

## **Spanish *carajo*: Problems and Proposals.**

I. Few will deny that there exists a difference between expository language and 'emotive' or 'expressive' language. While this difference may be difficult, indeed, impossible, to precisely characterize, it is apparent to most people that qualitatively or quantitatively, some factors intervene in the speech act to separate utterances with a purely communicative intent from those whose primary motivation is the release of emotional tension. While a moment's reflection will suffice to convince us that a large (perhaps unduly so) proportion of our verbal output may be roughly classed as 'emotive', this form of discourse has received relatively little attention within the discipline of linguistics, compared to the quantity of effort devoted to the description of so-called 'non-emotive' or 'literal' discourse. This is particularly surprising, given the fact that the partially overlapping discipline of literary criticism, in view of its subject matter (which incidentally comprises a large sample of all linguistic production), places great emphasis on the expressive properties of human language. The tenets upon which are founded the study of poetics and style implicitly assume the primacy of expressive language and consequently imply, in the formal study of language, the consideration of an 'expressive' component (or at least dimension) in the grammars of natural languages.

Until relatively recently, the study of expressive language within the field of linguistics was confined to etymological inquiries and purely descriptive summaries. While the gap which separates the study of emotive language from that of purely 'neutral' discourse is being closed, much work remains to be done before these two facets of the same phenomenon can be united under the rubric of a single science. In addition to the problem of incorporating emotive discourse into grammars of languages, it will be necessary to characterize the (nearly?)

universal process by which inherently non-emotive words become intrinsically emotive in function, since, as noted by Edward STANKIEWICZ (1),

Contextually expressive variants may, of course, become inherently expressive words, if we view the matter diachronically. Many derived interjections owe their origin to non-expressive cognitive elements (e.g. Engl. *damn*, *Jesus*, *Holy Moses*), or to various taboo-distortions (such as *heck*, *gosh*, *cripes*, French *sacrébleu*, *diantre*) (p. 243).

The present note is intended as a contribution to the growing body of literature on emotive language, comprising the study of a single, widely diffused, form found in the Spanish language. The form in question is the word *carajo*, which, in the words of the poet Robert Graves (2), is 'the great mainstay of ... swearing, which is used indiscriminately as noun, adjective, verb or adverb'. This word has exerted a fascination on Spanish philologists, since its origin is as clouded in mystery as its eventual history. While great progress has been made toward the eventual elucidation of the problems surrounding this singularly interesting form, several recalcitrant areas remain. This study in no way purports to offer any definitive solutions, but merely seeks to gather in one spot those available data which may facilitate the inclusion of this form in a more comprehensive grammar of Spanish. Following a brief survey of etymological hypotheses and an equally brief description of the contemporary manifestations of *carajo* and its variants, some rudimentary proposals will be offered concerning the formal status of this word and the expressions which it engenders.

2. The original meaning of *carajo* was 'penis', and, while vestiges of this meaning still persist, although in diluted form, in the Iberian peninsula, it has disappeared from most dialects of Latin America. Since the purpose of the present inquiry is the study of the emotive potential of the word *carajo*, examples will be largely confined to the Latin American region, where the anatomical connotations have vanished. Investigation of this word is hindered by the prudish inhibitions of otherwise well-equipped investigators, which precluded their discussing, at least publicly, a word of such value, since, as remarked by A. A. FOKKER (3), 'la plupart des dictionnaires usuels semblent avoir été faits pour les

(1) Edward STANKIEWICZ, Problems of emotive language, in *Approaches to Semiotics*, ed. T. A. SEBEOK, The Hague (Mouton) 1964, pp. 239-64.

(2) Robert Graves, *The White Goddess*, New York (Farrar, Straus and Giroux) 1966, 2nd ed., p. 290.

(3) A. A. FOKKER, Quelques mots espagnols et portugais d'origine orientale dont l'étymologie ne se trouve pas ou est insuffisamment expliquée dans les dictionnaires, *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 34 (1910) 560-8 [p. 567].

jeunes filles, puisque les mots "obscènes" y manquent très souvent'. Nonetheless, the data which have survived such scholarly misgivings permit the existing lacunae to be fairly accurately delimited.

Spanish *carajo* appears to be the reflex of a uniquely Ibero-Romance form, although etymological parentage has occasionally been suggested with Provençal *caralh/carai/carach*. The cognate form in Portuguese is *caralho*, in Galician *carallo*, and in Catalan *carall*, with a number of phonetically-deformed euphemisms in each language. No attestations are found in Italian (1) or French (2).

The first extant attestation of Spanish *carajo* comes in the *Glossario del Escorial* (3):

- (1657) plepucium [praeputium] por capillo del carajo  
 (1710) priapus, -i por carajo  
 (2274) androge[n]us, por cosa que tiene conno y carajo

The following verse appears in the *Pleito del Manto* (4):

Por que tuviste con él  
 Afición tan sin medida  
 Pues carajo en esta vida  
 Nunca entró justo por él?

The *Cancionero de Baena* offers the following lines:

Señora, pues que non puedo  
 Abrevar el mi carajo  
 En este vuestro lavajo  
 Por domar mi denuedo, etc.

(1) Except for a humorous attempt at creating an Italian cognate found in the novel *Figuraciones en el Mes de Marzo* by the Puerto Rican writer Emilio Díaz-Valcárcel (Barcelona 1972, p. 88): *Beniamino Dell Caraggio*. This, however, could not be the correct derivation from \**caracūlum* which would have yielded \**caracchio* or possibly the more conservative \**caraglio*; starting from \**caralium*, only the latter reflex would be possible. The normal source for [ʃ] in Italian is Latin *gj*, or *dj*; e.g. *radiūs* > *raggio*, *pējus* > *peggio*, etc. This same configuration also gave [ddz]; e.g. *mediūs* > *mezzo*, etc. In fact, the only case where Spanish [x] and Italian [ʃ] coincide etymologically is in the derivation *-aticum* > *-aggio* (Sp. *-aje*) which is the result of borrowing from French or Provençal; e.g. Sp. *coraje*-It. *coraggio*, Sp. *viaje*-It. *viaggio*, etc. In other instances, this ending underwent the normal development in Italian to become *-acco*, or survived intact, as in *simpatico*.

(2) In the *Larousse Mensuel* no. 444 (August 1951), p. 691, one finds the French word *caraque* 'Gypsy, Spanish bohemian', which is claimed to have come from Spanish *carajo*. If it comes from any Hispanic word, however, it is most probably the Portuguese euphemism *caraco*, used as a derogatory term for Spaniards.

