

## Where Are the Dead? Celestial, Earthly and Subterranean Spaces in Juan Rulfo and José Revueltas

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### Abstract

Juan Rulfo (1917-1986) and José Revueltas (1914-1976) are two of the most important writers of the twentieth century for Mexican and worldwide literature. When comparing the literary work of both authors can be found similarities rich in meanings that help us to understand in a deep way a worldview of man from the finiteness of being, the subjugation to which men and their societies confront the power Political of their rulers, and the alienation of modern societies. These thematic similarities find throughout their literary work divergences in style and treatment of their plots and characters. In this way, in the paper I propose here, I expose in a wide way the biographical and bibliographic aspects that support the importance of these authors, and then analyze how in the literary work of Juan Rulfo –the novel: *Pedro Páramo* and his collection of short stories: *El llano en llamas*– and that of José Revueltas –novels: *Los muros de agua*, *El luto humano*, *Los días terrenales*, *En algún valle de lágrimas*, *Los motivos de Caín*, *Los errores* y *El apando*; and short story books: *Dios en la tierra*, *Dormir en tierra* y *Material de los sueños*– show that cosmogonic vision of the Mexican being in which the presence of death prevails and its meanings from three possible spaces: in the subterranean, the earthly and the celestial. In a graphical way I analyze and contrast how both writers develop in their literary work these three spaces, from the symbolic perspective of the death.

**Keywords:** Juan Rulfo, José Revueltas, Mexican Literature, Cosmogonic Vision of Death.

### Introduction

Why make writers like Juan Rulfo and José Revueltas coincide in a Literary Study in the 21st Century? Why discuss two authors in which we certainly find great convergences, of origin, of rescue of the voice of the Mexican people; but also extreme divergences, of thought, of style?

Juan Rulfo (Juan Nepomuceno Carlos Pérez Rulfo Vizcaino), Writer, Film Screenwriter and Photographer, was born in Sayula, Jalisco, Mexico, on May 16, 1917, and died in Mexico City on January 7, 1986. His most important Literary Works, *El llano en llamas* (1953) and *Pedro Páramo* (1955), have been a landmark in the History of Mexican and World Literature since its publication. José Revueltas (José Maximiliano Revueltas Sánchez) was born in Santiago Papasquiaro on November 20, 1914 and died in Mexico City on April 14, 1976. Belonging to one of the most important artistic families in Mexico<sup>1</sup>, José Revueltas carried out work in various currents artistic and thought: Literary, Cinematographic, Testimonial, Political and Philosophical. His Literary Work includes the novels: *Los Muros de Agua* (1941), *El Luto Humano* (1943), *Los Días Terrenales* (1949), *En Algún Valle de Lágrimas* (1957), *Los Motivos de Caín* (1958), *Los Errores* (1964) and *El Apando* (1969); and his Story Books: *Dios en la Tierra* (1944), *Dormir en Tierra* (1961) and *Material de los Sueños* (1974).

In these two writers there are generational and artistic similarities. Evidently, there is the Mexican rural origin, the time in which they write and publish their Literary Work, the theme referred to the rural origin already mentioned, the rescue of the voice of the Mexican people through its diverse characters, the complaint to the Mexican Government that oppresses its people, the recurrence to the *Mexican Revolution* and the *Cristero War*<sup>2</sup>, and of course, the theme that guides this work:

<sup>1</sup> His brothers, the musician Silvestre, the painter Fermín and the actress Revueltas, are still known and academic discussed in the world for their Artistic Work. In the same way, their descendants in different generations have made Artistic Works of great value for the cultural legacy of Mexico and the world.

<sup>2</sup> The Cristero War, also known as Guerra de los Cristeros or Cristiada, was an armed conflict in Mexico developed between 1926 and 1929 between the government and militias of lay people, priests and religious Catholics who resisted the application of the so-called Calles Law, which proposed limiting the Catholic Cult in this country.

Death. But there are also generational and artistic differences in them: the principle of their Artistic Vocations: in Revueltas the contact with the political, cultural and artistic environment comes from an early age when he emigrated to Mexico City and stayed with his brother Silvestre; and in the case of Juan Rulfo, having tried to study at the University of Guadalajara and devote himself for a long time to photography by working for a Government Agency and traveling throughout Mexico because of that job; also, there are their stylistic proposal, extremely divergent, and of course their political position, this last one is obvious, since Revueltas does not have in his life someone who could really follow him in parallel to his convictions and ideological temperament.

