustrate this argument: “The early shapers of the tradition [“Jamaica Discipline or the Law of Privateers”] were those whom one English official in the Caribbean called the ‘outcasts of all nations’ –the convicts, prostitutes, debtors, vagabonds, escaped slaves and indentured servants, religious radicals, and political prisoners. . . Many French buccaneers, such as Alexander Exquemelin, had been indentured servants and before that textile workers and day laborers. Most of the buccaneers were English or French, but Dutch, Irish, Scottish, Scandinavian, Native American, and African men also joined up, often after they had in one way or another escaped the brutalities of the Caribbean’s nascent plantation system. These workers drifted to uninhabited islands, where they formed maroon communities. Their autonomous settlements were multiracial in nature and organized around hunting and gathering. . . (158); “Sailors were a vector of revolution that traveled from North America out to sea and southward to the Caribbean” (241). As a “vector of revolution,” the sailors exchanged information during their expansive travels and their effects are exemplified in episodes in the novel with the mariner’s song being one example, and Ti Noel and Mackandal’s mentions of exchanges between Africa and Andalucía as another.
interaction, the authorities were trying to solidify their own positions. Physical separations began to dominate the discourse while it was being carefully constructed to support such separations and the lack of movement in order to maintain control. Movement is especially dangerous since: “As all travelers discover, the list of things that shame the locals varies from place to place. . . . Shame itself may be universal, but its content is not fixed in heaven” (Hyde 162). It is then possible through travel to notice the arbitrariness of these social orders and the silences they impose and enforce. By taking notice of this arbitrariness and stepping outside the closed system, we can note the traps and choose an alternative; the path of the Trickster can be chosen, the one who “refuses” to participate in the shame game.\footnote{The imposed divisions and separations were subverted by a “motley” alternative: “The pirate ship was motley-multinational, multicultural, and multi-racial” (Linebaugh and Rediker 164). The “motley” crew posed a danger to authoritative powers that benefitted from separation: “The new American ruling class redefined ‘race’ and ‘citizenship’ to divide and marginalize the motley crew, legislating in the 1780s and early 1790s a unified law of slavery based on white supremacy” (Linebaugh and Rediker 240). The idea of motley is closely associated with the Trickster as Lewis Hyde states “The opposite of such structure is motley-the pied, the dappled, the maculate. . . . Once a mottled surface appears, it has a particular structure, of course, but the sense is always that it got that way haphazardly, by patchwork, and that it may not last. Motley bespeaks a lack of identity. . . . Among the living, the character in motley is never the hero, never the king, though he or she has a freedom of motion those others lack” (297-298). Hyde then says, “The image of motley’s destructuring force runs through the trickster stories. . . .” (298). The text then describes a motive power: “Even motley fails to figure the fullest extremes of plenitude, however. For that we need what might be called motley-in-motion, as with the wandering octopus that can shift the pattern of its skin to fit its ever-changing backgrounds. And inside that skin lives something even more fluid. In Aristotle the octopus is an image for its own ‘many-coiled intelligence’” (298). These ideas are then linked to the figure of the traveler: “That intelligence belongs to the wanderer who has heard the same object called by different names in different cities” (298). The power of motley lies in its “freedom of motion” and its adaptability.}

According to Hyde: “This is the insight that comes to all boundary-crossers–immigrants in fact or immigrants in time–that meaning is contingent and identity fluid, even the meaning and identity of one’s own body” (172). In response to an exterior imposition of a definition of self, Trickster shifts the boundaries where self-identification can begin inward and then project itself outward. It is a self that can then be communicated and also communicate having shifted from a stationary definition with an imposed silence, to a moving and shifting process of self-definition and communication.
In Carpentier’s novel, Ti Noel himself becomes this sort of a shifter of communication. Throughout the novel, he reveals himself as a communicative intermediary: from speaking to objects, animals, and people, to transmitting messages through the generations. In the first chapter, Ti Noel finds himself in el Cabo, which being a port city already implies networks of travel and communication. He notices a newspaper and speaks to the bookstore clerk asking about a copper engraving of an African king. Carpentier uses the adjective “atrevidamente” to describe the asking of the question, which suggests that from the beginning of the novel, Ti Noel defies a social code imposed on communication, implying that silence or minimal speech is what is expected of him. The bookseller replies, “That is a king of your country” (14), which, as Carpentier continues to explain in the narration, is what Ti Noel had been thinking as he begins to remember the stories that Mackandal had told him about the kings of Africa. Since Mackandal has traveled from Africa to Haiti as a slave, he has a sense of different places and like the Trickster figure, can slip the trap of shame knowing that the parameters that define it are arbitrary. He transfers this shifting of perspectives to Ti Noel through his stories. Thus, in the very beginning of the novel, Ti Noel is already starting to slip the traps of imposed definitions and expectations by breaking the silence with speech and an intent at self-definition. The first chapter ends with Ti Noel humming a mariner ditty that insults the king of England, which later in the novel he will use again, this time with Henri Christophe replacing the king of England. Ti Noel appropriates the song he hears, using it to express his own thoughts. In these examples, Ti Noel is a mediator of many different influences: the subversive songs that he hears in the port; the stories told by Mackandal; the exchange with the bookstore clerk. In this first section, we have the first mention of the relationship between Ti Noel and Mackandal, and between these two Trickster-like figures, there is a dynamic and subversive relationship. As mentioned, Mackandal shares his stories and perspectives with Ti Noel and Ti Noel uses his mediating influence in a subversive manner when Mackandal begins to plan an insurrection. It is implied that Mackandal asks Ti Noel to help poison several cows on the plantation, and when the master of the plantation observes the sickness of
the cows, Ti Noel offers the confusing explanation that “foreign cows confuse the grass” (30). It is Ti Noel’s statement that is confusing by hiding and omitting the real cause of the death of the cows. By giving this explanation, Ti Noel is confusing the foreign Lenormand de Mezy. When Mackandal passes, his life will continue, if not mythically as a shapeshifter, then through the stories of his life told by Ti Noel who transmits them to his children and passes them on through the generations, thus shaping history and giving it a context for the next generation. Ti Noel has the power of memory, memory that is mobile, invisible and that waits for the opportune moment to effect a change.

Throughout the novel, Ti Noel continues to be a communicator with everyone and everything without regard for their form, a communicative capability associated with the Trickster: “Desde hacía mucho tiempo había adquirido el arte de conversar con las sillas, las ollas, o bien con una vaca, una guitarra, o con su propia sombra” (90) and “Ahora, Ti Noel hablaba constantemente. Hablaba abriéndose de brazos, en medio de los caminos” (140). Ti Noel’s inclusive and egalitarian communication stands in stark opposition to the prevalent divides that not only halted and stilted communication, but silenced it. If we refer to the quote from Eliade that “God is free to manifest himself under any form—even that of stone or wood,” then Ti Noel as Trickster could be thought of as experiencing a hierophany, and by communicating with these objects, he is in fact, communicating with a divinity (Patterns 29). Furthering this idea, Spinks states: “…so not only does he [Trickster] speak with the animals and embody the Other, but he also speaks the human language of dreams and visions and thereby is a medium for communications with the gods if not a part of the divine himself” (Semiosis 184). Ti Noel is a storyteller, a mediator between generations through time, between people from different places and different walks of life, and perhaps a communicative mediator between god and the kingdom of this world, “if not a

---

120 In the Winnebago Trickster cycle as told by Paul Radin, for example, the Trickster is able to communicate and understand all: “He and all objects in the world understood one another, understood, indeed, one another’s language” (7).
divinity himself.” In his transmissions and communications, Ti Noel has not only the power to define himself, but the power to define history.

As a Trickster, Ti Noel’s power is not only communicative in nature, but also generative. In addition to the creative element of begetting children and thus repopulating the world, towards the end of the novel, Ti Noel is able to recreate the world around him. An inversion process begins to take place as Ti Noel dons the jacket of Henri Christophe. At last, he generates his own world; from the ruins of Sans-Souci, he creates a humane world of his own. Ti Noel restructures his world by bestowing titles on all he deems worthy, upon both people and objects in nature. This could be interpreted as a parody of Henri Christophe who was known for making his own class of nobility, yet this mockery does not take away from Ti Noel his generative power of (re)creating his own world – his own reino de este mundo—by making passersby ministers, barons, and by giving blessings and flowers (141). The Rey de Angola from the first chapter makes a reappearance: this time instead of merely looking at it, Ti Noel is in possession of it; the artifact becomes an amulet from “allá” (Africa) granting Ti Noel the power to rule. According to Mary W. Helms, items that come from a faraway place are thought to be imbued with the power of that place and the person in possession of said article is in possession of the powers imbued in the object (114-115). The amulet can be thought to give Ti Noel a procreative power when herds are being born which he uses to elevate himself and those around him. There is a sad aspect to Ti Noel giving orders to the wind and thus seeming ineffectual and ironic, yet on the other hand, the wind travels and has been known to “carry” things, so perhaps Ti Noel’s orders and his words are being carried by the wind to different places in the world. The image of the wind allows us to make a visual leap by metonymy to the sail of a ship, which requires wind to be mobile and the ship is a potential carrier of information. The word “order” itself can have many possible meanings: it could refer to the verbal orders of a ruler, and the word could also refer to orders of plants and their classifications. Ti Noel renames the flowers and changes their order on multiple levels by bestowing honorifics on them. Plants and flowers are also associated with growth,
generation, and new life. Shortly after Ti Noel “pronounces his vision for the future and his promises,” there are births that create and symbolize new life, highlighting the idea of Ti Noel as Trickster in both his communicative and creative capacity. The Trickster is a generator by language: by playing with words and social hierarchy, Ti Noel is not only restructuring the social order, he is restructuring the natural world around him. The flowers themselves and their names are communicative in that they “speak to us” by virtue of the characteristics and stories that are associated with them. The manner in which they “communicate” and possess signifying properties can be divided into the following categories: 1) Native plants: The names of the flowers “explain” that they are from the region and in a way, are “witnesses” to all that have transpired 2) Plants with medicinal properties: Mackandal soon learned to speak the “language of the plants” and wrote down the information hermetically. The “language of the plants” includes the medicinal properties of the plants. 3) Plants related to folklore and legends: Many of the plants figure in folklore and legends, and some have stories of their own. A comparison is certainly drawn and implied in an ironic mode between how Ti Noel treats those in his kingdom, versus the treatment of those who had been in power and abused it, seeing as how Ti Noel’s treatment of the environment around him is more conducive to life. Ti Noel sits equally among a priest and a veteran of the war of independence. Perhaps the warrior and the priest can be seen as aspects of Ti Noel himself that have been simmering within the character. Ti Noel’s kingdom, however, is destroyed when it is taken over by the Agrimensores. To truly embody the Trickster and slip the metonymic trap, Ti Noel must become lighter by removing the jacket of Henri Christophe, since according to Hyde: “an apparently shameless uncovering is a precondition for entrance into heaven” (284). His final communicative act in el reino de este mundo, is a war-cry, which is a declaration only a ruler and a warrior can make. Now that Ti Noel identifies himself as autonomous, the war-cry is a potent scream against those who would again impose their semiotic traps

121 In a way, Ti Noel’s granting of honorifics and his interaction with his environment parallels the actions of Don Quijote, who also elevates himself along with other characters as opposed to denigrating and humiliating them.
and their power to silence. It seems that the war cry harkens the winds, perhaps transforming Ti Noel into a *loa*, representing the sacred and divine aspect of Ti Noel, manifesting change on the earthly realm.

After having broken the silence with an initial scream, the Trickster is transmitter, communicator, intermediary, whose communications transform and travel. In terms of communicator, the Trickster serves as a mediator, particularly for, although not limited to, communication between the divine and the terrestrial. This link is oftentimes invoked when communication among men has become stilted. The *houngan* in voodoo, for example, acts as an intermediary between the gods and man. However, in order to contact the gods in voodoo, there is yet another intermediary: the *loa* Papa Legba is invoked at the beginning of every ceremony in order to establish contact with other *loas*. In other words, there is a human intermediary and a divine intermediary: the *houngan* (the name for the female intermediary is *mambo*- although rather than use this word, Carpentier opts for *sacerdotisa* in the novel) and Papa Legba respectively. These two entities meet and exchange in order to open the roads and passageways; they form the bridges of communication in addition to being associated with crossroads of physical travel. As depicted in *El reino de este mundo*, which was based on accounts of events in Haiti, voodoo was a way of obtaining divine intervention in earthly affairs by seeking communication with the gods. If Ti Noel was an intermediary among people, Mackandal is an intermediary between people and nature. He is given power over plants by the *loa* and uses it to effect change in the world around him when he discovers the “vida secreta de especies singulares, afectas al disfraz, la confusión, el verde verde, y amigas de la pequeña gente acorazada que esquivaba los caminos de hormigas” (23). The ideas of confusion and masking are sometimes attributed to Trickster since (s)he plays on the border of meaning, creating confusion on purpose or elucidating meaning, or both, with the result being a confused clarity.122 Trickster also serves as a go-between for (super)nature and humans, learning the secrets of Nature during his adventures and

---

122 As exemplified by the episode in which Ti Noel confuses Lenormand de Mezy with regard to the sickness and death of the cows.
using them, which is what Mackandal does in the novel. He learns these arts from Mamán Loi, whose name, Mother Law, could be interpreted perhaps as Mother Nature and the laws of nature. She herself is an adept in voodoo and she demonstrates this when she puts her arms in hot oil without getting burned. A similar ritual is practiced during voodoo ceremonies (sometimes during initiation). After establishing a connection with Nature and thus with the divine, Mackandal, according to the novel, becomes a “houngán del rito Radá” and “Señor del Veneno” who is “Dotado de suprema autoridad” (34). Having developed this powerful connection with nature and the loa, Mackandal is not only well-versed in the nature of plants and their transformative capabilities; he transforms himself using the “disfraz y confusión” techniques of the plants by transforming into animals and in this way, he changes and alters his possibilities of movement and motion, which take on an especially subversive role when social and legal structures are set up to limit movement. These motions also defy the physical limitations of Mackandal who had lost a hand while working as a slave: “Todos sabían que la iguana verde, la mariposa nocturna, el perro desconocido, el alcatraz inverosímil, no eran sino simples disfraces. . . . De metamorfosis en metamorfosis, el manco estaba en todas partes, habiendo recobrado su integridad corpórea al vestir trajes de animales” (37). Like many a Trickster, Mackandal turns a weakness into a strength, a limitation into a newfound power, and moves around the island fomenting a movement of resistance in ways that were seemingly impossible: establishing contacts among the people on plantations and those in the mountains, keeping a register “Con caracteres que sólo él era capaz de descifrar” (29). Such varied movements to so many different places transform Mackandal from slave to a ruler of the island: “Con alas un día, con agallas al otro, galopando o reptando, se había adueñado del curso de los ríos subterráneos, de las cavernas de la costa, de las copas de los árboles, y reinaba ya sobre la isla entera. Ahora, sus poderes eran ilimitados” (37). These acts also mirror what is within the realm of possibilities for a shaman, according to Mircea Eliade: “Because of his ability to leave his body with impunity, the shaman can, . . . act in the manner of a spirit; e.g., he flies through the air, becomes invisible, perceives things at great distances . . . is
incombustible” (*Rites* 153). This would partially explain the widely-held belief by fellow slaves that Mackandal could not die in the fire. These transformations or disguises were not temporary, but became part of Mackandal himself: “Algo parecía quedarle de sus resistencias en misteriosas moradas. . . . Su barba se aguzaba con felino alargamiento, y sus ojos debían haber subido un poco hacia las sienes, como los de ciertas aves de cuya apariencia se hubiera vestido (41).” These changes highlight the fluidity between Mackandal and the natural world, as well as Mackandal’s increasing power. Mackandal’s highest authority and calling come from the *loa* themselves who will give Mackandal, aside from power, responsibility: “Un día daría la señal del gran levantamiento, y los Señores de Allá, encabezados por Damballah, por el Amo de los Caminos y por Ogún de los Hierros, traerían el rayo y el trueno, para desencadenar el ciclón que completaría la obra de los hombres” (37-38). These three gods, representing intelligence, the trickster or god of the crossroads, and the warrior god, will be the powerful allies to the resistance movement. Mackandal is described as: “…la humana persona de Mackandal. El mandinga Mackandal. Mackandal Hombre. El Manco. El Restituido. El Acontecido” (40). The last three words that begin with uppercase letters demonstrate his importance to the community, for which he is more than a man, he becomes myth. Mackandal is first and foremost named a person and human being, this being one of the most important aspects, since it contradicts and rejects the dehumanizing nature of slavery. Mackandal then morphs into an occurrence, a happening; and thus a motion and movement. In the minds of the people, there was no doubt of the miracle that Mackandal would continue to exist. According to de Certeau: “The structure of the miracle has a similar form: out of another time, from a time that is alien, arises a ‘god’ who has the characteristics of memory, that silent encyclopedia of singular acts, and who, in religious stories, represents with such fidelity the ‘popular’ memory of those who have no place but who have time—‘Patience!’ (85-86). Mackandal has a vast storehouse of memory; he tells Ti Noel of the stories and events that took place in Africa. Having access to a vast quantity of stories and possessing a rich knowledge of nature, Mackandal used these in a subversive way that is in line with what was
mentioned earlier with regards to de Certeau’s ideas about memory. Utilizing *kairos*, or opportune moments in time, the memories and information that Mackandal possesses are able to come to the fore to enact changes outside of himself in the world around him. In this process, he becomes a “god,” a “miracle” that will become part of the memory of the people; a memory that can then be used again and again when *kairos* presents itself in an opportune moment. Even after Mackandal has died or, according to his followers, has transformed, he is a continuous presence, which reflects his sustained significance and importance to the community. Mircea Eliade explains that, “the sacred manifests itself limited and incarnate” (*Patterns* 26), and even though Mackandal was “limited” in his human and “incarnate” form, he was a “manifestation of the sacred” eventually transcending time and place. In the novel, he will continue to be alluded to via the mention of mushrooms on and around the citadel. Mackandal manifests yet again as a nocturnal butterfly when Henri Christophe is about to die. Yet Mackandal appears as human once again when Solimán arrives in Europe: “Otros mendigos habían agitado furiosamente los *muñones*, mostrando todo el patrimonio de llagas y miserias, por si se trataba de algún *embajador* de ultramar” (132; emphasis added). Words describing pain, misery, and physical mutilation are linked to terms associated with country and politics, looking to find a Trickster capable of transforming them.

According to Lewis Hyde, sacrifice allows for redistribution or “reapportionment”; sacrifice redistributes that which is divine amongst the mortals, by giving what is mortal to the gods, the gods in turn, give what is immortal (knowledge, boon, foresight) to mortals, opening up a passage (Hyde 36, 115). In this way, sacrifice can redistribute power on the terrestrial plane and on the divine plane since, “sacrifice is ritual apportionment” (36). Hyde further explains that, “Whatever trickster pulls this trick does not initially invent sacrifice, therefore; first he invents the trick of reapportionment, some sleight of hand by which the thigh of an ox ends up on the plate of a slave” (Hyde 37). An example of how sacrifice is used in order to obtain a change of “apportionment” occurs in *El reino de este mundo* during the Great Pact, when a priestess sacrifices a pig as part of a ritual and oath. If we apply the idea that sacrifice is
necessary to redistribute or reapportion, this sacrifice can be seen as necessary in order for the loa to redistribute the land in Haiti from plantation owners to slaves. There is a need to sacrifice a hunger on one level, the pig for appetite, in order to satisfy hunger on a transcendent level, the hunger for freedom. The relationship between the pig as link between the terrestrial and divine occurs again when Ti Noel sees images of the pig of San Antón in the churches. The figure of the pig returns inversely in the citadel where there is smoked ham, which opposes the image of sacrifice: in this case the pig is a sign of luxury and reflects the hunger of the appetite, thus breaking the link with the divine. In addition to the animal sacrifices during the Grand Pact, Mackandal also sacrifices animals in order to test his poisons. Given powers by the loa over plants, he sacrifices the animals and changes the “apportionment” of the plantation owners as they lose their wealth by way of their animals. Not only do the plantation owners lose their wealth, many begin to lose their lives; these losses incite fear in the plantation owners as the balance of power begins to tip. Henri Christophe also sacrifices, but rather than pigs, he sacrifices bulls in order to edify the citadel with their blood. Carpentier uses the word sacrificio to open a chapter called “El sacrificio de los toros,” which describes the sacrifice of the bulls during the construction of the citadel. This word will be used again towards the end of the chapter when Carpentier writes: “edificadores conscientes del significado profundo del sacrificio” (103). However, used in this example, the word takes on other meanings that go beyond “un simple adelanto en la técnica de la albañilería militar” (103). It was not only the blood of bulls that was spilled in order to construct the citadel, during Henri Christophe’s reign; as metonymic extension of the bull’s blood, human blood had been spilled in order to build the citadel. The gods need sacrifice in order to have movement themselves: “En el Reino de los Cielos no hay grandeza que conquistar, puesto que allá todo es jerarquía establecida, incógnita despejada. . . imposibilidad de sacrificio, reposo y deleite” (150). The Trickster is necessary to establish a connection

---

123 Lewis Hyde describes how Hermes “slips the trap of appetite” by sacrificing the loot from his theft, giving up one hunger (appetite) for divine ambition (38).
between these realms and to keep that connection open, mobile, and fluid. In return for establishing this connection, power is granted by the loa who rule over the vegetable and animal world, initially to Mackandal, Solimán, Mamán Loi, and Bouckman. Later, Mackandal will teach Ti Noel, who eventually will have powers of his own.

As in the case of Mário de Andrade, we can consider Carpentier himself as a Trickster, a communicator that is a mediating figure. Capentier, in a baroque chiaroscuro style, borders on dark and light much like the Trickster figure; he obscures and enlightens at the same time. Within the text, there are many plays on words that can obscure the real definition while at the same time, elucidating the complexity of certain ideas and sentiments by juxtaposing meaning. The chiaroscuro of Carpentier, while focusing on and emphasizing certain events and people, draws attention to the absence of others, by making their absence conspicuous with brief allusions and then saying no more. Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert notes and analyzes the absence of Dessalines and Toussaint L’Ouverture (122-125), and rightfully so. In a way, I almost feel as if, by having to be sought out, the absences in the novel (in addition to other absences: the absence of the slave ship, the long absence of Mackandal) lingered in a subtle way and forced the reader out of the complacency of being given a story and accepting it as is, as an entirety. Mackandal, who is one of the main characters of the first part of the novel, is indirectly alluded to elsewhere, even though he does not forward the plot. For example, in the Ciudadela, as Henri Christophe is dying, a mariposa nocturna appears (a reference to one of the transformations of Mackandal) and hongos (alluding to the mushrooms Mackandal used as poison) are present in the Ciudadela. Perhaps in a similar way, Dessalines and Toussaint L’Ouverture, while mentioned only tangentially, are present through their very absence. It is interesting to note that Toussaint’s name “L’Ouverture” meant opening, since coincidentally, he could find/create/craft an opening through different situations in order to overcome them. Toussaint L’Ouverture is mentioned in the novel as crafting the Magi. Mary W. Helms
states that crafting is an endeavor associated with Hermes and Trickster in general, where crafts are imbued with power because of the labor that is required:

The curious or unfamiliar objects that are most marked by cosmic power are frequently those that are not immediately at hand, but must be obtained by some exceptional effort. The difficulty of acquisition and/or the need for exceptional skills to acquire or craft exotic goods become, in turn, part of the measure of their potency.

...crafting skill indicates a special gift or a special power. (114-115)

L’Ouverture and this textual association with Christianity contrasts with Dessalines’ association with voodoo and the more aggressive Petro rite. Dessalines legacy is marked with both positive and negative ambiguity, leaving much to be sorted out. In terms of mythical figures, which is what interested Carpentier, he places L’Ouverture and Dessalines on opposite sides of the spectrum, although Ti Noel himself feels a synchronicity between Christianity and voodoo in the churches of Santiago. Ti Noel is then more of a mediating figure between the two figures, embodying the moving and living dynamics between the two belief systems, a third option amongst opposing sides.

It also seems that the author uses the idea of triads as a subversive dynamic: Lenormand de Mezy, a former mason, “desconfiaba ahora de los triángulos noveleros” (72); Henri Christophe will also view the Christian triad of San Benito, San Pedro and San Francisco as “traitors” who have left him in his hour of need (121). Those in power then view the number as a threat; perhaps a third option is perceived as menacing since it contains the potential to upend a binary stasis of power. A third option could also represent the Trickster, who changes the binary system; not necessarily as a mediator, however he can change the system entirely and thus poses a threat. Mackandal, for example, had the power of three loa on his side: Ogun (warrior), Legba (road, Trickster), Damballah (serpent, intellect). The number three is particularly meaningful to Ti Noel since he uses the number as a sign (as the author is perhaps doing): when Ti Noel spots the three ceiba trees “situadas en vértices de triángulo comprendió que había llegado” (93). Seeing three rocks in a semi-circular fashion and a broken branch is a bad omen and harkens the
beginning of Henri Christophe’s reign (91). Towards the end of the novel, Ti Noel will also be part of a trio: he, along with a Padre de la Sabana, and a veteran will sit together briefly in the kingdom that Ti Noel has created. Finally, there are three storms in the novel, one during the Great Pact, the other when Henri Christophe is dying and the last storm occurs towards the end of the novel when Ti Noel is dying. There is a foreshadowing of these storms when it is explained that Mackandal is to give the signal when the loa “traerían el rayo y el trueno, para desencadenar el ciclón que completaría la obra de los hombres” (38). We can associate “ciclón” with the word ciclo or cycle, and indeed the cycles in the novel begin and end with storms. The cyclone during the Pact signals the beginning of the end of slavery in Haiti, then another cyclone occurs during the final day of Henri Christophe, signaling the end of his reign and his kingdom. There is one final cyclone at the very end of the novel, which puts a stop to all of the hard travails of Ti Noel and his work in the reino de este mundo. It also coincidentally concludes the novel itself. These cyclones/cycles can be interpreted as a type of apocaplypse: as a divine revelation of an ending and the heralding of a new beginning. Carpentier’s description of the function of the cyclone in the novel has then several meanings and many functions: it states how the cycles can be viewed, it signals that the cyclones have special meanings and signal a temporal change, perhaps it is also a self-reference to the author’s own work in the novel. The multiplicity of meanings the author leaves as an open semantic field is similar to Trickster’s creation of an open road: we become boundary crossers as we find that “meaning is contingent and identity fluid” (Hyde 172).

