

THE RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF THE NOVELS  
OF JOSÉ MARÍA GIRONELLA

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THE RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF THE NOVELS  
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

José María Gironella, the most widely read author in Spain today, was born in 1917 in the town of Darnius, in the Catalanian province of Gerona.<sup>1</sup> His family later moved to the coastal village of San Felix de Guixols, and finally to the provincial capital, Gerona. In Gerona Gironella attended the seminary and worked in a bank, where he was exposed to the most diverse influences and points of view. The author states, speaking of the Gerona of his youth:

Había residido seis años en San Felix de Guixols, pueblo del litoral, y luego me había instalado en un microcosmos, en Gerona, capital de la provincia, adonde confluían, como tartanas en día de mercado, todas las pasiones y todas las banderas. Por si fuera poco, en el seno de mi propia familia se daban cita las tendencias más opuestas, desde el anarquismo activo hasta el éxtasis en el momento de comulgar.<sup>2</sup>

Gironella had been working in a bank in Gerona prior to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, which took place on July 18, 1936. In December of the same year, he fled from Catalonia and crossed the French border; subsequently he recrossed the border into Nationalist Spain at the border

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<sup>1</sup>Richard E. Chandler and Kessel Schwartz, A New History of Spanish Literature (Baton Rouge, 1961), p. 252.

<sup>2</sup>José María Gironella, Todos somos fugitivos (Barcelona, 1961), p. 304.

town of Irún, and joined a company of ski-troops entrusted with guarding mountain passes. The author describes his state of mind at the time in the following words:

El impacto que me habían ocasionado el estallido del Alzamiento en Gerona, el traspaso de la normalidad a la sangre, la transformación del rostro de las gentes, el abrazo de despedida a la familia, me habían convertido en una extraña mezcla de idealismo y de escéptico, de niño tocado de senectud. Cantaba con fervor determinados himnos y me sentía presto al sacrificio máximo, a dar la vida. ¡Qué extrañeza! Porque yo tenía fe religiosa, pero nunca había pertenecido a ningún partido político. No había sido falangista, ni requeté, ni había empuñado jamás un arma. Por otra parte, era más bien cobarde y la palabra España despertaba en mi interior resonancias dispares.<sup>3</sup>

Gironella relates how, in December of 1937, he thought about writing for the first time. As his unit was guarding a certain mountain pass on the border between Spain and France, a group of French skiers approached and engaged the Nationalist soldiers in conversation. An attractive young French girl from Paris, who had never experienced war, asked: "¿No les parece una idiotez andar pegándose tiros entre hermanos?"<sup>4</sup> The then twenty year old Gironella became obsessed with the question and determined to write a novel which would attempt to explain to the world the complex situation which existed in Spain.

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 299-300.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 303.

As the idea of writing a novel concerning the Spanish Civil War further developed in Gironella's mind, he decided to write not only one novel, but rather three, which would answer the questions por qué, cómo, and para qué; he would write a trilogy, with one novel devoted to the pre-war period, another to the war itself, and a third to the fate of the Spanish people in the years following the conflict.<sup>5</sup>

Upon the conclusion of the war, in 1939, Gironella returned to Gerona where he engaged in various undertakings and more or less forgot his plan to write a trilogy. After the end of the Second World War he decided on marriage, after a courtship of six years. His wife encouraged him to begin to write without further delay, and Gironella wrote his first novel, Un hombre.<sup>6</sup> This work, which won for its author the Premio Nadal of 1946, was widely acclaimed in literary circles, although it did not attain popularity with the Spanish reading public.<sup>7</sup> Gironella considers Un hombre to be a novel in the style of Pió Baroja.<sup>8</sup>

Encouraged by the success of Un hombre, Gironella decided to begin his long-planned trilogy, but only after

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 306.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 309.

<sup>7</sup>Juan Luis Alborg, Hora actual de la novela española (Madrid, 1958), p. 135.

<sup>8</sup>Gironella, op. cit., p. 309.

trying his hand at a second novel, which deals with Nazi Germany during the Second World War. This second novel, entitled La Marea, was intended by Gironella to provide a transition between Un hombre and the trilogy.

Puesto que mi trilogía española debería apoyarse sobre hechos históricos, antes de enfrentarme con ella debía realizar un experimento previo, tomando como base, por ejemplo, la odisea bélica alemana, tan reciente y tan significativa. "Es preciso fundir los hechos históricos con los elementos de ficción, fundirlos de tal modo que constituyan una unidad perfecta, natural." El experimento me daría oficio y noticias fidedignas en cuanto a la enigmática orientación de mi temperamento de escritor.<sup>9</sup>

La marea was published in 1948, and immediately afterwards Gironella sold his book store in Gerona and left with his wife for Paris, where he lived for the next four years. In France he wrote his monumental novel, Los cipreses creen en Dios, the first part of the Civil War trilogy.

After having obtained a publisher for his novel in France, Gironella returned to Spain and began to search for a Spanish publisher, at first unsuccessfully. Publishers in Spain were reluctant to become involved with a novel which dealt with the Phalange, anarchism, and communism, and the other controversial aspects of the Spanish Civil War. Los cipreses creen en Dios was finally accepted by Editorial Planeta of

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 310-311.

Barcelona, and Gironella began compiling notes for the second part of the trilogy, Un millón de muertos.<sup>10</sup>

Los cipreses creen en Dios had described the conditions in Spain during the years of the Republic, leading up to the outbreak of the Civil War in 1936; Un millón de muertos was to deal with the events of the Civil War itself, beginning with the military revolt in July of 1936 and continuing until the collapse of the Popular Front in 1939. Gironella, therefore, made a trip through Spain, in order to study the various areas and to familiarize himself with the scenes of the most important battles which had taken place during the war. The beginning of the actual writing was delayed for nearly two years, however, due to a sudden and unexpected illness which befell Gironella. He suffered an attack of vertigo after receiving communion at midnight mass on Christmas of 1952. This was to be the beginning of years of suffering from vertigo, depression, and amnesia.<sup>11</sup>

Gironella went to Madrid early in 1953, hoping to recover quickly from his illness. After some time spent there he went to Rome, where he planned to write Un millón de muertos, as he had written Los cipreses creen en Dios in

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 320.

<sup>11</sup>José María Gironella, Los Fantasmas de mi cerebro (Barcelona, 1959), p. 86.



Paris. His state of health did not improve, however, and he went to Majorca, accompanied, as always, by his wife. There he finally began the actual writing of Un millón de muertos, in October, 1954, after two years of research and note-taking, in addition to interviews made in Italy with Italians who had fought on both sides of the Spanish Civil War.<sup>12</sup>

This period in the life of José María Gironella was the most difficult which he had ever experienced. His attacks of vertigo led to severe mental depression and forced him to seek treatment from a psychiatrist. The author felt that he was going to die. At times he did not have the desire to continue with Un millón de muertos, and spent his time writing short stories, later to return to work on the novel. Gironella then became a victim of amnesia, apparently as a result of shock-treatments which he had taken, and this malady caused him to forget virtually everything not connected with the Civil War:

La amnesia que me provocaban los tratamientos afectaba a todos los temas, excepto el de nuestra guerra. A veces no me acordaba del nombre de un amigo, pero hubiera podido señalar con toda certeza el nombre del general que se encargó de la defensa de Bilbao o la fecha exacta en que se marchó al frente el batallón "Los chacales del progreso."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>José María Gironella, Todos somos fugitivos (Barcelona, 1961), p. 304.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 326.

After undergoing extensive treatment on the isle of Majorca, his attacks of depression seemed to lessen and Gironella went to Finland, where he planned to make another attempt at writing Un millón de muertos.

En route he visited Germany, where he interviewed Germans who had taken part in the Civil War and where he received additional treatment in a clinic at Bonn.

In Finland, Gironella began the book again, making slow progress, and returned to Majorca, where, in 1958, after six years of intermittent work combined with bouts of mental illness, he completed Un millón de muertos, only to decide that it was unworthy and begin work on the novel for the third time. Gironella chose Switzerland as the scene of this third writing.<sup>14</sup>

By this time, 1958, the first part of the trilogy, Los cipreses creen en Dios, had become a best-seller, not only in Spain and France, but also in the United States, and had drawn world-wide attention to Gironella. Alborg, writing in 1958, states:

Quiere decirse que con su premio y todo, y aun después de su segunda novela La marea, Gironella no llevaba camino de imponerse como novelista de resonancia hasta la publicación de Los cipreses creen en Dios. Gracias a este libro, sin embargo, Gironella ha logrado el milagro no sólo de convertirse en nuestro novelista más leído en España y fuera de ella, sino de conseguir un ingreso

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 335.

"record"---dentro de nuestra bolsa literaria--- que le permite entregarse con el mayor reposo a la prosecución de su tarea.<sup>15</sup>

While working on Un millón de muertos in Zurich, Gironella frequently felt tempted to commit suicide. To combat this inclination he would go to a neighborhood church and pray for strength. His condition was such that he gave up work on the novel again and began to compile a book entitled Los fantasmas de mi cerebro, which contains the Muerte y juicio de Giovanni Papini, cuento fantástico, an account of Giovanni Papini's death and subsequent encounter with Christ, a description of the writer's own illness, and a selection of essays on various subjects.<sup>16</sup>

Gironella returned to Spain and at last, in 1958, his spells of depression ceased and he felt that his strength had returned. He resumed work on Un millón de muertos, feeling that he was once again the same man who had written Los cipreses creen en Dios. He continued working until the book was finally completed, in the summer of 1960, after eight long years of doubt and suffering. Gironella speaks of the conclusion of his novel as follows:

Al poner "fin" abracé a mi mujer, como lo hice en París al terminar Los cipreses creen en Dios. Ella había sido mi sostén y mi guía. Un millón de muertos fue posible porque tuve a mi lado, sin desfallecer

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<sup>15</sup>Alborg, op. cit., p. 135.

<sup>16</sup>José María Gironella, Todos somos fugitivos (Barcelona, 1961), p. 336.

un segundo, la criatura viva que mi mujer es. Y porque el recuerdo de mi madre, estampa real de Carmen Elgazu, que sigue en Gerona, en la calle de la Rutlla, rezando credos para pasar por agua los huevos, me alentó.<sup>17</sup>

Late in 1958 Los fantasmas de mi cerebro was published, followed a few months later by a book entitled Todos somos fugitivos, which Gironella had also written during his illness. This volume is a combination of short stories and essays. The subjects dealt with are most diverse. They include a fantastic story in which a woman gives birth to a seventy-five year old man, an essay analyzing the communist regime of Fidel Castro in Cuba and describing the author's trip to the island, and an essay concerning Un millón de muertos, in which he discusses the problems and difficulties which confronted Gironella in writing it. This last essay contains much biographical information about the author.

The next book by Gironella to appear, called Mujer, levántate y anda, is a symbolic novel in which Christ and Satan struggle to gain the soul of the protagonist, Myriam. Christ is represented in the person of a psychiatrist and Satan is portrayed as a space physicist. This last work appeared in December of 1962.

In addition to the books described above, Gironella has written an immense number of essays and articles,

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 339.

hundreds of which have been published in the Diario de Barcelona, and in various magazines. One of the longest articles, which is actually a brief biography of Mao Tse Tung and a history of the Communist Party in China, has appeared in book form in the United States. The English translation, containing also the essay on Cuba, is entitled On China and Cuba.

Since Gironella first left Spain in 1948, he has traveled extensively in many countries. In 1961 he went to New York where he stayed for several weeks, visited the United Nations, and met with the then Ambassador of the United States to the United Nations, the late Adlai Stevenson. Gironella apparently considers his meeting with Stevenson to have been unpleasant, for he writes: "Pensaba en la primera, insolente pregunta que me hizo Stevenson, en el Waldorf Astoria: '¿En la guerra de España, en qué lado luchó usted?'"<sup>18</sup> Gironella went from New York to Cuba and also visited Mexico briefly.

Gironella has often stated that his efforts as a novelist would have failed had it not been for the influence and encouragement of his wife. He has also expressed a debt of gratitude to the French translator and classicist, Jean Chuzeville, who aided him with Los cipreses crecen en Dios.

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 296.

Soon after having moved to Paris, Gironella became acquainted with Chuzeville, who advised him to read all the great novels pertaining to war before undertaking his Civil War trilogy.

Me faltaba un apoyo intelectual; alguien, cerca de mí, que tuviera experiencia y el poder de vacunarme contra errores graves desde el punto de vista artístico. El azar trajo a mi casa a la persona idónea, el polo opuesto a los bohemios del Barrio Latino. Un hombre de unos sesenta años, soltero, políglota, viajero incansable, de formación clásica. Un traductor llamado Jean Chuzeville, que había vertido al francés a los príncipes de las literaturas rusa, alemana e italiana. Nuestro amigo estaba familiarizado con el talento de cada uno de ellos, y también con deficiencias, repeticiones y trucos. Impuesto de mi sed de aprender, día tras día, sentado a nuestra mesa, me aleccionaba, con textos en la mano, sobre el arte de novelar. Convenciómeme de la gravitación del idioma sobre quien lo maneja y de la necesidad telúrica de permanecer fiel al país de origen. Me aclaró las diferencias existentes entre intriga y situación, entre acción y movimiento, entre persona y personaje. Me inmunizó contra el esteticismo, que era preciso anegar con sangre y vida. Había traducido a nuestros escritores del Siglo de Oro. Admiraba en grado sumo a Santa Teresa y a San Juan de la Cruz. Consideraba que Galdós y Baroja eran dos novelistas natos, que habían malgastado su grandeza por falta de organización. Los llamaba talentos desorganizados, entendiéndolo por ello, entre otras cosas, el elegir sin convicción los temas, el escribir con prisa, torrencialmente, y el adoptar posturas exclusivamente irónicas frente a las ideas que no compartieran o frente a las instituciones que no amaran. "Para comprender hay que esforzarse en comprender."<sup>19</sup>

Gironella refers to Chuzeville as the "arquetipo del humanista francés."<sup>20</sup> He attributes to him "la gran parte

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 314.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 315.

de cuanto pueda haber de diáfano y seguro en mi manera de escribir."<sup>21</sup> The author seems to feel that he could not have written Los cipreses creen en Dios without the assistance of Chuzeville.

Gironella has also been influenced greatly by the Italian author, Giovanni Papini, the author of a famous Italian version of the life of Christ. Numerous references to Papini can be found in the writings of Gironella. The author has gone so far as to say that Papini's version of the life of Christ has impressed him more than the Gospel accounts themselves.<sup>22</sup>

Gironella is currently living in Barcelona with his wife. He has written extensively for the Diario de Barcelona, a newspaper with Monarchist backing, and has been preparing the third part of the Civil War trilogy, which is to deal with Spain and the Spanish people during the years from the end of the Civil War up to the present.

All contemporary Spanish novelists have been influenced to a greater or lesser extent by the Spanish Civil War and the subsequent right-wing regime of Francisco Franco. This is certainly true of Gironella, whose decision to become a novelist, as has been noted above, was motivated by his desire to write an impartial novelistic account of what transpired in Spain prior to and during the Civil War. This ambition

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<sup>22</sup>José María Gironella, Los fantasmas de mi cerebro (Barcelona, 1959), p. 37.

of the author was realized with the publication of Los cipreses creen en Dios and Un millón de muertos. It would therefore seem appropriate at this point to discuss briefly the Civil War and its causes.

The fall of the Monarchy and the establishment of the Republic in Spain in 1931 marked the beginning of a struggle for control of the country by two factions with violently opposing viewpoints. Variouslly described during the years before and during the Civil War as liberals and conservatives, left- and right-wingers, Loyalists and Nationalists, Reds and Fascists, the two groups from the very start showed no desire to work out effective compromises, but rather set out on a collision course bound to lead to disaster. The left-wing, which came to be known as the Popular Front, received the support of the Republicans, Socialists, Anarchists, Communists, Free-masons, Trotskyites, and Basque separatists. The right-wing consisted of the Monarchists, Phalangists, members of the CEDA (a party of Christian Democrats), the majority of the officers of the Spanish Army, and nearly all of the Catholic clergy. As the Civil War progressed, power struggles took place within both factions, with the Communists and Phalangists working to achieve control of their respective sides and eventually of Spain itself. Foreign powers came to the assistance of both factions. The left-wing Loyalists received aid from Soviet Russia, while the right-wing Nationalists obtained support from Germany and Italy. Thousands



of foreign troops fought on Spanish soil. Members of the International Brigades, organized largely through the efforts of the world-wide Communist Party, fought with the Popular Front, and Moorish mercenaries fought with Franco from the very beginning of the war. Italian troops were sent by Mussolini to aid Franco, and Hitler's regime in Germany sent a large number of "advisers."

Fighting during the three years of war was vicious, resulting in approximately one half million fatalities. Atrocities were repeatedly committed by both sides. There was scarcely a Spaniard who did not have a close relative or friend killed in the war. The victory of the Nationalist faction of Franco, and the resulting restrictions on the freedom of the press, were bound to have a profound effect upon subsequent literary efforts.

The development of the literary school called tremendismo is an example of the manner in which some novelists have reacted to the tragedy of the Civil War, with its atrocities and bloodshed. One description of tremendismo says that it "relies for some of its effect on an accumulation of horrible and often bloody deeds. It differs from Naturalism in its insistence on environmental factors as well as in its existential overtones."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Chandler and Schwartz, op. cit., p. 257.