In this Paper I intend to analyze how these two writers in their literary work treat a common theme of the Mexican Idiosyncrasy: Death, how they have a stylistic and even ideological treatment different from it, which responds to the cosmogonic vision of the World Prehispanic, and to the Judeo-Christian Tradition of the Mexican people –a Catholicized people from the Spanish Colony–. This analysis focuses on how the authors, to talk about death and the possible or impossible Transcendence of Being, make their Stylistic-Literary treatment from Three Possible Spaces for the Being: the *Earthly*, the *Subterranean* and the *Celestial*. This also causes readings and analysis from the Ontological, Ideological and Social point of view.

### Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo*

It is unquestionable that Juan Rulfo in *El llano en llamas* (1953) and in the novel *Pedro Páramo* (1955), based on the structure and narrative functioning of both books, also fundamentals of what we call the 'Rulfian Universe', exposes widely and deep the Essential Condition of the Mexican Being with its Prehispanic Myths and Beliefs about Death.

*Pedro Páramo* sometimes involves in a subtle way and in others categorically, the presence of Original Sin, its projection from the Edenic couple, incest, and a somber physical and spiritual atmosphere due to the erratic restlessness of the dead by the consciousness of the Lost Paradise. To get these representations in the narrative of *Pedro Páramo*, Rulfo makes use of the orality of a people, Comala and its inhabitants; thus he explores in a wide way the condition of these inhabitants of the town: Suffering Souls that will not get to transcend the *Earthly* or *Subterranean Spaces*.

In this novel already considered within the Literary Canon, Rulfo follows a fundamental line still in force in Mexican Literature: giving voice to a people so that through that voice we can know the essence of their being and their vision of the facts. Thus Rulfo gives continuity to the line drawn up by the chroniclers of the Spanish Colony; As Norma Klahn has already mentioned, the aesthetic vision of Rulfo's art: "se opondrá al realismo tradicional, vigente en su época de formación, y su visión ética seguirá las pautas establecidas desde la Colonia por fray Bartolomé de las Casas y el padre Sahagún, darle voz a los desvalidos"<sup>1</sup> (1996, p. 251); thus spinning this present and past literature with the Prehispanic Texts and their Cosmogonic-Cultural interpretation of the Life-Death duality.

In *Pedro Páramo*, the voices of the dead will invade little by little the narrative space until overflowing in a choir that together they will be symbol of the Comala itself, the dry land crying and counting its misfortune. Rulfo introduces the reader to this gradual descent through a recognizable figure, whose existential order can be understood from the Earthly Space: Juan Preciado. The first line, his voice, is extremely significant to understand such recognition with the reader: "Vine a Comala porque me dijeron que acá vivía mi padre, un tal Pedro Páramo"<sup>2</sup> (Rulfo, 1955. p. 1). The narrative places us next to Juan Preciado, at his side, to witness firsthand the journey to the underworld world, as Evodio Escalante has pointed out: Juan Preciado is "guía del lector en su descenso a los parajes inhóspitos de Comala. Modelo de personaje extranjero y –por esto mismo– primer elemento de las identificaciones del lector"<sup>3</sup> (1996, p. 663).

Entering together with Juan Preciado to Comala and hearing the voices, perceiving the apparitions, sensing the snares of the Suffering Souls, and above all, the history of the people reconstructed by the memory of those souls, is how we can understand that our logic will be broken and that the inhabitants of Comala still have an impulse that makes them wander in that timeless plane. It is important to point out what this impulse consists of, since it is not pure inertia: all the inhabitants

<sup>1</sup> ... will oppose Traditional Realism, in force at the time of its formation, and its ethical vision will follow the guidelines established since the Spanish Colony by Fray Bartolomé de las Casas and the Father Sahagun, to give voice to the helpless.

<sup>2</sup> Because it is the original literary text, with its linguistic terms and local language uses, no translation of the fragments of the novel *Pedro Páramo* will be made.

<sup>3</sup> ... the reader's guide in his descent to the inhospitable places of Comala. Foreign character model and -for this very reason- first element of the identifications of the reader.

of Comala speak with conscience of sin and wander not to repent but to recall in an exercise of *querulous gossip*, the moments in which their tragic existence, within the order of the Chiefdom of Pedro Páramo, led them to be part of the act of transgression to a greater order: the Divine. Thus, a base space in the horizontal plane can clearly be identified in the novel: the Media Luna and as part of it, Comala, a town whose center in the actions of the novel, is always the church; In addition, there are two horizontal spaces that are reached by vertical ascent or descent: *Subterranean Space*, the one under the earth, the tombs, and *Celestial Space*, the blue sky, the divine space. Thus, the *Earthial Space* is that of Pedro Páramo, of the Cacique, the Media Luna and the earth; the subterranean space is that of the dead or souls in pain, that did not reach the Divine Grace, and divine space that would have to start from the church of Comala, it is only the blue sky.