3.4 Mascaró, el cazador americano: Trickster Transformations and Transfigurations

Beware the social system that cannot laugh at itself, that responds to those who do not know their place by building a string of prisons.

-Lewis Hyde

In Mascaró, el cazador americano, many facets of the Trickster figure are superimposed in a dizzying manner in order to (con)fuse and elucidate (which is what the Trickster figure does), since Haroldo
Conti knew full well that his audience would be a combination of both supporters and detractors, and that this last group would ultimately censor his work. Both the fictional characters within the novel and the author himself can be considered as Trickster figures whose movements, whether across the sea, the desert or the page, transform, transmit, and transcend. The fictional characters of the novel are Trickster figures; characters that are capable of inner and outer transformation, and these transformations will be seen as a threat to the established order (personified by the rurales), serving as what seems to be at first glance a simple allegory. The nonfictional person of Haroldo Conti can be thought of as a Trickster himself; his transformations of words, folklore, and paradigms on a literary level and the transmission of these on a social level were made to be purposely ambivalent or rather polyvalent, and this polyvalence will be explained by the author within the novel itself as a form of transmission/hermeneutics.  

3.4.1 Tri-Tricksters: Unity in Three

To begin on the literary level, there are many characters in Mascaró, el cazador americano but only a few “figures” stand out as main characters; one character that is marginally more pronounced as compared to others is Oreste, since his actions are the focus of the beginning and the end of the novel.  

124 For Spinks, Trickster makes the ambivalent, polyvalent: “Trickster renew the archetype by attacking the archetype; he makes the ambivalent polyvalent; and what he does by this dance of differentiation is that he keeps the archetype from settling into stasis and gives it evolutionary life” (Trickster 15).

125 Haroldo Conti calls some of these characters figuras or figuritas. As we shall see, much of the wording has many layers of meaning, all of them significant in the context in which the word is presented. The word figura has as a few of its possible meanings as stated in Diccionario de la lengua española by the Real Academia Española: 1. Forma exterior de alguien o de algo 3. Cuerpo de un hombre o de un animal representado pictóricamente o escultóricamente. 5. Cosa que representa o significa otra. 8. Ilustración que acompaña a un texto para adornarlo o explicarlo gráficamente. 9. Persona que destaca en una determinada actividad. 10. Función que alguien desempeña. La figura del director de orquesta. 11. Personaje de ficción. 12. Actor que representa un papel teatral. 13. Movimiento o cambio de postura de un deportista o de un bailarín en acción. 14. Der. figura jurídica 18. Ret. Forma del discurso que se aparta de la más habitual con fines expresivos o estilísticos (“figura,” def. 1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18). In the novel, the word figura is repeated where it can have one or several of these meanings at the same time: the characters are represented as people or animals pictorially using words and some of these words or images are used to refer or represent someone or something else outside or exterior to the text, many of them possibly representing actors in the Libre Teatro Libre. The figures/characters do stand out in their determined activities as they cultivate their talents. These characters are also fictional characters that have a particular function. Movement of some type
In the interim, two other characters, the namesake of the novel, Mascaró, and the Príncipe Patagón, become associated with Oreste as they travel together, with the Príncipe Patagón serving as a mentor figure who endeavors to make Oreste a *príncipe* like himself by encouraging his individuality. Antonio Benítez Rojo deduced that these protagonists are all one figure:

¿Por qué Mascaró? Mascaró, alias Joselito Bembé, el Príncipe Patagón, el señor Tesero, etc., es sin duda un personaje en la novela, pero a pesar de sus apariciones individuales-siempre fugaces-, se trata de un personaje colectivo; Mascaró, el jinete enmascarado, el tirador infalible, el cazador de gorilas americanos, es el circo, la célula clandestina, el grupo popular perseguido a muerte por los “rurales”. (90)

The three main characters, Mascaró, el Príncipe Patagón, and Oreste, coalesce as one figure and yet this one character also represents all of those who will join their traveling circus as a collectivity, as Benítez Rojo suggests. Underscoring the idea of a trio/one is the repetition of the number three throughout the novel, implying some importance is given to the number and to triadic formulations, where in many cases these triads are comprised of the fusion of three different characters. In the following example from the text, the author seems to be describing three aspects or facets of the Príncipe, although these facets could be interpreted as a manifestation of the unity of the Príncipe Patagón, Oreste, and Mascaró, since the three different characterizations suit the personalities and functions of these three characters: “el Príncipe que por un lado parecía desatenderse de las cosas y por otro estar en constante acecho, esto es, dos príncipes y hasta tres, porque había uno oscuro que marchaba detrás de los otros dos, tal vez Requena” (21). It seems as though these three princes or aspects all reside in the Príncipe Patagón, further (con)founding the idea of three in one. These characteristics can also apply to other protagonists. For example, Oreste seems to “desatenderse de las cosas” as exemplified in the following citation: “En cuanto a Oreste, estaba ido, siguiendo los aires de una música apartada” (85). Mascaró seems to be “en
“constante acecho” and Requena is the earlier name of the Príncipe Patagón as a character in a previous novel by Haroldo Conti. The idea of these three figures as one underscores the characteristic of polyvalence as a trait typical of the Trickster figure who can embody many figures and shapeshift.

Having discussed the unity of these three figures, our focus turns toward their individuality. To begin with el Principe Patagón, why the figure of a Prince? In order to answer this question, we need to delve into the semiosis of the text. Haroldo Conti uses certain words that are as polyvalent as his characters; he combines meanings and definitions, revivifying words and making them living entities pregnant with meaning. The manner in which the author employs Castilian Spanish and Latin can cause the boundaries between these languages to become fluid.

Haroldo Conti takes full advantage of a plurality of meanings by playing word games in the way Trickster often does. The word prince, deriving from the Latin princeps has among its many meanings: “first; earliest; original; leading, in front; foremost, chief II m leader, chief; emperor; (mil) maniple, company; (mil) captain, company commander, centurion; . . .” (“princeps”). If we apply these meanings to the Prince as a figure that embodies three/one/multitude, then the Prince is “first, earliest, and original” because the Principe Patagón named himself Prince; no regent came before him and bestowed the title upon him, rather it was a title that began with him. The title is ironic since he is a vagabond with few possessions, atypical of princes and royalty that were bequeathed kingdoms and sought riches: “Yo mismo me reconozco así hace tiempo. Al principio lo tomaba a broma, me revestía de trapos y un nombre de tamaño, para rústicos. Ahora hace...

---

126 Antonio Benítez Rojo asserts that not only can these three figures be considered as one, but that they represent Haroldo Conti. The way the Prince is described will be analyzed further with regard to the author himself. For the moment, suffice it to say that the Prince, among other things, is a skilled orator and wordsmith that leads the circus and also serves as a mentor to Oreste in his quest for (a) purpose.

127 Haroldo Conti taught Latin and his use of the language in Mascaró appears seemingly sporadic, and yet when certain words are fleshed out by considering their multiple meanings in Latin, they are charged with overlapping meanings that sometimes can create new significations. These multiple meanings have a myriad of implications in the novel. Conti doesn’t limit himself to Latin and employs American indigenous languages along with English and other languages.

128 Taken from The New College Latin and English Dictionary by John C. Traupman, Ph.D. (338). Unless noted otherwise, all Latin definitions provided will be taken from this text.
rato que soy el Príncipe Patagón. ¡Soy el que soy!... En la otra vida me llamaban Requena” (15). He self-defines himself much like Ti Noel does towards the end of El reino de este mundo. By already having traveled, he has slipped the metonymical traps and rejects definitions and paradigms that come from without. The Príncipe as mago is a reference that hearkens back to a time when people were sent to other places in order to learn about different people, to gain knowledge and wisdom, and to be thought of as a learned person. Mago also implies a Trickster figure who possesses knowledge of various places and can serve as a mediating figure. The mediating figure is exemplified when the Príncipe interacts with Scarpa, the previous circus owner, to negotiate a deal for the wares of the circus, although it seems that was not the original agreement among the two individuals. As the circus moves from town to town, it is the Príncipe who introduces the circus and serves as a gateway between the circus and the town. Some of the other definitions of the word princeps should be considered: the meaning of emperor is evident from the onset when the Príncipe is introduced as “Casi emperador” (12). The Príncipe is also defined as the, “legítimo Príncipe Patagón: versista, recitador, escribiente, mago adivino certificado, algebrista y, en otro tiempo, ministro” (12). The functions or acts of the Príncipe are as follows:

Inolvidable espectáculo para los amantes del ARTE, la CIENCIA y las BELLAS LETRAS.

Relatos de viajes y sucesos con FIGURAS DEL NATURAL.

Coplas, himnos, acrósticos y monólogos.

Adivinación del FUTURO por infusión . . . (12)

Many of these functions and attributes of the Príncipe have been discussed as characteristics that are typical of a Trickster. The Príncipe is a wordsmith in the form of a storyteller who combines memory and

---

129 If we consider that a large extension of the novel is called “La guerrita” then one of the Latin definitions of principes as maniple could refer to the Príncipe’s function as “man in the middle” of the guard. Oreste would then represent the hastati, since he is closer to the front lines, which explains why he was the first one captured and tortured. Mascaró would then be a triarii, the one who is better armed, and remains towards the back of the maniple, rarely seen until the need arises, which is precisely his function in the novel.
imagination and waits for *kairos* to use storytelling as tactic. The Príncipe tells stories of travels being a traveler himself. The Príncipe also plays with words and language and this playfulness (as described in the above citation “Coplas . . .”) is creative and is part of the power inherent in Trickster.

Oreste is a traveler from the beginning of the novel, travelling in his boat to meet with destiny. He will disembark for a short stay to be followed by another journey on the boat, the Mañana, whose name evokes the themes of destiny, possibility, and hope. Oreste’s name, as with all names in the novel, has a meaning: “Y dice su nombre, reposado, llamándose y reconociéndose, juntándose, uno solo en aquel fárrago” (14). The Príncipe links Oreste’s name with travel by responding, “Nombre para viajes” (14). *Oreste* is the name of a character from previous novels by Haroldo Conti and he reappears in *Mascaró*.

Oreste’s talent is to transform from human to animal. At first, Oreste uses gestures and special effects, then, with the passing of time, he perfects his talents to the point where both the audience and the reader begin to question where the line can be drawn between Oreste as human and Oreste as animal. These transformations transpire both in the circus and spiritually, concluding in a “finale,” a unification of the spiritual and the physical aspects that occurs when Oreste transforms into a flying swan. The imagery of the swan is charged with a transcendent symbolism in a novel where transcendence is a ubiquitous motif. Oreste is described in the beginning as “apenas cuerpo, alma resumida” (14). The word *resumida* has multiple meanings, one being that he is resuming the action from where the previous novel, *Sudeste*, had left off. There is also a play on the word itself: *re/sumida*. The *Diccionario de la lengua española* by the Real Academia Española states that the verb *resumir* is from the Latin *resumère*, for ‘retomar,’ ‘reanudar,’ ‘reabsorber,’ and within Oreste, it alludes to a sum or “absorption” of many animals, experiences, and other people: a similar sum that can be found in other characters in the novel since many are

---

130 The name *Oreste* could be taken to mean different things on different levels; Conti could have reused one of the names of a prior character and kept it *Oreste* as a play on the word *oeste* which was perhaps a region of focus in this particular novel. Or perhaps it is a play on *Agrestes (Olimpias), Coro*, names for the WNW wind, since the northwest region is a place of interest since. In addition, throughout the novel there are references to the words: *rosa* and wind (*for rosa de los vientos*) along with Santa Olimpia.

210
interconnected by references, symbols, and allusions ("resumir"). If by resumir we also mean “3. prnl.

Dicho de una cosa: Convertirse, comprenderse, resolverse en otra,” the transformations of Oreste are being foreshadowed by this description of “alma resumida,” or perhaps the description is a clue with regard to a latent state of being(s) that has always resided within Oreste as a potential Trickster who has the capability to manifest these dormant states that wait for kairos ("resumir,” def. 3). If in the beginning of the novel Oreste is “apenas cuerpo,” towards its end, Oreste “casi no existe” (93). The word apenas can be taken in many forms: in the first way as “apenas cuerpo,” in order to describe Oreste’s levity as a traveler; yet separated to a/penas, the weight of the body and of the past (or the weight of history) can be inferred from the Latin poena-ae “hardship, loss, pain,” in which case the body and the past are united since the body bears the scars and the years of the past as memory (“poena -ae”). 131 In the beginning of the novel, Orestes leaves these scars and memories behind and becomes liviano as he begins his voyage on the Mañana. Towards the end of the novel, Oreste “casi no existe” to the prison guard in the sense that he is a number, and his existence is of little importance and, as he is being tortured, his very life hangs on by a thread. Oreste a/penas existe in that Oreste exists in a state of “punishment and penalty” and it can also refer to a state of hardship, loss, and pain, thus creating a web of double significance.

The title of the novel Mascaró, el cazador americano leads us to think of Mascaró as a main character. Although not much space is devoted to him, his presence is felt as the jinete that participates in the circus. The Príncipe, Mascaró, and Oreste are all cazadores as they attract people to the circus and to their cause. One of the first references to these characters as cazadores, aside from the implication of the title, is the scene of the tempest on the boat where the Príncipe utters the words duc in altum or “put out into the Deep” – the English translation of the Latin phrase, that in itself is a translation of what Jesus says to Simon when he tells him to go and be a fisher of men (16). In the novel, parallels are drawn

131 A similar phrasing occurs towards the end of the novel in the case of the Príncipe: “El Príncipe echó pie a tierra disimulando a duras penas que era un Príncipe” (85; emphasis added).
between desert/sky/sea and fish/birds, and similarly to a fisher of men, the *cazadores* are “birders” of men; they are attracting people to their cause using the imagery of birds rather than fish and the parallels drawn between birds and fish, sea and sky throughout the novel allow for this metonymical slip. This biblical allusion sets up what will be one of the functions of the circus: to find people and animate them towards the cause. The first person that the Príncipe Patagón “catches” is Oreste who, “Dormirá como un pez” (16) which is a line that follows shortly after the Príncipe utters *duc in altum*. Yet Conti uses words to their greatest semantic extent, rather than just giving the reader an image and in many ways, a purpose; the words are charged with the full plenitude of meanings that they can possibly hold and these meanings tend to intersect within the novel. If we explore the meanings of the words in Latin: *ducō*. . . meaning “to lead, guide, direct, conduct; to command; to march; . . . to mislead, take in, . . . to construct, form, . . . to run, build *(a wall or ditch or rampart or road from one point to another)*; to drive *(vehicles)*; . . . to derive, trace *(lineage)*. . .”; and *altum* meaning “high; tall; deep; profound *(wisdom)*; . . . thick *(fog)*; high-born, ancient *(lineage)* II n. high seas, the deep; heaven; . . .”, all of these meanings are present and superimposed on one another (“*ducō dūcere dūxī ductus*”; “altus -a-um”). The circus will *lead and guide* the townspeople into awaking their own creativity and potential for power. The circus will also *mislead* with semantic games any attempt to pin anyone down into a narrow paradigm or a narrow cell. A circus will be *constructed* along with identities, acts, and a self-contained universe that also extends outward. As for *altum*, the *Príncipes*, while not high-born in the sense of belonging to traditional royalty, their title implies high-born, and in many ways these characters experience a rebirth to a lighter, more elevated experience, thus playing on the idea of “high-born.” “High seas” and “deep heaven” along with “high and tall,” and “deep and profound,” in addition to geographical and mythical terms that have already been explored, may refer on one level to the writing of Haroldo Conti with regard to his combination of registers where such a sacred phrase, “*duc in altum*” becomes *duquinalto*, demonstrating an irreverence typical of Trickster figures. The juxtaposition of the high and the tall, deep and profound, describes the spaces
where the Trickster finds himself, where he is either moving amongst them or he is present in both of them at the same time. Tall and short as physical heights constitute yet another play on words, because Perinola is a short person, while the Príncipe Patagón is tall. However, this difference is both literary and metaphorical because the Príncipe Patagón speaks in an elevated manner, while Perinola tends to twist words towards the picaresque and the profane. Later in the novel, Perinola becomes a “giant” and his spirit is no longer mean, and this is symbolized by his change in physical stature by way of Carpoforo who elevates Perinola on his shoulders.

3.4.2 Alchemist as Trickster

In addition to being leaders and fishers of men, this trio of Tricksters are alchemists which may be implied by the Príncipe Patagón when he calls himself a mago- magus, a magician or learned man. Alchemists can be thought of as Tricksters in that they are supposedly capable of transforming natural elements around them. The idea of this triad of characters as alchemists crystallizes when the Príncipe Patagón looks for a piedra amarilla which can be linked with his attempts to imitate Basilio Argimón, the flying man, since both the stone and the act of flying imply transformation and transubstantiation (85). The Príncipe Patagón wants to be able to go from terrestrial being to aerial being and searches for the secret of this transformation and transubstantiation, which is one of the goals of alchemy: not just to turn elements into gold on a physical level, but rather to experience a transformation of the spirit. The piedra amarilla, if we take it to signify sulfur, implies we could also consider mercury and salt as part of an alchemical trinity, since this is how these elements were grouped. This grouping reinforces the presence of the number three and its symbolic importance throughout this novel, along with the conception of unity in one. According to Paracelsus, mercury (representative of the energetic force of the spirit), sulfur (representing the soul), and salt (representing base or matter) were the principia, the origin of seven metals and ultimately, the philosopher’s stone (Holmyard 174-175). An argument can be posited that the
three main characters embody this alchemical trio: Mascaró representing the salt of the earth as “the principle of incombustibility and non-volatility” is described at the beginning of the novel as a solid, concrete figure; the Príncipe Patagón represents Mercury, the “principle of fusibility and volatility” (174). It is he who “fuses” together a circus by recruiting different characters. He also creates linguistic confusions and if we delve into the political aspects of the novel, perhaps it is worth bearing in mind that a word that was used for Mercury was Argentvive, which, with a quick semiotic twist, easily becomes “vive Argentina” (Holmyard 277). Quite the loquacious character, the Príncipe is presented as passionate with fluctuating emotions and changing actions that highlight a “volatility.” The meaning of “volatile” also underlines the Príncipe’s most fervent wish: to fly. Oreste representing Sulfur, the Soul, is capable of transforming into a swan that takes flight, an act that can also symbolize transformation on a spiritual level. The Príncipe Patagón, in asking for la piedra amarilla (sulfur) which Adviento Paleo uses for ulcers, is perhaps trying to achieve this last state of transcendence into the aerial, spiritual realm.

The references to an alchemical transformation continue when the Príncipe maintains a conversation “acerca de las sustancias magistrales y su uso pertinente, bebían sin concupiscencia sumergidos por entero en aquella luz empolvada que parecía traspasar sus cuerpos” (86). In light of other possible references to alchemy, the sustancias magistrales could refer to the alchemical “magisterium” also known as the “grand elixir” or “philosopher’s stone,” “whose virtues were such that it could not only transmute baser metals into silver and gold, but could also prolong life indefinitely” (Bogert 254). This process of transmutation and transubstantiation is best summed up by the following phrase that appears frequently in the novel, “celesta y compuesta:” celesta (from the Latin caelestis, an adjective deriving from caelum or “sky, heaven(s); air, climate, weather; universe, world”) and compuesta or com/puesta- an amalgam of various elements, individuals, and entities that create and recreate the universe/world. An example of these amalgams can be found on page eighty-three in the combination of names of the people in the circus that are exhibited on a wanted poster.
The instructions that Basilio gives to the Príncipe in a dream explain to him how to form the compuesto in order to fly (or travel to the caelum):

Lo compuesto consiste en cortar las cañas de un solo tajo en cuarto menguante y cocerlas a fuego de reverbero en grasa de ñancu, tramar la tela bien prieta, de seda natural, . . . empleando para las costuras el punto ojal y fundir los engranajes sumando siempre a la fusión media onza de titanos y tres cucharadas de agua fortis, mientras uno se embebe por dentro, para conjugar, con agua ardens a voluntad. (75; emphasis added)

This last mixture of agua fortis and agua ardens, can represent metaphorical internal descriptions of character, and may reference other definitions that also may have symbolic meaning within the text. Fortis can signify “brave, courageous; strong, mighty, powerful; resolute, steadfast, firm; . . . decent, honorable (conduct); drastic (remedies); . . .” (“fortis -is -e”). Ardens means “blazing, burning, hot, fiery; gleaming; intense (emotions); zealous, eager. . .; bright (colors, stars)” (“ārdēns -entis”). These are characteristics that are necessary for transcendental transmutation. The word aqua has the following obvious connotations: “water; rain, rainfall” (“aqua -ae”). If we look for combined expressions with aqua, we find aqua et igni interdicere: to outlaw (literally, to keep (away) from water and fire)” (“aqua -ae”). If the circus is outlawed because of its capability to transform and transcend, the pursuers of the circus are figuratively trying to keep it away from water and fire, and yet fire water is the prescription that Basilio Argimón gives the Príncipe Patagón for transcendence. Of all of these semantic and metaphorical infusions, according to Basilio, “lo que realmente importa es la celesta” or rather, the transcending aspect of alchemical sublimation (75). Oreste, the Príncipe, and Mascaró, when considered together, are spiritual alchemists that transform the world around them by exhibiting an inner potentiality for transformation.

3.4.3 A Trickster UniVerse
This mixture of the individual and the collective embodied in the triad of the Príncipe Patagón, Oreste, and Mascaró is neither the only triad nor the only configuration of figures (numerical or otherwise) present in the novel. Some configurations are dyadic, some involve six figures, and some configurations are potentially limitless. In addition to numerical configurations, there are amalgamated arrangements that exemplify the combination of human beings and animals transforming fluidly from one into the other.

An example of how combinations are conceived in the novel appears in the following quotation: “El cisne siguió volando cada vez más suelto, más alto, pero a ratos soplaba un gruñidito, estrafalaria encarnación de tan opuestas criaturas, rejunte, Trinidad, Universo” (66). In this example, through the idea of opuestas, we are presented with the implication of a duality followed by a Trinity in one Universe (uni/verse). The novel begins with the predecessor of triads in one: Oreste, Mascaró, and Príncipe Patagón: Cafuné. In a way, Cafuné is the original and mythical Trickster of the novel, who, as mentioned in the previous chapter, is the original transformer and foreshadows many of the transformations in the plot. He embodies all; he is a universe in one person in a state of perpetual change. Some of his incarnations include: pájaro (4), pez (6), centauro (8), precursor (11). Cafuné is both a message carrier and creator: “Cuando no toca la flauta corre de un lado a otro con su bicicleta. Lleva y trae mensajes. Más a menudo los inventa” (4).

His presence remains in the background, he does not participate actively in the action of the novel, but similarly to Mackandal, his presence will be continuously evoked. He is memory (of an origin) in wait for kairos: “Cafuné . . . es todo presente, y tan sólo espera su oportunidad” (11). Cafuné is a subversive figure not only for what he does, but also ontologically. This explains why towards the end of the novel, he too will be on the list of people the rurales are looking to imprison: for being a messenger and for being one of the original cazadores.

134 This novel, full of messages, presents within the plot the messages of the author with allusions to messages and messengers abundant throughout the novel.
The *cazadores* of the novel create more *cazadores*, forming a *universe* or a “spinning” (*verso*) “whole” (*universus*) in constant movement and motion as an expanding and itinerant circus travelling to various towns. On the boat Mañana, in addition to the triad formed by the Príncipe, Oreste, and Mascaró, is the triad comprised of el Capitán, el Andrés, and el Nuño. Parallels can be drawn between pairs within these sets of triads: between el Nuño and the Príncipe, the Capitán and Mascaró, who are described as “hombres concretos,” and Andrés and Oreste. However, even these parallels are subject to change. An example that demonstrates and reinforces the idea of exchange between characters, and in this triad in particular, is the following: “Oreste, por fuerza, se preguntó quién diablos comandaba, porque el Andrés y el Nuño estaban igualmente allí” (15). This exchange between characters occurs on the level of signifiers in the wanted poster that is affixed to a wall towards the end of the novel:

René Mascaró (a) El Cazador Americano, Joselito Bembé, Maldeojos, profesor Asir, Seis-en-Uno, Carpofo, el Califa, Bailarin Oriental, Viuda negra, Chumbo Cárdenas, Lucho Almaraz, Oreste von Beck, Pepe Nola, Fragetto, dòmine Tesero, Príncipe Patagónico etc. (83)

Oreste von Beck, for example, is a mixture of Oreste and el Nuño’s alter ego, Capitán von Beck. Pepe Nola fuses Pepe, a character who appears at the beginning of the novel, and Perinola. Piroxena and Pélice at one point in the novel will resemble one another, while Perinola and Carpofo will join together to become one in the act of the “gigante,” and El Calloso becomes Mascaró’s shadow (77).