Gironella's novels may be considered as providing an answer to the philosophy of tremendismo. It has been suggested that Gironella and his writings are but one example of a current resurgence of Catholic literary activity in Spain.<sup>24</sup> If tremendismo be described as summing up "an age where faith in absolute values has given way to a search for one's own authenticity in the face of nothingness,"<sup>25</sup> then Gironella's outlook would indeed seem to be opposed to that of the tremendistas, for he maintains, speaking of his novel Un millón de muertos, that:

mi propósito era que una única postura personal quedase clara en el libro: que yo era cristiano, que creía que Cristo era Dios y que, como tal, predicó, cerca de un lago, una doctrina eterna.<sup>26</sup>

It will be the purpose of this thesis to comment upon the five novels by Gironella published to date, with special consideration given to the religious aspects which are found in them. Gironella's attitude toward the Catholic Church and its representatives will also be examined, particularly in regard to the role which the Church and its priests played in the Civil War.

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<sup>24</sup>Lawrence H. Klibe, "Where the Soil Was Shallow," Catholic World, CLXXXVIII (February, 1959), 402.

<sup>25</sup>Chandler and Schwartz, op. cit., p. 261.

<sup>26</sup>José María Gironella, Todos somos fugitivos (Barcelona, 1961), p. 335.

## CHAPTER II

### UN HOMBRE

José María Gironella was awarded the coveted Premio Nadal for his first novel, Un hombre, in 1946. The book, despite the acclaim it won Gironella in literary circles, failed to achieve popularity with the Spanish reading public.

Un hombre is the story of an individual, Miguel Serra. The novel begins when the protagonist is a five-year old boy and continues until he reaches thirty-three years of age. At this point the novel is abruptly ended.

Miguel Serra's father, a Spanish musician who had moved to Paris, dies when the boy is only five years old. Miguel's mother, Eva, a Frenchwoman from a wealthy background, decides to make a home for herself and her son on a country estate in Brittany. When Miguel reaches ten years of age, he is taken by his mother on a visit to Spain. Eva feels that Miguel needs some religious influence, and has him enrolled in a boarding school conducted by Capuchin priests. She then returns to France, where she opens an art shop in Paris, unencumbered by the presence of her son.

In the boarding school Miguel acquires an unquestioning belief in the teachings of the Church. After the completion of his fourth year in the school, he receives a letter from

his mother, permitting him to transfer to another school for the final year of study needed for the bachillerato. Miguel acts upon his mother's suggestion and transfers to a school in the town of San Sebastián, where he lives with a certain señor Gurrea, a friend of his mother.

When Miguel completes the bachillerato, Eva joins him to celebrate the event. They visit the town of Darnius, where Miguel's father was born and where he had spent most of his life. They do not, however, visit the members of the Serra family, since there had been ill feeling between Miguel's father and the remaining members of the family. Miguel finds Darnius to be drab and uninteresting.

Miguel surprises Eva when he informs her of his decision to become a priest in the Jesuit order. She is unhappy with his plan, but does not attempt to prevent him from entering a seminary. Miguel, accordingly, enters a Jesuit novitiate in Belgium.

The novice subjects himself willingly to the rigid discipline of his new way of life. He prays fervently, studies diligently, and attempts to overcome the feelings of antipathy which he has toward the Father Director. He falls, nevertheless, into a violation of discipline. He speaks to a group of gypsies during an excursion in the countryside, which takes place upon the occasion of the Father Director's birthday. For this infraction of the rule he receives a reprimand and is

subjected to a public penance: he must observe silence during the remainder of the semester. In addition, he is ordered to come each evening for thirty days to the office of the Father Director, bow his head before him and say: "La vocacion puede perderse por la indisciplina."<sup>1</sup> Miguel at first humbly accepts the penances which have been imposed upon him. As the days pass, however, feelings of resentment begin to take hold of the boy.

Al muchacho le iba entrando como un sordo rencor. Todos los días, después del rosario, subía las Escaleras y llamaba a la puerta del Director. Este le abría; el novicio entraba y bajando la cabeza recitaba: "La vocación puede perderse por la indisciplina."

Llevaba veinticinco días repitiendo la misma fórmula. Veintiséis, veintisiete. Tres días más y habría cumplido la condena.

Entonces ocurrió un incidente inesperado, que le recordó una frase que varias veces había oído en boca de su madre: "Hay brujas que se cuelan de rondón en los libros." Al abrir el libro de latín se encontró con un papel escrito que decía: "La vocación puede perderse por la indisciplina: y en el margen se veía, torpemente dibujado, un novicio sin cabeza.

Miguel se mordió el labio inferior y dirigió una mirada inquisitiva, muy próxima del odio, a todos sus condiscípulos; pero sus condiscípulos estudiaban, absortos en sus lecciones.

Luego, sobrevino lo imprevisible. Miguel se pasó toda la tarde en un estado de dolorosa excitación, pareciéndole que en aquella casa, en vez de silencio, había un pájaro en cada agujero que le cantaba la canción del amor propio. Por último, un maligno espíritu se adueñó de él, en virtud del cual aquella noche, antes de cenar, al encontrarse frente al Padre Director, y bajar la cabeza con más unción que nunca, en vez de "La

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<sup>1</sup>José María Gironella, Un hombre (Barcelona, 1954), p. 91.

vocación puede perderse por la indiseiplina," dijo:  
"Padre, estoy harto ya de este asunto . . . ."2

The Father Director writes to Eva, informing her of Miguel's lack of obedience and of his leaving the seminary.

Su hijo de usted es hombre destinado o bien a triunfar esplendorosamente o bien a perderse a sí mismo. Si aspirara a algo concreto, orientando sus esfuerzos, fructificarían los dones con que Dios le ha beneficiado; si no, es de temer que la vida le lleve de un lado para otro y que empiece muchas cosas sin terminar ninguna. ¿No podría usted procurar que se interesara por alguna de las bellas artes? A veces esto constituye un gran recurso para los corazones inquietos como lo es el de su hijo.<sup>3</sup>

Eva is sorry that her son has left the seminary because of disobedience. She is glad, however, that he will be reunited with her on her country estate in Ireland, where she has been living since she sold her art shop in Paris.

Miguel arrives in Ireland and begins to take English lessons from a neighbor girl named Elena. The first lessons are uneventful, but an affair soon develops between the two. The English lessons become a pretext for Miguel and Elena to be alone together.

Miguel is surprised to learn that Elena is going to marry the local doctor, a fact which is revealed to him by his mother, who has been aware of the affair between

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 92-93.

Miguel and Elena. Miguel then decides to become a student of history and enrolls as an estudiante libre at the university in Dublin.<sup>4</sup> He remains at home and goes to Dublin only to take examinations.

Miguel and Eva go on an excursion to Tipperary to celebrate Miguel's successful completion of the first university course. The excursion ends in tragedy when Eva dies accidentally while engaged in mountain climbing. Miguel attends to his mother's burial, and goes to Dublin, where he registers as a full-time student of history.

Miguel completes all the requirements for the licentiate in history, but is suspended by the university for his part in establishing a Club de los pesimistas.<sup>5</sup> He then goes to Paris where he lives a Bohemian life, drifting aimlessly with no concern about his future.

Miguel goes to Brittany to visit the area where he and his mother had lived many years before. There he rescues a young girl from a savage beating at the hands of her drunken father. He attempts to persuade the girl, named Jeannette, to return with him to Paris, but she refuses. Upon his return to Paris Miguel finally decides to go into business, and opens a book store. He has moderate success with this enterprise.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

His landlady becomes ill and dies, and Miguel remains alone in the home with the daughter of the landlady, Ivonne. The two begin to live together as man and wife. Miguel finds that the book store has come to bore him, and sells it in order to remain at home every day with Ivonne. He feels that he is experiencing real love for the first time.

A surprise meeting with Jeannette, who has come to Paris to seek him out, changes everything for Miguel. Although five years have passed since he has seen the girl, he has not forgotten her. He finds himself completely captivated by her beauty and enthusiasm for life. Miguel soon decides to abandon Ivonne, but is afraid to face her with the truth. He sends her a message, delivered by an artist friend, informing her of his decision to leave Paris.

Jeannette has been employed by a circus, and Miguel, acting on impulse, buys the circus. He hires an experienced circus worker, a Chinese, as manager, and takes with him his artist friend, Rubens, as the circus begins a tour of Europe. A triumphal tour of Germany is followed by an equal success in Vienna. Miguel thoroughly enjoys his new life. The managing of his circus, named El Sansón, gives him real satisfaction, and the nights spent with Jeannette are filled with bliss. Trouble begins, however, between Miguel and Jeannette. The Sansón performs in Budapest, and Miguel, who considers himself to be an intellectual, is pained by the



fact that Jeannette cannot read and write and by her indifference toward learning. The girl has come to realize that something is wrong with her relationship with Miguel, and begins to have long conversations with Miguel's friend, Rubens.

Rubens accuses Miguel of egotism and of leaving behind anything which has begun to bore him. He also declares that Jeannette does not really love Miguel, and is remaining with him merely for her own financial benefit.

Miguel is tormented by the possibility that Rubens is right about Jeannette. His vanity prompts him to ask Jeannette to marry him, in order to discover the truth. The girl is overjoyed and agrees to marry Miguel. He does not, however, want to commit himself to a life with the illiterate girl.

Jeannette suspects the truth, and fears that Miguel has been playing with her feelings merely to satisfy his own vanity. She goes to Rubens and demands that he tell her the truth. The artist feels obligated to confirm her suspicions. Jeannette, heartbroken, leaves hurriedly for Vienna, without seeing Miguel or even leaving him a note. When he finds out that Jeannette has left him, he feels that he has made a serious mistake, and goes to Vienna in search of the girl. Miguel's search is in vain, however, and he returns to Budapest, where disaster strikes the circus. The Chinese

manager becomes ill and dies. Miguel loses all interest in the circus, even as he had lost interest in his book store in Paris. He sells El Sansón at a ridiculously low price, pays all his employees a very liberal bonus, and decides to set out for Spain with his friend Rubens, who wishes to return to Catalonia to live with his aged mother.

The two friends arrive in Spain and go to the village of La Escala, where Ruben's mother lives. Miguel brings with him a large collection of antiques, which he has collected on the circus tours. He spends his time examining the antiques and taking sunbaths. He also thinks about going to confession, a thought which had come to him for the first time in many years in Budapest, where he had felt himself strangely attracted to the churches of the city.

Miguel makes a trip to Darnius, his father's home town, which he had visited in the company of his mother years before. Obsessed with the idea of visiting his father's brother and sister, he goes to the house which had been pointed out as the Serra home during his first visit to Darnius. There he learns that his father's brother has died. Miguel's aunt is still living, however, and he goes to the house where she and her husband are living. The aunt at first treats Miguel coolly. Her husband welcomes him, however, and Miguel spends some very pleasant days in his aunt's home.

He goes to mass with his uncle, who is a choir member in the parish church, and sits with him in the choir. Following the mass he meets many old friends and acquaintances of his father.

Miguel, yielding to the persistent questioning of his uncle, is forced to admit that he has a somewhat smaller sum of money now than he had ten years before upon the death of his mother, who had left him a considerable fortune. His uncle suggests to Miguel the possibility of smuggling contraband. The proposal does not seem objectionable to Miguel.

At this point the novel is brought quickly to its conclusion:

Miguel pasó el resto del verano en La Escala. En octubre se instaló en Barcelona, en una pensión particular de la Rambla de Cataluña. La habitación era muy lujosa, con dorados en el techo. Frente al balcón se alzaba la inmensa espalda de Clave.

Semanalmente, un hombre le llevaba a la pensión un paquete. Si era verde, él lo llevaba a su vez a un joyero; si era rojo a un óptico; si era azul, al dueño de un laboratorio farmacéutico. Cada uno de los tres le entregaba un sobre abultado.

Los días seguían lo mismo para Miguel, cambiantes y largos. El muchacho no se desviaba de su trayectoria. Las antigüedades habían sido encerradas de nuevo en las cajas---excepto la cajita de música y el reloj de arena---, y ahora coleccionaba libros.

A veces escribía a Pierre Loubard pidiéndole algún ejemplar. A veces, a Ruddy. El "Sansón" se encontraba por aquel entonces en Ucrania. A veces, a Rubens y a su madre.

Fuera y dentro de sí, a veces reía, a veces lloraba, a veces pecaba, a veces se iba a confesar.

Su patrona le decía a menudo-- Serra . . . debería usted casarse!

Miguel le contestaba afeitándose con la navaja-- ¡Que inteligente es usted, doña Margarita!-- ¡Qué inteligente es usted!

Por lo demás, vivía como un señor.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 362-363.

Gironella, writing about Un hombre, calls it "una novela de tipo barojiano."<sup>7</sup> Commenting on Baroja's style, he says that he "sacaba al ruedo uno o varios personajes y los hacía vivir y morir a la buena de Dios."<sup>8</sup> It was Gironella's objective, in writing Un hombre, to imitate Baroja and win the Premio Nadal.<sup>9</sup> He did indeed receive the Premio Nadal for his first literary effort, receiving the award in 1946.

Critics are not in complete agreement concerning the Barojian elements in Un hombre. The novel has been compared to Baroja's Zalacaín, in which Baroja "cuts off the hero's life at the high point."<sup>10</sup> Alborg, however, says, discussing Un hombre:

A propósito de esta novela creo que algunos han hablado de cierta influencia barojiana. La hay--si es que quiere encontrársela--en la construcción lineal de la novela, en el hecho de que el protagonista se nos ofrezca en una sucesión de su vida que se corta caprichosamente (porque así lo desea el autor) en plena juventud del héroe, cuando todavía podría seguirsele hasta escribir docenas de novelas. Dada su inconstancia temperamental podría continuar protagonizando los más diversos e inesperados acontecimientos, recorriendo las tierras más dispares, ocupándose--

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<sup>7</sup>José María Gironella, Todos somos fugitivos (Barcelona, 1961), p. 309.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Richard E. Chandler and Kessel Schwartz, A New History of Spanish Literature (Baton Rouge, 1961), p. 262.

como lo ha venido haciendo--en las profesiones más encontradas. Hay barojismo, si se quiere, en ese deambular un poco caprichoso, en ese aparecer y perderse de personajes--tan humano, por lo demás--y en el escéptico desarraigo del héroe frente a los hombres y las cosas.

Pero la semejanza es muy de superficie. Media un abismo entre el opaco, cauto y sosegado dibujo de Gironella y el recio trazo incompleto y silueteante, pero tremendamente eficaz, del maestro vasco. El libro de Gironella--ya lo hemos dicho--es una supervivencia incuestionable del viejo realismo, no simplemente como norma genérica de creación, sino como sistema o módulo de arte, con todas las características que van más allá de una tendencia o procedimiento y que engloban incluso hasta los rasgos y el sabor característico de un estilo de época.

Quiero decir que Un hombre no representa bajo ningún aspecto una voz nueva. Supone una realización concienzuda y trabajada, fruto de una artesana minuciosidad, más no un acento personal. Pero es una obra digna. Para Gironella pudo representar un aprendizaje en el género, su gran bautismo literario, no sólo porque le daba un lugar en la república de las letras, sino porque afilaba su pluma y la dejaba muy a punto para intentar a continuación, con todos augurios favorables, cualquier difícil empresa.<sup>11</sup>

Un hombre contains, as do the other novels by Gironella, its religious aspects. Miguel Serra's early life is profoundly affected by the instruction of the Capuchin fathers. The religious training he receives from them influences him to enter the Jesuit novitiate. His conduct at first seems to be that of an exemplary novice.

Su compostura, su atención, su inteligente respeto y su amor al estudio hacían las delicias de sus superiores. El plan de vida era muy

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<sup>11</sup>Juan Luis Alborg, Hora actual de la novela española (Madrid, 1958), pp. 138-139.

riguroso, pero el muchacho obedecía como si en sus dieciocho años no hubiese hecho otra cosa que esto, que obedecer.<sup>12</sup>

El momento más importante era el del ofrecimiento de la misa al Dios-Padre. Y luego, el de la Comunión del Dios-Hijo. Sostenía en su lengua plana la diminuta Hostia, retardando a propósito el momento de ingerirla para dar tiempo a que su boca se purificara enteramente. Por fin la absorbía, y el pensamiento de la fusión de la divinidad con su carne interior temblorosa, con sus jugos ácidos y miserables, lo paralizaba y lo reducía al miedo vivo de no ser más que un pobre hombre. Con los pulgares se tapaba los oídos, y con los ocho dedos restantes se apretaba la frente hasta sentirla zumbar.<sup>13</sup>

Miguel's act of disobedience and his subsequent feelings of resentment at the penances which have been imposed upon him cause him to leave the novitiate. These developments seem somewhat surprising in view of his earlier fervor. Miguel's action proves typical, however, in view of his later inconstancy, revealed by his jumping from one activity to another. Soon after his departure from the novitiate, Miguel abandons the practice of religion altogether. It is only after the passing of fifteen years that he feels attracted by the churches of Budapest and feels the urge to go to confession. Miguel is strangely touched by the fact that Jeannette, who has never practiced the Catholic faith, and who has a fear of confession, expresses willingness to be married in the Church and go to confession.