In the course of the plot, it seems that the order of the Cacique beats the Divine order because its force and imposition is immediate. The inhabitants of Comala have more fear to the effective and instantaneous punishment of the Cacique and follow their commandments, they are adjusted to the terrestrial commandments and to the consequences of the patriarchal presence of Pedro Páramo; but also on the individual level each person is aware of his spiritual transgression, as José Carlos González Boixo points out: "Todos los habitantes de Comala tienen conciencia del pecado y saben que no pueden redimirse de él"<sup>1</sup> (1996, p. 654). They participate in sin under the concealer and often imposing figure of the Media Luna and Pedro Páramo, but they also know that this transgression, Sinful Spirit, arises from themselves, and when the time comes to repent and seek forgiveness, a vain approach to the *Celestial-Divine Space*, they will not be able to achieve it because Father Renteria is one of them, another one who has followed the game of Pedro Páramo and his internal impulses, and therefore, the Divine Power of granting absolution is denied.

The inhabitants of Comala participate in sin and also, as González Boixo says: "se identifican con la culpa original de la pareja edénica, como un peso que hay que sobrellevar en la vida y que les impedirá alcanzar el paraíso perdido"<sup>2</sup> (1996, p. 654). This consequent identification Edenic Couple-Lost Paradise, is essential for Rulfo and his novel. It is used to illustrate the deep sense of guilt that plagues the Human Being, in general, and the Mexican subject to the Catholic Church and its patriarchal system of chiefdom, in particular. It is clear to find in the novel this identification by the two reflections that are transcendental in the dramatic development of the text: Donis committing incest with his sister (without name) and Pedro with Susana San Juan. In the history of the first couple we can find the elements that George Ronald Freeman has pointed out to assign the most important archetypal key with which we can understand the novel: the Fall of Grace; such elements list them as follows: "Esta caída arquetípica se caracteriza por a) La imagen de una humanidad maldita, b) Un concepto del pecado original, c) Una condición de caído, y d) Un medio ambiente hostil y árido por el cual el hombre tiene que vagar buscando absolución"<sup>3</sup> (1996, p. 842).

As already mentioned, a large part of the inhabitants of Comala will not receive the Holy Oils, the Divine Grace, since Father Renteria first refuses and then can not grant it, therefore they will remain as Suffering Souls in the Subterranean Space and they will never reach the Celestial-Heavenly Space. Pedro Páramo is agent provocateur of such punishment for the land and the people, but he also becomes the recipient of punishment. As a patriarchal figure of Comala can prevail in it but his sentence will not consummate his inheritance as a Father Figure. In this idea there is an extremely complex duality proposed by Rulfo: Pedro Páramo is the father of everyone in the town, but in reality he does not have a son who can inherit his Kingdom; the only possible one, Miguel Páramo died and was the only one who managed to receive absolution.

The only possibility that Pedro Páramo has of transcending is to return with the woman he loved as a child, but it is impossible because she went crazy in The Andromeda Mine and remains in a permanent mystical-sexual trance. Thus, they have been expelled from the only possible paradise for human beings: Childhood and their Innocence. It is important to highlight how in this stage one of the two connections in the novel of the two spaces is presented: Blue Earth-Sky; This is given through the kite with which Pedro and Susana play, but this will not happen again except in the dream-hallucination of The Cuarraca.

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<sup>1</sup> All the inhabitants of Comala are aware of sin and know that they can not be redeemed from it.

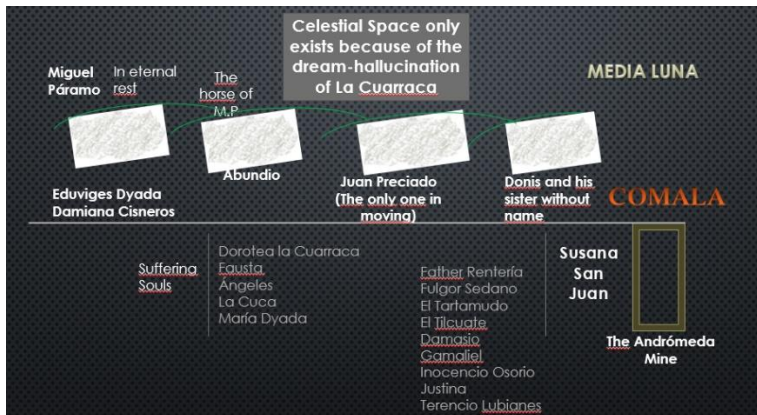
<sup>2</sup> They identify with the Original Guilt of the Edenic Couple, as a burden that must be overcome in life and that will prevent them from reaching Lost Paradise.

<sup>3</sup> This Archetypal Fall is characterized by a) The image of a cursed humanity, b) A concept of original sin, c) A fallen condition, and d) A hostile and arid environment by which man has to wander in search of absolution.