In *Mascaró*, characters cross with one another, diffusing barriers and definitive lines.135 This line blurs not only among people, but also between people and objects, and people and animals. One of the incarnations of Cafuné is that of a centaur, yet he combines this amalgam of horse and human with even more transformations and potentialities: fish, bird, man, messenger, and precursor. Oreste’s talent to transform into animals has already been discussed, and the following statement shows that the line

---

135 These exchanges (and diffuse borders) occur not only among characters in the novel, but also extends to persons outside of the novel that are referenced specifically in the novel. Included among some of these figures are various saints, musicians, artists, and politicians.
between him and Cafuné is also blurred: “Oreste Cafuné comienza a soplar la flauta de hueso” (7). Boc Tor will become such an expert equestrian that towards the end of the novel, he and the horse will become practically indistinguishable. Also at the end of the novel, Oreste finds himself in a zoo where he attempts to fly, much like his act in the circus, however in this case, he does not have access to the artifice that makes Oreste as man and Oreste as a bird indistinguishable. The zoo, the place where Oreste is captured, and the jail to where he is taken, become metonymic via the imagery of the bars. Places themselves, then become confused. The line between people and places also becomes diffuse since the names of certain characters and the names of locales are the same. For example, Madariaga is a musician in the novel and Madariaga is also the name of an empty town where the circus will conduct a show (79). The age of both the town and the character are connected by the descriptions in the novel; Madariaga the town is described as, “Todo entrevisto, de un mismo color, esa amarillenta vejez” (79) and as for Madariaga the character, “El violinista es un viejo legañoso” (3). Both descriptions evoke a languid sense of time passing, confusing person, place, and time.

The diffusion of borders among different characters, cities, objects, and animals is sometimes realized and made more profound through various transformations that occur within the people themselves, who by transforming, demonstrate Trickster-like capacities and capabilities. These changing and changeable characters, moveable and moving both as vagabonds and as the personification of metamorphosis, change in terms of references and reference points, making identification alterable. The characters keep spinning and moving both individually and as a group, therefore each individual can be considered a Trickster and the circus as a whole can be seen as a collective Trickster, full of potentialities. In the space between the individuality of each character and their collective entirety, there is a fluid movement; boundaries are crossed and intertwined in ways that are constantly changing and shifting much like the Trickster who exemplifies a figure that moves fluidly between individuality and collectivity. This redoubling or getting bigger, in many ways, seems to be a sign of life for Conti.
In addition to the interconnectedness of different characters (rendering signifiers as arbitrary with regard to signifieds as echoed by Oreste towards the end of the novel), the characters experience transformations through which their innermost qualities and talents transform, enabling them to also change the environment around them as they perfect their acts:

Farseto ha logrado suspenderse del trapecio y ahora voltea en la barra. . . .
Carpofofo ejecuta el “vuelo del ángel” hasta dormido. El Nuño, que se ha afinado y aun alargado, se sabe de memoria el manual de Wronsly y Vitone. . . . Perinola se ha reducido otro poco, extrayendo de su pequeñez toda la grandeza posible, monseñorio él, lo cual acaso explica la creciente amistad, por atracción de contrarios, entre él y Carpofofo, divirtiéndose como locos ejecutan el número del gigante. Boc Tor se ha transformado en un verdadero centauro, tanto que su humor varía según cambia el de Asir, y a la viceversa. . . . Sonia . . . sigue engordando y rejuveneciendo. . . . El Nuño prepara con devoción éstos y otros condumios de sencillo argumento con los que a menudo entretienen los fogosos ensayos del dúo filarmónico. En cuanto a los nuevos allegados, el Calloso es una sombra que no se despega del Bembé. Ayuda en la preparación de los fuegos al señor Piroxena sin apartar los ojos del caballero jinete. . . . El señor Piroxena . . . de día se parece al señor Pelice y de noche, cuando se quita la barba para dormir, se le parece tanto que resulta el mismo [cohetero en Arenales]. Joselito Bembé habla poco, como de costumbre, pero de alguna manera se induce, resuelve, comanda. Está y no está . . . más pensamiento que figura.

Las luces de Bengala [de Piroxena], sobre todo las moradas y las “auroras”, . . . no sólo servían para encantamiento del ojo sino también, en fantasiosa combina, para alumbrar repentinamente una apoteosis, simular incendios y trastornar figuras.136

En lo tocante al reino animal, el Califa . . . se comporta casi humano improvisando disparates. . . .

---

136 In alchemy: “The revivified body is quickened, perfected, and glorified, and is of a most beautiful purple colour; its tincture has virtue to change, tinge and cure every imperfect body” (from the anonymous The Sophic Hydrolith, in Holmyard 18). Holmyard states: “. . . and Paracelsus believed that when the conscious will and intellect were flooded with the super-personal lumen naturae, or light of Nature, life’s destiny was fulfilled” (176). When the circus performers reach a state of perfection, Piroxena sets off purple lights. Purple was the color of the philosopher’s stone, capable of transformation and transmutation. According to the author of The Sophic Hydrolith, “By its [the philosopher’s stone] aid Noah built the Ark. . . .” (Holmyard 18). The name of the circus is El Circo del Arca.
Oreste ha progresado también, a su manera. No se ejercita de forma corporal ni tampoco por dentro, en la idea. Su progreso consiste en todo lo contrario, en el más absoluto abandono, en el más complejo despojo. Sopla el “sicu”, se adormece. . . . Es casi un objeto. Pero solamente así, cuando truenan los fuegos, compone tantas formas, de arrebato, improvisando un surtido de personas y animales que se reemplazan velocemente sin confundirse ni estorbarse. (76-77)

Once the circus troupe participants reach the zenith of their capabilities, they become even more dangerous since this zenith represents not just a dedication to their craft, but a spiritual and transcendental culmination of the potentialities that have always laid dormant but were awakened by the circus. Oreste, after reaching the “height” of his capabilities, has within him the potentialities of the people and animals that he then acts out and makes manifest. Oreste is imprisoned after his flight as a swan when it has become almost impossible to differentiate him from flight itself. In the prison, Oreste has a dialogue with the guard who then asks for information about the rest of the circus troupe and a mix of myth and semiotics saves the protagonist from staying in prison since the guards, thinking that Oreste has lost his mind, unceremoniously throw him out. There was a communicative disconnect between the guards and Oreste because his point of view and reference points differed radically from those of the guards; Oreste refuses their semiotic game. The names that the guards use for the people they are pursuing do not correspond with how the protagonist sees the characters; Oreste sees the mythical internal version or magnified version of the characters that is eventually manifested outwardly, whereas the guards are looking for a one-to-one correspondence of name and face. Interestingly enough, the guards employ numbers as a naming device: they see Oreste as Cero and the guard himself is named Cinco, which indicates a violent act that simplifies people to a mere numerical scheme and thus

137 From the novel: “Oreste hubiera querido explicarle que los nombres son cosa de capricho. Que así como él, en su nueva condición, podía dejar de llamarse Oreste para ser más razonablemente Cero, y Primo, Cinco, Carpoforo podría muy bien consistir como Finito y el Nuño como el feroz capitán Cornamusa, lo cual se avenía mejor con sus nuevas encarnaciones. Pero no le dieron tiempo ni lo habrían entendido” (96).
dehumanizes them. When the guards indicate Carpofooro, for example, Oreste replies: “Éste es Finito Quebrantahuesos en su tercera encarnación. Gran campeón de todos los pesos…” (95). Oreste describes Farseto as: “Éste es el Araña, maestro alambrista de espeluznante solvencia con puñales y estafas” (95). The guards ask for clarification of this explanation and Oreste says: “Recursos para complicar la travesía de la maroma” (95). As for El Nuño, Oreste states the following: “Este otro [Nuño] es nada menos que el feroz capitán Cornamusa. Diestro en el sable de abordaje, mejor dicho, ambidiestro. Su especialidad es el ‘mandoble a la calabaza’”; and about Perinola: “¡Ojo con éste [Perinola]! Aunque se hace llamar monseñor es más sanguinario que el Lolonés” (95). The signifiers given Oreste do not match the signifieds in his mind since the boundaries are far more fluid than the guards allow. Names are metaphors or perhaps they are entities even more fluid than metaphors would allow. Oreste cannot give the guards what they want nor who they want: the troupe of Tricksters, a mythical troupe that doesn’t match a codifying system (which isn’t a one-to-one correspondence: discourses of power use these systems as an illusion to give themselves legitimacy; yet such closed correspondences are too strict for such illusions).

When asked for the signfieds of the signifiers, the Trickster gives myth, breaking and making fluid the boundary between semiotics and myth.

The Príncipe Patagón, as wordsmith, foreshadows what will be the purpose of the circus when he utters the words: “Motu proprio” (16)- motu can mean: “motion, movement; gesture; dancing; change (e.g., of fortune); impulse, inspiration; passion; revolt, riot; tactical move; (rhet) figure of speech” (“mōtus -ūs”) and proprio: “own, very own; special, peculiar, individual, particular, personal; lasting” (“proprius -a -um”). In addition, we have the phrase Sursum Corda (16) with the respective meanings of each word: “upwards, high up” (“sūrsum”), and corda from cor: “heart (as the seat of the emotions, as the seat of wisdom); mind, judgement; dear friend” (“cor cordis”).138 Sursum emphasizes the trope of elevation and

138 Perhaps heart, friend, and mind can also correspond to the alchemical elements and states mentioned earlier: soul (sulfur, heart), substance (salt, friend), spirit (mercury, mind).
ascendance. With the phrase, *Sursum Corda*, the circus travels in order to elevate hearts, friends, and minds. The *raison d’être* of the ambulatory circus is to create movement, to change, to inspire, to serve as tactical rhetoric. The circus serves as a figure of speech revolting against the limited discourse of the day. The troupe can also be a reference to the theatre group *Libre Teatro Libre* as there is no shortage of words that have theatrical meanings as a secondary or tertiary sense, nor is there a shortage of references to theatrical people and works of art. Haroldo Conti had written an article about a trip to Córdoba to see a group of actors perform a play that dealt with the research they had obtained about Tucumán, with special emphasis on the economic and social situation there. Conti mentions in a letter that he had harbored a member of the *LTL* and thus kept in contact with the group that could have served as inspiration for the circus troupe of the novel. In a case of fictional transformation, *LTL* becomes *el Circo del Arca*.

3.4.4 The Trickster Aspects of Haroldo Conti’s Writing

Haroldo Conti is a Trickster in the sense of being capable of transforming himself, as Antonio Benítez Rojo notes that Mascaró, the Príncipe Patagón, and Oreste are aliases of Haroldo Conti. When the *Príncipe* says that he is “versista, recitador, escribiente” it could be Conti speaking about himself and his function as the author of the novel. As a writer, “versista, recitador,” Conti is a *mago* who creates his world, and a learned man, who makes us look for references for deeper meaning. He is also an *algebrista*, because within the novel there are many combinations involving numerical concepts, particularly based on the number three and the idea of three/one/whole. The mention of *ministro* (at least, for one of its definitions), highlights the numerous religious references throughout the novel particularly to those who were persecuted and martyred, as do the allusions to spiritual transcendence. Travel stories are the most prominent of the “specialties” of the Príncipe along with hymns, acrostics, monologues, poems, and
adivinación (12). Haroldo Conti, by (in)fusión, combines different elements in order to say what otherwise cannot be said directly in a dictatorial regime and thus “darkening what is light” to confuse. At the same time, Conti is elucidating what is kept in the dark and that which is not being stated directly because of the silence imposed by the regime that was in place at the time. He is the Trickster that elucidates and obsfuscates at the same time. He is also the alchemist who uses symbols in order to keep parts of his work hermetically sealed, revealing and concealing at the same time, much like a Hermes or Mercury figure. The combinations and interconnections in the novel give many different meanings at one time in order to tell a multitude of stories that need to be told simultaneously.

Haroldo Conti achieves telling a vast quantity of stories as a Trickster of transmission, and by being an alchemist of words both on a linguistic level and on a cultural/social level. With regard to the linguistic level, he changes and combines words, names, and concepts, and in this way, he extends and stretches the meaning that a word is capable of producing, as mentioned earlier. This linguistic mixing is typical of the Trickster figure who is sometimes seen as the originator of languages. In addition, Conti also provides a hermeneutics for the reader by implying within the text that there are combinations, (in)fusions, and (con)fusions. For example, on the morphological level, among the circus troupe (and its other incarnations as Trova musicians/circus troupe/boat crew), the prefix “con” is used extremely frequently to underline a “togetherness” and a “unification,” a conjoining of people, elements, life episodes, and references. The use of “des”, “de,” “dis,” signifying separation, or a breaking apart, is used more frequently in reference to the rurales. The morphology gives us a clue as to how to interpret the novel as a whole: as a conjunction of words, people, objects, animals, concepts, numbers, and music etc., with art as unifier.

If this example reflects parallels between the author and a protagonist, a similar example also exists between a description of a book within the novel that could describe the novel itself: “Un libro de tapas negras . . . en el cual lleva largas y torcidas cuentas con rayada escritura, recetas, devociones, conjuros y contramaleficios, la oración a San Son, nacimientos, casamientos y finales . . . y la vera fórmula de la tintura de ajo” (7).
In a way that is similar to the Príncipe Patagón who instructs Oreste, the writer gives instructions as to how to read the text; in an operation of transference, this would mean that the Príncipe Patagón can be thought of as a writer and the author is the Príncipe Patagón. In the case of hermeneutics, Hermes and Mercury are both mentioned as Trickster gods of communication between the divine and the terrestrial (which is a frequent theme in the novel). The novel is a message between the author and the reader. There are messages embedded throughout the text, messages that are superimposed and appear as combinations in order to hide things in plain sight. For instance, the “ave negra,” is taken as a sign that has meaning and significance: “‘Pato viuda’, dice el Lucho. ‘Buen tiempo. Si pasa de noche silbando: malas noticias’” (7). This is an example of one of the author’s first hermeneutic directives. The reader transforms into a witness and an accomplice, active in the word games that Conti employs to engage and provoke him/her.

The Príncipe Patagón changes registers, combining, in some moments, vulgarity with formal speech. Morello-Frosch explains this juxtaposition: “... entre parlamentos declamados y lengua oral, Conti se plantea cómo textualizar la ficción del arte popular, estableciendo la distancia entre la retórica y la lengua hablada. El emparejamiento de ambos deja en claro que la retórica se refiere a un grupo que no incluye a estos actores de circo, pero a partir de la misma ellos pueden crearse una propia” (849). As part of the linguistic mix, Conti includes many different languages (Castilian Spanish, Latin, Italian etc.). In addition to these languages, Hugo De Marinis mentions the specializations of language that appear in Mascaró such as: “la marinería, el circense, el arte culinaria, la farmacéutica, el poético, el argot de la lucha libre, las supersticiones...” (334). This rich plurality of varied voices is subversive since dictatorial regimes normally opt for uniformity and univocity as a strategy for maintaining control; the multiplicity widens the field for unpredictability. In addition, these specializations are mobile in that they change and move such as the “marinería” that moves with the sailors, or the “circense” that moves with the circus. Superstitions also tend to move about and culinary language and wrestling are always adding, changing,
and combining to their repertoire to reflect new recipes and new wrestling moves. The authors who recognize these disparate yet communal voices and integrate them, not only create their own language, but with each included voice, they question the status quo and totalitarian ideology. One of the ways in which Conti formulates his own language is through the conjunction of the plurality of voices, registers, sayings, refrains, and expressions. Conti includes various elements of popular culture in order to achieve a cohesion of identity that is both personal and collective. Morello-Frosch states: “En la narración se prodigan abundantes recetas de tisanas, de cocidos de bacalao, instrucciones para hacer cohetes y ungüentos para curar el cuerpo y el alma. Todo el folklore casero que permite vivir y defenderse de todo mal, incluso la carencia y el dolor, se incluye como parte del patrimonio cultural de los personajes. . .” (849). She explains: “Conti exhuma cierta temática de la tradición cultural argentina, la historiza e invierte el valor de los signos de Sarmiento y Martínez Estrada –especialmente las polarizaciones civilización-barbarie y ciudad-campaña- y actualiza los de Arlt, en cuanto adjudica nuevas funciones a los marginados” (840). Conti had a multitude of messages he wanted to transmit through the novel, perhaps not only for himself but on behalf of others whose voices were not being heard. In this case Conti presents a multiplicity of voices. In one of the few instances when Mascaró speaks, he says “que estaba de acuerdo en que la vida del hombre sobre la tierra es una milicia, pero que ésta, a su vez, era un arte que se ejercitaba, que las buenas guerras se adornan como una representación, son casi un festejo. . .que uno nace volatín y otro capitán y cada cual tiene su misión sobre esta tierra” (20). Writing this novel and using the circus as “representation” was Conti’s way of participating in “la lucha” (20). Conti’s messages and language games voiced in the novel by the Príncipe Patagón, Oreste, Mascaró, and the many other characters, together form a conjunction, a connection, a communion, demonstrating to us one of the most powerful possibilities of the Trickster: his unifying potential.

3.5 Conclusion:
The multifaceted, polyvalent nature of the Trickster unites within him an unlimited sum of possibilities that lie within and without the realms of the known and the expected. Whether on the mythical or the semiotic level, the Trickster’s journey through the twists and turns of outside forces pushes the boundaries much farther, rendering them penetrable and open, and forming a living rather than a static entity, since the Trickster runs from death and silence. As mentioned earlier and stated by Gerald Vizenor, “the trickster is opposed by silence and isolation” (284). In Macunaíma, the author is regenerating and breathing new life into literature—he deconstructs discourse and structures using the paradoxical Trickster figure, and then reconstructs by adding and combining discourses in a degeographizing fusion. In El reino de este mundo, the author shows how even amidst death and severe impositions of silence, ways were found, particularly through stories, to keep communication and spirits alive. In Mascaró, el cazador americano, an author who knew that a threat on his life was looming, continues to speak both his overt and secret messages through the Tricksters in his novel. If silence is death, words are not the only recourse of the multidimensional Trickster. The Trickster has at his/her disposal many modalities of communication which serve as a countercurrent to hegemonic discourse. By their plurality and variety, these many modalities possess an intrinsic fluidity which, as we shall see in the next chapter, are harder to silence than words.
Chapter 4: Signs of Life and Alternative Semiotic Systems: Poetry, Dance, and Music in Motion

The previous chapter describes a sense of silence that can be imposed by hegemonic discourses which limit the field of possible utterances and expressions to a point of absolute silence which in turn, becomes a metaphor for death, since silence is the sound of death. We speak then of a type of silence that exists among the living due to a restriction of speech that mimics the silence of the dead. In Trickster discourse, according to Lewis Hyde and as mentioned in the last chapter, the Trickster is subversive because he speaks even when speaking is forbidden. Yet even without speech, the living are never truly silent: a heartbeat, a breath, are all signs of life. In the last chapter, the Trickster was shown to be a figure able to escape the traps of death that can be inherent in hegemonic discourses attempting to maintain control by extreme, life-destroying measures. The Trickster is able to do this by semiotic means, slipping through different systems of signification; he is also able to achieve this mythically, through memory, both personal and collective. In this chapter, alternative life-affirming modes of resistance, subversion, and transformation are discussed. These are the alternative expressions of life in the face of the deathly imposition of silence. If in the previous chapter the Trickster was presented as a breaker and transformer of linguistic practices, in this chapter, I study linguistic practices (along with music, dance, and other semiotic systems) that are further (de)formed through poetry in order to get to its very heart: rhythm, breath, and image.

Breath is closely linked with poetry; so much so, that poetry can be thought to be closely and viscerally entwined with the body. For Bachelard, “IN ITS SIMPLE, natural, primitive form, far from any aesthetic ambition or any metaphysics, poetry is an exhalation of joy, the outward expression of the joy of breathing” (Air and Dreams 239). Octavio Paz, parting from reflections about Etiemble, for whom the

---

140 To give a historical example, Lewis Hyde delves into the “Hermes-like threshold consciousness” that he attributes to Frederick Douglass (227) and then further explains how Douglass’s enunciations were subversive: “coming from the supposed sphere of silence, any diction is contradiction. From the sphere of silence, speech itself is impudent regardless of its content, and threatens the design of this world” (232).
root of “poetic pleasure” is to be found in “muscular and respiratory” physiology (295), suggests in El arco y la lira, that this pleasure is not just physiological, but rather stems from the “communion” that respiration creates with man and Nature:141

Recitar versos es un ejercicio respiratorio. . . . Respirar bien, plena, profundamente, no es sólo una práctica de higiene ni un deporte, sino una manera de unirnos al mundo y participar en el ritmo universal. Recitar versos es como danzar con el movimiento general de nuestro cuerpo y de la naturaleza. . . . Recitar fue -y sigue siendo- un rito. Aspiramos y respiramos el mundo, con el mundo, en un acto que es ejercicio respiratorio, ritmo, imagen y sentido en unidad inseparable.

Respirar es un acto poético porque es un acto de comunión. (El arco y la lira 296)

The first citation is taken out of Bachelard’s Air and Dreams in a chapter entitled Silent Speech. This title seems somewhat contradictory with respect to the ideas presented here, yet Bachelard then turns speech and breathing inward, closer to the mechanisms of pure will, describing, “unaspirated breathing in silent speech” (Air and Dreams 243). According to Paz, silence has a fullness about it that he describes using different qualifiers that allude to the plenitude of silence by the signs that fill it: “El mundo del hombre es el mundo del sentido. . . . El silencio mismo está poblado de signos” (19-20). Elsewhere he states that silence is “preñado de signos” (31) and it is in this silence where the act of poetry can begin: “El decir del poeta se incia como silencio. . . . Es una carencia y una sed, antes de ser una plenitud” (162). This idea parallels the sentiments of Bachelard. Silence has a potentiality contained within it, a latent or quiet voice with a potent fullness, perhaps waiting for expression, perhaps waiting for kairos. With regard to imposed silences, the aforementioned ideas reinforce the sentiment that “silence is never truly silent,” and that the body is never truly silent. Even in the silence that is imposed, the potentiality or possibility of communication and expression are in a state of chaos before reaching the point of manifestation.142

141 The word Nature is capitalized in this chapter to demonstrate the agency of nature in these alternative semiotic systems as a subject that acts, rather than as a dominated object.
142 For Mircea Eliade, a period of latency implies a period of chaos and this chaos is composed of all of the possibilities that can exist in this state of “pre-manifestation” without forms or determinations: “From one perspective, Shadows
another note, the silence itself can be taken as a sign. These are not “deathly silences,” but rather “dormant silences” or “pregnant silences” that are similar to the dormancy of Nature in the winter or silences that are gestations of a developing expression, whereas “deathly silences” have the intention of cutting all forms of communication and signification that do not resonate with the ideologies of power. In these imposed silences, signification, oftentimes linked with memory, waits for kairos, and uses alternate signifying systems in order to express itself. Dance (bodily movement) and music are but a few examples of alternative systems of signification that provide a means of subverting and transcending tyrannical discourses that impose silence by being systems that offer affirmations of signs of life where the body is an agent of expression and a communicator of meaning. Rhythm becomes an integral part of the delivery and an interpretative mechanism of these systems; it is not only a part of them, rather, it is at the heart of them. I use the term rhythm in reference to the Greek etymology referring to measured movement. Paz’s definition of rhythm is also helpful here: “el ritmo no es sonido aislado, ni mera significación, ni placer muscular sino todo junto, en unidad indissoluble,” amalgamating the body, sound (movement), and meaning (296). If in the first chapter, time and space were dealt with in terms of the movement of voyage; here I argue that voyage, as movement, can and often does provide a means of changing and altering rhythms.

Underlying all of these alternative systems of signification are biological semiotic systems since biological life has its own set of semiotic functions, which when engaged and active, are by definition, signs of life. As an example, studies have shown that plants are capable of communicating among themselves using chemical signals that they emit to other plants. To add to this, according to recent analyses, the communicative capabilities of plants aren’t limited to emitting and “translating” chemicals: research is being done into whether plants also communicate by sound (by perceiving sound and reacting

-----

are homologizable with Chaos, since no form is discernable, no structure is disengaged; this is the modality of the pre-formed” (Shadows in Archaic Religions 6) In a process from “chaos to cosmos” potentiality acquires a form and the cultural variations of this process are presented in The Myth of the Eternal Return: or, Cosmos and History.
to auditory stimuli) and/or alternative communicative systems. Movement creates sound. When we refer to communication, we don’t often consider communication among plants, animals, and other living organisms, yet humans, being part of the biosphere, share certain communicative characteristics with other living beings as much as they differ from them. We too emit certain chemicals that provide information and we can also communicate by rhythm. The human body speaks, without uttering a word, sending signals in a complex dance of chemicals and electrical impulses. We usually think of memory as a purely cerebral recall of a fleeting, bygone moment and yet we can speak of “muscle memory”: or the memory of movements that is contained and remains deep within the fibers of our muscles, to the recesses of our bones. This visceral description of memory takes de Certeau’s ideas about memory as a deep and invisible “encyclopedia” even further. The body has rhythms that work in conjunction to form what appears from the outside, a totality of rhythm: heartbeat, breath, circulation, sleep cycles, menstrual cycles. Maintaining these rhythms is part of maintaining the integrity of the body and the presence of these rhythms is the presence of signs of life. The rhythms of the body find creative translations through dance, music, and poetry, which then transform into signs of life, subverting and transcending codes of silence. Each novel analyzed in this study presents a struggle to maintain the integrity of the body and its


144 Lefebvre states, rather poetically in Rhythmmanalysis: “The body consists of a bundle of rhythms, different but in tune. It is not only in music that one produces perfect harmonies. The body produces a garland of rhythms, one could say a bouquet, though these words suggest an aesthetic arrangement, as if the artist nature had foreseen beauty - the harmony of the body (of bodies) - that results from all its history” (20). All citations from Henri Lefebvre’s work in this chapter are taken from Rhythmmanalysis unless otherwise noted.