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<sup>12</sup>José María Gironella, Un hombre (Barcelona, 1954), p. 85.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

Los confesionarios guardaban en su obscura entraña algo eterno, puesto que incluso personas como Jeannette un día se caían a sus pies. ¿Y él? ¡Cuántos años sin confesarse! . . . ¡Cuántos circos, además del "Sansón" y del "Dolly," se habrían alzado en Budapest desde que él se confesó por última vez!<sup>14</sup>

Upon his return to Spain Miguel again feels the desire to confess his sins, and finally does go to confession. Gironella describes Miguel at the end of the novel: "Fuera y dentro de sí, a veces reía, a veces lloraba, a veces pecaba, a veces se iba a confesar."<sup>15</sup> Miguel has moved from fervent faith to complete disregard of religion; nevertheless, after many years of abandonment of religion, he feels that he must return to its practice. His attitude toward religion has been one of inconstancy and inconsistency, as has his life in general. In the depths of his being he remains a Catholic, however, and will probably always be. Miguel's years of religious non-practice do not stem from an intellectual rejection of Catholicism. They are, rather, the result of indifference and a way of life incompatible with the Catholic moral code.

A brief comment regarding the Jesuit novitiate described in Un hombre is pertinent to the purpose and scope of this study. The novitiate seems rather severe and cold. The discipline seems to be excessive. The action for which Miguel

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 317.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 323.

is reprimanded appears to be a matter of little or no import in itself. He merely speaks to some gypsies whom he meets on an excursion through the countryside with the other novices. However, speaking with outsiders is presumably a serious infraction of the discipline to which all novices are subject. The penance which Miguel receives for his violation is unusually severe: he is not permitted to speak to his fellow novices for the rest of the semester. Although the Father Director does not seem particularly vindictive in administering the penance, still the wisdom of such a punishment might well be questioned. In view of Gironella's description of seminary life, to be discussed later, a description which he makes based on first hand experience, it may well be assumed that Gironella is directing some veiled criticism toward the harshness of seminary training and religious life in general.

At this point attention should be called to the fact that Gironella has rewritten Un hombre. The second edition, that of September, 1954, is the edition summarized and commented upon here. The author's attempt at improving his novel has given rise to discussion as to the right of an author to rewrite a novel, changing it substantially, as Gironella claims to have done with Un hombre. A discussion of this issue is beyond the scope of this thesis. Gironella's viewpoint on the subject may be found in his Prólogo to the



second edition, published in Barcelona in September, 1954.  
The issue is discussed at length by Alborg in his Hora  
actual de la novela española.

## CHAPTER III

### LA MAREA

Gironella's second novel, entitled La marea, was written in 1948. The book failed to achieve popularity, to some extent at least because it portrayed German National Socialism in an unfavorable light at a time when much pro-German sentiment existed in Spain. Gironella describes La marea in the following paragraph:

Escribí esta novela en 1948, o sea un año después de haber publicado "UN HOMBRE" y un año antes de empezar "LOS CIPRESES CREEN EN DIOS." Por lo tanto, es la obrapunte, la transición. "LA MAREA" está tan alejada del alegre desenfado de "UN HOMBRE" como de la minuciosidad de "LOS CIPRESES CREEN EN DIOS." El libro fue escrito con una sinceridad a toda prueba, pues la odisea, entonces reciente, de la Alemania nazi había herido por partes iguales mi cabeza y mi corazón. Era un tema a la vez histórico, político, social y humano. ¿Que más podía desear? Intenté realizar una síntesis. Ofrecer un cuadro de la Alemania que a lo largo de cinco años--1933-1938--acumuló potencia, que en 1939 se derramó por el continente ocupándolo casi por entero--ocupación en forma de cruz--, y que de pronto vió sus miembros amputados hasta quedar minimizada en el fondo de un ataúd. El libro empieza en los meses que precedieron a la campaña de Polonia, cuando el meridiano de la fuerza pasaba por Berlín, y termina con el armisticio, cuando el oceánico llanto de millones de ojos no conseguía apagar las llamas que brotaban de todas partes.<sup>1</sup>

The protagonists of the novel are Adolfo Stolberg, a famous architect, his brother Gustavo, an alcoholic poet,

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<sup>1</sup>José María Gironella, La marea (Barcelona, 1954), p. 7.

a Nazi inspector named Von Mansfeld, and Enna Strigger, who marries Adolfo Stolberg and later leaves him for von Mansfeld. The novel describes the fate of these characters during the Second World War, and ends with the utter defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945.

Adolfo Stolberg is thirty-five years of age at the beginning of the novel. He is a renowned architect who has been favored with government contracts. He is still single and spends his vacations at a nudist colony on the Pomeranian sea coast. Adolfo feels no compassion toward his fellow men, believing that "Un hombre compasivo acaba cortándose la lengua y prodigando suspiros alrededor de las tumbas."<sup>2</sup>

Adolfo's brother, Gustavo, is an unambitious poet who supports himself by writing for magazines. He drinks to excess and keeps irregular hours. Gustavo is also unmarried and lives in a pension, together with a certain Dr. Paltz, who is engaged in research for the German government.

While attending the annual session of the nudist colony, Adolfo meets an attractive young girl named Enna Strigger, a fanatical Nazi, whom he subsequently marries. They live in the mansion which Adolfo has built for himself in Munich, and the two are happy together.

Soon after the marriage of Adolfo and Enna, Gustavo also falls in love. He has met a young Polish girl named Wanda,

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

and feels himself profoundly influenced by Wanda's modesty and her fervent Catholicism. Wanda is not accepted by all of Gustavo's friends, however, since her Catholicism and her Polish nationality both render her suspect to zealous Nazis. Enna, in particular, is annoyed by Wanda's devotion and becomes angry upon hearing her speak about the inevitability of death. Enna's entire outlook is one of materialism and, in regard to death and other religious matters, her attitude is one of complete indifference.

Gustavo journeys to Warsaw to obtain the permission of Wanda's father for the marriage. When he returns to Munich he learns that there will be no wedding, since the official permit necessary for marriage has been denied Wanda on the grounds that she is seriously ill. Wanda leaves Germany to return to Warsaw. Shortly afterwards, Wanda's father arrives in Munich and informs Gustavo that Wanda has been taken prisoner by the Nazis in Warsaw. He claims that his daughter has never been ill and that she has been taken away by the Nazis for some inhuman purpose. Gustavo, frantic, begins a search for the girl. After some time, he learns the truth. Dr. Paltz, to whom Wanda had gone for a medical examination after having her application for marriage denied, has claimed Wanda for use in his experiments, presumably because she is Polish and Catholic. Gustavo confronts Dr. Paltz, who admits that Wanda has died during the course

of the experiments which he has performed on her. Gustavo wants to kill the doctor, with whom he has lived for so long in the same pensión. He controls his emotions, however, and reveals the truth to Adolfo and Enna. Enna defends the inhuman actions of Dr. Paltz. Adolfo says to her:

--En el fondo tú clasificas las vidas en superiores e inferiores. Y crees que Wanda era una vida inferior.

--Exacto--admitió Enna.

Sólo a duras apenas conseguía Gustavo contener su cólera. La expectante actitud de Adolfo le impedía cometer una barbaridad. Se mordía los labios y apretaba los puños.

--Wanda inferior a Paltz! ¿Quién es el Clasificador Universal? ¿Eres tú, Enna? ¿Quién es inferior a quién? ¿Por qué Paltz eligió precisamente a Wanda? ¿Por qué no, por ejemplo, a mí? ¿Por qué no a tí . . . ?

La pregunta le salió como un dardo y no se arrepintió de ello.

--¿A mí . . . ? --preguntó la muchacha con displicente asombro--. ¿A mí . . . ? --repitió, sentándose con nerviosismo--. ¡Bueno. . . ! --Por fin añadió, dominándose--: Lo razonable es, supongo . . . , elegir a los . . . enfermos. A los enfermos y a los enemigos--concluyó con decisión.<sup>3</sup>

Enna then expresses her belief in her own superiority and in that of her husband.

Adolfo me eligió a mí porque tenía la certeza de que estaba sana y de que sería siempre leal, de que lo sería con él y con la Patria. Y, por supuesto, yo le elegí a él por su talento, por su virilidad, y porque era alemán. Fue, pues, una clasificación diáfana; una clasificación de mayor o menor utilidad. Si tú entiendes de otro modo la vida, ¡quéle vamos a hacer! Ahora bien, no exijas que Alemania gaste sus energías lagrimeando y repartiendo compasión. Alemania no puede equivocarse. Como sabes muy bien, estamos en guerra.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 126.

Gustavo, in desperation, joins the army and receives training as a paratrooper. Adolfo is drafted, but is allowed to remain in Munich where he serves as an engineer. Enna, full of enthusiasm for the cause of the National Socialists, volunteers for military service also, and receives a position as an interrogator in a prisoner-of-war camp. Feeling that her husband is not using his brilliant talents to the fullest extent to hasten the victory of Germany, she uses her influence with an important officer she has met to have Adolfo transferred to a position of greater importance.

Adolfo receives his new assignment, which requires him to go to Paris. Enna is surprised that the new post necessitates her husband's leaving Germany. She remains in Munich and continues her job of interrogation. Adolfo, established in Paris, feels lonely without Enna. He writes her, asking her to obtain herself a transfer to Paris. When she does not do so, Adolfo gains the affections of a beautiful girl named Claudette, who yields herself to him completely. Adolfo asks Claudette, who is Catholic, why she fails to live according to the moral dictates of the Church. He thinks of the irreproachable conduct of Wanda and the uncompromising dedication of Enna to National Socialism, which he contrasts with Claudette's wavering and inconsistent profession of Catholicism. He feels that Enna, were she a believing Catholic,

would not compromise her religious principles in any way. Claudette is not able to give Adolfo an answer.

Enna is transferred to Berlin where she is eventually promoted to the rank of inspector, replacing a Nazi who has been accused of treason by Enna's superior, Guldin, and has subsequently been convicted. Guldin has become aware of Adolfo Stolberg's liaison with Claudette in Paris, and tells Enna to sign an order for the arrest of her husband's mistress. Adolfo is taken by surprise when Claudette is arrested, and fails to understand the meaning of what has happened.

Enna visits her condemned predecessor, who is soon to be executed, and hears him accuse Guldin of having falsified the charges against him. He further states that Guldin himself is the real traitor, who has had him convicted of treason in order to throw suspicion away from himself. He urges Enna to do everything in her power to expose Guldin. She begins to observe her superior, and realizes that the condemned man has been accused of treason by the real traitor. She gathers evidence against Guldin and takes it to the highest authorities, speaking with Heinrich Himmler himself. Shortly thereafter, Guldin is arrested and hanged for treason. Enna feels a sense of deep satisfaction, but is disappointed that she does not receive a promotion for her astuteness.

Guldin's successor, Von Mansfeld, is an aristocrat who has given half his fortune to promote the cause of National

Socialism. Enna soon falls in love with him, and an affair between the two takes place.

Gustavo, who has been wounded at the front, arrives in Berlin to recuperate. The poet visits Enna and in the course of his conversation with her comments about the admirable self-control of the priests whom he has seen ministering to the dying Austrians at the Russian front. Enna is unimpressed, however, and tells Gustavo how she feels toward religion.

Enna citó el hábito y la tradición y la necesidad en que se halla la gente primitiva de buscar consuelo en algo más espectacular que el propio espíritu, algo que conviertan lógicamente en sobrenatural.<sup>5</sup>

Gustavo accuses Enna of abandoning her husband for Von Mansfeld, and insists that she use her influence to have Adolfo transferred to Berlin, in order that the marriage of Adolfo and Enna may be salvaged. Enna yields to Gustavo's pleadings, and has her husband transferred as requested. She realizes, however, that she must confess to her husband that she no longer loves him. The two live together in a hotel, but Enna spends many evenings in Von Mansfeld's mansion, attending party functions.

When the Allied forces invade North Africa, Gustavo realizes that the Nazi leaders are bringing Germany to utter ruin. Speaking of them to Adolfo, he says:

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 227.



El pueblo alemán les ha seguido como se sigue a los dioses, y ellos han inculcado a ese pueblo la noción de que nada les era inasequible. Tú, Adolfo, por un complicado sentido estético, te resististe a entregarte por entero. Del mismo modo yo me entusiasme intermitentemente, pues, si es cierto que se han realizado gestas bastante superiores a las homéricas, también lo es que, desde que oí tocar el órgano a Wanda, un gusanillo se me metió en el cuerpo y ahora otros por los agujeros de las heridas. Ante los hechos, pregunto: ¿se puede ser libre prescindiendo de la caridad? Y, en caso de vencer, se puede ser feliz? El programa nacionalsocialista, además de convencernos de que somos superiores, nos ha hecho realmente superiores? No puede, por otra parte ocurrir que una doctrina originariamente sana se adultere al entrar en contacto con la sangre humana destinada a hacerla circular? Yo veo un punto de despotismo. ¿Quién sabe si, al prescindir de lo sobrenatural . . . . Está verdaderamente resuelto en sentido negativo que se puede prescindir de lo sobrenatural?<sup>6</sup>

Enna tells Adolfo that she is in love with Von Mansfeld, and goes to live in the mansion of the aristocratic Nazi. Adolfo is desperate, not knowing how to react to failure. As time passes, the military situation of Germany becomes worse and worse, and it becomes apparent that the Allies will win the war. Enna, happy as the mistress of Von Mansfeld, refuses to consider the possibility of defeat, confident that German science will be able to produce some new weapons capable of turning the tide of the conflict.

Adolfo feels that he cannot bear to be separated from Enna any longer. He goes to see Von Mansfeld, and demands

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 278-279.

that his wife be returned to him. Von Mansfeld shows no emotion, and coldly refers to Enna as "sólo un cuerpo."<sup>7</sup> He feels no affection toward Enna, but will keep her at his side as long as it is expedient.

Enna gradually comes to realize that Von Mansfeld does not love her. Her situation is complicated by the fact that she has become pregnant. Germany is losing the war, and von Mansfeld is unhappy about Enna's condition. He finally tells her to leave his house and enter a clinic for the last months of her pregnancy. Enna decides on abortion, and goes to Munich, where she asks Dr. Paltz to perform the operation. He warns her that her pregnancy is far advanced, and that some danger is involved. She tells the doctor to perform the abortion, however, and, following it, suffers from severe hemorrhages. Her condition is serious, and she undergoes entire days of delirium.

Adolfo Stolberg, meanwhile, receives orders to report as a common foot-soldier. He fails to comply with the order, however, and hides on the top floor of the pensión where Gustavo is staying. The great architect lies upon his bed in the depths of despair. The author succinctly describes his final moments:

Los rusos se plantaron a las puertas de Viena.  
Entonces murió Roosevelt, que no alcanzó a ver la

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 326.

victoria; y entonces también, al mes exacto de no salir de aquel tugurio obsesionante, se suicidó Adolfo Stolberg, que no llegó a ver la derrota.<sup>8</sup>

Enna, who has begun to recover from her operation, receives the news of Adolfo's death. She is not affected by the turn of events, and wishes only to return to Berlin and win back von Mansfeld's affections. She leaves the clinic, without the knowledge of Dr. Paltz, and begins to make her way through the streets of Munich toward the railroad station. She has chosen an inopportune time to leave the clinic, since the streets of Munich are deserted and the situation within the city is one of complete chaos. As Enna wanders through the streets of the city amid the rubble and bombed-out buildings, her hemorrhaging begins again. An air raid takes place at the moment Enna sits down to rest and realizes what is happening.

Era rara aquella mancha sobre la hierba. Una mancha roja. ¡Y toda su ropa, todo su vientre se hallaban empapados en sangre! Claro, claro, una hemorragia . . . . Con las explosiones, y la fatiga . . . . Y la otra liga se le había roto. Desagradable situación. ¿Por qué no pasaba nadie, por qué estaba tan desierto aquello?<sup>9</sup>

Von Mansfeld, at the very moment that Enna is bleeding to death in a ditch alongside a street in a bombed-out neighborhood of Munich, prepares to hasten to the side of Hitler, to be with the Führer at the end. He dies with Hitler in his bunker in Berlin, not knowing that Enna has already died.

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 375.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 386.

Gustavo discovers the body of his brother Adolfo, stretched out upon his bed in the pensión. The architect has chosen poison as the quickest and surest means of escaping from his misery. Gustavo procures a coffin for Adolfo, even as Russian troops enter Berlin.

Gustavo finds himself a changed man as, on May 2, 1945, the war comes to an end. Left alone by the death of Wanda and his recent loss of Adolfo, and lamed by the injuries he has sustained in the war, he has decided to embrace Catholicism, hoping to find a solution to the meaning and purpose of life.

Se trataba de elegir el único camino que, a su entender, significaba para el hombre eso; una concreta posibilidad de esperanza, una adaptación de la carnal miseria a la Forma primera e inmutable, una posibilidad de resignación y aun de gozo en el gran desgarramiento, de libre entrega a Alguien que no fenecería. Gustavo entendía que el hombre podía participar de estos bienes y colmar su soledad, con sólo tener fe, y ser caritativo y humilde.<sup>10</sup>

The novel ends in the following words:

Gustavo, sentado en el refugio de su pensión, y, junto a sus muletas, había empezado a escribir un poema larguísimo, que comenzaba así:

Señor, apiadaos de mi pueblo.  
Tened en el cielo a los míos  
y a la mujer que extrañamente perdí.  
Tened en el cielo a todos los muertos.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 374.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 388.