(3) Américo CASTRO, *Glosarios Latino-Españoles de la Edad Media*, Madrid (Hernando) 1936.

(4) Cf. Anice DE PAGÉS, *Gran Diccionario de la Lengua Castellana (de Autoridades)*, Barcelona (Fomento Comercial del Libro), V. 2, p. 142.

In a 15th century document cited by Emiliano Jos (1), we encounter the form *carajudo*, a type of fish, much like the Catalan terms *carall de rei* 'a fish', *carai mari* 'a marine animal', *carall de jan* 'a type of aquatic flora', etc. GILI Y GAYA (2) has compiled a comprehensive list of 16th and 17th century citations of *carajo*, all glossed as 'el miembro viril'. In many of these texts, *carajo* appears alongside a variant form *cajo*, suggesting kinship with Italian *cazzo*, of similar meaning and connotation. By the 18th century, the obscene status of *carajo* had been firmly established, so that Nicolás Fernández de Moratín (*Arte de las Putas*) could state:

Ni tampoco tu boca obscena diga  
 Si no es muy precisa coyuntura  
*Jocara, derjo, nescojo, ni ñoco*  
 (transposición se llama esta figura).

where *carajo*, *joder*, *cojones*, and *coño* are euphemized by means of the transposed syllables.

The form *caralio* appears in 1258 in the *Portugaliae Monumenta Historica* (3): 'Per aquam fontis predicti, usque ferit in riulo caralio'. *Caralho* is found in various 13th century Portuguese *cancioneiros* (4) including those of J. de Guilhade (1411, 7), Stevan da Guarda (1267, 21), Pedro Garcia Burgales (1336, 5), Fernando Esquio (1506, 9; 1507, 6, 12), Pero da Ponte (1330, 6, 11) and Martin Soarez (1320, 5, 16). Catalan *carall* makes its appearance in the *Llibre de Tres* of the 14th or 15th century, and is indirectly attested by euphemistic forms in the *Cançoner Satíric Valencià* (5).

3. Adding to the mystery and intrigue concerning Spanish *carajo* and its neighboring cognates is the fact that the precise etymology is unknown; the forms give the impression of having sprung fully developed into the mainstream of the medieval languages. While such a proposition is of course meaningless, the paucity of early attestations may be at

(1) Emiliano Jos, Notas lingüísticas y económicas de documentos inéditos de Armadas a Indias del siglo XV (1495-6), in *Estudios Dedicados a Menéndez Pidal*, Madrid (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas) 1957, V. 7, part 1, pp. 35-46 [p. 39].

(2) Samuel GILI Y GAYA, *Tesoro Lexicográfico*, Madrid (S. Aguirre Torre) 1960, V. 1, p. 476.

(3) José Pedro MACHADO, *Dicionário Etimológico da Língua Portuguesa*, Lisboa (Editorial Confluência) 1952, p. 502.

(4) I cite here from the edition of Elza Paxeco MACHADO and José Pedro MACHADO, *Cancioneiro da Biblioteca Nacional*. The first number refers to the catalogue number and the second number(s) to the line(s).

(5) Cf. J. COROMINAS, *Diccionario Etimológico Crítico de la Lengua Castellana*, V. 2, p. 668.

least in part attributed to the significance of the word itself, which did not easily lend itself to inclusion in the courtly and religious works which form the basis for much of medieval Hispanic literature. This etymological vacuum has resulted in a number of hypothetical reconstructions for the proto-form which was to be diffused throughout the Iberian peninsula. While the ultimate goal of the present study is a characterization of the contemporary manifestations of *carajo*, some of the more representative etymological speculations will be briefly glanced at, in order to provide an overview of the probable diachronic evolution of this form.

By regarding the common intersection of phonetic developments affecting Ibero-Romance, one easily arrives at the conclusion that for Spanish *carajo*, Catalan *carall*, Portuguese *caralho* and Galician *carallo* to have come from a single proto-form (as no one doubts they did), this form would have to have been either *\*c(h)aracūlum* or *\*c(h)aralium*. Thus, for example, Latin *alium* 'garlic' gave Spanish *ajo*, Catalan *all*, Galician *allo* and Portuguese *alho*, while *specūlum* 'mirror' gave Sp. *espejo*, Cat. *espell*, Ptg. *espêlho*, Gal. *espello*, and so forth. No other Vulgar Latin configuration would have given rise to this series of reflexes, except perhaps for a common later development utilizing the word for 'garlic' in each language (1), a hypothesis which in view of its lack of semantic plausibility and the almost nonexistent probability of a common development in four separate languages, may be safely discounted.

In one of the first references in modern times to the etymology of *carajo*, FOKKER (*op. cit.*, pp. 567-8) alludes to the possibility of an Arabic borrowing (2), suggesting the verb *haraža* 'to come out' and the noun *harág* 'thing that comes out'. This hypothesis, however, was quick to be disputed by M. L. WAGNER (3), who notes the phonetic and semantic discrepancies between the Arabic forms and the Romance reflexes. Scepticism was also evinced by COROMINAS (*op. cit.*), who discussed the possibility of a reflex of *\*caracūlum* in Egyptian Arabic *qárqal* 'hook' and concludes that the phonetic similarity is merely fortuitous, in view of other forms such as the Hispano-arabic *qárqal* = *veír a carcajadas* 'to guffaw'.

A short while later, MONTOLIU (4) suggested that Catalan *carall* (and by implication, the cognate forms in the other Ibero-Romance dialects)

(1) This possibility has given rise to the following folk etymology in Catalan, reported by ALCOVER. The Virgin Mary went to the market, to buy some garlic. Upon noting the high price, she walked off, exclaiming *car all!* 'expensive garlic'.

(2) First suggested in 1505 by Fr. Pedro de Alcalá in his *Vocabulista Árábica en Letra Castellana* (Granada). Cf. GILI Y GAYA, *loc. cit.*

(3) M. L. WAGNER, Nochmals siz. *guáḍḍara*, *ZrPh* 54 (1930) 750-3.