145 A scientific study that links rhythm with biological systems is: “Life Rhythm as a Symphony of Oscillatory Patterns: Electromagnetic Energy and Sound Vibration Modulates Gene Expression for Biological Signaling and Healing” By David Muehsam and Carlo Ventura.
rhythms. Even in situations where bodily integrity cannot be maintained, bones tell stories long after our biological rhythms have ceased.146

Dance, music (whether playing an instrument or singing), and poetry (especially spoken) engage the body in a more integral way that demonstrates the inherent limitations of the primacy of the visual in abstract space (Lefebvre) and in colonial discourses (Mary Louise Pratt) discussed in the first chapter.147 These alternative semiotic systems can overwhelm imposed discourses by employing motive signs that are rendered “invisible” to dominant discourses. They can “live” as signs of life undetected and unfettered either waiting for kairos for the tables to be turned, while creating the momentum needed to enact change, or becoming the means by which change occurs. These modes of expression are more closely linked to the body and its rhythms and can therefore tell more faithfully the stories of the body.

While we’ve seen how the visual and the abstract have been used by systems with imperial designs, the body politic has its own rhythms (these are of course abstract bodies versus the biological human body) and political rhythms dictate an “official” time and space for different activities thereby controlling rhythms. According to Henri Lefebvre:

> Political power knows how to utilise and manipulate time, dates, time-tables. It combines the unfurlings . . . of those that it employs . . . and rhythms them. This is officially called mobilisation. The authorities have to know the polyrhythmia of the social body that they set in motion. It is the extreme case, revealing simultaneously official and empirical - political and military rhythmanalysis. *(Rhythmanalysis 68-69)*

---

146 In the *Many-Headed Hydra*, the authors report of a case when a white man named Hughson had been hung and a black man named John Gwin/Caesar was “strung up in chains” for their interracial collusion in a rebellion in 1741. Their bodies were said to have changed colors where Hughson turned black and John Gwin/Caesar turned white: “Even their dead bodies were capable of subversion” (210).

147 For Bachelard, there is a tendency toward a vocal and auditory logic since we cannot rely on what is seen: “Vocalization governs the painting of true poets” (*Water and Dreams* 190). He continues on to say: “But when poetry is involved, realism is always wrong. Sight is no longer in command; etymology no longer thinks. The ear also wants to name flowers; it wants what it hears to flower, to flower directly, to flower in language” (191). Bachelard uses the example of the gladiolus— not a particularly aquatic flower in and of itself —yet the word and its sonority makes it poetically aquatic and liquid.
Depending on the authorities in charge, the more tyrannical the system is, the more the system tries to impinge upon personal rhythms. At its extreme, we have concentration camps and death squads that destroy personal rhythms by eliminating life which is the generator of these rhythms. Slavery, which leaves little room for personal movement, expression, and the free flow of transformational rhythms, is also at this extreme. At the other end of the spectrum would be a more liberal allowance and respect for personal rhythms. In order to maintain authority, the powers that be attempt to control the rhythms of others while organizing their own rhythms. However, the control over social rhythmic patterns can be subverted, and a transformation of rhythm is necessary for any change and Lefebvre explains the mechanisms for such alterations:

Objectively, for there to be change, a social group, a class or a caste must intervene by imprinting a rhythm on an era, be it through force or in an insinuating manner. In the course of a crisis, in a critical situation, a group must designate itself as an innovator or producer of meaning. And its acts must inscribe themselves on reality. The intervention imposes itself neither militarily, nor politically nor even ideologically. Occasionally, a long time after the action, one sees the emergence of novelty. Perspicacity, attention and above all an opening are required. (Rhythmanalysis 14-15)

Perhaps this opening can be interpreted as a moment of kairos, or the opening of the Trickster, a space of tactics as described by de Certeau versus the mobilization of strategies. If political power “rhythms” and “mobilizes,” these rhythms are challenged by transformations that both underlie and are a part of the systems that employ these rhythms. Also challenging power is the “exhaustion” (as described by Lefebvre) inherent in the controlling rhythms if they themselves do not change, metamorphose, or allow for changes, and transformations. According to Lefebvre, two agents of rhythmic variation are the rhythm analyst and the artist, who “transform” and “change” the world around them. Lefebvre explains how they are able to generate change by putting the present (and present objects) into “motion” where
it becomes presence which implies a temporal dynamic and fluidity, or in other words, the present becomes rhythmic:

The act of rhythmanalysis . . . transforms everything into presences, including the present, grasped and perceived as such. . . . the act of rhythmanalysis integrates these things – this wall, this table, these trees – in a dramatic becoming, in an ensemble full of meaning, transforming them no longer into diverse things, but into presences. (23)

He [the rhythmanalyst] changes that which he observes: he sets it in motion, he recognizes its power. In this sense, he seems close to the poet, or the man of the theatre. Art, poetry, music and theatre have always brought something (but what?) to the everyday. (25)

Without claiming to change life, but by fully reinstating the sensible in consciousness and in thought, he would accomplish a tiny part of the revolutionary transformation of this world and this society in decline. (26)

Lefebvre brings the body back into focus by giving attention to the “sensible,” and the perceptions of the senses which are necessary to perceive rhythms and transform them. Perhaps we can speak of alternative rhythms as transformational rhythms that can resist the “manipulations of time and dates.” This takes us back to the idea of timefulness from the first chapter where rhythms that are in a process of moving and transforming cause time to be perceived in a sense of timefulness, and this perception creates an escape from imposed rhythms. If a complete escape is not possible, then timefulness limits the influence of imposed rhythms which then exert far less of a dominating effect on the organism. Here, it is proposed that alternative semiotic systems bear within themselves the “break” from external and imposed rhythms by recognizing and respecting natural rhythms along with creating alternate rhythms to external and imposed rhythms. These alternative systems allow for a reintegration with the body and natural rhythms, and create an escape route from the imposed, exterior rhythms. In the first chapter, vacation and travel as displacement in space and time allow for a break where natural rhythms could restore themselves.
Travel also helps to produce a socially differential space that admits alternative rhythms all integrally as a whole while leaving space for distinctions.

What many of these alternative signifying systems have in common is their ability to travel and a fluidity among borders. Since the systems discussed here are more intimately bonded with the corporeal, and thus, open to the experience of everyone, they tend to be more unifying in that transfers and incorporations can be more immediate. Music can be a spontaneous creation, which is also true for spoken word and dance. It is easier to learn and share a song, a dance, a rhythm as a traveler or someone being traveled to than it is to acquire/transmit other systems of signification and it is the ease of the peripatetic transmission of music and dance that allows for these alternative modes to spread and permeate, penetrate, alter and be altered, to fuse and infuse. These modes promote a sense of participation as exemplified in the following instances: antiphony used by travelers, songs sung by sailors, troubadours and traveling minstrels. One might say that these systems, because of their inherently open and spontaneous possibilities, invite participation even when this is not their ultimate goal. Rhythms are catchy, be they musical or poetic, and they invite one to sing, chant, and dance. Whether one is expressing joy or pain in these modes, it is the act of expression itself that matters, since as mentioned by Bachelard, suffering lies in leaving things left unsaid (Water and Dreams 195). These alternative systems, rather than demanding silences, call on everyone to speak openly and fluidly.

While alternative semiotic systems and their manifestations in the novels will be developed in more detail in the corresponding sections, at this point I consider it necessary to briefly introduce the issues of rhythm and bodily integrity in order to compare their roles in the novels. In Macunaíma, for example, since basic bodily functions are a preoccupation of the Trickster as is maintaining the harmonious rhythms of the body, Macunaíma goes about searching for ways to satisfy his hunger and sexual urges. There is also a comparison of bodily rhythms as experienced in the rainforest versus the city. As technological advancements begin to change lifestyles, affecting the rhythms in São Paulo,
Macunaima upon his arrival to the city, throws a monkey wrench into these new rhythmic patterns: he is an in-between figure, adapting to the new rhythms of São Paulo and other regions of South America, while bringing an Amazonian rhythm to the city. With all of these rhythms around and within him, he changes from monorhythmic (rainforest) to polyrhythmic (rainforest and city) to arrhythmic, when his body is torn into pieces by the Uiara. When he ascends into the sky, he becomes eurythmic: a part of a celestial rhythm of stars and galaxies. In *El reino de este mundo*, Carpentier depicts some of the brutalities of slavery when he shows the breaks in bodily integrity: the maimings, death by immolation, and the scars of brandings. This destruction of the body and of life has its countercurrents in the practices that restore and reintegrate the body as a whole. One way this is achieved is through dance: dance restores the body as a sacred and integral whole. The body moves of its own accord, on its own terms. Also chanting and singing restores the musicality of breath. The body, in *El reino de este mundo*, can refer not only to the individual bodies of the slaves, but also to the “collective body” of slaves, who, divided among different plantations, form one body during the reunion-dance-chant in Bois Caimán. In *Los pasos perdidos*, the narrator feels stuck in a monotonous rhythm: he is searching for a life-affirming and life-generating rhythm and occasionally finds it in the natural rhythms of tree-filled areas, or in the rhythm of sex, or in the nocturnal rhythm of the city. It is not until he is surrounded by Nature as an entirety as opposed to entering small, reserved spaces set aside for Nature, that he feels his bodily integrity and rhythms are restored. A problem for the narrator is that Nature has its own rhythm and doesn’t obey the desires and dictates of man: when the narrator wishes to return to his idyllic refuge, the rhythms of the rain and the river have made passage to his haven impossible. In *Mascaró*, the circus creates its own rhythm as a whole unit that both integrates and respects the individual rhythms of its participants. These participants stretch their physical capabilities as far as possible, pushing the boundaries and limits of what is possible.

---

148 While the body is linked with the rhythms of different places, the body “as polyrhythmic and eurythmic” in a natural and healthy state is presented along with arrhythmia (as pathology) and the higher level isorhythmia in *Rhythmanalysis* on page 67-68.
corporeally feasible in an expanding rhythm. In this way, the circus upsets the native rhythms of the towns, creating areas of polyrrhythmia. As a repercussion, the bodily integrity of Oreste is almost destroyed when he is tortured and brutalized. When Oreste leaves the prison, “Oreste comió con ganas. Su cuerpo volvía a sentir hambre, esa clara señal de la vida capaz de trastornar al mundo,” where hunger becomes a signal, a sign capable of communicating in a way far more visceral than words (97). This feeling of hunger that he has contrasts with a lack of feeling experienced while in the prison, since even though it is not mentioned explicitly, it would be reasonable to suppose that the protagonist “separates” himself from his body in a way that sometimes occurs in people who find themselves in traumatic situations. The author focuses on the mental state of Oreste in prison, namely the projections of his imagination which offer him a temporary escape and reprieve. When he leaves prison, Oreste begins to feel and is no longer separated from his body. He can now listen to the signs of his body and satisfy his hunger which in turn, will strengthen him.149 This reunion with the body and its signs signifies the triumph of life over the possibility and the silence of death.

Departing from the idea of bodily rhythms, we extend the focus of rhythms to include cycles of movement, change, and flux which are as much a part of the universe as they are the body: microcosm and macrocosm. Movement and change are continuous parts of life, the world, and the universe. The point here is not to propose an opposition per se of death vs. life since death is a necessary part of life, even for stars (whose cycle of existence, which spans for billions of years, seems unfathomable, giving us a false perception of stars being “eternal” along with galaxies and universes). Life and death and death and life form their own rhythms: the rhythms of the universe as part of constant cycles of change. What is viewed as problematic are discourses of metaphorical and actual silence/death that attempt to inhibit/prohibit a certain vitality in order to gain advantage by destroying the life of another, or by attempting to restrict and/or prohibit rhythms and movement thereby impinging upon basic bodily

149 This hunger can represent the physical and metaphorical hunger of the Trickster.
freedoms and the right to bodily integrity. Signs of life defy and resist systems of silence. I use the term *sign* in the broadest sense possible in order to allow for multiple meanings. My objective is to leave the term open and as polysemous and polyvalent as possible while recognizing the fact that words must have boundaries or they cease to have any meaning at all. Systems of silence tend to be univocal and tend toward homogeneity. Life tends toward change, variety, and an evolution of forms and substance where signs of life reinforce (and may participate in an act of *mimesis*, yet with difference) this potency of what some may call the will—a willing of being or becoming.

4.1.1 Poetry

As mentioned, humans can transform and make manifest certain rhythms and movements creatively in different modes, forming various expressions of signs of life. One such expression is through poetry. On the linguistic level, poetry plays with existing linguistic systems: breaking them, recreating them, disjoining and conjoining them. Yet the composition of poetry isn’t comprised of only linguistic components: poetry has rhythms and perhaps the creation and formation of these rhythms are corporeal. In Bachelard’s separate analyses of the elements of air and water, he observes that with regard to the element of air, poetry is intimately linked with breath, and with regard to water, language is liquid in terms of sounds. Perhaps the first breath uttered is poetry and the first poem uttered is breath, if we return to the image of the newborn defying silence with its first breath and its first cry. Poetry makes use of words, the space on the page, and even caesuras, yet silence in poetry is never truly silent; pauses are pregnant with meaning, a waiting period if you will, if we extend the metaphor to the first shout of life. We should bear in mind that the origins of poetry are found in the spoken word before poetry began.

---

150 We are discussing humans, however some animals can be seen to use creativity with regard to rhythms which in a way is reflected in the Trickster character when he transfigures/adopts certain animal characteristics, adopting their rhythms and thus reflecting the creativity of the animal by embodying it.

151 These ideas are expressed respectively in the conclusions of *Air and Dreams* and *Water and Dreams*.
being codified in writing. Poetry is language in motion, allowing that which cannot be said in ordinary discourse to find a space in the movement of poetry by not adhering to traditional grammatical and codified rules, nor by adhering to the paradigm signifier/signified in the most strict of senses. Poetry widens the signifying field, giving more room for freedom of expression as a mobile creation that regenerates itself: “La creación poética se inicia como violencia sobre el lenguaje. El primer acto . . . consiste en el desarraigo de las palabras. El poeta las arranca de sus conexiones y menesteres habituales: separados del mundo informe del habla, los vocablos se vuelven únicos, como si acabasen de nacer” (Paz 38). Poetry makes use of imago and rhythm. The poet represents the figure of the Trickster as mediator between the world and poetry. While novels are generally considered prose, here we will consider the poetic aspects of the novels of the corpus since all of these texts exhibit tendencies of the poetic and the lyrical in their language and in their images.

Part of poetry’s power lies in its production of images via metaphors. Metaphors, according to Umberto Eco are open entities, and “There is no metaphor that is absolutely ‘unpoetic’” (122). The two terms of a metaphor and the distance between them leave a “playing” field open for interpretation, where the interpretation is a type of “crossing over.” And yet, “Once the process of unlimited semiosis has started, it is difficult to say where and when the metaphorical interpretation stops. . .” (Eco 124). Rather than an idea or an image of an open playing field, Eco explains that “There remains the criterion of the greater or lesser openness, that is, of how far a metaphor allows us to travel along the pathways of semiosis and to discover the labyrinths of the encyclopedia” (126-127). He continues on to say that “In the course of such traverses, the terms in question are enriched with properties that the encyclopedia did not yet grant them” (127). Eco also states that “dead” metaphors can be resurrected (or “becomes an inventive one anew”) by “shifting from one semiotic system to another” (127). Thus, alternative semiotic systems can breathe new life into signs that are dead in other systems. Shifting semiotic systems, much

---

152 Eco goes on to except certain “sociocultural situations” from this distinction.
like Trickster’s shapeshifting, keeps vitality in play via dynamic movement among open systems using open terms. Movement is key since “That metaphor is ‘good’ which does not allow the work of interpretation to grind to a halt” (120). The shifting sands of this open space create a diffuse area that puts into question the very “boundaries” of what a metaphor is: “There are cases in which from one or more metaphors the interpreter is led to an allegorical reading, or to a symbolic interpretation, where the boundaries between metaphor, allegory, and symbol can be very imprecise” (Eco 124). Due to the open boundaries between metaphor and symbol, Mircea Eliade explains the openness of the symbol:

   The symbolism adds a new value to an object or an activity without any prejudice whatever to its own immediate value. In application to objects or actions, symbolism renders them “open”; symbolic thinking “breaks open” the immediate reality without any minimising or undervaluing of it: in such a perspective this is not a closed Universe, no object exists for itself in isolation; everything is held together by a compact system of correspondences and likenesses. (Images and Symbols 178)

Symbol and metaphor, because of their openness and their ability to “break open,” create a medium for “linguistic travel” from one term to the next although this is not relegated strictly to words; metaphors are also used in actual cases of travel or other situations where people are using different systems, or find the need to clarify because metaphors and symbols can “jump” or “travel” from one concept to another and from one semiotic system to another.

Metaphors are not limited to the visual nor to the abstract. In fact, according to Umberto Eco: “The inner nature of metaphors produces a shifting of the linguistic explanation onto semiotic mechanisms that are not peculiar to spoken languages. . . . The problem is that the verbal metaphor itself often elicits references to visual, aural, tactile, and olfactory experiences” (Eco 88-89). The “sensible” and the body are again brought to the fore where images created by words also involve senses that in and of themselves implicate other semiotic systems of the body. As opposed to Lefebvre’s dominance of the visual in abstract space and to the gaze of dominance as an articulation of dominance presented in Mary
Louise Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes*, poetry’s metaphor deforms/reforms the visual element. This is not to say that metaphors are never used in dominant discourses that seek to maintain power and control, although these tend to be more “closed” (as per Eco’s ideas) than “opened” in order to avoid different interpretations. Because of their potency, metaphors are used quite frequently in such instances and for such purposes. The fluidity of metaphors as an open system, however, allows for these “closed” metaphors to be reworked, altered, subverted and transcended. Poetry offers a medium for conjuring images verbally, rhythmically, graphically if written, and tonally if spoken. Images/metaphors create and (re)form new ways of conceiving the world; they make communicable to others how they can be exchanged, reproduced, and reworked. They offer alternative modes to conceptualizing certain perceptions that seem to be taken as a given or become automatic habit in Shklovsky’s sense. As a matter of development, images/metaphors need to be reworked, otherwise they lose their power and their potency. They become stale and conventional, diminishing the variety of possibilities of meaning they are capable of creating. In order to maintain their generative capacity and in order to avoid falling into convention, images/metaphors must be made fresh and created anew.

4.1.2 Music

Music is a difficult concept to pin down since it encompasses and includes many variables and variants. Due to all that can be considered music, the term itself is fluid and yet possesses substance. We begin with the idea of sound as a movement, a vibration through air and through water. It is the beating of a drum, the airy song of the flute, an entire orchestra, a voice that sings. With an instrument or without one, music can be produced. Music is always evocative, provoking interior emanations as much for the person who produces the music as for the persons who hear and listen to it. Rhythm is primordial: it is felt, heard, and produced: by a heartbeat, by a soft voice, by breath. For Lefebvre there is an intimate link between music and the body: “The relation between musical time and the rhythms of the body is
required. . . Musical time does not cease to have a relation with the physical. If it begins with verbal rhythms, it is because the latter are a part of the rhythms of the body. If it detaches itself from them, it is not in order to void itself but in order to reach all the so-called physical rhythms” (Rhythmanalysis 64). Because of this intimacy with the body, music is known by all and can be created by all. Since the body intimately knows and responds to music, music can be interpreted as a sign of life and has been used in resistance movements because of its visceral qualities where it tells and evokes the stories of the body. Also, music is used in resistance movements because of its fluidity, which allows for music to be remembered, and to be shared since it can cross cultural, political, and economic boundaries as emotions and as movement. Music’s open structure is generous which lends itself to being shared. Because of its evocative and resonating qualities, music transmits messages, feelings (pain, joy, sorrow), stories and counterstories to hegemonic discourse when other avenues of expression are cut off. For example, music has provided alternative means of communication when access to literacy was denied. Music transcends linguistic barriers and while some musical pieces may include words, music communicates on its own, and words are not a requirement in order to transmit a message. If biological systems have rhythms and in a larger context, the universe has rhythms, then rhythms as a universal phenomenon can have the potential ability to carry messages when language is a barrier, since rhythm itself carries significance. Lefebvre demonstrates how rhythm allows for global transmission of messages and musics:

. . .by and through rhythm, music becomes worldly. . .Europe and the West receive and perceive exotic, original and different musics: Japanese and Jamaican. Rhythms unfold, increase . . . by diversifying themselves: neither melodies nor harmonies had achieved this world coverage . . . which is universal in the manner of rationality. . .

After peregrinations (measure, writing and the aleatory), modern music finds itself back in the body; rhythm dominates, supplants melody and harmony (without suppressing them). (65)

Music is as much universal as it is personal creating a double extension leading both outward where music is shared with others and can travel the globe, and inward where it is felt at a visceral level in the body.
With regard to the novels of the corpus, being “modern novels,” they exhibit this double extension both outward toward others and inward toward the self since “modern music finds itself back in the body.” Conversely, languages or forms of them, because of their musical quality, become more easily understood. A creation formed by different languages, is musical in intonation, making it more universally understood because of its musicality, an aspect described by Linebaugh and Rediker in *The Many-Headed Hydra* and explored further with regard to *El reino de este mundo*. Paul Gilroy explains that music expresses the “ineffable” especially when the “ineffable” stems from trauma and an otherwise inexpressible pain:

> The topos of unsayability produced from the slaves’ experiences of racial terror and figured repeatedly in nineteenth-century evaluations of slave music has other important implications. It can be used to challenge the privileged conceptions of both language and writing as preeminent expressions of human consciousness. The power and significance of music within the black Atlantic have grown in inverse proportion to the limited expressive power of language. It is important to remember that the slaves’ access to literacy was often denied on pain of death and only a few cultural opportunities were offered as a surrogate for the other forms of individual autonomy denied by life on the plantations and in the barracoons. Music becomes vital at the point at which linguistic and semantic indeterminacy/polyphony arise amidst the protracted battle between masters, mistresses, and slaves. (74)

Melodies and rhythms tend to remain etched in the memory longer than “dry” words that lack the alternating rhythms and the intonation of music. They travel in memories, and through voices: whether an old song or a new one, the (re)creation is always renewing, always moving, whether as a secret rebellious song sung in the night or in the playing of the indigenous flute under the hot desert sun.

4.1.3 Dance

---

153 The text continues: “This decidedly modern conflict was the product of circumstances where language lost something of its referentiality and its privileged relationship to concepts” (74).
While the novels themselves do not contain much material where dance is concerned, I feel it would be remiss not to mention it, since the word “dance,” like the word “music,” refers to many forms and is open to many interpretations; yet it always implies a freedom of movement. Dance is often accompanied by music, although not always and not necessarily. Dance is not usually vocal, but it is rhythmic. It is not an image, but a constantly moving series of images; a flow of the imagination, a Lefebvrian presence. Dance is perhaps a corporeal poetry; if poetry transforms quotidian language habits, dance transforms quotidian movements in a way that communicates and resonates, at times like antiphony - inviting participation. Where silence is imposed, movement is usually restricted and yet dance defies silence: if you won’t allow me to speak, I will MOVE. The speaking is in the movement itself; words are not necessary, perhaps even superfluous. The body returns to itself; it’s rhythms alter: breathing, heartbeat, not in a way that is arrhythmic- the body, preferring homeostasis (emphasis on stasis), finds a sense of harmony in changing rhythms through dance. The body finds itself within itself; a bodily integrity denied elsewhere is found through purposeful, self-directed movement.

The novels express signs of life each in their own way: in Macunaíma, the power of breath overcomes death and is a sign of life in indigenous cultures. Breath has a double function of not only resurrecting, but also keeping one’s stories and memories alive by speaking them and allowing them to travel. In El reino de este mundo, music, vegetation, and corporeal movement provide signs and indications of life under the tyrannical yoke of slavery where death and torture were rampant. In Los pasos perdidos, the narrator, perceiving stagnant rhythms around him, looks for a more life-affirming and vibrant way of living by reintegrating natural rhythms and creating new artistic rhythms. In Mascaró, the body itself communicates signs of life where death and torture were a threat in a society where only homogenous viewpoints were tolerated. The circus, as a unified body, can be conceived of as a dance that is subject to constant improvisation, which renews the body with vitality. Alternative perspectives
are silenced and this silence is met with generative, creative capacities where life can expand in a restrictive atmosphere.

4.2 Macunaima: A Semiotics of Presence, Absence and the In-between

Mário de Andrade has described Macunaima as a rhapsody, and the fact that it was conceived as such, emphasizes the oral and auditory qualities inherent in the novel. Perhaps the fact that Mário de Andrade himself was a musician who started at a young age explains a profound auditory component to his literature. In a letter to Manuel Bandeira, de Andrade explains that in Macunaima, he is not verbose in descriptions (which would provide more visual clues) with the exception of the chapter “Carta pra cascamiabas” where he satirizes the descriptive style. Another exception occurs when the description creates a certain rhythm within itself and Mário de Andrade gives the example of “no campo vasto do céu” (de Andrade q. in Cavalcanti Proença 215). If rhythm, sound, and the conception of the novel as a rhapsody don’t necessarily privilege sound over images, they make sound at least as important as a modality. Mário de Andrade explains how the language itself is musical: “Quanto a estilo, empreguei essa fala simples tão sonorizada, música mesmo, por causa das repetições, que é costume dos livros religiosos e dos contos estagnados no rapsodismo popular” (Macunaima 218). In addition to the repetitions, the musicality of the novel manifests itself as rhythmic via alliteration, lists that read like streams of consciousness, the appearance of folk songs, verses and proverbs, the integration of various languages and registers. All of these elements create a sonorous backdrop for the poetry (not in the strictest sense) and imagery that Mário de Andrade weaves throughout the text.