In this way the Structural, Thematic and Symbolic Elements converge in the construction of the Rulfian Universe, a mirror where we can see ourselves reflected as individual beings, with a religious, social and cultural legacy that binds us to this land or gives us condemnations or deserved rewards. A village, Comala, which we entered accompanied by Juan Preciado to be trapped there: another one of the Suffering Souls; a town from which, as Escalante suggests, we can not, as readers, escape: "De Comala, como quien dice, no se regresa nunca, aunque se regrese. Esta es, de hecho, la experiencia de los lectores. En la memoria del viajero siempre habrá un recuerdo que nos devuelva a este páramo inhóspito"<sup>1</sup> (1996, p.683).

In the following figure it can see how the plot is constructed from the three proposed spaces:

Figure 1. *Celestial, Earthly and Subterranean Spaces in Pedro Páramo*



### Earthly Space

Dorotea la Cuarraca, Fausta, Ángeles, la Cuca and María, are the ones who make the choral voice of the Subterranean Space, among gossip, jokes and dialogues with which the story of Comala and Pedro Páramo is built, the story of his fall from Grace. Further, as I already mentioned, in the Earthly Space is Juan Preciado, he arrives at Comala looking for his father Pedro Páramo and he will find death in the suffocation: the murmurs kill him. Similarly, although Miguel Páramo, sole legitimate son of Pedro Páramo, was buried and received the blessing of Father Rentería for money, his horse is not and is condemned to wander eternally on the Earthly plane, as stated in the same novel:

Una mujer que esperaba en las afueras del pueblo contó que había visto el caballo corriendo con las piernas dobladas como se fuera a ir de bruces... luego [...] caminaba con el pescuezo echado hacia atrás como si viniera asustado por algo que había dejado atrás. (1955, pp. 26-27).

The other two characters that roam alive in the Earthly Space are Donis and his nameless sister, who live in the sin of incest and who are doomed to be sooner or later just Suffering Souls.

Besides these, it is mentioned in the novel that there is a crowd of souls that are loose in the street, among which are Abundio, Eduviges Dyada and Damiana Cisneros.

### Subterranean Space

The Subterranean Space is the most important in the Juan Rulfo's novel, that's where the voices of the people of Comala, in particular of the women, are presented. As already mentioned, a large part of the people died and was buried but without receiving the Divine Grace. Dorotea la Cuarraca is the one who initiates this dialogue of the dead, she, along with Fausta, Ángeles, la Cuca and María Dyada, inhabit the Graves of the Poor, the dead piled up, however there is another woman's voice, says La Cuarraca, she speaks alone, that of the Big Grave (which Pedro Páramo paid): Doña Susanita tells them,

<sup>1</sup> From Comala, as one says, never returns, even if he returns. This is, in fact, the experience of readers. In the traveler's memory there will always be a memory that will bring us back to this inhospitable wasteland.

Susana San Juan, who lives still dead moving in her delirium. In addition to these, they are there underground but mute, perhaps only ruminating their grudges, the dead men: Father Renteria, Fulgor Sedano and others.

### *Celestial Space*

As already mentioned, the only two references to the Celestial Space are given by the innocence of childhood or by the madness of Dorotea la Cuarraca, who without the option of being a mother, hallucinates in a dream: "En el cielo me dijeron que se habían equivocado conmigo. Que me habían dado un corazón de madre, pero un seno de una cualquiera. Ese fue el otro sueño que tuve" (1955, p. 57), but she, as Father Renteria tells her, is not made for Heaven, only for Purgatory

Pedro Páramo as a child could feel the way he moved to that Heavenly Space thanks to his precocious love for Susana San Juan:

A centenares de metros, encima de todas las nubes, más, mucho más allá de todo, estás escondida tú, Susana. Escondida en la inmensidad de Dios, detrás de su Divina Providencia, donde yo no puedo alcanzarte ni verte y adonde no llegan mis palabras. (1955, p. 11).

The fate of Susana San Juan, The Cuarraca and all the other characters we know, but *Where is Pedro Páramo when he's dead?* He also did not die in Divine Grace even though he had all the money in the world to buy it, nor is he a Suffering Soul, he turned around, when he threw himself at the end of the novel, and was watered at the expense of the wind dispersing him, himself Comala, the *eterna living resentment* with which Juan Rulfo describes him and Comala.

The approach of these three spaces can be seen thematically and aesthetically coincident in the narrative of Juan Rulfo not only in *Pedro Páramo*, but in the same stories of his only volume published *El llano en llamas*, at least this is remarkable for the stories "Diles que no me maten", "No oyes ladrar los perros", "El hombre", "Luvina" and "Talpa".