(4) M. DE MONTOLIU, *Estudis etimològics i lexicogràfics*, *Butlletí de Dialectologia Catalana* 3 (1915) 40-51 [p. 48].

came from Old Catalan *corall*, coming from Latin *corallium*. The vocalic change of *o* to *a* is explained as due to assimilation to the stressed vowel, aided by the influence of *caramella*. MONTOLIU'S hypothesis was first accepted by J. JUD (1) and also partially accepted by Leo SPITZER (2), who notes the similarity in meaning between *corallum* 'coral, red worm', and its eventual result among the Romance languages. Further noted is the use against the evil eye (*mal de ojo*, *Jettatura*) of this talisman, a practice also noted by Robert GRAVES (*loc. cit.*) for the ass's penis, the original meaning of Spanish *carajo*:

... its purpose is to avert the *evil eye*, or ill-luck, and the more often it can be introduced into an oath, the better. Touching the phallus or an amulet in phallus form, is an established means of averting the evil eye, and *carajo* means 'ass's phallus'; the appeal is to the baleful God Set, whose starry phallus appears in the Constellation Orion, to restrain his anger.

Later, however (3), SPITZER expressed doubts on the correctness of MONTOLIU'S proposal, noting that the unassimilated \**cor-* of *corall* was thereby left unexplained (4). He also spoke out against the etymology proposed several centuries ago by Covarrubias (cf. PAGÉS, *op. cit.*) which attributes *carajo* to Latin *charaxāre* 'to write' 'por la semejanza que tiene con la cola o rabo, de allí el llamarse también, en castellano, *pene*, derivado del lat. *pēnis*'. This etymology offers very little in the way of plausibility, and has not remained as a contender in the search for the true derivation (5).

As an afterthought to these ruminations, SPITZER became the first to propose the etymology \**characūlum* from a word meaning 'stake' or 'pole'. He suggested a diminutive formation utilizing the suffix *-ūlum* added to the word *charax* (Greek *χάραξ* 'small stick'), a proposal which both semantically and phonologically is so plausible (cf. Spanish *palo*, English *rod*, etc.) that it has been accepted by most later investigators.

(1) J. JUD, review of the *BDC* V. 3, in *Romania* 45 (1919) 568-71 [p. 570].

(2) Leo SPITZER, review of the *BDC* V. 3, in the *Literaturblatt für germanische und romanische Philologie* 40 (1919) 176-7.

(3) L. SPITZER, *Lexikalisches aus dem Katalanischen und den übrigen iberoromanischen Sprachen*, Bibliotheca *Archivum Romanicum* ser. II, vol. 1, Geneva (Olschki) 1921, pp. 35-7, 158.

(4) However, some parallel developments of unstressed *o* to *a* are offered by Oiva Joh. TALLGREN, *Glanures catalanes et hispano-romanes* II, *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 14 (1912) 12-34 [p. 18].

(5) Cf. Sebastián de Covarrubias, *Tesoro de la Lengua Castellana o Española* (Madrid 1611). For more data on the evolution of *charaxāre* among the Romance languages, see M. L. WAGNER, *Die Beziehungen des Griechentums zu Sardinien und die griechischen Bestandteile des Sardischen*, *Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbücher* 1 (1920) 158-69 [p. 167].

One of the first to rise to the defense of SPITZER's proposed etymon \**characūlum* was BRÜCH (1), who noted that the major weakness with respect to SPITZER's notion is the fact that the derivation of diminutives utilizing the older ending in *-ūlus* was no longer possible in the late Vulgar Latin period, since the posttonic penult was syncopated yielding the termination *-lus*, devoid of all diminutive force. BRÜCH counters this problem, however, with a hitherto unmentioned attestation of the (otherwise hypothetical) Greek/Latin word *charax* in the Vulgar Latin of the Iberian Peninsula, in the *De Re Rustica* of Columella, who lived around 100 A. D.: (Book V, iv, 1) *characatus*; (Book V, v, 16) *vineis characatis*, where *characatus* refers to the grape vines which were supported by poles. Also noted by BRÜCH is the fact that the Latinized inflection in *-atus* demonstrates that the root word *charax* was firmly implanted in the Hispano-Latin lexicon by the first century A. D. During this time period, however, the formation of new diminutives through the suffix *-cūlum* was still possible; thus, the possibility of a proto-form \**characūlum* is greatly increased.

The validity of the SPITZER/BRÜCH hypothesis regarding the etymology of *carajo* was later accepted by M. L. WAGNER (*ZrPh* 54.752) and by MEYER-LÜBKE in his *Romanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*. A later voice of scepticism was raised, however, by COROMINAS (*loc. cit.*) who, while acknowledging the plausibility of the proposed etymon \**characūlum*, inclined in other directions. COROMINAS notes the complete lack of documentation of the form \**charax* in the Vulgar Latin of the Iberian Peninsula, although the author's own awareness of *characatus* as used by Columella, renders this objection somewhat untenable. Nonetheless, COROMINAS proposes the etymon \**caracūlum*, an instrumental derivation from the Classical Latin verb *carĕre* 'to card wool', formed in analogy with such paradigms as *battuĕre-battuacūlum*, *tenĕre-tenacūlum*, *retinĕre-retinacūlum*, etc. As indirect support for this hypothesis, COROMINAS notes the vulgar Catalan usage of the verb *cardar* from *carĕre* to mean 'sexual intercourse', in addition to its etymological meaning of 'card wool'. This hypothesis, however, was not supported by J. M. PIEL for Portuguese (2), nor in the Portuguese dictionaries of MORAIS SILVA

(1) Joseph BRÜCH, Zu Spitzers kat.-sp. Etymologien in der Bibliotheca archivi romanici III, in *Miscellanea Linguistica Dedicata a Hugo Schuchardt per il suo 80° Anniversario*, Biblioteca dell' "Archivum Romanicum" Serie II, vol. 3, Geneva (Olschki) 1922, pp. 26-74 [p. 36]. For some ideological parallels, see J. SCHEFFELOWITZ, Das Schicksal der indogermanischen Lautgruppe *zg*, *Indogermanische Forschungen* 33 (1913-14) 133-69 [pp. 141f.].

(2) J. M. PIEL, Notas à margem do "Romanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch", *Biblos* (Coimbra) 10 (1934) 124-40 [p. 132]; A formação dos nomes de lugares e de instrumentos em português, *Boletim de Filologia* 7 (1944) 31-47 [p. 43].

and MACHADO (1), nor in the Catalan dictionary of ALCOVER/MOLL (2), all of which support the derivation from *\*characūlum*.

Such, then, is the contemporary status of etymological research on *carajo* and its congenitors. While the available data elude the formulation of definite conclusions, the general hypotheses may be reconsidered in the light of considerations of overall plausibility. The lack of early attestations of *carajo* and its etymological predecessors seems, as noted earlier, to be the result of a prudish avoidance of mentioning certain anatomical regions, particularly within the context of religious, moral-didactic, and heroic works. Even today, the majority of written literature is not an accurate reflection of the everyday spoken language, and this seems to have been even more so during the middle ages.