While folkloric and traditional songs are intercalated in the novel, so are elements from theatre, dance, and other artistic and cultural creations. These artistic references are social in nature since they are constructs in which the community participates; these references necessarily include social sounds that invite participation and dialogue because sound itself tends to be more social than the visual. Some of the references within the novel are ones that expect, provoke, or request a response from another
person: an antiphony, not in an oppositional (anti) sense however, but in a responsorial sense in a context that leans more towards a communal dialogue. One example of such a dialogue occurs between Macunaima and the chauffeur “em versos y resposta,” when Macunaima asks the chauffeur for a cigarette using a rhyme and the chauffeur responds in kind. According to Cavalcanti Proença, this interaction can be found in *Folclore* by João Ribeiro and Pereira da Costa (248). In addition to the social sounds produced by humans, one can also find in the text the sounds of Nature that become part of the musicality of the novel: for instance, the onomatopoeic sounds of the bird calls, such as the “Curr-pac, papac!” and then the sound “Bilo, bilo...” made by a humming bird (*Macunaima* 213). Other sounds are made fantastical by attributing Brazilian Portuguese and/or indigenous linguistic expressions and behaviors to animals and plants in Nature, thus anthropomorphizing them. One such example takes the form of the the *macaco* that speaks to Macunaima, in what seems like Brazilian Portuguese, tricking him into eating a rock. If in *Imperial Eyes* Pratt shows how the visual culture was used as a mechanism of power, the prevalence of sound in *Macunaima* provides an alternative form of perception and communication; one that by nature includes an Other.

The very beginning of the novel is marked by both sound and its “absence.” The sound that opens the novel is the “murmur” of the river, the Uraricoera, and this murmur contradicts the supposed “absence” of sound as demonstrated in the following line: “Houve um momento em que o silêncio foi tão grande escutando o murmurejo do Uraricoera, que a índia tapanhumas pariu uma criança feia” (13). The silence and the murmur do not negate each other: the word “listening” in its progressive form creates a sense of movement of sound not in a temporal sense where the murmur follows the silence, (although the reading of the line creates the illusion of a temporal progression), rather these acoustic events are layered: there was a moment of silence and the listening of the murmuring of the river when Macunaima was born. This moment between silence and the river’s murmur is when Macunaima, the in-between Trickster, first enters the world. The novel, a rhapsody, thus begins with a Trickster’s play of sound; a
Trickster amidst the juxtaposition of silence and murmur. Macunaíma’s birth is also marked by the sonority of the words which begin with a smooth rhythm of soft consonants that mimic a fluvial flow. The word *que* breaks the rhythm along with the word *criança*, due to the hard “k” sound. This second part of the phrase introduces Macunaíma as Trickster to the world, who by his very birth, has changed the rhythm of things. It may be possible to think of Nature as a Trickster figure in and of itself with its own language or semiotics that contain within it various Trickster aspects; or perhaps Nature is Trickster semiotics. Throughout this novel, Nature (as plant, animal, river, etc.) is shown to be changeable and in constant movement, at times imitating sounds, colors, and figures in order to deceive. The language of Nature is one of movement where every change is imbued with meaning and significance and only the dead are silent, although even they speak. Underlying such changes are rhythms and these rhythms form part of what we can call a semiotics of Nature. Within the patterns of rhythms are meanings. In the alterations of patterns and rhythms, Nature shows her diversity, her flexibility, her Derridean difference, and her capacity as Trickster.

In the previous chapter, the Trickster qualities of Macunaíma were discussed, particularly his transformational capabilities. Prior to the episode where Macunaíma tries to trick Piaimã (also known as Venceslau Pietro Pietra) by emulating a (French) woman, Piaimã himself had tricked Macunaíma by imitating the call sounds of a bird. Macunaíma’s brother Maanape had warned Macunaíma not to respond to the bird call knowing it was a hoax since the bird associated with the sound did not match the producer of the call. Macunaíma ignored the warning and responded to the “bird call,” which led to his first death. An imitation of sound and a warning unheeded proved to be deadly. Elsewhere in the novel, Ceiuci’s daughter warns Macunaíma that: “Se você escuta um passarinho gritando ‘Baúa! Baúa!’ então é a velha Ceiuci chegando” (135). This call of “Baúa,” sure enough, follows Macunaíma just as the daughter had predicted and will cause him to travel all over Brazil in order to escape it. The sound made by Ceiuci is supposed to be a trick again, since a sound attributed to a bird is actually coming from Ceiuci. Since
Macunaima has been cautioned to beware of the sound of the bird, the sound changes its semiotic function: rather than a trap or a trick, it becomes a warning, alerting Macunaima to the danger nearby having learned his lesson from his encounter with Piaimã.

As previously mentioned, from the beginning of the narration, Nature sets itself up as Trickster in the sound/silence of the Uraricoera, while towards the end of the novel, the murmur is no longer mentioned with relation to the Uraricoera and there is just silence which is used as a qualifier for the river (213-214). Nature mirrors Macunaima’s Trickster ways (or vice versa) as is evident when Macunaima and his brothers come across “A margem estava traiçoeira e nem se achava bem o que era terra o que era rio. . .” (21). In other words, at the tricky margin, earth and river become indistinguishable. The borders within Nature itself become confusing and unclear since perhaps this is a characteristic of Nature and its various open semiotic systems that interact with one another. Adding to the confusion of borders is the travel conducted over them, and travel according to Cavalcanti Proença is often found in popular stories as a “forma de indeterminação” (170). The landscape is always changing, as are the people and routes and rhythms within it.

Man communicates with Nature and also uses Nature as a primary material with which to communicate. Making marks on Nature is a form of communication and expression that employs symbolic and pictorial systems which, as mentioned, are open systems. Certain pictures are used symbolically and border on the metaphorical, where the word metaphor means to cross over or transfer. Therefore, making marks on Nature transfers meaning, not through words but rather through symbols and meanings that are attributed to Nature and then, inscribed on it. From the epitaph that Maanape draws on the grave of his mother in the beginning of the novel to the appearance of petroglyphs towards its end, images and drawings present another form of communication: a semiotics without words. Maanape draws a graphic as an epitaph: it comprises a figure in the middle of the drawing with what looks

---

154 A similar occurrence appears in Los pasos perdidos, where forms have diffuse borders.
like a possible insect or animal on the left-hand side, and three lines and a linear design on the right. The figure in the middle resembles a woman. The ambiguity of the picture on the left reflects, perhaps, the ambiguity of Nature. Does the epitaph represent woman/female as life giver? Could the three lines on the right represent the three sons of the mother? Could it represent a sort of language where mother is the birth of creatures and language especially since the first impulse of Macunaima’s speech was directed towards his mother?

Later in the novel, rather than pictorial inscriptions, letters are carved into stone, allowing the communications to last temporally by withstanding any changes that may occur in Nature:

. . . no lugar chamado Poço do Umbu onde tinha umas pedras cheias de letreiros encarnados da gente fenícia, sacou o anzol. . . . (132)

Passando no Ceará decifrou os letreiros indígenas do Aratanha; no Rio Grande do Norte costeando o serrote do Cabelo-não-tem decifrou outro. Na Paraíba, indo de Manguape pra Bacamarte passou na Pedra-Lavrada com tanta inscrição que dava um romance. Não leu por causa da pressa e nem a da Barra do Poti no Piauí. . . . (136)

Macunaima is not the maker of the stone nor the carver, he “deciphers” stones that are changed from rocks into metaphorical novels. In this case, the deciphering is a transformative act that alters Nature, as is marking the rocks which creates a metaphorical transfer of a term.

Aside from petroglyphic images as a form of alternate communication, dreams are also interpreted and relay messages to Macunaima. Macunaima’s first dream of the novel is of his tooth falling out, which his mother interprets as the death of a loved one. The mother then, is an interpreter of Macunaima’s subconscious to his consciousness. The prophetic dream turns into a tragic reality for Macunaima when he accidentally commits matricide. The dream of the dislodging of the tooth provides a metaphor for the stability and the sense of “rootedness” that was provided by the mother that is taken

---

155 For more information on the appearance of these inscriptions, see Cavalcanti Proença (228-229).
away by her death. Since Macunaima’s roots have been loosened, he then wanders and travels. His next series of dreams involve travel and they also indicate and communicate future happenings. Macunaima will dream of ships, whose images will be deciphered by another woman, although in this case the link between the dream and the interpretation is quite clear: the dream means “viagem por mar” (Cavalcanti Proença 232). Again, Macunaima’s dreams are prophetic messages that are capable of jumping through time, although in this case, Macunaima is not the one who will travel, rather, it is the giant Piaimã who will voyage on a ship. Macunaima dreams of the giant’s leaving and returning to Brazil before it occurs. Another dream resembles a type of feverish delirium where Macunaima, near a fountain, hallucinates that he sees a ship and all of the people onboard are diseased. Perhaps this dream is a foreshadowing of the sickness that his family will suffer towards the end of the novel. From the first dream that Macunaima has, one that symbolizes an “uprooting” which leads to an itinerant way of being to the frequent theme of ships in Macunaima’s dreams, we see a trajectory of voyage in both his dreaming and waking life. In this way, the symbolic and metaphoric images that are sustained in a dreaming semiosis travel through time and space.

The sounds of the Uraricoera are prevalent throughout the novel; even in moments of supposed silence, the river is always in the background. The Tietê is seen and felt (51, 93, 103), yet the Uraricoera is always heard and its presence is made present through time, beginning with Macunaima’s birth and continuing to flow after Macunaima’s ascension. Its murmurings set the sonorous atmosphere at the beginning of the novel; in its middle, Macunaima and the brothers miss their home and this saudade causes them to hear the river. Throughout most of the novel, the emphasis is on the musical and the sonorous qualities of the river. Yet towards the end of the novel, Macunaima finds himself in a lagoa, or still and silent water. To contrast it with the Uraricoera, which has a fluid and sonorous name to match its ontology, the lagoa remains nameless. It is in this still and silent water where Macunaima will be mutilated. The “lagoa estava toda coberta de ouro e prata...” (205), and according to Mário de Andrade,
gold and silver are an “alusão à cantiga-de-roda ibérica da Senhora dona Sancha,” a European woman used as an instrument of vengeance by Vei (236). The Uiara spirit of the lake does speak and it is she who will mutilate Macunaíma. Cavalcanti Proença attributes the cabelos negros of the Uiara to Iracema, a fictional indigenous woman (279). The case can also be made for the sudden dominance of the image of the lake if we view this scene in the context of the Narcissus myth, where the image in the pool of water becomes deadly. In the novel, the lake is seen as being coquettish and dancing with her undulations to and fro in a dangerous seductive dance; the same could be said of Macunaíma who wants to enter the water and yet is skittish. This dance is not a dance of life: it is a mirage, a reflection. Macunaíma dips his toe in the water and then takes it out and this act of moving both towards and away mirrors the undulating motions of the Uiara figure in the river (205-206). Whether of European origin or an allusion to Iracema, the Uiara comes to reflect Macunaíma himself who is just as ambiguous as the water figure in a double reflection. Vei “pushes” Macunaíma into the river where one image destroys the other. The image of Macunaíma is torn into pieces and his bodily integrity is lost; his natural rhythms have become arrhythmic and he is not able to find a place for himself anymore except either in the machine-like system of Delmiro Gouveia or experiencing eurythmia as a constellation in the heavens (208).

Besides the sonorous quality of the Uraricoera and the contrasting stillness of the lake, the novel is replete with many different sounds, beginning with the ones Macunaíma makes himself. In the beginning of the novel when Macunaíma was supposedly born in silence and yet the river is also heard, this ambiguous auditory quality is also echoed by Macunaíma who supposedly can’t speak and yet:

Si o incitavam a falar clamava:

- Ah! que preguiça! ... 

e não dizia mais nada. (13)

When Macunaíma is past six years old, he finally speaks and expresses a desire to be mobile by going around the rainforest. Whereas towards the end of the novel, the images of Macunaíma and the Uiara
mirror each other, in the beginning of the novel the sounds of the river and Macunaíma echo each other. Aside from the sounds of the river and Macunaíma, there are the social sounds of the tribe and the social rhythmic movements that are communal activities, such as dance. Dance is also mentioned in the beginning of the first chapter: “Porém respeitava os velhos e freqüentava com aplicação a murua a poracê o torê o bacororô a cucuicogue, todas essas danças religiosas da tribo” (13). Being of a religious sort, dancing links the physical with the spiritual, filling the movement with significance and imbuing it with a meaning that transcends the physicality of the dance. Dance will also have this double meaning in the “Macumba” chapter where the practitioners and followers will experience a communion of sorts with each other and with the spirits, Exu in particular. Among the sounds heard in the beginning of the chapter is the sonorous laughter of the tribe. Laughter, a physical reaction and a nearly universal sound, denotes a sense of happiness that tends to be communal. The end of the novel is, however, a negative reversal of its beginning, in that the signs of life such as birth, dance, and laughter are gone and all that is left is death and silence. However, this death and this silence are not complete, but rather will be transcended through continuing signs of life. Macunaíma and his brothers (and a princess) experience a different corporeal reality when they become shadows, without substance. These bodily changes occur after the rest of the tribe is already gone upon the return of Macunaíma and his brothers to the region of the Uraricoera. Not only is the body and the corporeal aspect missing, the dynamics, movements, rhythms and sounds of the tribe are also gone. Another example of this life/death reversal that differentiates the beginning/end of the novel is found in the dancing that was ubiquitous in the beginning of the novel is contrasted with the corporeal mutilation that Macunaíma endured towards the end of the novel. If we consider dance as corporeal poetry, a freedom of movement, this perception of the body contrasts with the lack of bodily integrity Macunaíma experiences when his body parts are torn from each other.

Having been accustomed to sound since his birth, silence is unsettling to Macunaíma in different parts of the novel. When he loses his muiraquitã, Macunaíma tries to locate it by asking if anyone (or
anything) has seen it, yet he doesn’t receive an answer: “ninguém não sabia de nada. . . . O silêncio era feio e o desespero também” (45). Macunaíma breaks this silence by his cries and his prayers which will eventually be answered by a bird emissary, since birds are communicators in this novel, particularly through song. Towards the end of the novel, the silence is unfathomable for Macunaíma since he, “não compreendia o silêncio. Ficara defunto sem choro. . . .” (201). The silence in the novel occurs in the presence of death and the absence of all else. Symptoms of this silence and absence are the arrhythmias or departures from biological rhythms, and the lack of the social and communal sounds of Nature: the flora, the fauna, and the people. Even Macunaíma imitates and mirrors his environment; he is silent to the point that he can’t cry and deserts the mato, leaving the place in silence. The desertedness and loneliness “matava os peixes e os passarinhos de pavor,” and Nature herself felt affected by the desertion (213). The silence and death begets more silence and death. Or is it truly silent? Is Nature ever truly silent? The silence in the novel “dormia à beira-rio do Uraricoera” and yet, “A mudez era tão imensa que espichava o tamanhão dos paus no espaço” (213). Again, we are presented with an ambivalence of sound, Mário de Andrade imitating the ambivalent Trickster-like nature of Nature. Breaking the “silence” is the sound of a bird called the beija flor. Cavalcanti Proença mentions that for the indigenous, the beija flor is the messenger from the dead and is thus an in-between figure, mediating between silence and sound (284). Then, the man in the mato notices a papagaio; the bird “sings” the language of the tribe and knows the stories of Macunaíma, which he guarded in the “silence” of the Uraricoera. The songs of both the papagaio and the narrator travel to Portugal to be sung there.

These stories and how they are told are also ambivalent given Macunaíma’s nature of fabricating stories. There is an episode in the novel that clearly demonstrates Macunaíma’s creative capacity for story-telling: Macunaíma plays his flute, lies, and tells a story of how he hunted a tapir. The problem, according to the people to whom he tells the story, isn’t that he tells a story, but rather that he does so under the pretext that it is real and true. Macunaíma creates stories and cannot help or stop himself.
This story-telling resembles what Mário de Andrade accomplishes in *Macunaima*, in that he takes certain bits of actual information and adds to them fantastical elements, (re)creating them anew. Macunaima, who took “so long” to speak in the beginning of the novel, in the end is the only one of his tribe left to speak and he leaves his stories, whether they are tall or true, with a bird, an imitator of the language. According to Cavalcanti Proença this episode calls forth to mind a story recounted by Humboldt, who had heard a bird repeat the words of a tribe that no longer existed and the tribe that possessed the bird, could not understand it (285). In the case of Macunaima, the bird and his new and hermetic language is apparently understood by the narrator, with both the bird and the narrator singing of the events of Macunaima. Not just telling but singing; and it is important to point out that the narrator has a violin to accompany his song.

Having discussed Macunaima and the Uraricoera, at the beginning and the end of the novel, I turn now to the travelling in-between which also creates states of rhythm changes in the protagonist. As a Trickster figure, Macunaima and his bodily integrity are issues of prominence along with the various rhythms of the body and their continuity. Macunaima, driven by bodily rhythms and the need to maintain a sense of corporeal integrity, focuses on hunger and sex and travels to satisfy these needs. His quests integrate his needs both in a physical and a symbolic sense. In the case of the latter, the possession of the *muiraquitã* represents the protection of corporeal integrity and without the talisman, the protagonist is more vulnerable. Without his *muiraquitã*, and in search of it, Macunaima falls prey to the giant who cuts him into little pieces in order to eat him. Macunaima will be restored and brought back to life and yet this is not the only time that such a resurrection occurs. As previously mentioned, a *macaco* will also trick Macunaima into eating a stone. Again, Macunaima’s body and the damage done to it will be reversed and Macunaima will be restored. At one point in the novel, he has a chance to enjoy corporeal integrity for eternity. The Sun’s daughters, while traveling in a boat, take care of Macunaima who experiences joy and delight. In this instance, there is a silence that is followed by the murmuring of the waves and the
beating of an African drum by one of the daughters. This joy and delight are expressed by singing a song that is rather contrary to the sentiment of joy and delight: it is a shock to the ears as are the silence and music of the drum and the rhythm of the waves (89-90). Macunaíma could continue to travel in the boat, and marry one of the Sun’s daughters, a decision which at the time, unbeknownst to Macunaíma, would have allowed him to maintain his youth forever. Macunaíma becomes restless and jumps out of the boat to have an escapade with another woman. This angers Vei, the Sun, and Macunaíma loses the possibility of eternal corporeal integrity and a gentle travel along the river. The lake spirit will later eat him alive.

This is not to say that Macunaíma is above destroying or interrupting the bodily integrity of another. He accidentally kills his mother and hurts Venceslau Pietro Pietra during the macumba session as two separate examples. In another part of the novel, Macunaíma eats the leg of the currupira while the body of the currupira talks and calls out to itself:

- Carne de minha perna! . . .

Lá de dentro da barriga do herói a carne respondeu:

- Que foi? (24).

The body not only seeks reintegration, but perhaps to also make a meal of Macunaíma, who after noticing the noise and the dialogue of the body, “vomits” the parts that he ate into a well. When the currupira calls out again, he falls into the well. Macunaíma will also wreak havoc on the corporeal integrity of Piaimã the giant, by proxy for having mutilated the bodily integrity of Macunaíma. With the aid of the supernatural in the form of Exu, he begins a litany of bodily tortures with a sadistically creative variety of ways to deform and affect the body of Piaimã. Piaimã, like Macunaíma, will also recover from his wounds and his bodily integrity will be restored yet again. Macunaíma also tests his corporeal integrity and his strength twice when he tries to pull a tree and by cutting an incision in his leg.  

156 The first time that

---

156 In some cultures, an incision is also a rite of passage: it represents the feminine in a male, incorporating both male and female in one. The incision emphasizes Macunaíma’s nature as Trickster figure. For more information about subincision, see Mircea Eliade’s Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth, 57-62.
Macunaíma tests his strength, he fails. It is only the second time, when his bodily integrity is at its peak, that Macunaíma is finally able (although by cunning and not by strength) to defeat the Piaimã (or Venceslau Pietro Pietra) and retrieve his beloved muiraquitã. What allows Macunaíma to defeat the Piaimã, is the use of the giant’s own rhythms against him. When Piaimã asks Macunaíma to balance, Macunaíma says the giant should go first (in a classic Trickster move) and when the giant begins to bleed, Macunaíma insists that he continue using the same words the giant used with the chauffeur. The giant gets caught up in the rhythm that he has created falling into his own trap, to his own death and into his own soup.

At various points in the novel, Macunaíma’s vitality is protected and resurrected, oftentimes by breath or another source of vitality projected into him. The sighs (or sonorous breath) of Ceíuci’s daughter who was “nada habilidosa e só sabia suspirar,” warn Macunaíma of her mother’s call (or her own mother’s breaths), saving his life since he is then able to escape from Ceíuci (133). Macunaíma’s bodily integrity is destroyed at various times in the novel and it is by the actions of his brother, Maanape, the feiticeiro that he is able to have his bodily integrity restored. Maanape primarily resorts to the use of the soplo, or breath, in order to resurrect Macunaíma. The soplo, according to Cavalcanti Proença and anthropologists, is present in many stories as a means of bringing the dead back to life (Cavalcanti Proença 191-192). Rather than explain in detail the purpose of these practices within actual contexts and their spiritual/physical significance, let us at least sustain that the soplo is indeed a practiced method of healing/resurrection that makes an appearance in the novel. The interpretation offered here is not to be taken as an explanation with regard to actual indigenous practices, but rather as an alternative interpretation to their presence within the scope of the novel in a poetics/semiotics that emphasizes signs of life. In the first instance, when Macunaíma is chopped into pieces, it is not only breath, but the collection of his blood that will allow him to live again. Both are elements of water and air, in this case in corporeal form. Both breath and blood are moved about in rhythmic ways. By being mutilated,
Macunaíma has lost his own bodily rhythms. The substance, pieces of the body, are then reunited by the flow and exchange of breath. The liquidity of the blood unifies the pieces; the dynamic movements of both liquid blood and aerial breath flow into the deceased Macunaíma who is silent and immobile. In another example, Maanape seeks the help of another curandeiro Bento, in Beberibe for Macunaíma’s sarampão. Maanape cures with air, Bento cures with water: “. . .Bento curandeiro em Beberibe que curava com alma de índio e a água de pote. Bento deu uma agüinha e fez reza cantada” (141). The air and water projected into Macunaíma revivify him: make him mobile, restore his rhythms and consequently, his sounds. It is only towards the end of the novel, when Nature around him has become a desert, that there is no life that can project itself onto Macunaíma; he can become a machine or he can become a constellation. Towards the end of the novel, Macunaíma’s breaths are used to tell his story and the story of his tribe. These breaths/stories are shared with the bird that will then repeat these words/sonorous breaths to a traveler, interpreted by Cavalcanti Proença to be Mário de Andrade himself, who then tells the story of Macunaíma (284). Breath can then be interpreted as sound; breath according to Bachelard is linked with poetry. For Octavio Paz, poetry revivifies and brings to life. Breath makes a sound, it allows us to create sounds, words, stories. Breath is the mechanism by which Macunaíma’s tales are spread and will continue to live on. Breath resurrects Macunaíma both in life and in death with its vibrations and movements in the air that are charged with meaning and significance that are then (re)interpreted. Like ripples in a lake, these movements continue to spread and extend outward. The papagaio and the narrator return these stories to life using their own breath.157

4.3 El reino de este mundo: Semiotic Systems of Transcendence

---

157 Interestingly enough, there is the appearance of the tradition of Bumba-boi, a reenactment of resurrection and yet in the novel, the bull is not resurrected. Perhaps it is to ensure an ending for Macunaíma and the novel, leaving no one to resurrect Macunaíma, only the legacy of his stories.
In *El reino de este mundo*, Alejo Carpentier describes his interpretation of slavery and hierarchies of domination in Haiti, which he based on his travels and research. He declares in the prologue his particular interest in Mackandal and Bouckman, and those who upended these exploitative structures by their actions and by surviving as mythological figures. Alternative semiotic systems and alternate forms of communication during the times depicted in the novel were not only used by matter of quotidian necessity, but were also carefully constructed and employed in order to subvert tyrannical systems of exploitation. Alternate means of communication were a matter of everyday necessity because persons taken from Africa and moved as slaves around the Americas were put into contact with peoples of different linguistic backgrounds. One result of this linguistic mixing was pidgin English, whose musical quality allowed people from different linguistic backgrounds to understand each other due to an importance placed on intonation:

Linguists describe pidgin as a “go-between” language. . . . It was a dialect whose expressive power arose less from its lexical range than from the musical qualities of stress and pitch. . . . Where people had to understand each other, pidgin English was the lingua franca of the sea and the frontier. . . . Pidgin became an instrument, like the drum or the fiddle, of communication among the oppressed: scorned and not easily understood by polite society, it nonetheless ran as a strong, resilient, creative, and inspirational current among seaport proletarians almost everywhere. Krio, itself a lingua franca of the West African coast, was spoken in many places, as were Cameroons pidgin, Jamaican creole, Gullah, and Sranan (Suriname). (Linebaugh and Rediker 154)

There are several examples in the novel that describe linguistic flows, exchanges, and barriers, yet one example that highlights the importance of tonality is a scene when a priest is speaking, and everyone is able to understand him because of his inflections and intonations:

Fue entonces cuando aparecieron en los campos unos sacerdotes negros, sin tonsura ni ordenación, que llamaban los Padres de la Sabana. En lo de decir latines sobre el jergón de un agonizante eran tan sabios como los curas franceses. Pero se les entendía mejor, porque cuando
recitaban el Padre nuestro o el Ave María sabían dar al texto acentos e inflexiones que eran semejantes a las de otros himnos por todos sabidos. (86)

Thus, on the quotidian level that requires communication in order for actions and exchanges to occur, music, tonality, and rhythm (which, as mentioned, is universal according to Lefebvre) present themselves as communicative tools available to everyone. This is especially relevant in the context of repressive systems that purposely block certain sections of the populace from access to certain linguistic skills in order to withhold knowledge and thus maintain a position of power and the capacity for exploitation.158 Sound and rhythm become potentially unifying semiotic modes and useful tools for communication, especially when travel brings into contact those from different linguistic backgrounds. On the side of subversion, alternative semiotic systems, particularly music, were used in order to subvert exploitative and restrictive systems. These semiotic systems allowed for communication at times when regular contact and communication were prohibited or restricted. For Paul Gilroy, in The Black Atlantic, music or song is a way of “transcending” these restrictions and prohibitions, and serves as a means of restoring the integrity that is compromised by them: “They are, for example, battles over the means of cultural representation available to racially subordinated people who are denied access to particular cultural forms (like literacy) while others (like song) are developed both as a means of transcendence and as a type of compensation for very specific experiences of unfreedom” (123). Restrictions in contact and communication are often accompanied by restrictions or control of movement; in this situation, “the reconciliation of art and life” in a way that is free-flowing, dynamic, and fluid is a means of overcoming truncation, both corporeal and expressive, caused by constraints and prohibitions. Alternative systems allowed for messages to be communicated, even when movement was controlled, by providing a flexible

---

158 Examples of the prohibition of the spread of information and knowledge endured in the form of illiteracy and banning access to books and other sources of knowledge as described in The Black Atlantic by Paul Gilroy (123). Lewis Hyde speaks about Frederick Douglass as a person who subverted this system by becoming literate himself (228-229).
and moveable medium, powerful enough to resonate. Music and sound, accessible to everyone, were already part of the quotidian and facilitated mutual understanding. Taken a step further, they become subversive elements to dominating schemas and narratives, which show a preference for the visual (à la Pratt) and the abstract (à la Lefebvre). In *El reino de este mundo*, details narrated by Carpentier give us a glimpse into some of these alternative systems and how they were used and kept open, fluid, dynamic, and functional amidst all the efforts to eradicate them. This put tremendous pressure on the alternative systems themselves, but being open, they were able to transform and adapt in order to survive.