### **Three Horizontal Spaces in the Literary Work of José Revueltas**

José Revueltas was born in 1914 in Durango and moved to Mexico City from a very young age. There he starts his political activism, he is secluded in *Islas Mariás* and he writes his first novel *Los Muros de Agua* (1941), then another novel, *El Luto Humano*, in 1943, which is worthy of the National Prize for Literature, and his first Book of Stories *Dios en la Tierra* of 1944. This will be followed by what for many is his best literary work but that earned him generalized repudiation of his fellow ideological struggle, the novel *Los Días Terrenales* in 1949, followed by *En Algún Valle de Lágrimas* (1956), *Los Motivos de Cain* (1957), then another story book, *Dormir en Tierra* (1960), the novels *Los errores* (1964) and *El Apando* (1969) - also considered by many as one of his greatest works - , to conclude with the book *Material de los Sueños* (1974) and the volume of work varies (presented as text of tales and short-stories) that was published posthumously, *Las Cenizas*, in 1981.

The first analysis of horizontal spaces in the work of José Revueltas is based on one of the best-known author's stories: "Dios en la Tierra", text that gives its name to his first volume of stories, published in 1944, when Revueltas was around thirty years old. This also represents a good example to delve into the particular universe of an author who has suffered multiple labels and pigeonholing of certain sectors of criticism, moving from Realism to Criollismo, Socialist Realism, and even Existentialism.

José Revueltas strives, both in his novels and in the stories discussed here, to build a method, a *Literary Machine*, as Escalante himself calls it, which has well-defined effects that he wants to provoke in the reader. Materialist-Dialectical Realism, that is what Revueltas calls it in that same desire to be congruent and to clarify, in the first place to itself, how this machinery should work. Escalante explains this procedure:

Lo que Revueltas pretende (...) es captar no un reflejo mecánico directo de la realidad, sino un movimiento interno, aquel aspecto que obedece a las leyes y a través del cual esta realidad aparece en trance de extinción, en franco camino de desaparecer y convertirse en otra cosa.<sup>1</sup> (1979, pp.18-19).

At the moment of applying this internal exploration in a real world to his literary texts, what Revueltas does is to become an Insightful Persecutor of the movements that, in this reality, are built, above all, that is what Revueltas perceives, in a process

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<sup>1</sup> What Revueltas intends (...) is to capture not a direct mechanical reflection of reality, but an internal movement, that aspect that obeys the laws and through which this reality appears in a state of extinction, on the way to disappearing and becoming another thing.

of descent or of degradation, "... y encontrar en esta degradación, en esta corrupción aparente, no una manifestación del mal en términos absolutos, sino un momento en el camino de la superación dialéctica de la realidad"<sup>1</sup> (1979, p. 23). A textual movement that is none other than the internal evolution of reality, which most of the time becomes Revueltas, a repulsive encounter, because what he finds, according to Escalante, is "la verdad del acabamiento"<sup>2</sup> (1979, p. 26). The important thing is this Internal Movement that Revueltas explores to its ultimate consequences, not only verbally or thematically but in the same trajectory of his characters; and this movement is what basically separates Revueltas from any resemblance to Socialist Realism, which, according to Vicente Francisco Torres M., "hace de la realidad un espantajo momificado, antidialéctico"<sup>3</sup> (1985, p. 51). Thus, I will illustrate, from figure 2, the movement of this literary machinery in the story "Dios en la Tierra". For such an assignment, I have divided the text into five moments or movements, to follow the logic of Revueltas, which are clearly framed in the Space-Time progression of the story.

Figure 2. Five moves in *Celestial and Earthly Spaces* in "Dios en la tierra"



The first movement begins with an Omniscient Narrator who immediately places us before this overwhelming idea of oppression: "La población estaba cerrada con odio y con piedras"<sup>4</sup> says the omniscient narrator at the beginning of the story (Revueltas, 1979, p. 11). This represents one of the most particular characteristics of Revueltian literature, as Philippe Chéron emphasizes: "El tema fundacional de la obra de José Revueltas aunado al de su militancia, es el de la cárcel, el del encierro a todos los niveles..."<sup>5</sup> (2001, p. 51). From that first line the narrator places us not only in a space, but in a dimension where the essential thing is that confinement that is not only physical, with stones, also, more importantly, it is closed with hatred, with that feeling that we identify very own of the human, but which we do not stop finding very close to that idea that will be, clearly, present throughout the story: the similarity between two words that are supposed to be contrary: *God-Hate (Dios-Odio)*, almost spelled in Spanish. The narrator turns any place (the population) into a dimension that, although closed, does not stop referring us to a Mythical Time, from the recreation of an almost Biblical Tone, another constant of Revueltas. The narrator here is descending from the Celestial Space to the Earthly Space, and from that initial point of view, the Biblical Tone is justified since his vision is the *Divine* one. This one uses dry language, short phrases and adjectives that try to show a contradictory entity: "... Dios fuerte y terrible, hostil y sordo, de piedra ardiendo, de sangre helada... despaciosa, cuidadosa, ordenada crueldad" (1979, p. 11); reiterations that increase the Mythical breath and confirm this Divine vision: "... desde la ceguera más ciega de su historia" (1979, p. 12), and rhetorical questions that it uses throughout the text with different purposes, in this case to reiterate the Mythical origin of chaos: "¿De dónde venía