Alborg, commenting upon La marea, says that it is "una novela excelente, con todas las cualidades de un modelo en su tipo."<sup>12</sup> The following is from his review of the novel:

Lo que a Gironella--hombre y escritor--le ha conmovido en el reciente drama alemán, no ha sido sólo la derrota de sus armas, sino el fracaso de una postura moral, la quiebra de una divinización del hombre al servicio de ideales desorbitados, la carencia de humanidad y respeto al derecho ajeno, el orgullo desenfrenado y la adoración trágicamente narcisista de la propia superioridad.

Cada personaje de la novela puede decirse, pues, que encierra el valor de un símbolo; y, sin embargo merced a la intensidad con que los ha concebido el novelista, adquieren sólida consistencia humana, son seres hasta tal punto vivos, que su realidad contribuye a reforzar la misma intención trascendente de que los ha querido dotar el autor; una fusión, en suma, muy equilibrada de ideas y de vida, dentro de un cauce novelesco que apasiona y arrastra desde el comienzo hasta el final.<sup>13</sup>

La marea, en suma, supone un avance de muchos grados sobre la novela primera, no sólo por la calidad de sus personajes--mucho más complejos, trascendentes y difíciles los de aquí--, sino por la misma construcción del libro, por la prudente economía de medios expresivos y la calidad de la prosa, precisa y eficaz. En oposición a la cómoda sucesión lineal de Un hombre, la estructura de La marea representa un armazón novelesco técnicamente perfecto, que denuncia también el firme novelesco técnicamente perfecto, que denuncia también el firme salto dado por el autor del uno al otro libro.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Juan Luis Alborg, Hora actual de la novela española (Madrid, 1958), p. 139.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 141.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 142.

Gironella not only attacks materialism, as exemplified by National Socialism with its disregard for the rights of others, but he also reaffirms his belief in traditional Catholicism. Gustavo, the only one of the protagonists to survive the war, embraces Catholicism as the only course open to him which will give meaning to life. One may find the viewpoint of the novelist in the words of Gustavo quoted above. Gustavo finds himself disillusioned with the promises of the political leaders, after having lived through the utter defeat of Nazi Germany, and wishes to turn to Alguien que no fenecería. Gustavo has seen death all around him during the war, particularly at the end, when he finds his own brother lying dead upon his bed. Impressed with the brevity of human life, he sees in Catholicism una concreta posibilidad de esperanza, una adaptación de la carnal miseria a la Forma primera e inmutable. Gustavo has seen what the pride of the Nazis and their disregard of human rights have led to and feels that el hombre sólo podía colmar su soledad, con sólo tener fe, y ser caritativo y humilde.

La marea failed to achieve popularity in Spain. Critics gave the novel scant attention, perhaps because they were afraid that a favorable review of the book would anger the Franco regime, which had received assistance from Germany prior to World War II. After having written La marea,

Gironella left Spain suddenly, apparently without official permission, and did not return for four years.<sup>15</sup> Whether or not Gironella left Spain because he feared La marea might anger the Phalangists is a matter of conjecture. At any rate, the publication of a novel portraying German National Socialism in an unfavorable light might be considered potentially dangerous for a Spanish novelist writing in 1948. This consideration should be borne in mind by those who see in Gironella a protagonist for General Franco and the Phalangist cause.

Gironella has rewritten La marea. The revised edition, published in 1954, is the version quoted in this thesis. The review of the novel cited above is also an evaluation of the same revised version.

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<sup>15</sup>Richard E. Chandler and Kessel Schwartz, A New History of Spanish Literature (Baton Rouge, 1961), p. 262.

## CHAPTER IV

### LOS CIPRESES CREEN EN DIOS

The first novel of the Civil War trilogy, Los cipreses creen en Dios, appeared early in 1953. The novel, of some 800 pages, is divided into five parts, and covers a period of five years, from the establishment of the Republic in Spain in 1931 until the outbreak of hostilities in 1936. The novel describes the fortunes of the Alvear family, as created by Gironella, and of Spain, during the years prior to the Civil War. These characters, and Ignacio Alvear in particular, serve as a sort of microcosm, as does the city of Gerona, in that the events which occur in Gerona and within the Alvear family mirror what occurs throughout all of Spain.

Gironella devotes entire chapters to the political situation which existed in Spain during the five-year period covered by the novel. Historical characters are portrayed along with fictional ones, and historical events are mixed with happenings created by the author. Gironella himself states:

Se trata, como queda dicho, de una novela y no de un ensayo histórico, filosófico o político. Vaya por delante esta declaración, justificativa de mil libertades que me he tomado.



En efecto, lo que he intentado ha sido la creación de una novela, y en consecuencia, aun manejando en lo posible hechos verídicos, me he reservado en todo momento el derecho de apelar a la fantasía.<sup>1</sup>

There are a number of sub-plots and social and political questions in the novel which limitations of scope will preclude from comment in this summary. What follows is an attempt to describe the Alvear family and the principal happenings concerned with it.

The setting of the novel is the Catalonian city of Gerona, capital of the province of Gerona. The family of Matías Alvear lives in a home with a rear balcony overlooking the Onar river, a balcony from which Matías spends much time fishing.

Matías comes from a liberal, anti-clerical background. Originally from Madrid, he has lived in various areas of Spain, wherever he has been able to find employment as a telegraph operator.

Matías' wife, Carmen Elgazu, is of an entirely different background. She is Basque, intensely Catholic and traditional, and places religious values above all others. She has exerted a positive influence upon her husband, from the religious point of view, and has succeeded in rearing her children as devout Catholics.

Ignacio, the oldest of the three Alvear children, who has always been encouraged, if not pressured, by his mother

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<sup>1</sup>José María Gironella, Los cipreses crecen en Dios (Barcelona, 1953), aclaración indispensable.

to become a priest, has finally yielded to her wishes and entered the seminary in Gerona. In May of 1931, however, he leaves the seminary, unable to follow the example he sees being set by the priests he knows. He feels that they are somewhat cold and indifferent to the needs of the poor and to the other problems of the people. Ignacio's decision to leave the seminary is a severe blow to Carmen Elgazu. She is soon consoled, however, by the decision of her younger son, César, to adopt the vocation abandoned by his brother.

César is only eleven years of age when he enters the seminary of Colell, in the mountains not far from Gerona in the fall of 1931. He is three years younger than Ignacio and of a different nature. Quiet and reserved, he spends much time in prayer and meditation.

The Alvear family is completed by Pilar, the only daughter and the youngest of the three children, who is ten years old at the beginning of the novel. She is being educated in a school conducted by nuns when the Republic is established in Spain in the spring of 1931.

The fall of the monarchy and the establishment of the Republic are events of the greatest importance for all of Spain, including the Alvears. Carmen Elgazu is shocked by the attitude of the new regime toward religion, an attitude which might at the best be described as one of mere toleration.

From the very first day of the Republic, sides begin to form as dissatisfied elements, both within and without the government hope to secure power.

Ignacio obtains a position in a local bank, where he encounters anti-clerical and irreligious attitudes. The atmosphere in which he works, together with the influence of the novels of Baroja, which he has begun to read, cause Ignacio to become more and more critical of the Spanish clergy and their attitude toward the people. He begins to feel some perturbation at the thought that his own purity might not prove impregnable. César returns home for the summer vacation in 1932, and Ignacio reprimands him for spending too much time at the diocesan museum, presided over by the pompous and arrogant Mosén Alberto. He tells César that he should concern himself with the poor and the suffering, and should attempt to do something practical to help in solving the problems of the poor. César is disturbed by his brother's advice, but decides that Ignacio is right. He resolves to try to learn to shave and cut hair in order to be of some assistance to the sick and the poor. César returns to the seminary in the fall, hoping to be able to put his plan into execution during the next summer vacation.

Ignacio is influenced by the presence of his left-wing, anarchistic cousin José Alvear, from Madrid, who visits

Gerona and remains for several weeks. Ignacio is torn between his religious background and his consciousness of the social injustices prevalent in Spain. He continues to work at the bank, and attends an academy in the evening, hoping to obtain the bachillerato.

César returns home for his second summer vacation, bringing with him a letter from the Rector addressed to Matías Alvear. The letter states that César has had fainting spells and that he should be observed carefully by his parents. Ignacio then reveals to his father that César has been wearing a penitential cord which cuts into the flesh. Matías, angered, slaps César and throws the belt into the river. The boy goes into the slum districts of Gerona, where he serves the poor as a barber. He also teaches illiterate children how to read and write, but is threatened by the parents of some of the children when he attempts to give catechetical instruction. César learns that the majority of the working class are bitter toward the Church and that his acts of charity represent, for many, their first favorable contact with a representative of the clergy.

Ignacio continues his education by attending night classes in the private school of David and Olga Pol, two young socialists who have never married, but live together by mutual agreement in accord with their socialistic philosophy. As Ignacio is subjected to the anti-clerical viewpoints

of David and Olga, a change takes place within him. He feels less sure in his practice of Catholicism. The irreligious attitude of his classmates and the influence of the local police chief, Julio García, who has befriended Ignacio, weaken the boy's moral fiber and wear down his resistance to temptation. Ignacio goes to see Julio García one evening, and is received by his wife, doña Amparo, who is alone. The seductive behavior of doña Amparo proves too much for Ignacio, who falls an easy victim to her charms. After leaving the apartment, the boy's first impulse is to go to confession, to rid himself of his feelings of guilt and shame. He does not do so, however, but rather attempts to silence his conscience, and puts the thought of confession out of his mind. Overcome by a lethargy and indifference toward religion, Ignacio enters into a period of abandonment of the practice of Catholicism.

The elections of November, 1933, in which the conservative coalition is victorious, are of great importance. The direction in which the Republican regime has been moving is reversed by the conservatives,<sup>4</sup> and this causes an increase of unrest in Spain.

Months pass, during which Ignacio fails to make his confession and receive communion. At Christmas mass he feigns receiving communion by going forward to the communion rail, mixing with the crowd of communicants, and returning to

his place without actually having received the sacrament. This he does merely to make his family believe that he is still a devout Catholic. Ignacio does not even confess his sins during Holy Week of 1934.

Mosén Alberto, one of the most prominent priests in the diocese of Gerona and a friend of Carmen Elgazu, pays the Alvear family a visit and becomes involved in an argument with Ignacio, who accuses the priest and the clergy in general of leading an easy, comfortable life, and of being unconcerned with the needs of the poor. It is apparent that Ignacio is becoming progressively more anti-clerical.

The boy completes his course in the night school of David and Olga Pol and successfully passes the examination necessary for the bachillerato. The entire family celebrates the event. Matías Alvear is especially pleased with his son. Shortly afterward, César returns home again for the annual summer vacation. The seminarian has grown considerably and is now larger than his father and Ignacio.

Ignacio accompanies his former teachers on a trip to the beach and spends several weeks there with them. He meets a girl named Ana María, from a wealthy Barcelona family, and the two soon fall in love. Ignacio realizes, however, that he is socially unacceptable to the girl's family. Upon his return to Gerona he feels miserable and frustrated, feeling that he loves Ana María but will never be able to marry her.

César spends the summer serving the poor, ignoring the ridicule of the prostitutes and the animosity of the most bitter anti-clericals. He succeeds in winning acceptance from many individuals and families and dreams of the day when he will be able to exercise the priestly ministry among the poor.

César notices that Ignacio has changed since his return from the sea. He angers César by reading aloud certain excerpts from a magazine, which describe St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clare as having had illicit relations. César goes into a rage and tears the magazine to shreds. The two brothers almost come to blows for the first time in their lives. Ignacio, restless and frustrated after leaving Ana María, enters into a liaison with Canela, an attractive young girl who has just been employed by La Andaluza, the only bordello operator who has been friendly to César on his missions to the slum area.

A revolution takes place in Gerona in October, 1934, as the left-wing elements of the city attempt to overthrow the government and seize control. This is merely a part of a larger revolt taking place throughout Catalonia. The revolt fails and some of Ignacio's best friends, including David and Olga and Julio García, are arrested and held for trial by a military tribunal. Mosén Alberto is appointed chaplain to the prisoners, who give him a cold reception.

The priest's efforts seemed bound to fail, since he persists in preaching to the prisoners in a highly pietistic manner.

Ignacio continues to see Canela, despite warnings from his father, who has become aware of the situation. The boy has also begun to study law, together with Mateo Santos, the son of a close friend of Matías Alvear, and the two soon become good friends. Mateo is a dedicated Phalangist and Ignacio becomes thoroughly acquainted with the Phalangist philosophy, which fails to impress him.

As the months pass, Ignacio reaches a crucial period in his life. The conflicting political philosophies to which he has been exposed, ranging from the anarchism of his cousin José, to the fascism of Mateo, the most diverse religious attitudes, including the staunch Catholicism of his mother and the outright agnosticism and atheism of his fellow-employees in the bank, and his own emotions have brought Ignacio into a state of doubt and uncertainty. A major crisis occurs shortly after his twentieth birthday, when Ignacio awakens one morning and discovers the sheets stained with pus. He has contracted venereal disease from his association with Canela.

Matías Alvear is angry and strikes his son when Ignacio tells him that he has persisted in seeing Canela and has contracted a disease. Carmen Elgazu considers that she must be guilty of some serious sin, and that God has allowed her son



fall into sin and become ill as a punishment. The doctor who comes to treat Ignacio also acts coldly toward him. Only the loving attention of his sister Pilar, who is unaware of his true condition, brings Ignacio some consolation. As soon as he is able to leave the bed some time later, Ignacio begs his parents to forgive him and expresses the desire to go to confession.

He selects as his confessor Mosén Francisco, a young priest noted in Gerona for his zeal and piety. The confession, Ignacio's first in well over a year, lasts an hour and a half. The boy feels that he has made a perfect confession, since he has emptied his soul to the priest. Carmen Elgazu is overcome with joy.

Ignacio writes to Ana Maria for the first time since his leave-taking from her. He also writes a long letter to César, who realizes that a change for the better has taken place within his brother. The seminarian kneels and thanks God, feeling that his prayers have been answered.

Mateo Santos, Ignacio's new friend, causes profound changes to take place in the lives of the Alvears. Pilar soon finds herself falling in love with Mateo. At the same time, Ignacio realizes that he is in love with a Phalangist girl whom he has met through Mateo. She is Marta Martínez de Soria, whose father is the leading right-wing military figure in Gerona.

César returns home for the summer vacation in 1935, bearing with him a letter from the rector, stating that the boy has spent entire nights in prayer and that he should be observed carefully by his parents. Carmen Elgazu speaks to Mosén Alberto regarding her son, and the priest tells her that César has evidently been touched in a special way by the grace of God. After spending the summer in Gerona, where he visits often with Mosén Francisco, César returns to the seminary.

In February, 1936, elections are held which prove to be of the greatest importance. The left-wing coalition is victorious, after a hectic election day with many incidents. As the new regime takes over in Madrid, it becomes apparent that violent days are ahead for Spain. Anti-religious propaganda is intensified in Gerona and throughout Spain. The new left-wing coalition government and their right-wing opponents are headed for a fight to the death.

A number of violent incidents take place in Gerona. Ignacio for the first time seems to feel closer to the conservative cause than to that of the socialists and their allies, for he has been utterly disgusted by the actions taken by the new leaders in Gerona, who include the uncouth Anarchist leader, El Responsable, and the communist Cosme Vila.

During the winter of 1936 right-wing leaders begin to plan a revolt, which they feel must take place before the Communists are able to consolidate their position within the coalition government and take complete control. The majority of the officers in the Spanish Army are involved in the plot, together with the Phalange, founded by José Antonio Primo de Rivera, and other right-wingers and conservatives of various groups. Virtually the entire Spanish Church sides with the right wing since it is faced with extermination if the Communist Party succeeds in taking control of Spain.

César arrives in Gerona a month earlier than expected, because the anti-clerical farmers in the vicinity of the seminary had insisted that the seminarians leave. As he enters Gerona, he passes by the ruins of the school of the Christian Brothers, which has been burned by an anti-religious mob, and is deeply hurt by the realization that large segments of the Spanish population are prepared to use violence against the Church.

The hour of revolt draws near. Ignacio is still unable to sympathize with the aims of the Phalange, although he has fallen in love with a girl who is a dedicated Phalangist, and even though his best friend, Mateo Santos, has become the Phalangist leader of Gerona. Ignacio tells his sweetheart, Marta, whose father is to lead the uprising in Gerona, that

the powerful landowners and monarchists will not become more compassionate and understanding in the event of a successful revolution. He feels, rather, that they will simply become cruel and exercise their power in much the same way as the Communists and Anarchists.

On the morning of Sunday, July 19, 1936, the right-wing revolution takes place throughout Spain. Major Martínez de Soria has the general in charge of the local garrison taken prisoner and proceeds to seize control of the city, with an army consisting of the troops loyal to him and of many civilian volunteers, including Mateo Santos and his Phalangists. The left-wing leaders of Gerona and their followers are seized with fear as they realize that their mortal enemies have gained control of the city. As the day wears on, however, it becomes apparent that the success of the uprising in Gerona will be short-lived. In the other areas of Catalonia, the revolt has been abortive. Major Martínez de Soria realizes that he has no choice but to capitulate, and exhorts his soldiers to be prepared to die honorably for the honor of Spain. As the civilians who have taken part in the revolt learn that they have failed, they are overcome with terror. Some remain behind, including Mosén Francisco, who wishes to remain in Gerona and exercise his ministry.