*El reino de este mundo* opens with a reference to newspapers and other printed periodicals that disseminate information. La *Gaceta de Leyde*, which was mentioned in chapter two, was a periodical which circulated revolutionary ideas and yet the information contained in it is out of reach of Ti Noel who remarks about the lack of literacy among the slaves who “no entendían de letras” (13). They were denied access to literacy by colonizers as a way of maintaining control over them. There is a later reference also to the *Gazette of Saint-Domingue*. On the one hand, the mention of these periodicals, which were destined for “certain members of the society,” demonstrates one undercurrent of the realities depicted in this work of fiction, yet the novel then undercuts this undercurrent by demonstrating that revolutionary ideas still were able to spread amongst those who were prevented from becoming literate. In this same scene, revolutionary ideas are disseminated by song, in this case by the song of the sailors who, as mentioned in chapter two, travelled and circulated information and ideas. In this chapter, the musical importance of these scenes will be discussed.

While songs also belong to the repertoire of dominant discourse, in the form of marches and similar musical genres, these forms tend to be closed to improvisation and re-interpretation. In the following example we encounter a battle between sounds and rhythms produced by Lenormad de Mezy and Ti Noel. Lenormand de Mezy’s expression ventures outward in a whistle that serves to highlight the regimented march and also harkens to the use of the whistle as a sound used to command: “el amo
comenzó a silbar una marcha de pífanos. Ti Noel, en contrapunteo mental, tarareó para sus adentros una copla marinera, muy cantada por los toneleros del puerto, en que se echaban mierdas al rey de Inglaterra” (17). Ti Noel’s expression is internal, it flows, is dynamic and changeable (since the content of the song has changed). The song has already traveled by water and by land (via the sailors) and will continue to do so. Songs and music provided a medium for messages, news, and information to cross mountains, oceans, and deserts. It is through the copla that Ti Noel was made aware of the sailor’s opinions of the king of England, even if he didn’t speak the language of the sailors who had sung it: “De lo último sí estaba seguro, aunque la letra no estuviese en créole” (17). This copla provides a subversive foil for Lenormand de Mezy’s march and his whistling. Demonstrating the fluidity of the song, Ti Noel will later change the focus of the copla and sing it against Henri Christophe. The “grosería a un rey” which refers back to the king of England in the original song is replaced by Henri Christophe, using it as an expression of subversion (109). The following information from The Many-Headed Hydra adds a historical context for this literary example explaining that the ship, while a vessel used to transport slaves, was also a vessel used by some to escape slavery and if the Middle Passage carried slaves, abolitionary ideas and movements also were transported by water, according to Rediker and Linebaugh: “For Thomas Clarkson, the abolitionist, rivers provided an image of freedom; for James Joyce, the smithy of the Irish soul, rivers transmitted languages. . . . Rivers divaricate. From Putney, after 1647, would flow the ideas and practices of both freedom and slavery” (111-112). While this citation and the uprisings mentioned by the authors –Naples (1647), London (1649), Ireland (1649-1651), Barbados (1649), The River Gambia (1652), London (1659-1660), Virginia (1663-1676) – antedate the events recounted in the novel, these rebellions and the news of them set the stage for events that were to follow, including the revolution in Haiti.

The fact that information was travelling and transmitted by word of mouth is alluded to on numerous occasions in El reino: “Los negros de Dufrené traían grandes noticias del Cabo” (76); “Pronto las noticias bajaron por los respiraderos, túneles y corredores, a las cámaras y dependencias” (125).
Information travels not only great distances but also through time: as mentioned in the last chapter, Mackandal shared stories of Africa and these stories were passed on, particularly by Ti Noel and his descendants. Ti Noel was a spreader of information, and music played an important role in this process. Ti Noel composes songs for his children about Mackandal and, in this way, uses music as a way of remembering and telling stories. These songs also serve as a foil to the roles that Mlle. Floridor tries to interpret. The transmission is stilted when she is misunderstood by the slaves as having confessed that she had “committed many crimes” and that she had escaped to the colony to avoid persecution (52-53). Her attempts at grandiose roles are ironic in that she is not deemed able to play them in Paris and is misunderstood when she attempts to perform them in front of the slaves in the colony. In a twist of irony, Carpentier is exposing the true crime of Mlle. Floridor (and the colonists as a whole) which is her abuse and mistreatment of the slaves, in which case the slaves accurately interpret her criminality. In comparison, Ti Noel, rather than performing a (rather ironic) role, created songs by himself, with a fluid sincerity that “reverences” or raises up Mackandal, who continues to live through the stories. His memory is kept alive, as is the supernatural possibility of his return, restoring, in a sense, the possibility of corporeal integrity which has been destroyed by immolation. According to Gilroy, “music plays a significant role” in the first “moment” of “black political culture” which is “the attempt to liberate the body of the slave from a rather deeper experience of reification” (124). If for the slaveowners, the body of Mackandal is an object, the music sung about him, can be seen to liberate him from reification by restoring his agency as a human being by emphasizing his role in the movements of liberation. While Mlle. Floridor finds herself in a socially higher position within the societal hierarchy of the time, with access to literacy and thus able to read and perform works of high literature, when trying to elevate herself still higher, she only manages to become a caricature. In contrast, Ti Noel, who is pushed down by the society, is raised higher through

159 Music also plays a role in the second moment as well, and with regard to the third moment: “the third can be defined by the project of liberating music from its status as a mere commodity and by the associated desire to use it to demonstrate the reconciliation of art and life...” (124).
his own musical creation and the power of his own self-expression. Carpentier juxtaposes the sounds produced by the dominant with those created by the exploited, developing a comparison that undermines the structure of political and economic hierarchies. When in Santiago, Lenormand de Mezy and other French settlers dispossessed from Haiti begin to sing *La Marsellesa* and the *Himno de San Luis*, a scene that Carpentier has infused with irony. The irony demonstrates the loss of musical power and significance of the songs. *La Marsellesa*, a march that was composed during the French Revolution (1789-1799), and thus can be associated with subversion and revolution, loses its significance when the song that is a cry against tyranny is sung by the tyrannical. The song speaks of protecting the country (France) from invaders (Austria) and yet in this case, in a role-reversal, it is sung by invaders who in this case are the French. The *Himno de San Luis* is also sung while those singing engage in and have been engaging in unchristian-like acts. This scene is contrasted by Ti Noel entering a church whose images recall the “symbols” of Voodoo and Ti Noel is inspired to sing (“pray”) to Mackandal: “Santiago, soy hijo de la guerra...” where Santiago is Ogún Fai, “el mariscal de las tormentas, a cuyo conjuro se habían alzado los hombres de Bouckman” (73). Much like the song *La Marsellesa* is a call to arms, Ti Noel’s chant is a type of war cry, yet it lacks the irony that Carpentier attributes to *La Marsellesa*. Thus, due to its sincerity and fluidity, Ti Noel’s song maintains a revolutionary and subversive power.

Without the melody of a song, yet having its own rhythm, a declarative shout, potent with will and emotion, is its own form of subversion. If “ciertas frases” of a *capellán español* caused the death of Cornejo Breille, and “El silencio demasiado prolongado de una ciudad que ha dejado de creer en el silencio,” then “sólo un recién nacido se atrevió a romper con un vagido ignorante, reencaminando la vida hacia su sonoridad habitual de pregones, abures, comadreos y canciones de tender la ropa al sol” (109). Against the backdrop of the silence of death and the finality of the corruption of bodily integrity, is a new life screaming with will that brings the rest of the town back to the rhythms of life. In a similar example,
at the death by immolation of Mackandal, the shout of “Mackandal sauvé” brings Mackandal back to life in the eyes of the people, as a chant, as music, as invocation.

Invocations are not only a call to the gods, but also instill a sense of power amongst the people who are lacking an outward manifestation of their power. To invoke is to feel the divine on one’s side, the sound of a voice that inspires and instills powerful emotions, emotions with energy that then leads to actions. An invocation implies a will, a will seeking a revolution in the sense of turning or changing. As mentioned, Ti Noel invokes Santiago in a church in Santiago proclaiming himself a “son of war.” Invocations also facilitate the temporary change in the status of Solimán when Leclerc falls ill, “Solimán invocaba con sus conjuros, en verdadero amo de la isla, único defensor posible contra el azote de la otra orilla, único doctor probable ante la inutilidad de los recetarios” (83). The invoker possesses an interior power that inspires a sense of faith by communicating between the forces of Nature, the supernatural, and humans. The pact at Bois Caimán is anticipated by the (con)fusion of voices and Nature: “Aunque se hablara en voz baja, el rumor de las conversaciones llenaba todo el bosque, confundiéndose con la constante presencia del aguacero en las frondas estremecidas” (55). Earlier in the novel, Ti Noel promises to follow Bouckman, who, on a stormy night in August in Bois Caimán, invokes the loas, Ogún and Damballah, in a pact for freedom, and inspires others to swear fidelity to him:

Había mucho de invocación y de ensalmo en aquel discurso lleno de inflexiones coléricas y de gritos. Era Bouckman el jamaiquino quien hablaba de esta manera. Aunque el trueno apagara frases enteras, Ti Noel creyó comprender que algo había ocurrido en Francia, y que unos señores muy influyentes habían declarado que debía darse la libertad a los negros, pero que los ricos propietarios del Cabo, que eran todos unos hideputas monárquicos, se negaban a obedecer. Llegado a este punto, Bouckman dejó caer la lluvia sobre los árboles durante algunos segundos, como para esperar un rayo que se abrió sobre el mar. Entonces, cuando hubo pasado el retumbo, declaró que un Pacto se había sellado entre los iniciados de acá y los grandes Loas del África, para que la guerra se iniciara bajo los signos propicios. (56)
The sign for the insurrection would be the sound of the shell. The air breathed into the shell is a sign of life that circulates in the shell in order to produce sound. This sound, in the novel, would signal a declaration and a sign of life in a terror system that tries to instill and impose a deathly silence by prohibiting communication and access to literacy. This system also destroys the integrity of the body. The shell becomes a medium of communication: it communicates the sentiment that even though the body bears the scars of a system of terror, the breath is a sign of life. The shell also communicated to the people that the revolution and the Pact sworn that August night were to begin. If the shell is linked to breath and life, the drum is linked to the body as heartbeat and circulation of blood. The drum as an instrument that provides a steady flowing rhythm and its sound are the most elementary components of music providing its most essential element: rhythm. The drum is also one of the most profound instruments, since it resonates with us on the deepest level, echoing the heartbeat, the flow of blood as it pumps through our veins. Its sound extends beyond the auditory into the palpable; we can feel a drumbeat. Carpentier’s novel shows that in addition to songs disseminating the message of revolution, the rhythm of the drum can spread signs of revolution or change. Drums and percussion instruments are signs in and of themselves; their sounds are signs that transcend language: “The irrepressible rhythms of the once forbidden drum are often still audible in their [“organic intellectuals”] work. Its characteristic syncopations still animate the basic desires - to be free and to be oneself - that are revealed in this counterculture’s unique conjunction of body and music” (Gilroy 76). Drums served as a means of communicating when words could not be transmitted because verbal communication was impossible because of distance (mountain to port) or because communication was regulated and any breach in regulation resulted in severe and brutal repercussions. The drum can also instill fear and for that reason, was prohibited or limited. When Mackandal returns during a dance in December and appears from behind the Tambor Madre, everyone starts to sing a yanvalú, an “interrogation” and an “invocation” asking when the suffering will end. The Tambor Madre, or Mother Drum, accompanying the song, links even more
intimately the idea of the drum and the heartbeat if the first sound we ever hear as a human being is the sound of our mothers’ hearts in the womb. Like the sound of the shells, the sound of the drums sets the scene for the death of Henri Christophe and heralds a revolution in leadership. The drums “respond” to each other, like the sounds of the shells, as an antiphony, a dialogue among the instruments that proclaim from place to place, a united revolutionary call. These drums were the “tambores radás, los tambores congós, los tambores de Bouckman, los tambores de los Grandes Pactos, los tambores todos del Vodú” (120). These drums, associated with Voodoo, in the novel are a form of communication: “Los esclavos tenían, pues, una religión secreta que los alentaba y solidarizaba en sus rebeldías. . . . hablándose con los tambores de calendas, sin que él [Lenormand de Mézy] lo sospechara” (66). The sound of the drums, a unifying form of communication, associated with the body as a palpable sound, as the earliest sound, and the messages sent by the drums, escape the attention of Lenormand de Mezy, who can read the gazettes in the storefronts, but cannot read the spontaneous, live rhythm of the drums.160 The drums, as a mode of expression, escape the understanding of the colonizers.

Although the visual is associated with abstract space and discourses of domination, symbols and poetic imagery are still alive, dynamic, and fluid since they have maintained their imaginative potency by keeping the connection between art and life. In El reino de este mundo, images of subversion and transcendence are often linked to sound. The sonorous component adds another vital and expressive link to the images, making the image more dynamic in memory. One of the first images of the novel is a “grabado en cobre” of an “almirante o un embajador francés, recibido por un negro rodeado de abanicos de plumas y sentado sobre un trono adornado de figuras de monos y de lagartos” mentioned in chapter two with regard to myths (14). This image reverses the power schema of the Antilles by showing an African King on a throne being visited and honored by Europeans. This image will bring to Ti Noel’s mind

160 The marches that Lenormand de Mezy whistles and La Marsellesa he sings are dead rhythms because they have lost their meaning and their value. The words and rhythms have been twisted and deformed so as to have lost the power of significance.
the stories that Mackandal told him of the kingdoms in Africa. The aural component that lives in memory is brought back to life through the copper image in the store. According to Paul Gilroy, the past serves as a source of power. “The invocation of anteriority as anti-modernity is more than a consistent rhetorical flourish linking contemporary Africalogy and its nineteenth-century precursors. These gestures articulate a memory of pre-slave history that can, in turn, operate as a mechanism to distil and focus the counter-power of those held in bondage and their descendants” (57-58). By recalling the past, the image in copper along with Mackandal’s stories, become an example of that power. A link between history, story, memory, and the image is rendered dynamic and powerful because of the potency between art, life, and memory. In another example, in a church in Santiago, the aforementioned song/prayer is inspired by the images in the church:

. . .el negro hallaba en las iglesias españolas un calor de vodú que nunca había hallado en los templos sansulpicianos del Cabo. Los oros del barroco, las cabelleras humanas de los Cristos, el misterio de los confessionarios recargados de molduras, el can de los dominicos, los dragones aplastados por santos pies, el cerdo de San Antón, el color quebrado de San Benito, las Vírgenes negras, los San Jorge con coturnos y juboncillos de actores de tragedia francesa, los instrumentos pastoriles tañidos en noches de pascuas, tenían una fuerza envolvente, un poder de seducción, por presencias, símbolos, atributos y signos, parecidos al que se desprendía en los altares de los houmforts consagrados a Damballah, el Dios Serpiente. Además, Santiago es Ogún Fai, el mariscal de las tormentas, a cuyo conjuro se habían alzado los hombres de Bouckman. Por ello, Ti Noel, a modo de oración, le recitaba a menudo un viejo canto oído a Mackandal:

Santiago, soy hijo de la guerra:

Santiago,

¿no ves que soy hijo de la guerra? (73)
The images in the church, being compared to the images in the houmforts creates a tie, a nexus of symbols that are now involved in a web of intercommunication on both a semantic level in terms of meaning, and a semiotic level between imagery and music. There is a flow of correspondence that revivifies both sets of images in both places infusing them with new meanings without losing the premise of the old. The song also adds vitality to the images by “reciting” figures and scenes painted on the walls and Ti Noel becomes an interactive participant in the imagery rather than a mere observer. The images bring to life the memory of Bouckman and Mackandal in Ti Noel, revivifying their stories and their memories with an implied promise of a continuation. Ti Noel’s song in the church becomes even more potent as it turns prophetic towards the end of the novel when uttering a battle cry, Ti Noel conjures Santiago/Ogún Fai, and the storm and winds hear his cry and respond, turning Ti Noel into an invoker in the tradition of Mackandal and Bouckman. While both of these examples link sound and imagery, they also link different parts of the world by presenting images and stories that have travelled.

Nature also speak in El reino de este mundo. Everything in Nature has the potential to be communicative through various types of semiotic systems. One of the most noticeable examples of communication via “Nature” are the signs in the chapter that bears the title “Los signos.” Ti Noel notices that “Todas las vegetaciones que ahí crecían tenían filos, dardos, púas y leches para hacer daño” whose visual and tactile signs are more expressive with regards to the danger and the atmosphere of fear than the “pocos hombres que Ti Noel se encontraba no respondían al saludo,” that do not engage in communication (90). The sharp edges of the plants signal a dangerous time and the fact that they are native plants signal that the danger comes from the island and not from abroad, heralding to Ti Noel the nature of the kingdom of Henri Christophe. Through plants, Nature is speaking, even when men cannot. These signs contrast with Nature as it is depicted towards the end of the novel when Ti Noel governs what is left of the plantation of Lenormand de Mezy:
El anciano llenaba de cosas hermosas los vacíos dejados entre los restos de paredes, haciendo de cualquier transeúnte ministro, de cualquier cortador de yerbas general, otorgando baronías, regalando guirnaladas, bendiciendo a las niñas, imponiendo flores por servicios prestados. Así habían nacido la Orden de la Escoba Amarga, la Orden del Aguinaldo, la Orden del Mar Pacífico y la Orden del Galán de Noche. Pero la más requerida de todas era la Orden del Girasol, por lo vistosa. (141-142)

The plants have now acquired new meanings: rather than signaling the presence of danger, flowers become a currency system and part of a new order. The names of the flowers have double meanings and thus produce double images, referring to a flower and also to secondary objects. Earlier in the plot, Mackandal learns the language of the plants from Mamán Loi and puts to use his knowledge of mushrooms and their poison. What seems to be a silent and mysterious death to the colonizers, in the sense that they cannot find the source, is the language of Nature, the poison of the mushrooms that eludes their initial interrogations. The mushrooms will also appear on the walls of the Citadel.

The body itself, as a work of Nature and a part of Nature, is a sign. When movements are restricted, the body is controlled. In slave systems, the body and its integrity are under the absolute control of the slave owner. Any bodily movement in such a system is therefore an act of subversion, much like Hyde affirmed that any “diction” is an act of rebellion in a system where speech is banned or controlled. The body itself is a network of its own semiotic systems and its relation to others tells its own stories. Mackandal’s transformations are symbolic of one’s volition over one’s own body. Using a supernatural symbolic system, the body not only becomes integral, whole, and free from impositions, but images and symbols related to it acquire a powerful hold on the imagination of others; the imagery as story spreads influential actions and rhythms in order to restore corporeal integrity in the physical, exterior, and social plane of events.

---

162 In every system, there is always some form of regulation in terms of bodily movement; in slave systems, this control is absolute.
In *El reino de este mundo*, Alejo Carpentier exposes a perception that is different from that of dominating orders. Similarly, and yet not exactly in the same way, Tzvetan Todorov compares the semiotic systems of the indigenous Americans and the Spaniards during the conquest of America. Todorov does not pit one system against another, but pretends to show how atrocities are possible; what mechanisms reinforce discourses and practices that lead to atrocities? For Todorov, the indigenous system is circular because of the mythological and cosmological conception in which events are circular and follow a pre-determined pattern. Spaniards, he argues, followed a linear system of a present that is continuous and not pre-determined. In *El reino de este mundo*, Alejo Carpentier compares the still alive mythological systems with mechanical systems of dominating discourses of the West. I would argue that amidst these binary rhythmic polarities, there are other rhythms and shifts that serve as undercurrents that interact in complex ways, and by drawing attention to them, we also draw attention to the complex web of possibilities and probabilities that were in play during these different periods of history. In *El reino de este mundo*, Alejo Carpentier demonstrates how transcendent are the (his)stories of Mackandal for creating a mythology and how transcendent personal stories can become through complex webs of alternative semiotic systems.

4.4 *Los pasos perdidos*: The Search for Rhythms of Vitality

The novel’s beginning serves as a contrast to its ending: it begins with a theatrical simulacrum of Nature in the city of one continent and ends with the narrator in Nature itself lamenting his upcoming departure to the continent he thought he has left behind. This contrast between the fake and the real, the dead and the alive is not only a recurring theme in the novel by way of various references that create points of interaction and intersection among these poles, but also a part of its structure in terms of how the content of the novel is divided and how it defines the sequences of the plot. This dichotomy between death and life, both literal and figurative, will be explored through the author’s use of sounds, dance,
movement, and poetic images with regard to how these modes of expression can be considered subversive and/or transcendent. Travelling both through time and to different places serves as the backdrop for the comparison of how the life/death dichotomy is expressed and how this dichotomy is subverted and transcended.

Salvador Arias makes note of a contrast with regard to artistic works that are scattered throughout the novel, where one acts as a counterpoint to the other: he states that Beethoven’s *Novena Sinfonía* first appears in New York and is then “analizada, desmenuzada” by the protagonist on the road to the *selva*, meanwhile in the *selva*, the protagonist “conforma los detalles del Treno” which he will not be able to complete (13). The narrator of *Los pasos perdidos* also equates the *Novena Sinfonía* with death or rather notes the irony of this work which was composed as a triumphant hymn during one of the darkest eras of European history. The equation of the *Novena Sinfonía* with death occurs when it is played when the “macabre dance of death” is found everywhere. The *Novena Sinfonía* lost its power to the narrator when the image of brotherhood that the song implied for him contrasted with the imagery of cruelty of one man to another. The *Treno*, on the other hand, is inspired by a rite of death: the sounds a shaman utters in antiphony in an attempt to move death away.