<sup>1</sup> ... and find in this degradation, in this apparent corruption, not a manifestation of evil in absolute terms, but a moment in the path of the dialectical overcoming of reality.

<sup>2</sup> ... the truth of the expiry.

<sup>3</sup> ... makes reality a mummified, anti-dialectical scarecrow.

<sup>4</sup> Because it is the original literary text, with its linguistic terms and local language uses, no translation of the fragments of the short-story "Dios en la Tierra" and of the novel "El Luto Humano" will be made.

<sup>5</sup> The founding theme of the work of José Revueltas, together with that of his militancy, is that of prison, that of confinement at all levels...

esa pesadilla? ¿Cómo había nacido?" (1979, p. 12). Also in this first movement stands out the repetition of an idea: "Todas las puertas cerradas en nombre de Dios, toda la locura y terquedad en nombre de Dios" (1979, p. 11), the mental closure of an entire people for a religious reason.

From these initial keys we have one of the first thematic locations of the text in historical events, Revueltas is referring to the Cristero War that took place in Mexico in two periods, from 1926 to 1929 and from 1933 to 1939, and he takes this as a pretext to speak precisely of the Alienation of the people, the mental closure that led a nation to raging, alienated confrontation. The narrator observes both sides, makes judgments, calls his reason giving meaning to that internal movement, he sees them almost disappearing, as Florence Olivier points out: "El simbolismo de las referencias bíblicas o míticas prehispánicas convoca en los textos las imágenes fantasmáticas de lo monstruoso como indiferenciación entre el mal y el bien cuando se encuentran a punto de convertirse el uno en el otro"<sup>1</sup> (2001, p.55).

The distance of the opposites is in the first movement of the text framed by the Mythical / Cosmic, but gradually it is diluted and this God soon becomes Earthly and incarnates to face his enemy. It is then that the second movement of the text begins, which is already fully realized on the Earthly Space, that of men of flesh and blood; cries are heard: "¡Los Federales! ¡Los Federales!" (1979, p. 12). Here, then, chaos, human form, takes shape: two sides: the Federals and the people. And in this way the degradation takes a more defined course, we talked about hatred and now we see how this hatred is humanized. The possibility of some *Divine* and / or Cosmic order is nullified, as Torres M. detects in Revueltas: "...la vida humana es algo que enturbia el caos del cosmos: esas materias extrañas que son la vida y la conciencia del hombre, están condenadas a desaparecer, a disolverse en el orden destructivo del universo"<sup>2</sup> (1985, pp. 60-61). Soldiers appear and with them arises the conflict that sustains the storytelling plot, the narrator tells us the dichotomy: soldiers do not fight against others, they fight against God incarnate in his town. The belief of the people in the divine being makes it a compact mass, they are the People of God, they take their name, they become their representative, they are God on Earth, therefore there are no particularities, the people are a mass that has the faith that blinds him and the strength of that same faith; but the soldiers do not reach to compact themselves, they are still individuals. The Federals are the land, Revueltas describes them this way in the story: "¡Y cómo son los soldados! Tienen unos rostros morenos, de tierra labrancia..." (1979, p. 12), therefore, and here is one of the final keys of the story, this earthly character imposes the needs of individuals: they are hungry and thirsty. The people, while God is, can not show these human weaknesses; while hatred, its mission, is not concretized, it will be a participant in the attributes that this same people attributes to their Divinity. These human attributes (Federal) and divine (People) we contemplate in the basic binarisms of the text: Federal / People = Thirst / Water = Earth / Water. The Federals are thirsty, they are thirsty, God is water, their people have water, they are water, and in no way will they quench the thirst of soldiers.

We arrive at a third movement, also on the Earthly plane, where the conflict completes its process of humanization (the Federals have a name: Lieutenant Medina commands them and there is another named Romero, the only names that appear in the story). The narrator uses a question to start this third movement: "¿Cuándo llegarían?" (1979, p. 13), the people ask themselves, waiting, challenging their opponents. The Narrator does not stop emphasizing the trajectory of this Literary Machinery but Revueltas leaves the fight only to the land of the closed, of the mental oppression; each side has its trajectory directed from a single physical element: God = Water, and from this there is a transformation of the same entity according to whose point of view: the absence of God is the curse for the Federals (the Thirst) and for the people the presence of God is the blessing (the Water); and this dialectic, Curse / Blessing, is presented from one sentence to another throughout the story.