Major Martínez de Soria and the other officers who had aided him are taken prisoner by the general, who saves them

from lynching at the hands of angry Communist and Anarchist mobs. Ignacio's only thought is to do what he can to protect his loved ones and friends. He prevails upon his former teachers, David and Olga, to hide Marta in their home, since her position as daughter of the officer who has led the unsuccessful revolt is one of extreme danger.

The more moderate left-wing leaders are excluded from the deliberations of Cosme Vila and El Responsable, who with their Communist and Anarchist followers, proceed to take vengeance on all those whom they consider guilty of having held the people in subjection. These include the clergy, the businessmen, the landowners, and professional people; in short, all those who have not supported the left-wing coalition.

The first night after the failure of the revolt in Gerona is one of unmitigated terror. Patrols are formed which go out and take truckloads of the "enemy" directly to the cemetery where they are lined up against the wall and shot. This procedure is adopted to facilitate speedy burial of the numerous corpses. Similar atrocities are committed throughout Spain, in the areas where the revolt has been successful, as well as in those where it has failed.

It becomes apparent to the terrified Alvear family that the bloodthirsty mobs will not be satisfied with the victims of the first night. Matías seeks out a rough peasant named

Dimas, from a near-by village, to whom Ignacio years before had given blood for a transfusion. Dimas, remembering Ignacio's kindness, agrees to come to the Alvears apartment and protect them in his capacity as an official in the people's militia. Accompanied by a friend, he takes a position outside the door of the apartment.

Matías, feeling secure with the guards posted, goes to the telegraph office, only to learn upon his return that both Ignacio and César have left. Ignacio returns at nightfall, and reveals that he has been to see Marta in her hiding-place. César does not return, however, and the entire family fears for his life. Dimas forbids the members of the family to leave, and goes himself in search of the boy. He first searches the burned out churches, where the Alvears suppose that César has gone in the hope of saving some sacred objects from the looting mobs. At length Dimas and his companion learn from a bystander that César has been arrested in one of the chapels still intact in the city. Militiamen had discovered the seminarian consuming the Hosts which he had found in the tabernacle, hoping to save them from desecration.

Dimas and his friend know that they must act hurriedly if they hope to save César from the firing squad. They go to the local seminary, which has been converted into a jail by the militia, and search for César in vain. The boy is,

in fact, in the group of prisoners, but as they call his name aloud and César attempts to answer, he is silenced by his fellow prisoners, who do not realize that the two militiamen looking for César wish to release him. César himself misunderstands the true nature of the men's intentions and fails to understand how anyone who had promised his family protection could now come to seek his life.

Dimas goes to see Cosme Vila, the Communist leader, and demands that César be released from the Communist jail, where he supposes him to be imprisoned. Vila lies, however, and says that he has already disposed of the seminarian. Dimas sends his adjutant to the Alvear apartment to inform them, mistakenly, that César has already been executed.

At four in the morning the Anarchist leader, El Responsable, comes into the seminary bent upon violence. He and his assistants seek out the priests first and tie them together, forcing them to stand to one side. The names of the others are called, including that of César Alvear. César has no fear for his own life, but he is bothered by the fact that so many priests will be executed, and thinks about the many villages which will now have no pastors to take care of their spiritual needs.

El Responsable calls the name of his former employer, Corbera:

El señor Corbera se alineó a la izquierda mirando a su expleado con una sonrisa indefinible. Cuando estuvo en su sitio dijo:

--Responsable . . .

--¿Qué hay?

--Que Dios te maldiga.

A César aquello le había dolido en el alma. Hasta entonces le había afectado particularmente la llamada de los sacerdotes. Sabía la falta que hacían en la Diócesis, donde alguno tenía que cuidar hasta de dos parroquias. Si se iban tantos . . . . También le había afectado la presencia de otro seminarista, al que conocía sólo de vista, pero que sabía que estudiaba dos cursos mas adelantados que él; pero al oír las palabras del señor Corbera . . . .

A César le hubiera gustado que le ataran junto a él. Que su muñeca tocara la del señor Corbera. La del señor Corbera y, al otro lado, la de cualquier sacerdote; el párroco de la Catedral, por ejemplo. De este modo podía conseguir dos cosas. Pedir la bendición sacerdotal en el último momento y decirle al señor Corbera: "Señor, señor, tan cerca de la muerte no maldiga a nadie . . . ." <sup>2</sup>

César is tied, however, between two prisoners who are strangers to him. The militiamen then load the condemned into trucks and transport them to the cemetery. César looks out and sees the familiar sights of Gerona for the last time as the truck makes its way toward the outskirts of the city.

El viento les daba a todos en la cara y César, de pronto, sin saber por qué, miró las estrellas, que ya palidecían, y luego pensó en la edad que tenía. Exactamente . . . dieciséis años, tres meses y dos días . . . --Luego pensó en los copones que había escondido en las murallas. "Hoy he comulgado sesenta veces . . ." -- se decía. <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>José María Gironella, Los cipreses creen en Dios (Barcelona, 1953), p. 879.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 880.



The truck reaches the cemetery with its many cypress trees, the same cemetery where César had spent many hours one summer meditating on death, until he had been forbidden by Mosén Alberto to continue his practice.

César había guardado una Hostia, una sola, en el interior del chaleco. Al sentir que le alineaban entre los nichos, entrando a la izquierda, y ver que se formaban dos piquetes, con su mano libre la cogió. Se disponía a llevarla a la boca e ingerirla lentamente, perdonando a los milicianos. A su lado oía sollozos y las voces de siempre: "Criminales, criminales." Se volvió y dijo al sacerdote más próximo: "Me arrepiento de mis pecados. Quiere darme la absolución, padre . . .?" Luego vió al señor Corbera, cuyos ojos despedían ira. "Tome," le dijo de repente. Y levantó la Sagrada Forma, sosteniéndola con unción entre los dedos pulgar e índice.

El señor Corbera parpadeó tres veces consecutivas y de pronto, comprendiendo, comulgó.

Entonces César oyó una descarga y sintió que algo dulce penetraba en su piel.

Minutos después oyó una voz que decía: --Yo te absuelvo en nombre del Padre, del Hijo, y del Espíritu Santo. --Una voz que se iba acercando y repetía--: Yo te absuelvo en nombre del Padre, del Hijo y del Espíritu Santo. --También oía gemidos. Abrió un momento los ojos. Vio un miliciano de rodillas, que iba sacando de su reloj de pulsera pequeñas Hostias y que las introducía en la boca de sus vecinos caídos. Reconoció, en el miliciano, a mosen Francisco. Luego sus ojos se cerraron. Sintió un beso en la frente. Luego se cerró su corazón.<sup>4</sup>

Los cipreses creen en Dios won enthusiastic acceptance among much of the Spanish reading public. Undoubtedly the great interest of the Spanish people in the Civil War accounts for a large measure of its success. The novel has been translated into a number of languages, and the English translation became a best seller in the United States. American literary

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 880-881.

critics turned their attention to Gironella for the first time and were generally favorable in their evaluation of the merits of the novel. Gironella's claim to objectivity and impartiality has been questioned, however, by those who feel that the author did not deal severely enough with the Phalange. One critic has gone so far as to say that "the fact is that Señor Gironella, in his chronicle of the life of a Spanish town, has taken the side of the Right Wing, and of the victors."<sup>5</sup> Gironella himself, while he never attempts to conceal the fact that he fled into Nationalist Spain and became a soldier in the Nationalist Army, still insists that he tried at all times to present a realistic picture of Spain, considering impartially the feelings of all the various factions.

In regard to the merits of the novel and its literary type, there has been much discussion and disagreement. Alborg comments as follows:

No puede decirse, a mi juicio--como parece que se viene haciendo--, que Los cipreses creen en Dios sea una novela histórica, porque este subgénero es bastante más complejo de lo que habitualmente se piensa, y con definirla como tal no precisaríamos gran cosa. La obra de Gironella sí es, en efecto, una combinación de novela y de historia (de una historia que casi es vida aun y que lo será más agudamente a medida que el autor

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<sup>5</sup>Anthony West, "Social Men," The New Yorker, XXII (May 28, 1955), 109.

avance en el camino proyectado). Lo mismo podría tomarse por una historia novelada, es decir, un relato de sucesos auténticos, animado novelescamente por la interpolación de una acción ficticia, que por una novela densificada histórica y políticamente mediante el procedimiento de inscribir su desarrollo en el polígono de unos hechos ciertos.

Pero parece que la novela de Gironella podría rotularse con más exactitud como "social," o, si se quiere, como "político-social," puesto que se trata de retratar en ella con detalles muy concretos el estado político-social de nuestro país, con toda la complejidad de sus problemas; sólo que de forma novelesca. Los cipreses creen en Dios, es, en este sentido, un nuevo y significativo paradigma de la supervivencia en nuestra novela de viejos moldes del siglo XIX.<sup>6</sup>

The critic continues his evaluation of the novel:

No creo que, restando parte de lo que se suponga aquí de intención peyorativa, pueda encontrarse una definición que mejor convenga a Los cipreses creen en Dios, y que mejor explique la estructura novelesca de este libro, en todas sus partes. Lo que quiere decir, si no me equivoco al interpretarlo, que el libro como creación artística es un anacronismo, una forma pretérita que la novela ha dejado atrás enteramente en el proceso de su evolución y, por tanto, que el mérito de Los cipreses --nada escaso, por cierto-- habrá que buscarlo por otra parte y no en el aspecto estrictamente literario. Si transportásemos la novela de Gironella al campo de la plástica, podríamos decir que Los cipreses representa en nuestra literatura lo que sería la reaparición en la pintura de cuadros tales como El testamento de Isabel la Católica o Los últimos días de Sagunto.<sup>7</sup>

Los cipreses creen en Dios contains many religious aspects. There is a description of seminary life, dealing with the experiences of Ignacio and César as seminarians.

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<sup>6</sup>Juan Luis Alborg, Hora actual de la novela española (Madrid, 1958), p. 143.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 144.

There are contrasting reactions of Ignacio and of César to the seminary and to the Church in general. There are, in addition, a number of socio-religious problems touched upon in the novel. Mosén Alberto and Mosén Francisco provide a sharp contrast as they go about the exercise of their ministry. It would be possible to discuss the religious attitudes of Carmen Elgazu, who possesses a faith which can move mountains, or blind fanaticism, depending upon one's point of view. Some of these aspects may profitably be discussed in connection with Un millón de muertos, the sequel to Los cipreses creen en Dios. Others are too involved and complicated to be considered here. It seems appropriate, however, to comment upon the religious attitudes of Ignacio and César, as they are described in the novel.

Ignacio has left the seminary for several reasons, but primarily because he could not find among the clergy a concern for the practical problems of everyday life. The seminary was for him a harsh, cold place, lacking human kindness. Ignacio does not, however, abandon his faith after leaving the seminary, at least not permanently. Even when he falls into sin and remains in that state for a prolonged period, he still observes the externals of religious practice, such as joining the other members of the family in the recitation of the rosary. He is torn between his

religious faith, strengthened by his mother's example and his years of seminary training, and his passions and anti-clerical inclination, perhaps absorbed from his father. As the years pass Ignacio comes to dislike more intensely the pompous and pontifical Mosén Alberto. He feels that a priest should serve his flock humbly, quietly, and seek opportunities to aid the poor and distressed, rather than spend his time with only those people who treat him well, as does Mosén Alberto. Ignacio's attitude toward the practice of the Catholic religion is a wavering one, one of inconstancy motivated by inner conflict.

César is quite different from his brother. Quiet and introspective, he is not inclined to think about the social problems of Spain and the relationship of the Church with the working class. When Ignacio points out to him that he should concern himself with the poor instead of spending his time in the religious museum administered by Mosén Alberto, César humbly accepts the reprimand and begins to do something to aid the poor. His previous failure to minister to the unfortunate is not to be attributed to indifference, but rather to the fact that he has never thought about the social problems which have always troubled Ignacio so much. César's time has been spent largely in prayer and meditation. Almost completely isolated from the active life of the city, his thoughts have been about God and the

eternal, not about man and the earthly. César is, in short, inclined toward contemplation rather than toward action. He does not hesitate to take action, however, when the need is pointed out to him. César's missions to the poor are preceded by hours spent in prayer and meditation. Certain aspects of mysticism begin to become evident in the boy's life during his last years in the seminary. His praying all night without sleep is reminiscent of the austerity and religious fervor of a bygone age. César's conduct is always irreproachable and his integrity cannot be questioned. Only his penances are excessive, such as the wearing of a penitential belt. He does not find it difficult to give his life to God in martyrdom; he rather does so eagerly, with no bitterness or malice toward those who are responsible for his death. César lives, according to his convictions, a saintly life, and dies a martyr's death.

It should be pointed out that there are a number of similarities between events in Ignacio's life as portrayed in the novel, and actual events in the life of the author. Gironella attended the seminary in Gerona, left it, to the disappointment of his mother, and subsequently worked in a bank. Gironella has also pointed out that the most diverse tendencies were present in his family, with regard to the observance of religion. He states that such extremes as anti-clericalism on one hand and religious ecstasy at the

moment of receiving communion on the other were to be found among the various members of his family. The same kind of sentiments, some conservative, pious and orthodox, and others decidedly anti-clerical exist within the Alvear family and add to Ignacio's unrest. It may be inferred that Gironella uses his protagonist, Ignacio, whose life in many ways closely resembles that of the author, to voice his own criticisms of Spanish Catholicism and of certain types of Spanish clergymen.

## CHAPTER V

### UN MILLON DE MUERTOS

Un millón de muertos, the second part of the Civil War trilogy of Gironella, is the continuation of the novel, Los cipreses creen en Dios. The first novel had described the five years immediately preceding the war, and Un millón de muertos begins with the outbreak of the war and continues until the final days of the conflict in 1939.

The plot is once again constructed around the Alvear family and its members. The death of César profoundly affects Ignacio, and changes his outlook on life. The Ignacio portrayed by Gironella at the end of the armed conflict in 1939 is a far different person from the young seminarian of Los cipreses creen en Dios in 1931.

The political and military aspects of the Civil War are dealt with in detail by the author. The influence of the various foreign powers who became involved in the conflict is described at length, as is the complex internal situation.

Un millón de muertos begins as Ignacio Alvear leaves the family apartment shortly after dawn. The terror-stricken family, having heard that César was killed by the Communist-Anarchist terrorists, and yet hoping against hope that he might still be alive, has not dared to make a move until



sunrise and the subsequent withdrawal of the murdering patrols. Ignacio has finally left the house and gone to the cemetery in search of César's body. Ignacio examines the first row of corpses, and fails to find that of his brother, but as he begins to look in the second row, his search is rewarded. He thinks about the death order which had been signed, in all probability, by the Communist Cosme Vila, Ignacio's former fellow worker in the Arus bank:

Por unos momentos sintió un odio tan acerbo, que cerró los puños en signo de rebelión. Se rebeló contra el lápiz frío que escribió el papel, pero también contra quien, desde una altura inlocalizable, dirigía los destinos de los seres, decretaba su principio y su fin. Entonces avanzó, con la absoluta certeza de que también el rostro de César expresaría una tranquilidad dulce . . . . ¡Ah, ahí tuvo la revelación! Apenas lo vió, Ignacio se llevó la mano a las mandíbulas y miró hacia otro lugar. El rostro de César estaba desfigurado. No era rostro, era un amasijo coagulado. Nada quedaba de él. Ignacio no se atrevió a mirar de nuevo. ¿Por qué todo aquello?<sup>1</sup>

The words of a psalm which Ignacio had learned years before in the seminary pass through his mind: "pusieron los cadáveres de tus siervos para nutrir a las aves del cielo, sin que hubiera quien les diera sepultura."<sup>2</sup> Ignacio finally kneels beside César's body and removes a medal which the boy had worn. As he returns home to inform the other members of the family of his unhappy discovery, Ignacio thinks of his

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<sup>1</sup>José María Gironella, Un millón de muertos (Barcelona, 1961), p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

Phalangist friend, Mateo, and of Mosén Alberto, who have both fled Gerona to save themselves. They are alive, and César, whose only thoughts had been ones of love for God and neighbor, lies dead in the Gerona cemetery. When Ignacio enters the apartment, everyone knows what has happened. Carmen Elgazu silently takes possession of César's medal, which she proposes to treasure as though it were the relic of a saint.

Horrible atrocities take place throughout Spain, both in the areas where the revolution has succeeded and in those where it has failed. Hatred of the enemy becomes an obsession in thousands of families who have lost a loved one at the hands of the patrols, whether left- or right-wing.

Matías Alvear himself, as well as his wife and two surviving children, Ignacio and Pilar, are gripped with intense hatred. Matías, who had once been violently anti-clerical, shudders each time he sees a militiaman on the streets, and longs for the day when the troops of the right-wing General Franco may be victorious. Carmen Elgazu, for the first time in her life, feels that she is living in mortal sin, as she cannot or will not forgive those responsible for César's death. Hatred has so taken possession of her emotions that she has even lost all desire to go to confession.

Ignacio's feelings of hate and of bitterness are even greater than those of his parents. He considers himself

guilty of neglect resulting in César's death. He is consoled by the knowledge that his sweetheart, Marta, is safe, but is troubled by the fact that he cannot visit her at her hiding-place in the home of David and Olga, his former socialist teachers. Ignacio is so bitter that he even feels hatred toward David and Olga, despite their willingness to hide Marta at the risk of their own lives. He thinks of a remark which David had once made: "la mitad de los hombres morirá para que la otra mitad pueda vivir,"<sup>3</sup> and feels indescribable bitterness as he reflects upon the violence, cruelty, and injustice that he sees all around him.