Death takes on different manifestations in the novel as does life, its counterpart. One type of death, a figurative one more than literal, presents itself in the beginning of the novel and will serve as a continuous point of comparison throughout the rest of the novel to specific kinds of deaths that are particular to a certain place and time. This figurative death is a death of stagnation, emphasized by a lack of movement and a lack of nature found in the city, during the time period that was contemporary to Alejo Carpentier. The references alluding to death and a repetitive, unnatural rhythm abound in the beginning of the novel, as shown in the following examples: “El éxito de la obra aniquilaba lentamente a los intérpretes. . .”; “mi esposa se dejaba llevar por el automatismo del trabajo impuesto, como yo me dejaba llevar por el automatismo del oficio” (21). This unnatural rhythm is all the more unnatural because
it is imposed from the outside: the inner, natural rhythms of the body are forced to obey “rhythmic rules” that are based on the needs of political, economic, and social systems that are in place.\textsuperscript{163} Even the art that the narrator creates is an advertisement, controlled by economic interests linked with entities of power, and conflicts with Octavio Paz’s vision of art:

Un estilo artístico es algo vivo, una continua invención dentro de cierta dirección. Nunca impuesta desde fuera, nacida de las tendencias profundas de la sociedad, esa dirección es hasta cierto punto imprevisible, como lo es el crecimiento de las ramas del árbol. En cambio, el estilo oficial es la negación de la espontaneidad creadora: los grandes imperios tienden a uniformar el rostro cambiante del hombre y a convertirlo en una máscara indefinidamente repetida. El poder inmoviliza, fija en un solo gesto - grandioso, terrible o teatral y, al fin, simplemente monótono- la variedad de la vida. (287)

The description given by Paz is not only applicable to the art of the narrator but also to his life and the “máscara” of the Hombre-Avispa that represents in the novel the everyman that repeats the same daily monotonous rhythm. At night, the narrator attempts to subvert these rhythms when the frenetic, exigent, external, and diurnal rhythms have slowed down and personal rhythms are given more leeway. However, in the beginning of the novel, the narrator, never seems able to transcend the imposed rhythms. The next day dawns, just like the previous one, and the rhythms begin again as the narrator compares himself to Sisyphus with his constant and inescapable upward and downward motion.\textsuperscript{164} For the narrator, this

\textsuperscript{163} An interesting counter argument can be gleaned from de Certeau’s The Practice of Everyday Life, where there is a poetry in some of these quotidian rhythms, along with the subversion of “micromovements”- such as the route one chooses to go to work, or the coffee one chooses to drink- that has a certain power on its own. One can argue there is life in such movements; there is subversion and transcendence in the personal choices one makes every day even in the smallest of degrees, since these movements form the patterns and the rhythms of a place. Even imposed rhythms can be subverted and transcended: Trickster knows well how to subvert and transcend these rhythms, yet the narrator of Los pasos perdidos is not cognizant of these possibilities until he travels and dominating systems (such as the one he experienced in what is presumably New York) are no longer in place since the deeper into nature one goes, the less strength and potency such rhythms and impositions have; nature’s rhythms come once again to the fore.

\textsuperscript{164} This Sisyphal movement should not be confused with the vertical motion described in chapter two dedicated to myth. There, the vertical movement serves as a metaphor describing a free-flowing movement adhering to one’s own interior will and volition and implying an active and dynamic imagination.
singular rhythm implies a sort of internal death; it limits movement, and thus inhibits both corporeal and mental freedom. It is not until the narrator is asked to travel when he is finally able to break free from this slow and monotonous death.

Death also appears in the text in a less figurative and more literal sense. Silence is often associated with death and in attempting to transcend death, music and sound are used. On one such occasion, the literal death reinforces the figurative lugubrious atmosphere that permeates the beginning of the novel when one of the fellow members of the theatre troupe dies and the theatre company attends the funeral (21). Another occasion of literal death is when Mouche and the narrator arrive in the capital of a Latin American country where a revolution begins: shots are fired narrowly missing the narrator, another bullet finds itself in the body of Kappelmeister, whose funeral they attend. Travel from one country to the next changes the type of death that appears in the novel. One is a slow and tedious urban death of monotonous rhythms whose imagery is reinforced again towards the end of the novel when the protagonist “discovers”: “unos seres que descansan, como aturdidos, con algo de momias paradas” (222). Upon Mouche’s and the narrator’s arrival into another country, death becomes far more immediate, explicit and violent in the form of a revolutionary violence. Silence begins to fill the streets as terror permeates the atmosphere and yet the people inside the hotel will begin to play music, a sign of life stirring from the depths of the basement. If music here is a sign of life, an inverse association is formulated when the imagery and sound of revolutionary violence reach a crescendo: the narrator recalls then his trip to a war-torn Europe and remembers the horrors of war and the terrors of the Nazi concentration camps, where Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony* was played and words were chanted that countered the devastating images of war and extermination. Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony* contrasts with the prayers in Yiddish that then fell silent. The break of bodily integrity and its natural rhythms is depicted at one of its extremes at this point of the novel and silence/music serve to highlight these breaks.
As the narrator and Mouche travel in order to escape the proximity of the revolutionary violence, they come across a woman, Rosario, who seems as if she were on the border of life/death, “dio un grito y se agarró de mí, implorando . . . que no la dejaran morir de nuevo. . . . sólo ahora comprendía que había estado casi muerta” (81). Her scream, can be interpreted as a “sign of life” as she begins to recover her strength and her faculties. We find out that the woman’s father, suffering from ill-health, will die, and that Rosario undertook the trip to obtain a religious symbol of faith in order to save him. His sickness, as the narrator states, is explained in a “mythic” fashion and Rosario’s reaction to her father’s death has elements of older funerary rites of giving offerings to appease those who help the dead to cross over, thus reinforcing the “mythical” elements associated with his death. Traveling deeper into the selva, this time by boat, Rosario, the narrator, and those who are travelling with them, arrive at an indigenous village, where a villager will die. There, the narrator hears the tren, or funerary song enacted by the shaman, which will serve as an inspiration to the narrator. This ritual song is a protest against death, trying to protect life: “intento primordial de lucha contra las potencias de aniquilamiento. . .” (168). By witnessing the funerary rites associated with death, the narrator has found what he believes is the birth of music. To conclude, after Rosario’s own “resurrection,” the novel depicts two deaths and the corresponding attempts at resuscitating life using rites, rituals, music and sounds, which add a mythical quality to these experiences.

In Santa Mónica de los Venados and nearby areas, the last two deaths of the novel involve the degradation of the body and corporeal integrity in brutal fashions. Nicasio demonstrates degradation of the body on several levels: on the one hand, he is a leper and banned from the village because the villagers fear the spread of leprosy. On a second level, the narrator makes a point of explicitly mentioning the corporeal degradation that Nicasio inflicted upon a little girl when “había tratado de violarla” (205). It used to be believed that leprosy, in addition to being extremely contagious (it is not nearly as contagious as was once thought) was also a moral sickness, which explains the portrayal of Nicasio as both physically
and morally degraded with no cure in sight. In order to stop the contagion of Nicasio’s ills, he will be shot dead with no *treno* or music attempting to resurrect him; his corporeal degradation becomes final as the vultures pick at his bones and what is left of his carcass. Even spiritual redemption is denied him when he asks for confession and is shot before Fray Pedro has a chance to hear him confess his physical crime and spiritual sin. In an almost inverse case, Fray Pedro, attempting to indoctrinate indigenous tribes into the “morals” of Christianity, will be found mutilated by one of the tribes in a martyr-like fashion. \(^{165}\) In other words, if Nicasio came to the village both physically and mentally corrupt in the eyes of the villagers, the priest arrives at the village physically, mentally, and spiritually intact and will experience a loss of corporeal integrity. Thus, as the narrator moves backward through time (according to his perception), and moves around in space, the types of death change, along with the attitudes, rites, and reactions to death: from a slow, stale death of the modern urban space and modern age, to an explicitly violent death of revolutionary times, to deaths wrapped in mythical rituality, and finally, to the extreme reality of physical degradation of early Christian times. In these different cases of death, there are attempts to subvert and transcend it, demonstrating the human will to live. This will to live is expressed oftentimes using sound, like the *treno*, and also through change and movement which was the response of the narrator with regard to the first type of death; fleeing from the slow, stale demise, the narrator left the city for another continent to find life.

On many occasions, the proximity to death causes an experience when the will to life becomes more pronounced and manifests itself in different ways, expressing itself through signs of life or through a semiotics of life. For the protagonist, this will to live is found and then expressed by different means and modes. In addition to his own will to live, throughout the novel the narrator also observes the will to live in those around him and their manifestations and expressions. If death is a corporeal finality, the

\[^{165}\text{It can also be argued that Fray Pedro’s indoctrination is an imposition of belief systems on others and that the novel questions the morality of such indoctrinating activities.}\]
narrator finds a vitality in the body of a woman because procreation seems to be an antiphonic answer to death’s call; it is a corporeal act comparable to the shaman’s vocal and airy antiphony in the death rite. In the city, the narrator will find a vitality in Mouche that contrasts with the deathly rhythms that surround him. His amorous escapades with Mouche create a “change” in him; after coitus, his natural rhythms are comparable to those felt after spending time in Nature:

. . . y regresaba a su carne que me era necesaria, pues hallaba en su hondura la exigente y egoísta animalidad que tenía el poder de modificar el carácter de mi perenne fatiga. . . . Cuando esto se lograba, conocía a veces el género de sueño tan raro y apetecido que me cerraba los ojos al regreso de un día de campo – esos muy escasos días del año en que el olor de los árboles, causando una distensión de todo mi ser, me dejaba como atontado. (37)

This vitalizing experience is repeated with Mouche when they both go to another country where a revolution breaks out and the “smell of death” permeates the atmosphere as shots are fired throughout the capital. Their bodily contact and sexual activities serve as a counterpoint to the bullets that are searching for bodies. Mouche’s health then begins to decline as they continue on their journey and eventually Mouche contracts malaria. This is when Rosario, who was on the brink of death when she was found on the road, begins an ascending phase; her strength is regained and it is through her and her strengthening vital rhythms that the narrator will find a renewed sense of health, vigor, and life. His first amorous experience with Rosario is after the death of Rosario’s father and the narrator again mentions the idea of an instinct toward life and the impulse toward creating life in the midst of death. This instinct towards life is an instinct to create when one is faced with a void. This creative impulse to join with the Other can be thought of as a type of salto mortal à la Octavio Paz, transcending towards the other to become oneself, and is not limited to corporeal procreation, but is an impetus towards creation in general, be it artistic or otherwise: “La experiencia poética, como la religiosa, es un salto mortal: un cambiar de naturaleza que es también un regresar a nuestra naturaleza original” (Paz 137). Making love, as any poetic and religious act, is a type of salto mortal, creating a change that brings us back to ourselves through the
Other. These creative impulses can be seen as transformational rhythms, not necessarily antithetical to static rhythms, but rather ones that are in a continuous state of flux and change that is indicative of life.

In a more direct way, these rhythms and their transformations are reflected in the fundamental presence of music throughout the novel, and yet while the focus is on the narrator as musicologist, signs of life are brought to a simpler and deeper level: sound, which is at its essence a rhythm, a wave. If there is a voyage through space, and also through time as perceived by the narrator, there are also voyages through sound. The presence of sound allows the narrator to travel back in time through his memories, and also forward in time by transforming himself into a visionary who can imagine and hear the sounds of the music of the future. Sound also travels distances where a radio in Latin America plays Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony*, which activates certain memories in the protagonist’s mind sending him back in time. Keeping these displacements of time and space through sound in mind, the ultimate goal of the narrator throughout much of his life, was to find the *origin* or beginning of music itself, which he believed he had done through his work of *mimetismo-mágico-rítmico*, a theory sustaining that humans imitated animal sounds and that this imitation paved the way for music. Disheartened by his own efforts when the Curator plays a soundtrack of an instrument that imitates a bird, the narrator leaves the country looking for a new theory without realizing that it is the ultimate goal of his departure. When the protagonist visits another continent (presumably South America), disconnected now from his theory of *mimetismo-mágico-rítmico* and, therefore, open to new possibilities, he believes to locate a new *origin* of music: the *treno* of the shaman who begins an antiphony for the indigenous villager who has passed away. This *treno* is seen as an attempt to resurrect; a way of emphasizing life and protesting against death and its silence, much like the lamentations heard at the death of Rosario’s father. This possible origin of music is a sign of life against the fear of death and perhaps against fear in general. Music is born from an attempt to subvert and transcend death. Silence can also serve as a starting point for a sound. The *treno* heard by the narrator musicologist inspires him to create his own song of life. If death gave impetus to the narrator’s procreative
acts in corporeal terms, the death of the anonymous villager gives impetus to a creative act of another kind: the author’s creation of his magnum opus, which he comes to realize was within himself and has been waiting as a potentiality. According to Octavio Paz the freedom of man lies in being a possibility and it is through this potentiality that man creates himself and transcends his condition:

La libertad del hombre se funda y radica en no ser más que posibilidad. Realizar esa posibilidad es ser, crearse a sí mismo. El poeta revela al hombre creándolo. Entre nacer y morir hay nuestro existir, a lo largo del cual entrevemos que nuestra condición original, si es un desamparo y un abandono, también es la posibilidad de una conquista: la de nuestro propio ser. Todos los hombres, por gracia de nuestro nacimiento, podemos acceder a esa visión y trascender así nuestra condición. Porque nuestra condición exige ser trascendida y sólo vivimos trascendiéndonos. (154-155)

By traveling to the selva, the narrator has recovered the freedom of possibility and has the chance to “recreate himself.” It is the Treno, his artistic creation, that is a reflection of the narrator’s rebirth and his newfound freedom, discovered both within himself and in the potentialities outside of himself in Santa Mónica de los Venados. The Treno becomes a musical and physical manifestation of the inner will to live of the narrator to be expressed and shared with others. According to the narrator, it is the counterpoint to the deadening rhythms of allá, and to a Ninth Symphony that no longer has any meaning. The Treno is a protest against death on different levels: against actual death as a funerary song, against the figurative death of allá (from the viewpoint of Santa Mónica de los Venados, allá refers to what is presumably New York), against dead music whose meaning has been distorted and disfigured to the point of losing the value of significance. The Treno manifests the narrator’s desire to bring back life from the dead, a sort of musical resurrection by creating the origin of words: verbogenesis. It begins with the rhythm of simple words to which there will be added another voice and the piece will continue developing its complexity by adding yet another voice constituting both a male and female element. The piece continues in a sort of musical entropy “diversifying” its polyphonies (192-194). The Treno is a protest desiring a liberation
from diverse types of death and limitations; it finds its parallel in another work the author was trying to realize: his own version of the *Prometheus Unbound*, marking his liberation from the world of *allá*. This schema changes as the author realizes the book *Prometheus Unbound* is unavailable to him and decides to use the *Odyssey* as another source of inspiration. The *Treno* represents a resurrection in music that mirrors the resurrection of both the narrator who has come back to life from a figurative death, and Rosario who has been revived from a literal near-death experience and will contribute to the narrator’s own resurrection from the grip of the deadening rhythms of the *cómite* of *allá*. Between them, the rhythms of each person combine to form their own harmony that is amenable to life. The changes are reflected in the bodies of both the protagonist and Rosario after their “resurrections”: his body becomes leaner and sinewy, hers recovers the strength that it had lost.

Returning to the basic sounds of the body, the sound of the breath is an elementary sound of life and the difference between *suspirar*, *respirar*, and *aspirar* seems to acquire or possess specific meanings for the narrator, each having to do with different states of life. For Gaston Bachelard, “poetry is an exhalation of joy, the outward expression of the joy of breathing” (239). He continues this line of thinking by introducing Charles Nodier’s concept of a *mimological phonetics* as exhibited by the word *âme*. Bachelard adds to the example the word *vie*, thus replicating the physiology of breath through the dichotomy of *vie/âme*: inhalation consists of *vie* and exhalation consists of *âme*; these words meld with the natural rhythm and sound of breath (*Air and Dreams* 240-241). In Alejo Carpentier’s *Los pasos perdidos*, the word *suspirar* has a heavy density to it meaning “deep-breathing” or sigh. This word is used in conjunction with Mouche when she is sick. Her breathing takes on a heavy, tonal quality as she becomes sicker physically and also represents the sickness of the false, unnatural rhythms of *allá*. *Respirar* implies a rhythm for the narrator when, towards the end of the novel, he has learned to match his gait with his breathing; in other words, matching one natural rhythm with another as opposed to walking in accordance with rhythms imposed by exterior conditions (222). *Respiración* also takes on the quality of
“rest” or a break as it can mean in Latin, and for the protagonist, the “rest” of travelling and finding himself in Nature, allows his body to recover its natural rhythms, particularly the breath. *Aspirar*, compared to *suspirar*, takes on a lighter tone and is used in conjunction with Rosario while breathing in the night air after a time of happiness and dance. *Aspirar*, also means something to aspire to, a possibility of transcendence. Octavio Paz links aspiration with inspiration and movement, in which case the narrator’s inspiration to create the *Treno* is an aspiration, an airy movement of transcendence and freedom: “. . .la inspiración no está en ninguna parte, simplemente *no está*, ni es algo: es una aspiración, un ir, un movimiento hacia adelante: hacia eso que somos nosotros mismos. Así, la creación poética es ejercicio de nuestra libertad, de nuestra decisión de ser” (Paz 179). *Aspirar* is also associated with another sense: the sense of smell when the narrator aspirates certain perfumes and odors which have potent effects on his memory and state of being. Noting the basic connection between life and art, particularly music, the narrator will observe the rhythms of music as a type of breathing, as a type of respiration: “Una suerte de ataxia locomotriz había aquejado durante años a los autores de *Concerti Grossi*, en que dos movimientos en corcheas y semicorcheas -como si no hubiesen existido notas blancas o redondas-, desencuadrados por acentos martillados fuera de lugar, contrarios a la *respiración* misma de la música. . .” (197). The music *allá* (when *allá* refers to an urban area in North America) goes against the natural breath of music and the rhythms *allá* go against the natural rhythms of life. One of the dangers of *allá* for the protagonist, when he returns from his second trip to Santa Mónica de los Venados to the urban metropolis he left behind, is the absence of sound, which by the associations already discussed can signify a figurative loss of life. The narrator states: “Falta saber ahora si no seré ensordecido y privado de voz por los martillazos del Cómitre que en algún lugar me aguarda” (245). The loss of the ability to perceive and produce sound leaves no opening, and no means for self-expression, for creation, and by extension, for exhibiting signs of life.
In Nature, both life and death have a place. The descriptions of Nature in the novel expose Nature’s Trickster-like qualities since Nature is an entity that incorporates both life and death, creation and destruction. The Trickster is then a manifestation of Nature and its perpetual changes. The narrator’s binary distinctions are too sharp and Manichaean, and thus he himself doesn’t embody the Trickster: he is stuck in antithetical counterpoints (of his own making) without being able to move freely among them: here and there, Rosario and Mouche, or Mouche and Ruth, the Libertino and the Predicador. Embodied in la selva, Nature on the other hand is tricky, from flowers, to fruits, to animals, with the exception of birds and monkeys who, according to the narrator, are always true:

La selva era el mundo de la mentira, de la trampa y del falso semblante; allí todo era disfraz, estratagema, juego de apariencias, metamorfosis . . . la larva con carne de zanahoria . . . los colores de las flores eran mentidos . . . por la vida de hojas en distinto grado de madurez o decrepitud. Parecía haber frutos; pero la redondez, la madurez de las frutas, eran mentidas por bulbos sudorosos, terciopelos hediondos, vulvas de plantas insectívoras. . . . Hasta el cielo mentía a veces cuando, invirtiendo su altura en el azogue de los lagunatos, se hundía en profundidades celestemente abisales. Sólo las aves estaban en hora de verdad, dentro de la clara identidad de sus plumajes. . . . Tampoco mentían . . . los alegres monos araguatos. . . . (153)

Nature’s sounds are also tricky since silence and noise, death and life in Nature start to confuse and diffuse, and the borders of these auditory experiences tend to become more fluid. In Nature, the protagonist finds life and language by recognizing his own rhythms in the rhythms of Nature. These Trickster qualities of Nature allow for his transformation by providing a socially differential and an ontologically changeable and moveable space, together with fluid rhythms of both water and air that are invigorating to the narrator, both physically and artistically. Nature is both life-giver and life-taker, yet if we dare to take the salto mortal, we recognize our rhythms in the Other and become whole.
4.5 Mascaró, el cazador americano: Signs of Tranformation and Transformatve Signs

- Ve hijo. Jamás desoigas la voz de tu corazón.

-Haroldo Conti

Signs of life take on a different, more immediate tone in Mascaró, el cazador americano. In the case of Haroldo Conti, whose own life was in peril, this novel was the author’s sign of life in the context of a regime of terror when people disappeared by the thousands. Due to its subversive themes, the novel was censored. However, not only are the interrelating themes in the novel subversive; the author puts forth manifestos of art and life, where art, being a life-affirming act, subverts and transcends a deathly silence of those who cannot and dare not speak. If this work is an example of a sign of life on the part of the author, it can be argued that for the author, art is a sign of life, whatever manifestations or modes the artist chooses to use. Aside from its fictional structure, the novel conveys a poetic lyricism and contains several allusions to poets; additionally, the circus as a spectacle, as a sort of ambulatory theatre, and the inclusion of songs and musical references create a sort of hybrid textuality uniting different semiotic modes that subvert rigidly defined structures. For Octavio Paz:

La novela y el teatro son formas que permiten un compromiso entre el espíritu crítico y el poético.

. . . En cambio, la poesía lírica canta pasiones y experiencias irreductibles al análisis y que constituyen un gasto y un derroche. . . . Para el burgués, la poesía es una distracción - . . . o es una actividad peligrosa; y el poeta, un clown inofensivo -aunque dispensioso- o un loco y un criminal en potencia.

Los “poetas malditos” no son una creación del romanticismo: son el fruto de una sociedad que expulsa aquello que no puede asimilar. La poesía ni ilumina ni divierte al burgués. Por eso destierra al poeta y lo transforma en un parásito o en un vagabundo. (232)

If the novel and theatre are in-between a “critical and poetic spirit,” by including both of these modes in the novel, Conti embeds a political and economic critique of Argentina at the time when the poetic is a transcendent mode rising above or going around the structures that he is critiquing. His critiques and his
suggestions for overcoming the systems in place (made metaphorical in the novel by the “flying” acts) made Conti a dangerous man for those looking to maintain power and control. Engaging in such activities made anyone a danger to the status quo, by becoming “the clown, the deranged, and the potential criminal” who then is drawn out as “parasite and vagabond.” In the novel, the characters of the circus or of any artistic endeavor are portrayed in precisely this way— as vagabonds, clowns, the deranged, and as potential criminals, respectively. As the circus travels through space and time, its members are first perceived by authorities as vagabonds, later becoming ‘criminals.’ What is critical for them is to maintain their own identities and visions of who they are. The mixed bag of semiotic systems allows for freedom of expression, for these self-identities to be created and continuously developed and realized as possibilities and potentialities. Outside of the novel, the “critical and poetic spirit” of the theatre piece that Haroldo Conti had seen in Córdoba by the Libre Teatro Libre was a sign of resistance, a sign of life. These signs and these messages to others that invite participation appear reformulated in the novel in the form of a peripatetic circus. On a metaphorical level, similar to Los pasos perdidos, the idea of living without freedom, in a state of being dominated by stability and repetition, is a form of death, except that in Mascaró, the threat of death is not metaphorical.

The varying semiotic modes offer alternative systems to the visual, while also including poetic images. However, there is no value or hierarchy system among the arts: each talent or skill is equally as valuable, as made evident by the circus in Mascaró. Among some of the systems to be examined in this section are music, body, food, clothing, poetic images, and the language of Nature. Music, to take one mode, is ever-present throughout the novel and its meanings and significance play many different roles. The body and music are closely linked in their creation of artistic signs of life as discussed elsewhere in this chapter. Separate from music, the body is also a semiotic system, as exemplified in particular by Maruca. The body is also a vital part of the circus on several levels; it is a living and dynamic system and via the transformations of the circus performers as they perfect and perform their acts (all of which focus
on the potential of the body), these artistic processes renew a stagnating energy and transmute it into a vitality, which in turn effects the atmosphere by dynamizing it. In a way, the circus can be seen as a “body” in that all of the acts come together to form a vital unit that functions best in motion while interacting with the environment. In order to maintain this vitality, food is necessary to allow the body to maintain its productivity and activity. Food has its own semiotic system that could change depending on the environment, availability of certain foodstuffs, and cultural mores.\textsuperscript{166} Throughout the novel, recipes abound as people share their own ‘special recipes’ and meals become a time of communion. Also pertaining to the body is clothing, which has its own semiotics. Clothing acquires a rather personal significance to the wearer, communicating certain interior facets to an exterior public, creating a persona, or an image. In another semiotic system, the author creates poetic images through the use of words in unfamiliar ways and the circus itself is a metaphor of this process since it is an image that is representative of things and acts that have never been seen before. The boat Mañana also is a vehicle for things unseen since it symbolizes the future. For Haroldo Conti, the boat is also a metaphor for life: “La vida es un barco más o menos bonito. ¿De qué sirve sujetarlo? Va y va. ¿Por qué digo esto? Porque lo mejor de la vida se gasta en seguridades” (19). The boat and the circus unite images and ideas together in a transformative process of creating and inspiring, conjoining and developing. The rhythms of the boat and of the circus contain within them the possibility of transformation and metamorphosis. Poetry stems from the language of Nature, which as indicated before, presents semiotic systems of its own. The language of Nature, perhaps more distinctly felt as the rhythms of Nature, also plays a vital part in the novel as it provides images that inspire the imagination, and sounds that resonate in the shell-like cavities (cochlea) in the human ear. The shell-like cavities of the human ear find their mirror image in the shell bracelet of

\textsuperscript{166} According to Roland Barthes in \textit{Elements of Semiology}: “The alimentary language is made of i) rules of exclusion (alimentary taboos); ii) signifying oppositions of units, the type of which remains to be determined. . . iii) rules of association, either simultaneous (at the level of a dish) or successive (at the level of a menu); iv) rituals of use which function, perhaps, as a kind of alimentary rhetoric” (28).
the protagonist who will use the sound to remind him of the sea. The permanent link between signifier and signified of the traditional Saussurean variety, defined by a one-to-one correspondence, changes and acquires a sense of fluidity if we look to a semiotics of Nature where we can find other correspondences; these correspondences have a wider range than the one-to-one relationship of the signifier and signified since they are part of a more dynamic and complex web of relations and meanings. These can affect us directly through our physical world and our perceptions; they also affect our imaginations as explained by Bachelard and his psychological analysis of Nature with regard to what were considered to be the four natural elements: fire, earth, air, and water. These dynamics between the physical and the imagination (myth), created in space and time, are changeable (Trickster), and are part of the environment that helps us to create our understanding of Nature and of ourselves (semiotics).