We enter the fourth movement of the text, in the Earthly Space, and finally the storyline is completed, Lieutenant Medina thinks of an ally: "¡Si ese maldito profesor cumple su palabra...!" (1979, p. 14); a teacher who will have water for them. We see several points of extreme value in this intrusion of the ally and in the fact that it is precisely a Teacher: first, we place temporarily, now definitely, the story: it is the second period of the *Cristero War*, we come to this by two complementary data: remember the Educational Reform in Mexico of President Lázaro Cárdenas' Period (1934-1938) that had in the sending of Teachers to almost all the rural environment one of its main implements, and also by the fact that in this second

<sup>1</sup> The symbolism of the Biblical references or Prehispanic Mythical calls in the texts the phantasmatic images of the monstrous as undifferentiation between evil and good when they are about to become one another.

<sup>2</sup> "... human life is something that clouds the chaos of the cosmos: those strange matters that are life and consciousness of man, they are condemned to disappear, to dissolve in the destructive order of the universe.

period of the *Cristeros*, the participation of the Church as an institution was practically null, leaving all that labor in the hands of the people. Another interesting point in this interference of the Teacher as an ally, and here is a wink of Revueltas that I will not stop mentioning, is that perhaps *Reason* or *Knowledge*, represented by the Teacher, is another means of reaching the water and can break the binarism that separates the sides. And so the help is fulfilled but the Teacher is punished for the betrayal, because the narrator had already warned us from the beginning, this is a: "Dios fuerte y terrible, hostil y sordo" (1979, p. 11).

And so we went to the end, the fifth movement, short, only two paragraphs, but forceful, more Earthly impossible, closing the story masterfully. This fifth movement makes a detailed and dry description of the punishment, transforming the narrative into a falsely didactic tone: "Para quien lo ignore, la operación, pese a todo, es bien sencilla" (1979, p. 16). Then, it comes the description of how the people crosses the Teacher with a stake and nails it to the earth, like a Holy Cross on El Calvario. "Un cristiano" (1979, p. 16) says the narrator with excellent irony when referring to the teacher punished and emphasize those two words in quotation marks. And the Teacher, the Reason, the Knowledge is like a scarecrow. The story, which begins in the Cosmic, ends with the pathetic swaying of a scarecrow assuming that mission to scare, as an example of the severity of the people, the People of God. A scarecrow that flutters as if moved by the wind, "llevando la voz profunda, ciclópea, de Dios que había pasado por la tierra" (1979, p. 16). When finishing with that detailed description of the procedure, Revueltas demonstrates his mastery in the story and we verify the effectiveness of that literary machinery that is constructed in five specific movements. A machinery that from the beginning shows its directions in a clear and definitive way.

It is important here to point out how for José Revueltas the plane where the conflicts narrated in his literary writings happen is merely the Earthly one. The Celestial or *Divine* plane is not possible in its texts, it exists but only as a non-visible reference, always as a vault formed by gray clouds, or in the case of the story "Dios en la Tierra", by the luminous radiance, from where the Biblical breath arises, the Divine presence 'alienating', blind and at the same time invisible. Similarly, the infraterrenal space does not exist for Revueltas. *Where do the dead go in the literary work of Revueltas?*, nowhere do, they remain on the Earthly plane. This is exemplified by the impaled Teacher, so will Chonita, the dead girl, the Priest, Adán and the others killed in the novel *El Luto Humano*, where the dead are floating in the smelly water that floods the town after the *Flood*.

Similarly, the "machinery", the "internal movement" of the Revueltian narrative, is presented in the other literary texts of the author, for example, in situations and the obsessive, almost perpetual movement that is condemned by the characters of the *Islas Mariás* in the novel *Los Muros de Agua*; similarly it appears in the anxious, desperate, almost anguishing movement of the sailors of "Dormir en Tierra" always alienated characters whom Revueltas puts in check to face them the truth of their *Expiry*.

I will review, to point out these ideas, the aforementioned novel *El Luto Humano*, through equal of an illustrative figure (3) and its brief explanation.

Figure 3. *Nine moves in Celestial and Earthly Spaces in "El luto humano"*





The novel *El Luto Humano* (1943) by José Revueltas is constructed in 9 movements that do not necessarily coincide with its capitulated structure (it has 11 chapters). These movements, as in the story "Dios en la Tierra", occur on the Earthly plane, with no opportunity for the dead to find vertical movement towards the celestial or infraterrestrial spaces, and if any of these exist it is only as a dome, in this case at night, gray and black clouds that drop the flood, punishment of a God who is a shapeless mass, a vault that covers, rather than to protect, to enclose. There is no possible Divine Grace, nor Hell: this will occur in the same Earthly plane where the everyday happens for the Being, it seems that Revueltas makes that wink complicit to his possible readers.