Ignacio meets David and Olga driving through the streets of Gerona in a car which had belonged to one of the wealthy conservatives of the city. They tell him that Marta does not want to stay in their home any longer, and has asked them to get Ignacio to find a way for her to escape from Gerona. A violent dispute takes place, during which David and Olga realize that Ignacio has become thoroughly alienated from them and the Popular Front, and that his sympathies lie for the first time with the Nationalists. He accuses David and Olga much as he had once accused Mosén Alberto. His words serve to confirm the suspicions of his former teachers about his current attitude.

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

Julio García, the police chief of Gerona and leader in the local Popular Front, yields to the wishes of his boyhood friend, Matías Alvear, and personally escorts Marta from the city, slipping her past the militiamen. Ignacio feels that his love for Marta provides some measure of compensation for the hatred which has taken hold of him. Julio García finds the girl a place to hide in Barcelona in the home of a right-wing friend.

Ignacio feels completely alone with Marta and his friend Mateo gone from Gerona. He is comforted, however, by a visit with Mosén Francisco, who is hiding in the home of the Campistol sisters, dressmakers and devout Catholics who have employed Pilar Alvear in their shop. Mosén Francisco informs Ignacio that he was at César's side at the moment of his death, and was able to give him communion. The two have a lengthy discussion, in which Ignacio reiterates some of his objections to the Church in Spain, and is answered by Mosén Francisco, in a manner much different from that of Mosén Alberto. Ignacio asks the priest:

¿No cree usted que los errores cometidos han sido graves? La religión que predicamos en España ha sido siempre terriblemente triste y defensiva.

A mosén Francisco no le gustaba el tema, pero Ignacio, a quien invariablemente el vicario conseguía cautivar, insistió en él.

--Defensiva, tal vez . . . --arguyó el vicario--. El pecado existe, compréndelo. En cuanto a triste, no creo que tengas razón. Lo que ocurre es que los mandamientos de la ley de Dios son "jabón que no lava,"

van contra los instintos y ello en un país como el nuestro, sensual por naturaleza, resulta insoportable.

Ignacio se quedó meditabundo.

--En el Seminario nos machacaban con dos ideas obsesivas: la tierra es un valle de lágrimas y hay que despreciar el cuerpo.

--Nunca dije yo eso--adujo mosén Francisco--. En la tierra se puede reír, tú mismo a temporadas te has reído mucho; y despreciar el cuerpo es propio de miopes, habida cuenta de que existe el misterio de la Resurrección.

Ignacio miró al vicario y, parodiando el tono de mosén Alberto, evocó aquello tan antiguo: "¿De qué te servirá ganar el mundo si pierdes tu alma?"

--Planteado de este modo--añadió el muchacho-- es una invitación al fatalismo, a no esforzarse aquí abajo, a cruzarse de brazos. Resulta poco consolador.

--De pronto, Ignacio agregó--: ¿Sabe usted lo que me dijo una vez un compañero del Banco, la Torre de Babel?

--No, no lo sé.

--Me dijo que si cerraba los ojos y recordaba la iglesia española, no veía sino dos colores; el negro, o sea el luto, y el amarillo, o sea el oro.

Mosén Francisco reaccionó. Dejó caer la colilla y miró hacia la ventana, desde la cual se veían los campanarios. Por un momento se olvidó de Ignacio y admitió que, efectivamente, el día en que aquella persecución cesara--"todas las persecuciones cesan un día u otro," les había dicho a las hermanas Campistol--, deberían ensayar otro lenguaje, superar la rutina. El mismo había comprobado que, en cuanto desde el púlpito o en el confesionario glosaba algún pasaje poco conocido de la vida de Jesús, todo el mundo redoblaba la atención. Ahora bien: ¡esto era difícil! Al hombre español le faltaba el contacto con los animales y las plantas, es decir, con todo aquello que no era humano y que por su misma inferioridad invitaba a ser generoso, invitaba a dulcificar la vida cotidiana.

Sin embargo, Ignacio exageraba, como siempre, porque existía una desproporción entre su avidez de verdad y su experiencia real. Mosén Francisco le dijo a Ignacio que la religión española tenía otros muchos colores además del negro y el amarillo. Tenía el blanco, que era el de la indiscutible castidad de la mayor parte de sus ministros. Tenía el gris, que era el de los incontables párrocos que ejercían en el anónimo su

ministerio, en pueblos y en iglesias oscuras. Tenía el azul, que era el de los misioneros que surcaban sin cesar el mar, y tenía el color de los sabios. Y, además, tenía el color rojo, que era el de la sangre vertida.

--No hay aquí trampa, Ignacio. Los sacerdotes españoles damos la vida por nuestra fe. Podemos haber errado en el detalle, pero hemos predicado el Evangelio puro, y los que ahora mueren abrasados se convierten en antorchas de Dios. En conjunto, y repasando la historia, las conquistas, y pensando en la aridez de nuestro suelo, formamos, creo yo, una milicia digna; y estoy seguro de que en los momentos difíciles como este recibimos la asistencia del Espíritu Santo. Verás como todo esto pasa, Ignacio, y como la Iglesia renace con brío. Verás como lo eterno está de nuestra parte y que mudos quedarán los fusiles. Por otro lado, no te parece casi un privilegio ejercer el ministerio en un lugar de la tierra en que la gente conmina a los sacerdotes diciéndonos: "Sed perfectos o de lo contrario conoceréis nuestra ira?" Ello, andando el tiempo, hará nacer alas en nuestros costados. No falsees tu visión, Ignacio. No es cierto que todo aquel que mata tenga razones para hacerlo. El pecado existe, lo repito, y existe Satanás. Además, ningún hombre tiene derecho a castigar en bloque una determinada colectividad; ello es privativo de Dios.<sup>5</sup>

Ignacio informs his mother of his visit with Mosén Francisco and tells her that she will be able to attend mass in his room the following Sunday. Carmen Elgazu is overjoyed and goes to the home of the Campistol sisters, accompanied by Pilar. The two attend mass after confessing their sins of hatred and unwillingness to forgive.

Ignacio goes to Barcelona to visit Marta, at the request of her mother, and informs the girl of the execution of her father at the hands of a firing squad for his part in the

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 134-136.

unsuccessful revolt. Ignacio promises his sweetheart that he will stand by her, and advises her not to be afraid. He then leaves the apartment where Marta is hidden, and immediately telephones Ana María, whom he has not seen in three years, and arranges for a meeting. Although he professes to be in love with Marta, it is evident that Ignacio has not forgotten Ana María and that he wishes to be in her company once again. The two discuss their happy days together at the beach three years before, and what has happened to them since. Ignacio feels like another person when he is with Ana María, and attempts to speak poetry to her. The girl asks him if he has a sweetheart, and Ignacio quickly replies that he does not.

Mosén Francisco finds it necessary to flee to Barcelona, since he realizes that his hiding place in Gerona has been discovered. Ignacio directs the priest to the photography shop of Ezechiel, who has hidden Marta. The photographer is willing to hide the priest also, and Mosén Francisco begins to make plans for the exercise of his ministry in Barcelona.

Christmas of 1936 is difficult for the Alvears. Ignacio succeeds in tuning in a forbidden radio broadcast from Nationalist Spain, and the family listens devoutly to the Christmas carols which are played. They then light candles and in this manner celebrate the sacred occasion. The eyes of all the Alvears continually look at the empty place at the table, which once belonged to César.

Ignacio, realizing that he will soon be drafted into the Loyalist army, decides to volunteer for service in the medical corps. Matías Alvear, Carmen Elgazu, and Pilar feel deep emotion as Ignacio, who is now twenty years of age, leaves Gerona to enter military service in Barcelona. They do not know whether they will ever see each other again, since Ignacio plans to attempt to escape to the Nationalist front when the opportunity presents itself.

Ignacio enters the medical corps in Barcelona and finds a room at a pensión, where another medical corpsman, Moncho, is also lodged. The two soon become good friends. Moncho is also an enemy of the Popular Front and wishes to escape to the other side.

As the days and weeks pass, Ignacio spends much time with Ana María. Marta is no longer in Barcelona, having fled with her mother through the aid of the Guatemalan embassy. Ana María's father, who has been arrested by the Communists, is in prison and the girl has been taken in by a certain Gaspar Ley and his wife. Ignacio is jealous of Gaspar Ley and realizes that he is becoming increasingly attracted to Ana María. He feels toward her much as he did years before. He does not tell her about Marta, however. Ana María, for her part, is in love with Ignacio and tells him so.

Ignacio and Moncho plan to flee into Nationalist Spain together. They fear that their disloyalty to the Loyalist



regime has been discovered by some of their fellow corpsmen, and seek and obtain a transfer to Madrid, where they hope to be able to cross the lines into Nationalist-occupied territory. Before leaving Barcelona, Ignacio sees Ana María to say goodbye. The girl comes to his pensión for the first time. Overcome with emotion, they embrace and kiss passionately, and Ana María finally tears herself from Ignacio and runs from the pensión. Ignacio follows her down the hall, where his landlady is sitting, witnessing the scene. Ignacio immediately allows himself to be seduced by the woman, whose advances prove too much for the boy in his excited state. He then goes to the apartment of Ezechiel to say goodbye to him and Mosén Francisco, who asks Ignacio if he does not need to go to confession. Ignacio replies that he does not. His lack of desire for confession seems to be another indication of his inconsistency.

After arriving in Madrid, Ignacio comes to see his Anarchist cousin, José Alvear, who had visited with the Alvear's in Gerona. José is now a captain in the Loyalist army. He at first refuses to tell Ignacio whether he will help him to escape. He finally agrees to aid his cousin in crossing the lines, which are drawn a short distance outside the city. Ignacio must escape alone, however; José will not allow Moncho to accompany them. José leads Ignacio through the lines to the edge of no-man's land. They then enter a dark tunnel in

which they make their way painstakingly by flashlight. After a quarter of an hour, the two reach the end of the tunnel and find themselves in the midst of no-man's land, near the Nationalist lines. José then tells Ignacio goodbye, and directs him to shout that he is crossing over. Ignacio follows his cousin's instructions and walks forward toward the Nationalist sentries, who are all Moors. They seize him threateningly and beat him, until a regular officer appears and questions Ignacio. After checking the story which Ignacio relates, the officer permits him to leave for Valladolid, where he hopes to be reunited with Marta, now that he finds himself separated from Ana María.

Ignacio is hurt and disappointed when he arrives in Valladolid at the apartment of the widow of Major Martínez de Soria and learns from her that Marta has gone to Berlin at the invitation of the Nazi Party. Ignacio, who has never felt any attraction toward the Phalange, is angry that Marta has gone to Germany on a Phalangist mission.

Ignacio leaves Valladolid and goes to Burgos, where he wishes to visit an uncle, a brother of Matías Alvear. He learns from his aunt, however, that Matías' brother has been murdered by a Phalangist patrol, much as César had been killed by the Communists and Anarchists. Ignacio does not know what to say to his uncle's widow and to his cousin, a young woman

named Paz Alvear, whose head has been shaved by the Phalangists as punishment for her collaboration with the enemy.

After his visit in Burgos, Ignacio returns to Valladolid and has his reunion with Marta, who has returned from Germany. Their meeting leaves something to be desired. It seems that their long separation and his renewed passion for Ana María have caused Ignacio's love for Marta to grow cold.

Ignacio is happy, however, when he learns a few days later that his friend Moncho has also succeeded in joining the Nationalist troops. Moncho comes directly to Valladolid and meets Ignacio there, according to their pre-arranged plan. They decide to volunteer for service in the ski patrol, and are accepted by a unit in the Valley of Teña in Galicia.

The beginning of 1938 is a time of disaster for the Loyalist troops, as Franco's army regroups and recaptures Teruel, a city which had fallen to the Popular Front a few weeks before. It has become apparent that the victory of the right-wing forces is only a matter of time.

Ignacio and Moncho join a small patrol composed of farm boys from the valley of Teña itself, who are stationed at a lonely outpost high in the mountains near the French border. Upon reporting, Ignacio learns that the lieutenant in charge had known César. He had been a boarder at the school where César attended the seminary. The lieutenant weeps quietly when Ignacio tells him that César had been shot by the Communists.

Ignacio begins to learn how to ski, and finds his new life interesting and entirely unlike anything he had ever experienced. The soldiers pass time playing cards, singing, and reading and re-reading their mail. The first time that Ignacio must stand guard, he finds himself afraid, having order to shoot at the slightest suspicion. He occupies his mind during the hours of loneliness thinking about Marta, Ana María and César.

The Nationalists enter Catalonia and capture the city of Lérida. Mosén Alberto is among the Catalonians who wish to be the first to return to their native province. He has been deeply impressed by the death of a Basque priest, José Manuel Iturralde, who was executed for political activity on behalf of the Popular Front. The priest, who was motivated to support the Loyalist cause because of his intense Basque nationalism, had made his last confession to Mosén Alberto.

Mosén Alberto fue arrancado de la cama a las dos de la madrugada. El cura gerundense, sin saber de qué se trataba, siguió a sus dos acompañantes armados y se personó en la pensión. Allí, sin apenas preámbulo, se encontró a boca de jarro con el reverendo José Manuel Iturralde, el cual vestía de paisano. Los requetés dejaron solos a los dos sacerdotes. El reverendo José Manuel Iturralde tenía un aspecto vigoroso y enérgico, con las mandíbulas autoritarias. Sus muñecas habían sido esposadas. Mosén Alberto, al saber de quién se trataba experimentó aguda inquietud.<sup>6</sup>

The Basque priest confesses that he has actively supported the Popular Front, hoping that the Basque people would win

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid, pp. 557-558.

their independence. For this reason he had gone to the front lines and had even fired a machine gun.

Creía que la causa era justa y seguía creyéndolo. Siempre entendió que el sacerdote debía estar de parte de los obreros y, pese a los desmanes y errores que estos cometieran, opinaba que el pueblo vasco acabaría por imponer su sentido común y su tendencia a la solidaridad, en tanto que del lado de Franco inevitablemente no podía esperarse otra cosa que el predominio de los poderosos. "No puedo arrepentirme de lo que hice, no puedo."<sup>7</sup>

--Así que, reverendo padre, de lo único que me acuso es de no haber amado a Dios sobre todas las cosas. En conciencia reconozco que sólo he conseguido esto en algunos momentos de mi vida. Normalmente he vivido pensando en mí y en otras personas, en mí y en mi prójimo. --El reverendo José Manuel Iturralde iba bajando la cabeza cada vez más--. Y también en el pueblo vasco. Esto ha sido . . . como una obsesión.

Perdono a quienes me han condenado y van a disparar contra mí. Y vuelvo a acusarme de haber pospuesto el amor de Dios. En cuanto a mi vida pasada . . . no sé. Desde que fui ordenado, muchas veces cedí a la tentación de la gula. Muchas veces, eso es. Y otras muchas he sido soberbio. Me sentía fuerte . . . y pecaba de soberbia. Me arrepiento ante Dios. Y le pido perdón por tener miedo. Y . . . nada más.<sup>8</sup>

Mosén Alberto does not know what to say; for perhaps the first time he considers himself extremely unworthy. He attempts to admonish the partially penitent priest, but the words fail him.

También a mí me atemoriza pensar que dentro de poco verá usted a Dios cara a cara. Me siento pequeño a su lado, Nada, una alma apegada a la tierra. Le

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 558-559.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 559.

reugo, hijo mío, que esté tranquilo. Se lo digo en nombre del Señor. Y solloce, solloce cuanto quiera; es humano y el Señor lo comprende. También yo siento ganas de llorar, pero no soy digno de hacerlo, como lo es usted . . . . Esta es su última confesión, su último acto de humildad. Prepárese a recibir la absolución. Voy a dársela al instante, en nombre del Señor.<sup>9</sup>

Mosén Alberto feels unworthy, humbled as perhaps never before. After giving the absolution to the condemned man, he kneels and asks to be allowed to make his own confession. He does so, following which the Basque priest is led away and shot by a Nationalist firing squad, an act which violates all military statutes in handling a priest in the same manner as any other prisoner, since the clergy supposedly come under the jurisdiction of the hierarchy.

Following his experience with the condemned priest, Mosén Alberto seems to be a changed man. He ceases his loud, authoritarian preaching, in which he has always delighted, and seeks to aid those citizens who have been sentenced to death by the "liberating" Nationalist troops in Catalonia. His efforts are usually in vain, however, and he must see many innocent people go to their death after being denounced by some informer, often for petty reasons based on jealousy.

As the war draws rapidly to an end, Mosén Francisco, who has been hearing confessions and even distributing communion clandestinely in Barcelona, decides to go to the front

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 560-561.

to aid the dying Loyalist troops, feeling that perhaps there might be some among them who would be glad to have the chance to confess their sins at the hour of death. He dresses as a soldier, and attempts to hear the confession of a number of men, who, when they learn that he is a priest, curse loudly and express their desire to die without a priest. He escapes detection, however, amid the chaos of the battlefield. Later, as he enters a restroom in what had once been a seminary and is now a headquarters for the Loyalist troops, he happens to confront the Communist leader from Gerona, Cosme Vila, who recognizes him at once. Mosén Francisco is immediately arrested and returned to Gerona as a prisoner.