Due to the etymological difficulties encountered with positing a Latin base form *\*caralium*, it seems certain that *carajo* comes from an earlier *\*c(h)aracūlum*. As to COROMINAS' proposal of an instrumental form of *carère*, this appears rather doubtful in view of the fact that the unusual metaphorical extension of the Romance reflex of this verb to refer to the sexual act occurs only with the Catalan *cardar* (3), while the meaning of 'penis' is, and always has been, common to Spanish *carajo*, Portuguese *caralho*, Galician *carallo* and Catalan *carall*.

These considerations implicate *\*characūlum* as an early diminutive form, whence the conclusion that Greek *charax* 'small stick' provided the original Latin base form. In any case, it seems certain that some process of metaphorical metamorphosis operated at an early period of Iberian Vulgar Latin in order to produce the uniform meaning which *carajo* and its cognates assumed across the Iberian Peninsula. In view of the contemporary non-literal status of *carajo*, we may therefore tentatively characterize the evolution of this word as a metaphorically-motivated semantic replacement followed by a later dissolution of etymological meaning resulting in a purely expressive form. More will be added on this latter point following a categorization of the contemporary manifestations of *carajo*.

4. In contemporary Spanish, *carajo*, in view of its objectionable nature in all dialects, is represented by a number of euphemisms, ranging from the simple replacement of a single phoneme to the creation or exchange of the entire word. Most common among the simple phonetically-

(1) MACHADO, *op. cit.*; Antônio DE MORAIS SILVA, *Diccionario da Língua Portuguesa*, Lisboa (Editorial Confluência) 1949, 10th ed. V. 2.

(2) Antoni M. ALCOVER and Francesc DE B. MOLL, eds., *Diccionari Català-Valencià-Baleari*, Palma de Mallorca 1965; 2nd ed., V. 2, pp. 1009-10. See also F. DE B. MOLL, *Suplement Català al "Romanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch"*, Barcelona (Oficina Romànica) 1928, entry 810.

(3) Cf. also the development of German *ficken* 'to move to and fro' to 'to have sexual intercourse'.



deformed variants are *cará*, *caray*, *caramba*, *caracho*, *carijo*, *carifo*, *barajo*, *badajo*, *caracoles*, etc. (1). However, the full range of syntactic possibilities exhibited by *carajo* is not shared by any of the euphemistic forms, which only occur as simple interjections or in allusions to vulgarity such as in *echar (soltar) ajos* lit. 'to throw (let loose) garlic', fig. 'to say *carajo*', through phonetic association.

The possibilities for employing *carajo* are almost as numerous and varied as the people who use this word, but certain common and quasi-universal examples may be extracted from the totality of available instances. In the following discussion, all cases will involve only a figurative or expressive usage of *carajo*, and will be completely devoid of the original anatomical significance. Thus, for example, no attention will be paid to such transparent usage as the epithet *carajo* applied to a stupid or offensive person (2).

The most obvious use of *carajo* is as a simple interjection of anger, fear, surprise, or disbelief. Used in this fashion it shares the scene with other vulgar forms such as *coño*, *mierda*, *cojones*, *joder*, as well as less offensive terms. This usage is purely ejaculative and, as with similar forms in any language, carries no semantic value other than the conveyance of emotion.

Closely related to the ejaculative use, but offering a wider set of possibilities, is the use of *carajo* to reinforce the interrogative *qué*, a usage shared by *coño*, *mierda*, *diablos*, *demonios*, etc. (3), for example:

- (1) ¿Qué  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{carajo} \\ \text{coño} \\ \text{demonios} \\ \text{mierda} \\ \text{etc.} \end{array} \right\}$  te pasa?
- (2) ¿Qué  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{carajo} \\ \text{etc.} \end{array} \right\}$  me importa a mí?

In English, the slot occupied by *carajo* in Spanish is filled by *devil*, *hell*, *fuck*, etc. This usage of *carajo* carries an inherent value, the extent of

(1) Cf. Charles KANY, *American Spanish Euphemisms*, Berkeley (Univ. of California Press) 1960, p. 142; Ingo NAGEL, *Die Bezeichnung für "dumm" und "verrückt" im Spanischen*, Tübingen (Max Niemeyer) 1972, p. 180. In the contemporary Mexican work *Inventando que Sueño* (Mexico 1968), we find the euphemism *carash* (p. 59) while in the novel *Usmail* by the Puerto Rican Pedro Juan Soto (San Juan) we also find *cadajo*. See also, Werner BEINHAEUER, *El Español Coloquial*, Madrid (Gredos) 1963, *passim*.

(2) Cf. KANY, *op. cit.*, p. 49; NAGEL, *op. cit.*, p. 180. Similar is the French use of *con*, English *prick*, *pecker*, etc.

(3) Cf. BEINHAEUER, *op. cit.*, p. 76, fn. 91.

which will be outlined below, since the phrase *qué carajo* in effect modifies the following verbal phrase by intensifying the interrogative force.

A further example, also involving a form of interrogative and negative reinforcement, comes forth in the frame *qué — ni qué carajo*, where *carajo* can be replaced by *coño*, *demonios*, *ocho cuartos*, *cojones*, *puñeta*, and others, as well as a simple repetition of the first word (cf. BEINHAUER, *op. cit.*, pp. 179-85). BEINHAUER notes (p. 179), concerning this usage:

Por lo general, el hablante no se limita sólo a rechazar la palabra que le molesta, sino que, para poner además en ridículo al interlocutor, le añade otro elemento más, disparatado, de su propia invención ... sucede a veces que en su excitación no se le ocurre ninguna expresión nueva, y entonces su afectividad se desahoga en una insensata repetición mecánica de la palabra causa de su enfado ... el *ni* denota claramente que el sintagma precedente *qué + sustantivo* es sentido como negativo ... sin embargo, lo corriente es que al hablante no le falte expresión de que echar mano como de objeto en que cebar su rabiosa negación.

Examples include:

- (3) ¡Qué importante ni qué carajo!  
 (4) ¡Qué broma ni qué carajo!

The expression which may be inserted following the first *qué* may be virtually any part of speech or phrase which the speaker wishes to deny, negate, or refuse. This syntactic construction finds no ready analogue in English, but may perhaps be compared with *to hell with—*, or something similar.

The phrase *el carajo* occurs in numerous expressions, and in fact accounts for the greatest number of examples of *carajo*, except for the purely ejaculatory expressions. First in the list of common examples is the locution *del carajo*, meaning roughly 'bad', 'disgusting', with adjectival force. For instance:

- (5) Hace un tiempo del carajo.  
 (6) Este libro es del carajo.