As a semiotic mode, music and sound open the novel and offer the reader a first impression which is auditory in nature, thereby stimulating the imagination to “hear” the novel: “Cafuné sopla y sopla la flautilla de hueso” (2). The flute resonates in the air, then a “sonajero de uñas” “accompanies” the flute, adding a type of percussion to the first airy sound. This is another example of the breath and blood combination that we also have encountered in El reino de este mundo, where one instrument is associated with breath and air, and another instrument, specifically a percussion instrument, is linked with blood, the pounding rhythm of the heartbeat. Cafuné is heard and seen in the beginning of the novel; and although he is absent from sight later in the novel, he will continue to be heard in various ways: in one way, Oreste will hear Cafuné at different points throughout the novel, turning Cafuné’s initial presence into palimpsest and it is his sound that becomes his presence (versus present, as was mentioned earlier in relation to the ideas of Lefebvre). In another way, Cafuné gives Oreste a “pulsera de caracoles” which Oreste will shake in order to make a sound; this sound evokes the sea for Oreste where the sea is a metaphor for possibility and destiny. The pulsera can also be considered both a percussion instrument and an air instrument in that as the bracelet is shaken, air flows through the shells imitating the sound of
the ocean, and the shaking of the bracelet also produces a rhythmic sound. Oreste also plays the flute, the *sicu* in particular, which is an indigenous flute. It is this sound of the indigenous flute that saturates the beginning of the novel and continues throughout, permeating the atmosphere for both the circus and the reader. Towards the end of the novel, the protagonist has been tortured and his flute is destroyed.

If the flute is associated with air and air with breath and speech, by destroying Oreste’s flute, the guards that torture Oreste destroy his voice and a mode of self-expression. The end of the novel echoes its beginning in terms of sounds. When Oreste is finally let go from the prison cell, he moves his bracelet made of seashells, the only instrument left to him. Upon the bracelet being shaken: “El murmullito atrajo con tal fuerza la visión del mar, que el corazón le latió atropelladamente, las paredes se borraron, vio la luz cegadora del agua, una negra silueta que remontaba las olas y hasta sintió el viento cargado de sal que le hinchaba las narices” (97). Going back to the idea of the flute as breath and percussion as blood, the percussion instrument in the form of the bracelet of seashells and the character’s corporeal gesture of shaking the shell bracelet become a sign of life, where the percussion instrument “attracts a vision of the sea” causing Oreste’s heart to beat quickly. His heart beating is linked with the percussion instrument which in and of itself is associated with blood. After physical torture and mutilation and after his voice is gone, Oreste’s heart still beats as a sign of life, and we hear it first through the *pulsera de caracoles* which causes us to imagine rhythms of the sea (being made of seashells) and of the heart. If we compare the sounds at the end of the novel to the visual aspect, we realize that the visual effects described by the narration appear hazy as the walls “erase themselves” and the light of the water is “blinding” and there is a “black silhouette” on the waves. In other words, the images are exceedingly hard to see, almost impossible, and what is more readily perceptible are the sounds. As the images become hazy and begin to disappear, the other senses provoke the imagination: Oreste “feels” the “wind full of briny sea air” that then fill his nostrils. He smells and feels the ocean when he can no longer see it. The focus is on sound and feeling which are the same senses that are aroused at the beginning of the novel. In an era of terror
and clandestine activity which make it difficult to see what is happening in the country, the novel seems to suggest that if things or situations cannot be seen, they shall make themselves heard or felt. In the case of Oreste, when his flute, one mode of self-expression and communication, was destroyed, his bracelet encapsulates both breath and rhythm. Even though the air passing through the caracoles is barely perceptible, it is still there. The music of the shells, as air and percussion, as breath and heartbeat, fills Oreste with other perceptions and sensations that will remind him of his camino.

In addition to being signs of life, the presence of the flute and a percussive instrument are subversive in other ways in the novel. The flute, or the sicu that is played by Oreste, is an indigenous instrument, subversive because of its indigenous origins that bring to the fore a population that was relegated to the margins. The flute then serves as a sort of musical, historical reminder. With regard to transcendence, as a woodwind instrument, the flute makes manifest the will and the desire for freedom symbolized by the role air and wind play in the dynamic imagination of flights of freedom, as demonstrated in Air and Dreams by Gaston Bachelard. Flight, in the novel (and as mentioned in chapters two and three) is a transcendent motion that erases limits and divisions and provides us with a feeling of freedom of transcending past these limits and divisions. Speech and music are forms of flight in that their rhythms carry through the air and by a dynamic movement, the rhythm is perceived by others and there is communication. Cafuné’s flute, for example, moves and travels through space and time, highlighting the transcendent aspect of music: “Es un chorrito de aire, un raspón de metal, un alma finita de viento que se enrosca en el aire. El día aquí es esta música que anda por todas partes, gota, bolita, tiempo desnudo, sin recortes” (2). The music with which the novel begins travels much like the circus and in this way anticipates the ambulatory and communicative function of the circus, which will become its own semiotic universe. While the circus is performative on a personal and collective level at the same time (since each artist has his/her own act and yet they form part of a collectivity), the musicians in the novel can be individualistic or communal or both: there are individual musicians (such as Cafuné and Oreste to
a certain extent) and those who form part of a collectivity like the Trova at Arenales. Similar to Cafuné, the Trova is also present throughout the novel in that their sounds as palimpsest are heard like echoes in the wind. Marta Morello-Frosch explains that: “Fiel a su nombre [la Trova], el conjunto musical también sirve como difusor de noticias y cronista” (846). Music is also presented as collective because it belongs to shared cultural forms: music is part of the acts of the circus, and there are also references to famous musicians and pieces of music throughout the novel.\footnote{One of the musical pieces mentioned in the novel is \textit{La Paloma} by Sebastian Yradier. It may be interesting to note that \textit{La Paloma}, a form of the habanera is “associated with maritime cities” and “sang of the longing and pangs of separation generated by sea travel” (Manuel 98). This is pertinent given the role of the boat/sea \textit{carromato}/desert aspect of the novel. Peter Manuel also says “On the whole, these terms [“tango,” “tango americano,” and “habanera”] were used more or less interchangeably to denote a song with a short introduction and an accompaniment based on what has come to be known as the “habanera rhythm”” (97-98). This citation reveals global fusions of styles and genres where the tango, associated with Argentina, is linked with the habanera (a type of contradance), while named after the Cuban city, has deep and complex origins from around the globe.} Music is also a spontaneous communal activity when people begin to sing, play instruments, dance, all of which are forms of an exuberant (self)expression of emotions, be it joy or sadness. As people travel and come into contact with one another, music is created. Music reflects, in many ways, episodes of comings and goings, gatherings and dispersals. It expresses the energies and the rhythms that come together or the energies and rhythms that are dissipating in the comings and goings of life. For instance, when the band plays at Arenales, people start to gather to travel aboard the boat Mañana; this is an ascending stage of gathering. On the boat itself, seeds are sown, by music, that set the stage for the personal transformations that are about to take place. Another example occurs towards the end of the novel, at Olta, when everyone begins to sing as the circus is disbanding. The final dissipation of music and community is the breaking of the flute by the guard in the prison, when Oreste finds himself physically alone and yet mentally accompanied by his band of fellow \textit{vagabundos/vagamundos}. Yet, as we have seen, the end of the novel hints at the beginning of a new phase where the percussive and airy shell bracelet linked to both the rhythms of the ocean and the rhythms of the heartbeat provide a base, a start towards a new flow after an ebb.
The body as a semiotic system has its own language and this idea is demonstrated on many levels in the novel. We have already demonstrated the link between the breath and music where breath produces rhythms and sounds which become communicative as both a form of self-expression and collective exchange. The association between the heartbeat and music was also drawn. It is not just the body as a producer of sound, but the gestures and movements of the body that also have semiotic functions. Perhaps one of the characters that most uses the body as language is Maruca López de Esteve, or Sonia. Our first encounter with Maruca takes place when she and the Principe Patagón engage each other using certain corporeal signals to demonstrate their interest to one another, with the Principe Patagón showing a particular interest in what was being communicated through her eyes. As one mode of communication, Maruca uses her body and a fan to gesticulate and these gestures she makes have different significations depending on the movement of the hand, the eyes, and the fan. This communication at a distance becomes more intimate as the bodies come into contact with each other. This corporeal communication, far more intimate than the aerial and spoken communication that maintains and implies a certain distance and the crossing of it, is more immediate and personal. This language of the body becomes more familiar as the two consummate their love for each other in an act of rebellion against death, similar to the one in Los pasos perdidos. When she joins the circus, Maruca transforms into Sonia, an exotic bellydancer who uses the gestures of her body to communicate with the audience. During the voyages from town to town, Sonia’s body grows continuously in comparison to the bodies of the other members of the circus troupe. This can be interpreted as a symbol of plenitude that manifests as a corporeal reality and yet serves as a metaphor for the extension of the artistic spirit throughout the troupe and for the advancement of their abilities. As a woman, as potential life-giver, the growth of her body signals a form of pregnancy of creative potentiality. She then “embodies” the creative potential of the group being a potential life-giver. As a dancer, she can be conceived of as a synecdoche

168 As also presented in La piedra del sol by Octavio Paz
that represents the “dance” (or coordinated physical, aesthetic movements) that is the circus. However, her corpulent body also “speaks” against the norm of feminine beauty and redefines it. Hugo de Marinis explains:

Aquí nos encontramos con que esta mujer personifica en su figura otro de los desvíos que esta novela presenta a la convencionalidad del canon estético dominante, en este caso con una apreciación peculiar de la sensualidad y de la belleza. Estas dos últimas cualidades se incrementan en Maruca en directa proporción a su aumento de peso. . . . Si bien deben ayudarla a trasladarse por el motivo de su gordura, lo hacen asimismo porque tal característica física la enaltece en cuerpo y alma, como si fuera en verdad una reina o una diosa. (324-325)

Sonia’s transformations, as interpreted by de Marinis in the quote, then elevate her to the status of “queen” or “goddess” making her presence a type of apotheosis. Sonia also redefines certain gender roles for women: rather than staying at home, she travels along with the circus and decides to stay in Olta, sharing the bounty of her love and fecundity with the men of the town. Rather than being despised through an insulting epithet, she becomes the Princess of Olta. From Maruca’s entrance into the circus to her last stop at Olta, the initial decision to join the circus initiated a voyage that gave Sonia the freedom to live her life as she saw fit, without the normative constraints of propriety determined by society.

Maruca’s corporeal changes and her freedom of movement, as mentioned, “embody” those of the rest of the troupe and yet each individual contributes to the movement and rhythms of the circus with his/her own acts: their own corporeal gestures that are communicated to an audience and to each other. As they perfect their acts physically, mentally, and spiritually, their capacities for self-expression are strengthened as is their capability to will potentiality, or create possibilities and openings using their will. For Oreste, as an example, his body language is that of imitatio; he imitates animals, his father, scenes from the past and from the future in his one act in which he reenacts his childhood outings to the zoo with his father. The zoo, as a place with bars, also foreshadows of what will happen to Oreste when he is jailed. Yet in his imitations, he creates an act that is his and his alone and the pinnacle of this act is his
transformation into a swan, when he artificially flies above the crowd. His imitation, even with the use of certain mechanisms to make it seem as if Oreste were in flight, is enough to stimulate the imagination into flights of fancy and to suspend belief while Oreste seems suspended in air. Oreste is able then to communicate directly to the imagination by physical movement. Basilio Argimón, although not a part of the circus troupe, uses his body to transcend the status quo, which is seen as a subversive act by the rurales. The bodily gestures of Basilio are a threat to Rurales and yet inspire the Principe Patagón who also wishes to become aerial and take flight into another dimension of liberation. Yet another example of corporeal semiotics resides in the art of wrestling where the different moves act as signs. Wrestling is its own corporeal system as demonstrated by Carpoforo, the wrestler. A different act in the circus that requires a different semiotic system is performed by Boc Tor, who communicates with his horse in order to ride the equine, and this communication is non-verbal. Perinola demonstrates a more playful corporeal semiotic system using bodily gestures to incite laughter. The author hints that these types of bodily transformations that one sees in the circus are life affirming when he says that they “favorecen a la vida” (32). They communicate signs of life to an audience and to a reader when words can be dangerous and/or insufficient.

If the movement of the body represents a semiotic system, the coverings of the body are also part of their own signifying system. To the people in the circus, the Principe Patagón and Oreste in particular, clothing is a way to identify themselves. When they feel forced to shed their circus clothing to hide from the rurales, they feel they are experiencing another transformation: the plain clothing communicates a message to those around them that seems inauthentic, since the exterior appearance doesn’t match their interior selves. They begin to feel “less than” when the possibilities that the circus embodied are dimmed and the exterior world is putting pressure on the interior self to maintain its integrity.

169 See Roland Barthes, *The Language of Fashion*.
The clothing worn by those in the circus complete an image created by the bodily acrobatics of the circus performers and their feats. These bodily movements and gestures activate the imagination, forming moving images that transform and translate themselves as poetry. According to Octavio Paz, “muscular exercise,” as demonstrated by those in the circus, in addition to “respiration” (associated with music, wind, and flight), and inspiration, are poetry. Poetry is a subversive and transcendent act because it “transforms the world” and in and of itself is “revolutionary”:

Operación capaz de cambiar al mundo, la actividad poética es revolucionaria por naturaleza; ejercicio espiritual, es un método de liberación interior. . . . Aísla; une. Invitación al viaje; regreso a la tierra natal. Inspiración, respiración, ejercicio muscular. . . . Visión, música, símbolo. Analogía: el poema es un caracol en donde resuena la música del mundo y metros y rimas no son sino correspondencias, ecos, de la armonía universal. (13)

If poetry is also an “invitation to voyage” and a “return to the native land,” it cannot escape the reader that Haroldo Conti writes a novel replete with images of travel, inviting the reader to be a wanderer in the textual landscape. Gilberto Valdés Gutiérrez likens the novel to a river: “la novela es un río que exige continuo movimiento, y el presente solo tiene sentido potencial, latiente como futuro necesario” (66).

Life is presented as voyage and travel, the means of which these are realized -such as a boat and the circus wagon- are then vehicles headed towards liberation. The sea serves as a medium that facilitates this passage towards freedom and the desert serves as a medium for reflection and self-exploration leading to a freer and deeper way of self-expression. In this way, Nature provides images that stimulate the imagination, while also providing space, rhythms, and movement, and thus creates a dialogue of different semiotic modes between the protagonists and Nature itself, which then transcends the limits of a restrictive or repressive social-political order. Signs of life, capable of transforming rhythms, are parts of interactions that cross limits and borders in ways that are ever-changing and ever-moving.
4.6 Conclusion:

On the side of transcendence are mediums that employ alternative semiotics which allow for stories to be told, to be felt, and to travel great distances. For quite some time we have been taught a linear history dominated by structures of cause and effect. While such perspectives can be productive and indeed, valuable, we lose sight of the possibility of perceiving a polyrhythmic history. History may be (re)presented in the form of a singular, linear, cause-and-effect narrative, yet this narrative form cannot and should not be taken as the only way to approach history nor should it be taken as an absolute truth. It is in this state of absolutes where crimes against humanity are more likely to occur and manifest. History, as mentioned and cited in chapter two, has been a perpetual state of possibilities, probabilities, including the unlikely or improbable. Part and parcel of what actually manifests out of these potentialities are rhythms that can serve as background and foreground. They underlie the possible and yet are quite sensible because they are part of our everyday life and existence. They operate both in the background and the foreground, sometimes perceptible and noticeable, in ways that resemble the possibilities of the Trickster, understood as a figure of potentiality, of polyrhythmic fluxes. Considering alternative semiotic systems and alternative narratives within predominating systems of linear and verbal representation, allows for a deeper, and more integral perspective that demonstrates a more “wholesome” system by taking into account different rhythms and how these interact(ed) with each other. When stories, songs, and signs that were relegated to the margins are shared via travel, rhythmic and complex patterns come into view exposing the complex weave of the fabric created by the whole of humanity’s actions and decisions. Because of their mobility, stories, songs, and signs are able to transcend marginality and extend their message outward, in effect creating new patterns and new rhythms and in this way, the bear the potentiality of changing everything.

The signs of life are not a singular semiotic system, but an open series of complex systems that interact with one another in ways that link Man and Nature together. These systems inspire and provoke
alternative modes of thought and cognizance in order for new meanings to be generated and created. When these creative and transformational capacities of alternative systems are allowed to be expressed, change becomes possible within more stringent and strict systems that ordinarily leave little room for the freedom of life to express itself fully. These systems, some political, some economic or both, demand silence and impose severe bodily prohibitions and restrictions (like in slavery). This is when other systems need to come into play in order to work from within, outside, and around these dominant systems to bring about change and transformation. A will to self-expression and a will to life find ways of making themselves heard and felt.
5.1 Conclusion:

Pero la visión más ardiente, más luminosa, en la cual desembocan todos los otros sueños, es una playa inmensa de doradas arenas con un borde de espumas que cuando el agua retrocede el viento la dispersa.

Haroldo Conti

Each novel provides a unique contribution to the discussion of travel as a fictional motif and organizational principle of the plot, but above all, as a means of subversion and transcendence. The texts analyzed in this study present many similar concepts that overlap and intertwine in ways that activate elements of subversion and transcendence, but at the same time, each bears its unique mark of self-expression. *Macunaima* degeographizes and in doing so, brings into focus the heterogeneity of Brazil and, by extension, of South America; the novel questions borders, unity and disunity, provides no easy answers, leaving rather complex questions. *El reino de este mundo* challenges tyrannical systems and exposes their role in establishing discourses and regimes that would continue the exploitation of fellow men, while contrasting them with open systems of myth and with alternative semiotic discourses that bring about the possibility of overturning such regimes. *Los pasos perdidos* defies not only European but Western hegemony, pitting different rhythms against each other, exploring rhythms that stand in as a more holistic way of conceiving and perceiving cultural and social atmospheres. *Mascaró, el cazador americano* questions dictatorship and its tyrannical abuse of power, presenting art, creativity, movement, and travel as a countermeasure to the extreme stability imposed and enforced by discourses of power looking to maintain their authority. Each novel uses travel as a dispersing and integrating theme, telling stories that had been dominated by hegemonic discourse, stories with aspects that had been ignored, and stories that had been silenced. Gaston Bachelard expresses poetically the painful burden of not speaking:

Come, oh my friends, on a clear morning to sing the stream’s vowels! Where is our first suffering? We have hesitated to say . . . . It was born in the hours when we have hoarded within us things left unsaid. Even so, the stream will teach you to speak; in spite of the pain and the memories, it will
teach you euphoria through euphuism, energy through poems. Not a moment will pass without repeating some lovely round word that rolls over the stones. (Water and Dreams 195)

In this passage, Bachelard also suggests the remedy for this burden. The movement and flow of the stream, even when stumbling over rocks, exemplify and inspire the cool relief of speaking and telling a story. These words, much like the stream, flow, move, and travel; they are an ontological mobility.

By way of travel, the novels explored in this study also highlight the interstices, disjunctions, conjunctions, the moments of kairos, the openings of both space and time, demonstrating the freedom of possibility. Through the openings of myth, the possibilities that only Trickster can find, and alternative semiotic modes, these dynamic processes are also linked with finding a sense of freedom and creating a space for self-creation and self-expression, a search that stretches and crosses boundaries and borders, questioning them socially, politically, culturally, and individually. We also begin to sense in a more tangible way that the individual makes up part of a whole, and vice versa. The writers of the novels desired to give a glimpse into the time in which they were writing; even El reino de este mundo, whose plot delves into events from another era, ultimately is a product of its time, in terms of social climate and change, by questioning and reformulating narratives of the past. Even if each of the novels is strongly marked by the context (time and space) of its writing, they resonate beyond it. The novels not only formed new lines of questioning and opened up realms of possibility in terms of interpretation and expression, but also because of the aforementioned open qualities that still move us to question the boundaries of the possibilities and probabilities of the past, the present, and the future.

The corpus I have chosen for this study is just a sample of many travel novels written during the five decades between 1928-1976. Following 1976, numerous travel novels made their way into the Latin American literary canon: El mar de las lentejas (Antonio Benítez Rojo, 1979), El arpa y la sombra, (Alejo Carpentier, 1979), Crónica del descubrimiento (Alejandro Paternain, 1980), El entenado (Juan José Saer, 1983), La última noche que pasé contigo (Mayra Montero, 1991), El largo atardecer del caminante (Abel
Posse, 1992), *Las nubes* (Juan José Saer, 1997), *Mujer en traje de batalla* (Antonio Benítez Rojo, 2001), *El desierto* (Carlos Franz, 2005), to name just a few. Like *El reino de este mundo*, many of these novels interact with the past, oftentimes using irony and parody as a way of opening up historical criticism by poking holes in weak arguments that for too long had priority as a dominating discourse. The texts written between the late seventies and early nineties, in particular, favor irony as a literary device, along with parodic role reversals of travel chronicles, which question history and re-create it with new perspectives. A large portion of the New Historic Novel, in particular the novels that have the conquest of the Americas by Europe as a central theme, are indeed travel novels. Ambiguity, confusion, and perplexity begin to seep into the novels towards the end of the millennium and the beginning of the next, questioning the past, and the rhythms of the present. By this I mean the direction in which we are headed and have been heading, which is characterized by role confusions and ambiguity rather than role reversals or rewritings. Perhaps these distinctions themselves run the risk of over-simplification, yet what is certain is that a dialogue is maintained with the past, questioning it, seeing other possibilities and probabilities, and in this way, (de)simplifying the past in order to more comprehensively understand the present which, at first glance, seems to have lost a simplicity that perhaps never truly existed.

For Marc Augé, travelling implies a questioning of oneself and the basis of one’s knowledge:

> En este sentido, la comunicación es lo contrario del viaje, porque este, el viaje, implica la construcción de uno mismo a través del encuentro con el otro y aquella, en cambio, presupone lo que el viaje intenta crear: sujetos individuales bien constituidos. El *homo communicans* no se pregunta quién es, enuncia lo que sabe e intenta aprender lo que no sabe; el viajero ideal intenta existir, formarse y nunca sabrá quién o qué es en realidad. (14)

The novels, through the travels of the protagonists (along with the travels of the authors themselves) provide examples of this line of questioning that then subverts both geographical and social borders and limitations. Perhaps, rather than being the opposite of travel, as explained in the citation, communication is a means by which the *encuentro con el otro*, is experienced and interpreted during travel. Voyage puts
into question one’s identity as construed and expressed through different forms of communication. Travel conjoins, juxtaposes, and creates new communicative patterns that are both distinctive and yet share certain commonalities. In today’s world, with a population that continues to grow, travel, exchange, and communicate, alternative semiotic modes give everyone an opportunity to tell their stories and to share memories in ways that are corporeal, ways that can be seen, heard, felt, and perhaps most importantly, understood. We all become Tricksters in one way or another, having to manage between different spheres, becoming bridges as experienced when we begin to see the Self in the Other and the Other in the Self. We create new myths, magnifying experiences or stories, or looking to past myths and fiction, like those narrated in the novels by de Andrade, Carpentier, and Conti, finding their relevance today while making them our own.

Through the spatial practices of communicating via alternative semiotic modes, acknowledging the Trickster and the mythmaker, telling stories and finding the means to express the inexpressible, we begin to create a new space; we begin to create a differential space honoring rhythms, seeking possibility, respecting the freedoms of others, while taking responsibility for our own ultimate freedom: that of creating our lives, and by extension, the world. Travel is often an integral part of these processes, acting as a catalyst for change, altering daily rhythms and shaping global movement. By recognizing the rhythms of potentialities in the past, we begin to see the present and the future not as an inevitable outcome, but as developing creations and rhythms that carry potentiality within them. The novels exhibit a reworking of structural paradigms that move us toward new modes of expression by revealing the possibility of altering rhythms through voyage and poesis. Marc Augé urges, “Es muy importante para el hombre no olvidarse de viajar” (15). It is through travel and travel stories that status quos and hegemonies are questioned, subverted, and transcended; it is through voyage that we subvert and transcend ourselves.
Bibliography

Primary texts:


Web. 4 April 2011.


Secondary texts:


Meyran, Daniel. “Topos et utopos, le roman hispano-américain à la recherche du paradis.” La 
Représentation de l’espace dans le roman hispano-américain: Los pasos perdidos, Alejo 

Mishra, Ratnesh Chandra, Ritesh Ghosh and Hanhong Bae. “Plant Acoustics: in the Search of a Sound 
Mechanism for Sound Signaling in Plants.” Journal of Experimental Botany 67.15 (June 2016): 
<http://jxb.oxfordjournals.org/content/67/15/4483>

Morello-Frosch, Marta. “Actualización de los signos en la ficción de Haroldo Conti.” Revista 


Muehsam, David, and Carlo Ventura. “Life Rhythm as a Symphony of Oscillatory Patterns: Electromagnetic 
Energy and Sound Vibration Modulates Gene Expression for Biological Signaling and 
Biotechnology Information. Web. 2 August 2016. 
<www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4010966>

Carpentier’s The Kingdom of this World.” Research in African Literatures 35.2 (Summer 2004): 
<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/ral/summary/v035/35.2paravisini-gerbert.html>