Ignacio's unit advances eastward through the Pyrenees, as the Loyalist militiamen are forced into a hasty retreat. In March of 1939 Nationalist troops, accompanied by Mosén Alberto, arrive in Gerona. The priest's first thought is to have a solemn Te Deum chanted in the cathedral, which he himself conducts with due pomp and circumstance, much as before the war. The Te Deum is the scene of a joyous reunion between Ignacio and the other members of the Alvear family, who are already in the Cathedral as Ignacio enters, near the end of the service. The war has at last ended, and the Alvear family is happy for the first time since the death of César almost three years before.

Mosén Francisco does not survive the war. Cosme Vila has reserved what he considers a most fitting death for the sole representative of the Church left in Gerona as the Nationalist troops approach. He forces the priest to stand in a niche in a wall, large enough for a man to stand in upright, and then has the niche plastered shut, causing the victim to die of suffocation. Mosén Francisco dies reciting Psalms hours before the Nationalist troops arrive in the city, accompanied by the triumphant Mosén Alberto.

Ignacio is reunited with his Phalangist sweetheart, Marta, and Pilar is reunited with Mateo, whose safe return to Gerona is another occasion of joy to Ignacio.

As the war ends, Ignacio is entering manhood after years of inner conflict and unrest. He is still not completely sure of his future, since even after his felicitous reunion with Marta he still thinks of Ana María. He went to visit the girl while passing through Barcelona en route to Gerona. Ana María, who had learned the truth about Ignacio and Marta from Mosén Francisco while he was still in Barcelona, spoke harshly to Ignacio:

. . . al escuchar de labios de la chica la ir-  
rebatible acusación: "Has jugado conmigo de una  
manera innoble," Ignacio se sinceró: "No tanto como  
crees. Te digo la verdad. Nunca he tenido la  
certeza de que lo de Marta y yo fuera definitivo.  
Tampoco la tengo ahora. Por favor, demos tiempo al  
tiempo . . . ."10

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 797.



At this point the novel is concluded. The reader does not know what the future holds for Ignacio, nor for the other characters. The holocaust of the Civil War is over, however, and all the members of the Alvear family have survived, with the exception of César.

The comments made at the end of the preceding chapter regarding the style and literary merits of Los cipreses creen en Dios, are equally applicable to Un millón de muertos, which is written in a very similar manner. The principal difference is one of content and of period of time. The first novel considers the events leading up to the outbreak of hostilities; the second deals with the war itself and all the atrocities and horror which accompany it. The author has thus completed the task he had assigned himself of writing a novel which would give an impartial, balanced view of the true situation in Spain during the war. Gironella has himself stated in the following words his purpose in writing Un millón de muertos:

UN MILLÓN DE MUERTOS pretende ser una respuesta ordenada y metódica a varias obras escritas fuera de España y que han tenido influencia decisiva sobre el concepto que los lectores de Europa y de América se han forjado de nuestra guerra. Tales obras son: L'Espoir, de Malraux; ¿Por quién doblan las campanas? de Hemingway; Un testamento español, de Koestler; Les grands cimetières sous la lune, de Bernaos, y la trilogía de Arturo Barea, La Forja, La Ruta y La Llama. Dichas obras, aparte los valores literarios que puedan contener, no resisten un análisis profundo. Parcelan a capricho el drama de nuestra Patria, rebosan de folklore y en el momento de enfrentarse resueltamente con el tema, con su magnitud, esconden el rabo. A menudo, pecan de injustas, de arbitrarias y producen

en el lector enterado una notoria sensación de incomodidad. También pretende ser mi obra una crónica para los propios españoles, tan escasamente dotados para abrazar sin apasionamiento la totalidad de los hechos. Ni siquiera los protagonistas del conflicto suelen tener idea clara de lo que sucedió. Cada cual recuerda su aventura y dogmatiza más o menos sobre el área en que se movió, marrando lamentablemente al referirse a lo ocurrido más al Norte o más al Sur, y no digamos al juzgar la zona opuesta, a zona enemiga. Ahí la ignorancia causa estupor. Quienes vivieron sólo en la España "nacional" tienen una noción turbiamente acuarelística de lo que fue la España "roja" y quienes sólo vivieron en esta zona, ignoran por completo lo que significaron en la otra los términos disciplina, convicción providencialista, embriaguez victoriosa. En cuanto a la juventud, a los españoles de menos de veinticinco años, manejan el tema con obligadas frivolidad e incompetencia.<sup>11</sup>

Has Gironella been objective and impartial, and is his novel what it purports to be? This question has been widely debated. Most critics apparently feel that the author has honestly attempted to be fair and impartial in his treatment of the war. Whether he has succeeded in doing so is another matter. An American critic, commenting upon Los cipreses creen en Dios and Un millón de muertos, discusses the question of the author's impartiality:

Gironella himself was born in Gerona and like César attended an ecclesiastical seminary. Like Ignacio he left the seminary in distaste and became a clerk in the Banco Arnus. From 1936 to 1939 he fought at the front in the civil war. So the question arises as to whether history can be set down impartially by any man who played an active part in it. Would it be a Spanish Fascist or Republican, Free Mason or Catholic, who might be expected to develop the degree of detachment which would enable him to write of the Spanish Civil War as an outsider would? But who, in our time, remained an outsider, and aloof from the drama of Spain's civil war? The honor of all men was implicated in that

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

struggle, for the issue of man standing weaponless and alone before organized power had never been more heroically defined.

Gironella is a regular contributor to the organ of the Spanish monarchist paper, ABC, and he states that his articles in that paper have "acquired a national importance, because in them, for the first time since the Civil War, a writer has publicly denounced things that are not going as they ought to in this country." How guarded criticism of the present regime must be in order to appear in the pages of any Spanish newspaper is another question which required an answer. But if Gironella, for the sake of finding a publisher for his book in totalitarian Spain, and for the sake of continuing as a contributor to the ABC has told the story of the five years preceding the outbreak of civil war with shrewdness, he has also told it artistically well. "Your crusade is wonderful," Ignacio says to his fellow-student, the Falangist leader, Mateo, "except that nobody knows where he's going or whom he's rescuing. You call for discipline, danger, and joy. In other words, to die singing. What for? For many years people here have died singing, and above all they've been sung after they were dead. What most of them want is to sing while they're still alive."<sup>12</sup>

Throughout Los cipreses crecen en Dios and Un millón de muertos, the figures of two priests stand out. Two distinct types of clergyman seem to be represented by these men, Mosén Alberto and Mosén Francisco. Mosén Alberto glories in the prestige and prominence which his position as a priest gives him. He is, at least until the war has progressed into its latter stages, complacent and self-assured. His attitude toward the working class and toward the poor in general leaves much to be desired.

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<sup>12</sup>Kay Boyle, "Spain Divided, "Nation, CLXXX (June 11, 1955), 507.

He seems to be lacking in sympathy and understanding. Mosén Alberto apparently feels that the Spanish people belong in church, and if they are not there, that they are to be blamed for their absence. Mosén Francisco, on the other hand, after having taken issue with Mosén Alberto one day regarding the latter's treatment of the prisoners in the Gerona jail, goes to pray in an empty church, and thinks to himself that the Church has failed utterly in winning the people over to Christianity.

Mosén Alberto is a man who finds it difficult, even impossible, to like certain people. He tends to divide every group, whether it be a convent of nuns or a family, into two classes, those whom he likes, and those toward whom he feels antipathy. Mosén Alberto is disliked, in turn, by many. His failure in ministering to the left-wing rebels who had been imprisoned in the Gerona jail two years before the beginning of the Civil War demonstrates Mosén Alberto's inability to deal with those outside the fold.

Mosén Francisco, on the other hand, finds it easy to like people, and to help them when the need arises, regardless of their identity and political affiliation. At the end of the war he boldly goes to the front lines and attempts to give the last rites of the Church to any dying Communist or Anarchist soldier who might desire them. This is something which Mosén Alberto would never attempt.

The attitude of the two priests in the wake of the unsuccessful right-wing revolt in Gerona is quite different. Mosén Alberto, realizing that he will be killed by his enemies if he remains in Gerona and is discovered, is one of the first to flee the city. Mosén Francisco, however, unconcerned with his own personal safety, goes to the cemetery dressed as a militiaman and gives the last rites to the dying. Mosén Francisco's behavior is consistent throughout the war. He always seeks an opportunity to exercise his priestly office. He hears confessions on a park bench in Barcelona. At one point he even feigns being a wounded militiaman, and conceals consecrated Hosts in the bandages which he has on his head, in order to distribute communion to devout Catholics. Mosén Alberto, on the other hand, after reaching safety in Nationalist Spain, becomes the chaplain of a group of nuns and delights in preaching to them in a highly oratorical manner.

During the last months of the Civil War it seems that Mosén Alberto begins to realize for the first time that his attitude has been far from perfect. His hearing of the last confession of the condemned Basque priest, Iturralde, and his realization that the Nationalist occupation forces have falsely and unjustly condemned many citizens to death for collaborating with the "Reds," have shaken the priest and made him less complacent. The reader wonders if perhaps

Mosén Alberto will change and become more fervent and spiritual, more like Mosén Francisco. Upon the triumphal entry of the Nationalist troops into Gerona, however, Mosén Alberto's old love for pomp and ceremony returns. He eagerly seeks processions in which he has an important role to play, and on one occasion he wishes that the officer's car in which he is riding were a convertible. It seems likely that Mosén Alberto, with his prestige restored and even increased, since the death of the Bishop of Gerona at the hands of the militia, may become more complacent and self-seeking than ever. Perhaps he will himself become the next Bishop of Gerona.

The reader is led to believe that the humble, self-effacing Mosén Francisco will soon be forgotten by the people of Gerona as life returns to normal and the citizens of the city return to their everyday business. One feels that Mosén Alberto may have been very truthful when he told the Basque priest that the most worthy and most zealous priests have been called upon to give their lives in the conflict and the less worthy have been spared.

## CHAPTER VI

### MUJER, LEVÁNTATE Y ANDA

The most recent novel by Gironella, Mujer, levántate y anda, is quite unlike any of the author's previous works. It is also the shortest of his novels, containing only 168 pages. Two of the characters symbolize Christ and Satan, who contend for the soul of the protagonist, Myriam. Gironella describes his novel as "una novela escrita pensando en el 'combate eternamente renovado,' en la lucha que sostienen desde el principio de los tiempos el pecado y la gracia."<sup>1</sup>

The protagonist, Myriam, is a woman of thirty-three years of age, but who appears to be forty. She lives in Rome and earns her living by serving as an interpreter in various hotels of the city. The history of Myriam is that of a woman who bears the scars of war. Her parents have been killed in a bombing attack. Myriam often repeats the words "Yo morí en un bombardeo."<sup>2</sup> Her home had been in some country in Eastern Europe. "Podía ser Rumania, . . . Yugoslavia, . . . Checoslovaquia."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>José María Gironella, Mujer, levántate y anda (Barcelona, 1964), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

Myriam, who lives in a centrally located albergo, does not lead a normal life. She suffers from spasms which sometimes afflict her intermittently during entire nights. She suffers from feelings of abandonment. Myriam is irritated by the presence of the churches in Rome, since she has no religious faith. She often asks herself why prayer and religion have not disappeared from contemporary life just as the Roman emperors disappeared.

Myriam is called to serve as an interpreter for a famous space physicist, Dr. Hauer, who has come to Rome to preside over a scientific gathering. Hauer is a Swiss German who cannot speak Italian. As Myriam translates for the scientist, she becomes aware of his scientific beliefs about the significance of modern life. Hauer feels that man will eventually attain immortality and that the exploration of space will destroy old superstitions. Science, to him, is synonymous with the eventual enthronement of man in the universe. At the end of her first day's work with Hauer, Myriam returns to her apartment in the albergo and watches television with her landlord. She is startled to see Hauer appear on the screen, and witnesses an interview in which the physicist is the center of interest. She learns more about Hauer from the televised interview. He is a bachelor, interested in superstitions, and has the idiosyncrasy of collecting dice from all over the world. Hauer



expresses the viewpoint that there is no great difference between primitive and modern man. Both have the same violent passions which are too strong to resist. Hauer further states that his God is the universe itself and that he believes in logic rather than in fate.

Myriam has been deeply moved by what she has heard and seen. The stage has been set for her eventual surrender to Hauer. Myriam is a woman who, "tratándose de las relaciones hombre-mujer era de una simplicidad extrema. Si el hombre le gustaba, no pedía explicaciones."<sup>4</sup> "En cualquier caso, Hauer le gustó,"<sup>5</sup> After four days of work in Hauer's hotel suite, Myriam asks him "¿Por qué no me invita usted a quedarme? No soy ninguna niña."<sup>6</sup> After one week spent with Hauer, Myriam feels that she has fallen in love with the scientist, without really wanting to. Her nervous spasms cease and it seems that a void in her life has been filled. Hauer reveals to Myriam, during their long walks through Rome, that he is preoccupied with death. He has even devised a theory, whereby at the moment of death he would have himself launched into space in the hope of attaining immortality. He also tells Myriam that he has a phobia about Jesus Christ and also that he has a desire to crush the weak and defenseless. He considers ambition to be the supreme motivating

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

force. Hauer disagrees with Myriam on one vital point: while she does not believe in God, he does. Hauer believes, however, in an evil God.

Myriam loves Hauer, and wishes to remain with him. The scientist repeatedly tells the girl, however, that his work in Rome is nearly done and that he must be moving on. He takes leave of Myriam by means of a terse note. She thinks of suicide after reading the note and realizing that Hauer has abandoned her. She experiences feelings of hatred toward the scientist, as well as toward herself, and thinks that she would be capable of killing him if she had the chance. As she contemplates suicide, Myriam sees a second television interview whose subject will also exert a great influence upon her life.

The interview is with a certain Dr. Enmanuele, a psychiatrist, who is a native of Rome and who is presiding over a meeting of psychiatrists. Dr. Enmanuele is, like Hauer, a bachelor. As Myriam watches the interview and listens to Dr. Enmanuele, she compares him to Hauer. He reveals himself to be a man of deep religious faith, with viewpoints contrasting those of Hauer. He insists on the ultimate responsibility of all individuals for their actions, and regards the indifference of mankind as the greatest evil in the world. When the interview is over, Myriam continues to think about Dr. Enmanuele and finally decides to visit the

psychiatrist in his office, hoping to find alleviation of the nervous disorders from which she is again suffering.

The first meeting between Myriam and the psychiatrist does not result in complete satisfaction for Myriam, because the doctor does not give her time to relate to him everything she wishes. But during the second visit, he tells Myriam that she is suffering from "una desenfrenada ansia de placer."<sup>7</sup> "Usted busca, tal vez sin darse cuenta, con tenacidad fanática, el placer. Probablemente, ahí radica el tumor de que le he hablado."<sup>8</sup> Myriam reveals that she has performed masochistic actions and tells Dr. Enmanuele all of her experiences with Hauer. The doctor, upon hearing Hauer's name, becomes disturbed and questions Myriam about the scientist. Myriam asks Dr. Enmanuele if he knows Hauer, and he replies: "Yo no he dicho esto, he dicho que sé perfectamente quién es."<sup>9</sup> He adds "Hace muchos años que voy teniendo periódicamente noticias de Hauer. De modo que lo que voy a decirle a Ud. no es ninguna improvisación."<sup>10</sup> Myriam is amazed by the fact that Dr. Enmanuele knows so much about Hauer without being acquainted with him personally. The psychiatrist notes her perplexity and says:

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

Sé tantas cosas de Hauer porque, por encima de cualquier otro tema, me interesa el tema religioso; y se da la circunstancia de que Hauer es algo más que un monstruo de inteligencia, de soberbia y de egoísmo como usted dijo. Hauer es el propio Satanás.<sup>11</sup>

Dr. Enmanuele makes it clear to Myriam that he is speaking seriously, and that he actually considers Hauer to be the personification of Satan. He tells Myriam that Satan has appeared on earth in the form of Hauer to lead souls to perdition. Myriam does not know whether to laugh or to weep upon hearing the doctor's fantastic assertions. He tells her:

Una simple ojeada sobre el mundo, sobre la sociedad y sobre los individuos, demostraba mejor que cualquier otro argumento que el Príncipe del Mal existía, que circulaba por la Tierra "con poderes prácticamente absolutos."<sup>12</sup>

The doctor then explains to Myriam that Satan, in the person of Dr. Hauer, has intentionally made love to her and subsequently abandoned her in the hope that she would commit suicide and thus go to her perdition.

Myriam does not know how to accept what she considers to be the figments of Dr. Enmanuele's imagination. She feels, nonetheless, a need for the doctor's counsel and considers him to be her only hope of recovery. Dr. Enmanuele predicts that Hauer will return to try to complete his attempt at achieving Myriam's damnation.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 114-115.