The form *carajo* used in this fashion also occurs in interjections:

- (7) ¡Qué caballo del carajo!

Tied to the expressions involving *el carajo* is the omnipresent

- (8) Se me da el carajo.

roughly 'I don't give a damn' (cf. Fr. *je m'en fous*), and numerous slightly different variants. This expression also alternates with variants involving *un carajo*, as in

(9) *Me importa un carajo.*

In this latter frame, the number of variants which can appear instead of *carajo* is virtually endless, although all must take a nominal form. Common examples include *un comino*, *un (tres) pepino(s)*, *un cuerno*, etc. In the novel *La Oscura Historia de la Prima Montse* (Barcelona 1970) by the Barcelona writer Juan Marsé we are offered the sentence *¡Que me oigan! ¡Me importa tres pares de cojones!*, while the Spanish novel *Groovy* by José María Carrascal (Barcelona 1972) provides: *la felicidad del pueblo os importa dos carajos*. Similar expressions abound in the literature and seem limited only by the imagination of the user, although remaining within a clearly circumscribed subset of obscene and vulgar expressions.

The variant *el carajo* also appears in the expression *para el (p'al) carajo*, as in

(10) *Me voy p'al carajo.*

roughly 'I'm getting the hell out of here'. This usage appears to be tied in with the general employment of *el carajo* to indicate a pleonastic destination in a number of vulgar expressions. Most common among the latter is *mandar al carajo* 'to rudely dispatch someone or something', 'to tell someone to go to hell'. In the novel *Tres Tristes Tigres* (Barcelona 1967) by the Cuban Guillermo Cabrera Infante, we find the following reference to this usage: '(tremenda palabra, eh: *siempre*, la eternidad, el carajo)'. SÁNCHEZ-BOUDY (1) glosses this use of *el carajo* for those of his readers unfamiliar with this style of speech (which for some reason he regards as uniquely Cuban) as 'exclamación grandilocuente', but a more appropriate translation would also take into account the syntactic possibilities of this form. Other examples of this use include:

(11) *¡Vete al carajo!*

(12) *Me gustaría tirarlo (botarlo) al carajo.*

In (11) *al carajo* alternates with *a la mierda*, *al demonio*, etc., while an additional usage corresponding to (12) is found in *La Oscura Historia de la Prima Montse*: *mandar todo lo demás al cuerno*. This usage corresponds to one of the colloquial uses of Catalan *carall* cited by GRIERA (2),

(1) José SÁNCHEZ-BOUDY, *La Nueva Novela Hispanoamericana y Tres Tristes Tigres*, Miami (Ediciones Universal) 1971, p. 108.

(2) A. GRIERA, *Tresor de la Llengua, de les Tradicions i de la Cultura Popular de Catalunya*, Barcelona (Edicions Catalunya S.) 1936, V. 3, p. 200.

such as *mal carall te fum (fot)!* An interesting phrase, apparently related to this usage of *carajo* is found in the novel *Cambio de Piel* (Mexico 1971) by the Mexican Carlos Fuentes: *Te lleva el carajo o te llamas Rimbaud.*

Yet another way in which *carajo* may be inserted into an expression is illustrated by the following variants:

(13) Me va  $\left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{del} \\ \text{como el} \end{array} \right\}$  carajo.

where an example of *del* comes from *Cambio de Piel* while *como el* appears in the Argentine novel *El Derrotado* by Leopoldo Torre-Nilsson (Buenos Aires 1970). No literal translation may be extracted from these sentences, which figuratively mean 'things are going badly for me'. Perhaps in view of the emotive content of the sentences, this usage is restricted to the first person singular in the overwhelming majority of cases.

A final case of expressions making essential use of *carajo* is the class of expressions of the general form *más — que el carajo*, in which the use of *carajo* pleonastically intensifies the description; for example:

(14) Tiene más dinero que el carajo.

(15) Está más caliente que el carajo.

Occasionally the *el* may be deleted; for example, in *Tres Tristes Tigres* one finds *la miré y me di cuenta de que era pobre como carajo*. Since the phrase *más que el carajo* only figuratively introduces a comparison into the sentence, the *más* may, in certain instances, be omitted, giving rise to sentences like

(16) No sabe un (el) carajo de matemática.

(17) No tengo el carajo.

in which cases *el carajo* may be approximately rendered as 'nothing'.

The above examples have illustrated some of the more common ways in which *carajo* and its stylistic variants are used in everyday spoken Spanish. In no instance does *carajo* carry its original etymological meaning, and in each of the above categories *carajo* plays a different syntactic rôle. This panorama of interrelated phenomena demands inclusion in a comprehensive grammar of Spanish; hence, we must address the question of the lexical and syntactic status of *carajo*. Before turning to these formal questions, however, it is highly illustrative to consider the following remarks of Carlos Fuentes (from the novel *La Muerte de Artemio Cruz*) speaking of the Mexican usage of the verb *chingar* (1), whose range

(1) For a study of some of the difficulties surrounding this equally mysterious word, see Juan Clemente ZAMORA, *Lexicología Indianorrománica: chingar y singlar*, *Romance Notes* 14 (1972) 409-13.

of possibilities is nearly as great as that of *carajo*, and which engenders the same feelings of idiomatic *camaraderie* among the initiated:

... palabra de honor, palabra de hombre, palabra de rueda, palabra de molino, imprecación, propósito saludo, proyecto de vida, filiación, recuerdo, voz de los desesperados, liberación de los pobres, orden de los poderosos, invitación a la riña y al trabajo, epígrafe del amor, signo del nacimiento, amenaza y burla, verbo testigo, compañero de la fiesta y de la borrachera, espada del valor, trono de la fuerza, colmillo de la marrullería, blasón de la raza, salvavida de los límites, resumen de la historia ...

This characterization, while not directed specifically at the forms under consideration, indicates the range of emotional response to be ascribed to words of this category, and demonstrates the inherent unity which the Spanish speaker feels to exist among the various uses of the words in question. This unity must be taken into consideration when considering the optimum representation for a series of semantically and syntactically quite diverse variants. While couched in poetic terms, Fuentes' statement provides an accurate portrayal of the methodological difficulties which may be anticipated in this line of inquiry.