The first movement in the novel is also presented with a Cosmic breath; from the beginning it is key to the dome that will reign in the novel: "Y el cielo no tenía luz, apagado, mostrando enormes masas negras... Y Dios golpeando el cielo, la terrible bóveda oscura, sin estrellas" (1985, p. 14). To reiterate the confinement, the look of the Omniscient Narrator is transported to the interior of the house of Úrsulo and Cecilia, whose only companions are his daughter Chonita, dying, until The Death physically appears and surrenders to her. From here, the corpse of Chonita will wander on the Earthly plane without finding a destination, since The Priest will not have, like Padre Rentería in *Pedro Páramo*, the Moral or Divine Power, of giving him the Holy Oils.

The second movement occurs when precisely Úrsulo comes to look for The Priest, with the ultimate hope that he accepted to give the Sacred Anointing to Chonita. Úrsulo meets Adán in the river and asks him to help him cross it in his boat, *The Cautibadora*. The development of these characters, as a permanent stylistic feature in the narrative of Revueltas, leads them to find a past full of resentment in which they wander as if, in fact, the dead were themselves, as mentioned in the same novel narrator: "Este país era un país de muertos caminando, hondo país en busca del ancla, del sostén secreto" (1985, p. 21).

The third and fourth movements occur with the first encounter in the church with The Priest, then in the river, when he kills Adán and leaves him floating there, in the stinking water product of the flood, site of all the dead. Úrsulo makes his request to The Priest in the church but if he had at any time had the power to leave Chonita in grace, he loses it because of the accumulation of resentment to those who return to see Adán. Even so, the fourth movement does not appear directly in the narration, it will be intuited from the expression of that resentment and the subsequent moral fall, now definitive, of The Priest.

A sample of Revueltas's humor is given at the beginning of the fifth movement, when he describes the cluster of characters locked up again in the house of Úrsulo and Cecilia, next to Chonita's corpse, as "flacos y feos" (1985, p. 46). How else to describe those dead in life more than with those two adjectives. If in *Pedro Páramo* de Rulfo, some living personages appear who go to the tomb and there they remain as Suffering Souls, in the case of Revueltas, they are always like that: dead. In such a way, besides the owners of the house and the dead girl, Calixto, the Calixta, The Priest, Jerónimo Gutiérrez and his shadow wife, without a name, are: "ellos los muertos, lo que comparecían ante el pequeño cadáver" (1985, p. 52). From that desolate meeting and the memories-remorse of these characters, the reader finds enough information to know the past of the people they inhabit (including the dead that inhabit them): The Strike; The failure of the Community Development System; and The Drought; and with it enters the narrative game, the character of Natividad, the dead man who floats throughout the novel.

In the sixth movement is presented, again, a real physical movement of the characters, begins with the departure of the characters, all Dead in Life, and continues when it appears, also physically, Natividad, floating in the river. All wander, flee, with Chonita dead as a burden, the Calixta lost behind, Jerónimo stultified by alcohol also as a burden-another dead. There is a description here of Úrsulo that emulates Pedro Páramo: "... Era tan sólo una extrahumana voluntad hacia el ser, la más vehemente, la más ardiente voluntad de la historia, la voluntad, la vocación de la piedra... como parte del tiempo ya, convertido ya en tiempo espeso" (1985, p. 77). This trip, this flight of the characters is also towards the memory, especially of The Priest remembering the prostitute Eduarda, in the framework again of the *War of the Cristeros*.

In the seventh movement comes the night and the procession of characters take refuge on the roof of the house of Úrsulo and Cecilia, there they are protected in the darkness until the day comes and with it, the dome of clouds, the rain now irrepressible, with a barely luster, the sun that looks like a blind eye: "ojo viudo para contemplar la soledad" (1985, p. 92). That's how they last three days on the roof.

The eighth movement is already the delirium of those people, people starved of hunger, of thirst, of loneliness, the apparition of Adán floating dead in the water. The ninth movement comes with the appearance of the Vultures, their patience, hoping that those characters killed in life are finally dead body and spirit, because they have no possible transcendence up or down, only to float or be eaten by the Birds of Prey.

### Conclusions

This study, as already mentioned, can be extended in its analysis and graphic representations to the total of the novels and short stories of Revueltas, and in general to a large part of Rulfo's stories, but that exercise would require more time and space. With what was discussed here, it was possible to illustrate how both authors stylistically and thematically manage the three spaces that imply Life-Death and possible transcendence of Being.

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