Dr. Enmanuele reveals to Myriam his viewpoint regarding happiness and pleasure. He believes that the only possibility of achieving true happiness in life is to be found in the renunciation of pleasure. "Unicamente renunciando obtendrá usted lo que busca."<sup>13</sup> True love is, according to Dr. Enmanuele, a reverse process: "Amar era realizar la operación a la inversa, buscar no la dicha propia, sino la dicha de los demás."<sup>14</sup> These words express Dr. Enmanuele's basic philosophy, and are in contrast to Hauer's desire to "aplastar al débil."<sup>15</sup>

Myriam protests to Dr. Enmanuele that she does not want to love another, because "amé a Hauer y ha sido una catástrofe."<sup>16</sup> Whereupon the doctor answers:

Yo no le estoy hablando de ese tipo de amor, Myriam. Hauer sedujo a usted como a una colegiala. Se sintió usted fascinada por él, halagada. Usted no lo ha amado nunca en el sentido exacto que yo doy a esa palabra. Y lo celebro. Porque amar a Satanás equivale a la perdición.<sup>17</sup>

The prediction of Dr. Enmanuele is realized when Hauer returns to Rome and calls Myriam, asking her to come to meet him in his hotel. Myriam accepts his invitation and goes immediately to see Hauer. When she enters his room, he kisses her and receives a slap in the face. Amazed at Myriam's

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 128

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

behavior, he tries with every means at his disposal to cause Myriam to weaken, at first without success.

Hauer questions Myriam to find out precisely what has caused the change in attitude toward him. He asks her if there is another man, and learns about Dr. Enmanuele. Hauer then begins to speak of Dr. Enmanuele in such a way that Myriam realizes that the doctor is no stranger to her former lover. Hauer finally states: "El doctor Enmanuele es Jesús, llamado Cristo."<sup>18</sup> Myriam's confusion reaches new heights upon hearing the declaration of the space physicist. Is she really to believe either of the ridiculous assertions, that of Dr. Enmanuele that Hauer is actually Satan, and that of Hauer, that the doctor is really Jesus Christ? Myriam tells Hauer that Dr. Enmanuele has predicted that he would return to Rome to lead her to damnation.

Hauer guardó su pañuelo en el bolsillo y avanzó un paso en dirección a Myriam.

--Pues mira por donde se equivocó! --Su semblante se suavizó--. Precisamente he regresado por todo lo contrario . . . .

Myriam no se movió.

--¿De veras?

--¿De veras! --Hauer avanzó un paso más--. He regresado para acabar con todos los equívocos y hacerte la mujer más feliz del mundo . . . .

Myriam, ante la proximidad del rostro de Hauer, se estremeció. No supo lo que le ocurrió. La arrolladora humanidad de este le despertó recuerdos dormidos, la hizo olvidar de golpe toda dialéctica del doctor Enmanuele y la dejó sin resistencia.

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 145.

--¡Ah, sí? --dijo--. ¿Y cómo te las vas a arreglar?

--Queriéndote . . . --susurró Hauer--.  
 Queriéndote . . . como el doctor Enmanuele aconseja hacerlo: sin pedir nada a cambio . . .  
 De veras. No es necesario que des nada . . .  
 No tienes más que aceptar . . .

Myriam, entonces, vió en primer plano los labios de Hauer.

--Por favor, Hauer . . . . Por favor . . . .<sup>19</sup>

A new love affair takes place, of several weeks duration, at the end of which Myriam is again abandoned by Hauer. Myriam then learns that she is pregnant. She is at the point of despair and thinks about procuring an abortion. She has not seen Dr. Enmanuele since the beginning of her second affair with Hauer. The doctor has persisted in calling her by telephone, however, and finally succeeds in persuading her to come to his office. When she tells the doctor that she is pregnant, his hands tremble and he predicts that the child will be born horribly deformed.

Once again the truth of Dr. Enmanuele's prediction is borne out. The child, born prematurely, has only one eye, located in the middle of its forehead.

De pronto, a los siete meses justos, la naturaleza dijo: "Ahora." Y se produjo el acontecimiento: el parto prematuro. Ocurrió en la propia habitación de Myriam, en el albergó. Nació, en efecto, un monstruo. Un amasijo de carne, de un solo ojo, con un pequeño corazón que latía con fuerza y con ritmo regulares. Un monstruo que lloró una sola vez.

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 151-152.

Cuando llegó el doctor Enmanuele, todo el mundo retrocedió. El doctor permaneció al lado de la cama, impertérrito. El ojo del monstruo se abrió un instante: hubiérase dicho que miró al doctor, y luego volvió a cerrarse.

Myriam, al ver el fruto de sus entrañas, había dado un alarido. Pero lo había reclamado para sí y lo había tomado en sus brazos y lo había besado, lo había llenado de besos: tanto sentía resonar en su interior los latidos fuertes y rítmicos del diminuto corazón que acababa de nacer.

--¡Es mi hijo! --había gritado--. ¡Es mi hijo!

Al ver al doctor volvió a gritar:

--¡Doctor, es mi hijo!

El monstruo, hijo de Hauer y de Myriam, vivió artificialmente por espacio de un mes. A lo largo de ese mes la actitud de Myriam no varió. La muchacha cuidó de aquel amasijo de carne y se mostró dispuesta a cuidarlo durante años si fuera necesario. Durante toda su vida.

El doctor Enmanuele fue testigo de excepción de la heroica postura adoptada por Myriam, quien se empeñó en que Hauer no se enterara nunca de lo ocurrido. El doctor Enmanuele se sintió tan hondamente impresionado por la conducta de la muchacha, que el día en que el monstruo dejó de latir--no sin antes abrir de nuevo el ojo para mirar al doctor Enmanuele--le dijo a Myriam:

--Es muy posible, Myriam, que estas semanas de prolongado amor le hayan redimido a usted. Ha sido un amor modesto y heroico.

Myriam miró al doctor Enmanuele y rompió a llorar dulcemente.<sup>20</sup>

The theme of Mujer, levántate, y anda is basically a simple one; that there is a struggle going on in the world, a struggle which has been taking place since the beginning of time and which will continue as long as the human race exists--the struggle between good and evil, between sin and grace. Gironella's publisher comments upon the novel as follows:

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 166-168.



José M. Gironella, el novelista español más discutido y mas leído de nuestros días, aborda en esta novela un tema que, en su obra anterior, tan sólo había tratado de un modo marginal; el de la lucha entre la Gracia y el Pecado.

Myriam, joven apátrida, residente en Roma, de exterior abúlico y espíritu torturado, es arrastrada por la vorágine de dos fuerzas eternas y arrolladoras; Cristo, simbolizado en el psiquiatra Enmanuele, y Satanás, personalizado en el físico espacial Hauer. El juego de realidad y simbolismo llega a adquirir caracteres de alucinación, para desembocar en un final amargo, casi inaudito, en el que, no obstante, se adivina un limpio camino de amanecer.

Con esta obra, a la vez obsesionante y diáfana, de estructura lineal y estilo preciso, Gironella nos ofrece una visión magistral del hombre contemporáneo, destrozado por conflictos bélicos y crisis espirituales, pero sobre el que sigue gravitando la misericordia divina.<sup>21</sup>

Myriam becomes involved in the struggle between good and evil in a very direct manner. She becomes the object of contention between Satan and Christ, personified by Hauer and Dr. Enmanuele. Myriam falls in love with Hauer, or at least thinks she does. Dr. Enmanuele tells her, however, that what she has thought was love was actually nothing more than a selfish desire for pleasure. She has, according to his interpretation, become attached to Hauer for what he can do for her, and not because she loves him for himself in an unselfish manner. Only after the birth of her deformed child does Myriam really give of herself unselfishly to another in true love. This, according to Dr. Enmanuele, may prove to be her redemption. Gironella thus reveals his

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., publisher's cover jacket note.

conception of love and its importance in the practice of the Christian religion, for it is reasonable to assume that Dr. Enmanuele serves the author as his spokesman. Myriam is urged by Christ, in the person of the psychiatrist, to practice this disinterested, unselfish love, while Satan, personified by Hauer, influences Myriam to seek pleasure for its own sake. The implication in the last words of Dr. Enmanuele is that Myriam will be saved if she succeeds in experiencing true love, love for the sake of the beloved, and will be damned if she seeks merely her own pleasure without consideration for others, without really loving someone outside of herself and her own self-interest. Gironella cites a passage from the Gospels at the beginning of the novel:

Tú no has unguido con óleo mi cabeza, y ésta ha derramado sobre mis pies sus perfumes. Por todo lo cual te digo; que le son perdonados muchos pecados, porque ha amado mucho.<sup>22</sup>

In citing the words of Christ to the prostitute who entered the house of the Pharisee to wash His feet and anoint His head with precious ointment, Gironella reiterates the Christian concept that love is the chief and principal virtue to be exercised by Christians. Because of her sincere love, Christ was willing to overlook all the past failings

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<sup>22</sup>Nuevo Testamento (Madrid, 1959), pp. 47-48.

in the life of the prostitute, just as Christ in the person of Dr. Enmanuele feels that Myriam may be on the road to salvation because she has learned to live in a fashion that will atone for all her past mistakes and sins. The true love of which Dr. Enmanuele speaks may, or may not, be accompanied by physical love. Physical love sought for its own sake, however, in a desenfrenada ansia de placer will lead to perdition. This seems to be the theme of Mujer, levántate y anda.

It is interesting to note that Gironella has selected a famous scientist, a space physicist, to be the personification of Satan, and a psychiatrist to symbolize Christ. The author seems to feel that there is a danger in the modern world of relying too much upon natural science and upon the laboratory view of reality. Gironella's selection of a psychiatrist to personify Christ might at first seem surprising, in view of the anti-Christian sentiments of many psychiatrists. He seems to say, however, that psychiatry rightly understood is entirely compatible with a Christian philosophy of life. For Gironella, anxieties may stem from a failure to practice virtue, and the psychiatrist can and should attempt to aid his patients overcome their difficulties by giving their lives a new orientation, based on love in the Christian sense.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

It has been said by literary critics that José María Gironella does not represent a new literary trend, but rather that his style is a throw-back to the past. This observation has been made, for example, in regard to Los cipreses creen en Dios, which has been compared to the classic novels of the nineteenth century. Gironella's last novel, Mujer, levántate y anda, with its symbolism, would undoubtedly fail to fall within this description. The novels of Gironella, taken as a whole, however, do not seem to reveal anything new from the standpoint of literary style.

A similar observation might be made in regard to the basic underlying philosophy of the author as revealed in his novels. Gironella is not attempting to say anything new or radically different. His novels contain, on the contrary, a reaffirmation of traditional religious and moral values, values of the past which are, for the author, equally valid today. Gironella's novels take place in a twentieth-century setting, and deal with all the horrors and atrocities of modern warfare. In the midst of the chaos and utter destruction characteristic of this warfare,

Gironella looks to the traditional values of Christianity as the only hope for mankind. The religious values to be found in the novels of Gironella are ancient ones, re-affirmed and re-expressed in a present-day setting.

Gironella is thus in direct conflict with the literary movement known as tremendismo, which, as exemplified in the novels of Cela, for example, is an expression of disillusionment and despair. The characters in Cela's novels, confronted with the problems and difficulties of life in the modern world, and overwhelmed by the hostile environment in which they find themselves, react in a violent manner. Sexual aberrations and crimes of violence are encountered repeatedly. The protagonists of Gironella's novels react in a far different manner. They, too, face situations resulting from the horrors of war which seem unbearable. They do not despair, however, but rather seek solace in belief in God. Such is the behavior of Gustavo in La marea, who, after his brother's suicide, faces life alone as a cripple. He deeply feels the earlier loss of Wanda, the devout Polish girl with whom he had been deeply in love, and who had met her death at the hands of the Nazis in a cruel, inhuman experiment. Gustavo, had he been a character in a novel written by a tremendista, would likely have committed some terrible crime or become thoroughly perverted and depraved as a result of

these adverse occurrences. He embraces Catholicism instead, and in it he finds the answer to his questions about the meaning of life.

Gironella also differs from the tremendistas in his recognition and treatment of sin. For Gironella, evil is unequivocally evil. Although he portrays sin in his novels, he does so in a restrained, delicate way, without recourse to the sensationalism of many modern realistic writers, including the tremendistas. Many of the believers in his novels often sin, but realize that they are sinning and ultimately seek forgiveness. In short, Gironella's novels reaffirm belief in the old, traditional moral standards of right and wrong, of good and evil, whereas the tremendistas do not accept such standards, or at least do not concern themselves with them.

Miguel Serra, in Un hombre, deviates from the moral norms which he had come to accept in his youth, and stays away from the practice of the Catholic religion for many years. After all this time, nevertheless, Miguel still feels pangs of conscience when he enters a church and sees the confessionals. He eventually goes to confession and returns to the faith of his youth.

Much the same might be said of Ignacio Alvear, the protagonist of Los cipreses creen en Dios and Un millón de

muertos. Ignacio also lapses into disregard for the dictates of his conscience, but he never completely abandons the practice of his religion.

In his last novel, Mujer, levántate y anda, Gironella has concerned himself with the struggle between sin and grace. The protagonist, Myriam, whose life has apparently been ruined as a result of war, at last performs an act of love in the Christian sense, by caring for the horribly deformed child to which she has given birth. Dr. Enmanuele, who represents Christ, tells her that only in this way, by seeking the genuine well-being of others in an unselfish manner, can she learn what true love really is. The psychiatrist is obviously the spokesman for the author's religious sentiment in this defense of traditional Christian charity.

It is impossible to discuss the religious beliefs of José María Gironella without considering his relationship to the Catholic Church. This is a complex matter with many aspects. Gironella himself was at one time a seminarian. His days as a student preparing for the priesthood undoubtedly left their mark upon the author. His novels are replete with references to the Church and to members of the clergy. It is quite clear that Gironella himself is a loyal member of the Church. There are, however, a number of passages in his novels which might seem to indicate something short of complete sympathy toward all aspects of Spanish Catholicism.

The treatment of seminary life, as described in Un hombre and in Los cipreses creen en Dios, seems to be a veiled criticism of the traditional training given seminarians in Spain. The director of the Jesuit novitiate attended by Miguel Serra in Un hombre is portrayed as unduly cold and harsh, and somewhat inhuman, in his meting out of punishment for an infraction of a rule concerning a matter of only slight import. The experiences of Ignacio Alvear, as described in the opening pages of Los cipreses creen en Dios, are somewhat similar. Ignacio feels the lack of charity and consideration for the problems of the Spanish people which seems to characterize the priests who teach in the seminary. Upon one occasion, Ignacio goes to confession after having fallen into sin. The confessor, instead of speaking words of admonition and encouragement, threatens Ignacio with the loss of his vocation and treats the boy very severely. The experience of César Alvear in still another seminary reveals a somewhat similar situation. The young seminarian is forced to work for his board, since his father is unable to pay the tuition, and finds himself almost at the point of collapse after performing the numerous tasks assigned to him. The fact that all the seminaries described by Gironella appear to be so severe might be construed as a reflection of the author's desire for reform and modification of disciplinary practices.



A number of clergymen are portrayed in the various novels. The two priests who play important roles are Mosén Alberto and Mosén Francisco. These men, although they are personally good friends, are very different in their behavior. This point has been discussed at some length in the chapter concerned with Un millón de muertos. It should be merely noted here that Gironella seems to realize that, within the Spanish clergy, there are types of priests of greatly varying degrees of piety and sense of vocation. There are individual priests who are humble, fervent, and extremely sincere in the exercise of their ministry. There are also those who, although they do not lead scandalous or particularly unworthy lives, do not seem to appreciate fully the true meaning of their calling and who are complacent and personally ambitious. Throughout the novels Los cipreses crecen en Dios and Un millón de muertos there are a number of passages where criticism of the Church by its enemies is to be found. It may be argued that Gironella has made use of this device in order to give himself a certain appearance of impartiality. This is undoubtedly true to a certain extent, but there are a number of instances where one has cause to wonder if the author is not himself constructively criticizing the Church and certain of its representatives.

César Alvear, who appears in Los cipreses crecen en Dios, may also be considered a representative of the clergy. The

young seminarian is a model of religious devotion. He spends entire nights in prayer and seems to be a mystic in the old Spanish tradition, or at least on his way toward becoming one, when his life is cut short by the firing squad. César is not content with prayer alone, however, but rather seeks to serve his fellow man by works of charity. His life is one of religious fervor and hours spent in prayer, coupled with the practical application of Christianity in unselfish service of others, even of those who are completely ungrateful. Mosén Alberto, often distracted while celebrating mass, tries to think of Cesar's piety and devotion in such moments in order to recover his recollection. Gironella seems to be trying to say that, if the whole Spanish Church would pattern itself after the exemplary life of César Alvear, the religious situation in Spain would be far different.

To sum up Gironella's personal attitude toward the Catholic Church and its clergy as portrayed in his novels, it may be said that the author is himself a devout Catholic, loyal to the Church, but that he does not attempt to whitewash or conceal the blemishes to be found in Spanish Catholicism. His personal attitude is one of deep faith. He realizes at the same time that the individuals who make up the Church are only human, and that they often fail in their efforts to live up to their vocation. Gironella particularly seems to be concerned with the lack of consideration for the poor

and for the social problems of the Spanish people on the part of many Spanish priests.

In conclusion, the religious sentiments of the author may be best summarized in a statement which he made with reference to his novel, Un millón de muertos. Although Gironella was referring to one novel only, his words seem aptly to describe the religious attitude which underlies all his writings.

    Mi propósito era que una única postura personal quedase clara en el libro; que yo era cristiano, que creía que Cristo era Dios y que, como tal, predicó, cerca de un lago, una doctrina eterna.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> José María Gironella, Todos somos fugitivos (Barcelona, 1961), p. 307.

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