5. The most pressing issue to be considered concerns the referential status of the word *carajo*. Given the fact that, in the examples cited above, its etymological significance has entirely disappeared, what, if anything, does *carajo* mean in the various expressions in which it is found? Clearly, we may at once remove from further discussion the use of *carajo* as an interjection, devoid of any referential meaning. To consider the remaining cases, we must have recourse to a definition of the speech act, for example, the well-known description offered by Roman JAKOBSON, who describes it in approximately the following terms (1): an ADDRESSER sends a MESSAGE about a CONTEXT (referent) to an ADDRESSEE by establishing a CONTACT in a communication CHANNEL and utilizing the linguistic CODE. Corresponding to each of these six components of the speech act is a form of discourse which places primary emphasis on this component. REFERENTIAL language places emphasis on the referent or context of the discourse, and accounts for most normal speech situations. EMOTIVE or expressive language focuses on the addresser, giving his attitudes about what he is saying. The most purely emotive forms are the interjections. CONATIVE language is most strongly directed at the addresser and includes imperative and vocative locutions. PHATIC

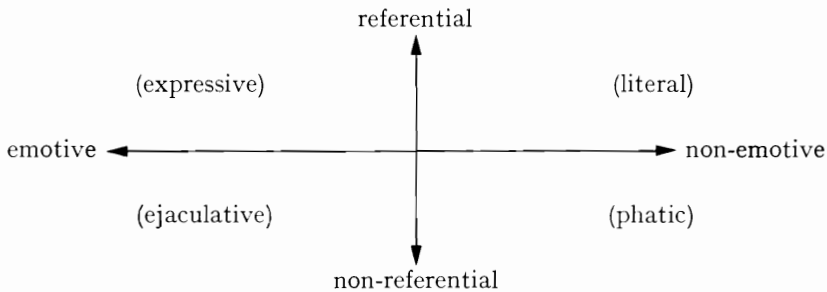
(1) Roman JAKOBSON, Closing statement: linguistics and poetics, in *Style in Language*, ed. T. A. SEBEOK, Cambridge (M.I.T. Press) 1960, pp. 350-449 [pp. 353-8].

messages serve to test the operation or existence of the speech channel, and include such otherwise meaningless expressions as 'are you listening?', 'good morning', etc. METALINGUAL discourse is that directed at the code, or language, and arises, for example, when asked to paraphrase or explain the meaning of something one has said. Finally, the almost catchall category of POETIC language places the greatest emphasis on the form of the message.

Trying to fit the usage of Spanish *carajo* among the categories isolated by JAKOBSON leads to several possibilities; on the one hand, all such instances are clearly emotive, while a great number are also notably conative. Many, if not all, of the expressions using *carajo* seem to be poetic in function, given the existing variation among the patterns; certainly, the diachronic development of *carajo* must be viewed on the poetic dimension. JAKOBSON's formulation, while providing a maximum expansion of the speech act, leaves somewhat unclear the relationship between referentiality and the other facets of discourse, and does not delineate which, if any, of the categories or components (since virtually no discourse consists solely of one component) are mutually exclusive or incompatible. To view these questions from a slightly different angle, we turn to the greatly simplified, but nonetheless illustrative treatment by Philip WHEELWRIGHT (1), who defines a SYMBOL as follows:

What [all symbols] have in common is the property of *being more in intention than they are in existence*. In the words of an older vocabulary, it is ideally self-transcendent (p. 19). ... a "symbol" is not just anything that has meaning, it is that which carries a hidden or less obvious or more transcendent meaning in addition to the surface one (p. 24).

These considerations give rise to a four-way partitioning of all discourse, along the axes of referentiality and emotivity (pp. 48f.):



(1) Philip WHEELWRIGHT, *The Burning Fountain: a Study in the Language of Symbolism*, Bloomington (Indiana University Press) 1954.

Ejaculative utterances are those which are at once emotive and non-referential; to this category belongs the use of *carajo* as interjection. Phatic discourse, being non-referential and non-emotive, includes such meaningless expressions as noted by JAKOBSON. Literal discourse, and its ideally perfected form, logical discourse, are referential and non-emotive, accounting for most conversational language, and expository and didactic styles. Finally, we come to expressive discourse, the most difficult to categorize. The emotivity of expressive speech arises, in the words of WHEELWRIGHT, 'not by incidental conjunction as in crying "fire!" but in the more organic sense that the referential function, the proper meaning, takes at least some of its essential character from the emotivity of the language, and changes therefore as the emotivity changes'. POETIC DISCOURSE is 'a species of expressive discourse, in which the main part of the meaning is controlled by the poet's art rather than by social custom and fortuitous association'. WHEELWRIGHT's characterization of symbols and his four-way division of linguistic discourse are far from universally acceptable, but they do offer an interesting basis for comparison in our study of Spanish *carajo*. By WHEELWRIGHT's definition, *carajo* is clearly a symbol, since it transcends itself in the sphere of connotation. Expressions involving *carajo* may also be unequivocally placed on the plane of emotivity, for such is the essential characteristic of this word. However, except for the clearly ejaculative use of *carajo* as interjection, the question of its referentiality still remains. The road of argument bifurcates at this juncture: either all expressions involving *carajo* are to be classified as purely ejaculative, or some of these utterances may be characterized as expressive; that is, referential. The second alternative seems to offer some plausible ground for substantiation. The most obvious fact supporting the referential analysis of *carajo* is the fact that, syntactically speaking, it behaves as an ordinary noun, albeit with rather limited co-occurrence possibilities. Moreover, the possibility of modifying *carajo* by the articles *el*, *un*, and other numerals seems to impute a certain existence to this mysterious noun, since the use of these modifiers ordinarily presupposes the existence of the modified word.

If one accepts the referential status of *carajo*, it seems certain that several distinct lexical representations will have to be considered, since a variety of paraphrases are required to account for all the expressions in question. This is in effect the analysis accepted by GOUET (1), for the idiomatic uses of modern French *foutre*, for he proposes a series of lexically distinct occurrences of *foutre* to account for the various non-commut-

(1) Michel GOUET, Lexical problems raised by some of the "foutre" constructions, in *Studies out in Left Field; Essays Presented to James Mc Cawley*, Edmonton (Linguistic Enterprises) 1971, pp. 79-85.

able frames in which this word occurs. The analysis in French is aided by the fact that, except in a few unitary expressions like *foutre le camp*, each idiomatic occurrence of the verb *foutre* may be put into a one-to-one correspondence with another verb, such as *faire*, *se moquer de*, etc. In Spanish, however, most instances of *carajo* may not be replaced by another meaningful word; rather, the entire expression or phrase must be replaced. Thus, right from the outset, a difficulty presents itself with regard to the referential interpretation of *carajo*. In a few cases, *carajo* may be replaced by *nada* 'nothing' and a reasonably accurate, although non-emotive, paraphrase results. In the remaining cases, there appears to be no feasible way of uniquely replacing *carajo* by another word in the same syntactic frame and still retaining the basic meaning of the phrase.

A possible escape from this dilemma has been offered by Wallace CHAFE (1), in the guise of POSTSEMANTIC PROCESSES. In essence, what CHAFE suggests is that, at the underlying semantic level, idiomatic expressions are stored as indivisible units, and that postsemantic rules give these semantic units a phonetic shape by identifying them with sequences of basic, non-idiomatic words of the language. Thus, for example, the Spanish expression *estirar la pata* lit. 'to stretch out one's paws' fig. 'to die' (cf. English *kick the bucket*) would be semantically represented as the unitary //estirar la pata//, which, *per se*, would correspond to no surface phonetic representation. Later 'literalization rules' would identify this semantic configuration with the non-idiomatic words *estirar* and *la pata*, giving rise to the surface representation. The existence of the two levels, the idiomatic level and the literal level, is suggested by the fact that such idiomatic expressions may not normally undergo the full gamut of syntactic transformations associated with non-idiomatic strings. Thus, for example, the phrase *Juan estiró la pata* 'Juan died' may not be passivized to *\*la pata fue estirado por Juan* and retain its idiomatic force; rather, the entire verbal expression *estirar la pata* behaves as a unitary verb, i.e. *morir* 'to die'.

In the case of Spanish *carajo*, it is not clear that CHAFE's proposal may be put to work, since in the dialects under consideration, there is no 'literal' interpretation for *carajo*; thus, it is hard to imagine exactly what the output of the 'literalization rules' would be. One could perhaps save the day by positing a dummy surface element CARAJO, and requiring that all idiomatic expressions involving this word be 'literalized' to this intrinsically meaningless form. Introducing a dummy element into an analysis solely to facilitate the operation of otherwise unworkable rules, however, is an *ad hoc* measure which cannot be justified on independent grounds. On the other hand, if one assumed that the surface

(1) Wallace CHAFE, *Meaning and the Structure of Language*, Chicago (Univ. of Chicago Press) 1970, Chap. 5.



element *carajo* still contained its original etymological meaning, a form of semantic 'absolute neutralization' would result, again yielding a methodologically undesirable analysis. Elsewhere in his monograph (pp. 48-9), CHAFE himself discusses examples where idiomatic expressions have no semantic, but only postsemantic, representations, but feels that such forms pose no problems for his analysis of postsemantic processes. If, however, this is in fact true, then in the case of such idioms as *carajo*, the 'literalization rules' are nothing but identity transformations, and one has in fact returned the whole expression to the lexicon, thus leaving unsolved the problem of lexical representation.

It is beyond the scope of this brief study to do justice to all competing alternatives for the analysis of *carajo*. Rather than belaboring the issue of the adequacy of various semantic theories, it will be suggested that *carajo* is in fact non-referential in ALL its occurrences, and thus purely emotive in content. While it is probably impossible to definitively establish this claim, one may at least hope to demonstrate the plausibility of such an approach; this, then, will be the modest goal of the remaining paragraphs.

6. The fact that an idiomatic expression can be modified by articles and other words which normally presuppose existence is in itself of little consequence; consider the English expression *I don't give a damn*. Here *damn*, which carries no semantic content, is modified by the indefinite article *a*. Further modifiers may be added almost *ad libitum* although some are more common than others: *a tinker's damn*, *a royal damn*, *a holy damn*, *a (rip-) roaring damn*, and so forth. An interesting parallel is found in the novel *Manhattan Transfer* by John Dos Passos, where the character Phineas P. Blackhead has expanded the common, if somewhat dated, interjection *by Jingo* to *by the living Jingo*, and once even to *by the living almighty Jingo* (1). Similar examples are produced by most English speakers at moments of intense emotion. While idiomatic structures are generally fixed, it is frequently possible to insert additional modifiers at specified points in the expression, thus allowing a measure of personal initiative.

For all Spanish speakers, the various expressions making use of *carajo* are felt to be united not only by the common word, but by emotional considerations as well. While it might be feasible to establish a set of lexically distinct, although related, representations for the surface *carajo*, the most desirable solution would be one which started from a single underlying representation. I would like to propose, therefore, that *carajo* be introduced directly into the underlying representations of the expressions under consideration; not, however, as a lexical item, but in

(1) I have also heard *for the Pete's sake* instead of the normal *for Pete's sake*. Cf. also Joyce's *kiss my royal Irish ass* in *Ulysses*.

some fashion, as a lexico-semantic formative, which is later converted to surface *carajo* by means of a general interpretive rule or transformation. Rather than rigorously prove this assertion, which is probably impossible given the currently available data, certain examples will be adduced which suggest that the optimal representation for *carajo* lies in the lexico-semantic structure itself.

Consider, as an example, the following two sentences, which in terms of surface syntax, exhibit identical structures:

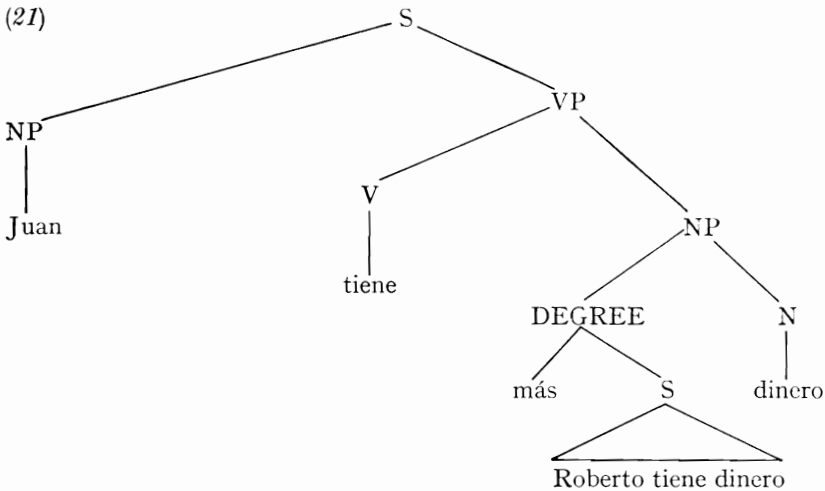
(18) Juan tiene más dinero que Roberto  
'John has more money than Robert'

(19) Juan tiene más dinero que el carajo.

Sentence (18) is composed of the two sentences

(20) a. Juan tiene dinero  
b. Roberto tiene dinero

and has an underlying structure something like (21):



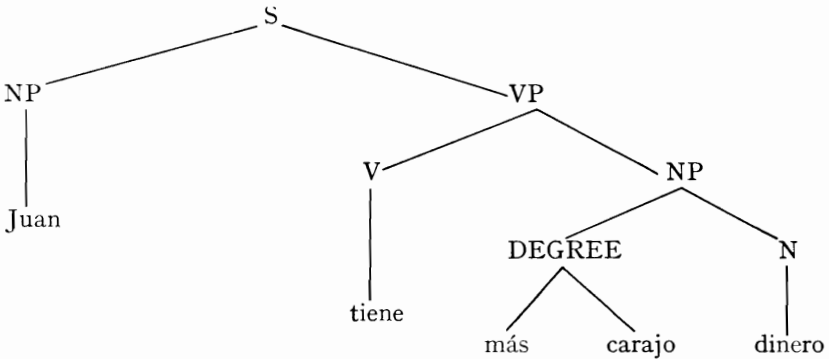
However, sentence (19) cannot be assigned a deep structure similar to that in (21), since the following strings are unacceptable:

(22) a. \*El carajo tiene dinero.  
b. \*El carajo tiene más dinero que Juan.

(1) I have based my deep structure analysis on the following works, and the references contained therein: Austin HALE, Conditions on English comparative clause pairings, in *Readings in English Transformational Grammar*, ed. R. A. JACOBS and P. S. ROSENBAUM, Waltham, Mass. (Ginn & Co.) 1970, pp. 30-55; Rodney HUDDLESTON, *The Sentence in Written English*, Cambridge (Univ. Press) 1971, Chap. 6.

The examples in (22) clearly show that (19) is not derived through the deletion of an underlying phrase like (22a). The phrase *más que el carajo* cannot be taken as an ellipsis, but must be regarded as an integral entity. Therefore, these facts suggest that the underlying structure of (19) be very roughly analyzed as:

(23)



Similarly, consider a sentence like

(24) Me importa un carajo.

In view of the ungrammaticality of the 'normal' order

(25) \*Un carajo me importa

it is clear that *carajo* is not the subject of (24). This is further illustrated by replacing *un carajo* by a 'plural' variant such as *dos carajos*, *tres pepinos*, etc., in which cases the verb invariably remains singular. In fact, in the absence of an explicitly indicated subject, the grammatical subject of (24) is the pro-form which may be denoted as ELLO (1), and which is obligatorily deleted from the surface structure. On the other hand, *carajo* cannot be the direct object of (24), due to the impossibility of other nouns' occurring in this frame (other than such nonsense forms as *un comino*) and to the fact that (24) may not be passivized (26), clefted (27), etc. (2).

(26) a. \*Un carajo me es importado.

b. \*Se me importa un carajo.

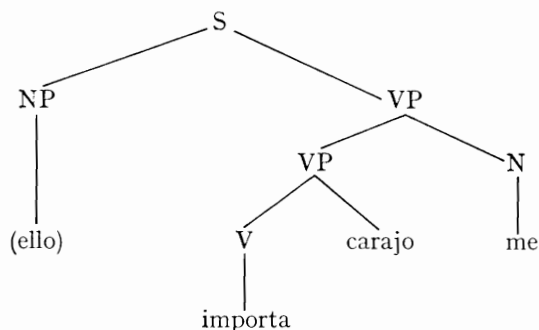
(27) \*Lo que me importa es un carajo.

(1) For a study of this pro-form, see Carlos P. OTERO, *El otro lo*, in the *Proceedings of the 12th International Congress of Romance Linguistics and Philology*, Bucharest 1970, pp. 649-59.

(2) The sentence *se me da el carajo* is not a passivized form of (24) or anything like it, but appears to be an unanalyzable idiom.

*Importar* is an inherently intransitive verb which takes only an indirect object, like *interesar*, *gustar*, *parecer*, *placer*, *constar*, etc. In fact, the only additional modifiers which may be adjoined to (24) are adverbs such as *mucho* 'much'; consequently, we may assume that *un carajo* plays the rôle of a verbal modifier, giving very roughly the following structure:

(28)



A similar analysis seems to hold for *carajo* in prepositional phrases, such as in examples (10)-(12) and in interrogative phrases such as (1), and (2), where the formative *carajo* may be subjoined to the interrogative marker. In fact, the only remaining type-form which cannot be accounted for by postulating a logico-semantic formative of the sort suggested above is the class of expressions of the form *qué — ni qué carajo*, which imply a negation or rejection of the word fitted into the blank. I have no idea of the deep structure of this highly idiomatic expression, but in its most rudimentary logical form, it seems that the representation is something like

(29)  $\sim (X \vee Y)$ 

read not (X or Y), where X is the word being negated and Y is the class comprised of *carajo*, *coño*, *puñeta*, etc., which, by De Morgan's laws, yields

(30)  $\sim X \ \& \ \sim Y$ 

The precise nature of the transformations required to produce the correct surface structure remains one of the unsolved problems of semantic theory.

7. Clearly, the examples presented above are no substitute for a detailed analysis, which is, however, beyond the scope of this brief study. The purpose of the present work has been to trace the semiotic development of *carajo* and to hint at its functions in modern Spanish. The

conclusions which tentatively emerge from the preceding discussion may be summed up as follows. First, in the dialects under consideration, *carajo* has no lexical value, but purely symbolic potential. Second, that the various expressions involving *carajo* are, on some plane of representation, united in the minds of Spanish speakers, and should consequently be fitted into a unified description. Finally, that *carajo* appears to find its most feasible representation as a logico-semantic formative in the deep structure. None of these assertions has been proved; and it is not certain whether they ever will be, due to their metatheoretical nature. In particular, the precise point at which a logico-semantic formative should be inserted into the deep structure remains a matter of considerable conjecture. In the preceding paragraphs, a rudimentary suggestion was offered as to how this might be effected, but other alternatives well worth exploring also suggest themselves. It may be possible to introduce *carajo* as a constituent of the entire sentence, like negation or interrogation, rather than as a modifier of a particular substructure. Alternatively, one might wish to insert instances of *carajo* by means of surface or intermediate interpretive rules. Whatever the eventual solution, it will have to account for the data which have been reported above, in a manner consistent with the other facts of the Spanish language. There seems to be, at least in Spanish, a qualitative difference between colloquial expressions of the sort which have been discussed and more usual non-emotive discourse, and this difference will have to be accounted for by any adequate grammar.

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