

CHARACTERIZATIONS AND THEMES IN THE
NOVELS OF ELENA QUIROGA

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THESIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

During and after the Civil War, many of Spain's most illustrious literary voices could no longer be heard. Most of Galdós' works were banned as were all but one of Pío Baroja's; García Lorca was shot by Franco supporters in July, 1936. The Basque philosopher, Miguel de Unamuno, "arch-priest of the Generation of '98,"¹ was removed as Rector of the University of Salamanca and died broken-hearted under house arrest on December 31, 1936. Recognized literary and mental giants such as writer and philosopher, José Ortega y Gasset; historian, Menéndez Pidal; philosopher-historian-novelist, Salvador de Madariaga; and novelists: Pérez de Ayala, Ramón Sender and the late Arturo Barea were forced to flee the country. However, the culminating atrocity of the bloody strife was the regime's instigation of a mass book burning in May of 1939 and a strict censorship of books. Willis Jones speaks of the situation in this manner:

Franco forbade the sale of everything printed in languages other than Spanish, even condemning Basque and Catalan works, but making an exception for Italian books printed after 1923, Portuguese titles after 1926, and German publications later

¹Hugh Thomas, The Spanish Civil War (New York, 1961), p. 355.

than 1932. Local printing was controlled by supplying stock only for the works of writers who followed party precepts and propaganda Of course any of the writers who had fled to France, Mexico, or Argentina were completely unacceptable. So stringent was the ban that the New York Post Office after April 11, 1940, refused to accept for transmission to Spain any printed matter not accompanied by an official Spanish permission to import.²

With all the censorship, banishments and isolation from European literary trends, young aspiring writers were left to write cautiously only that which in no way could be construed as subversive propaganda or criticism. In 1944, to encourage creative performance and remedy the dearth of printable literature, Destino, a publishing house in Barcelona, announced its sponsorship of a prize in honor of its late editorial secretary, Eugenio Nadal. The award, named for Nadal and consisting of 5,000 pesetas plus a promise of publication the following year, was to go to the best unpublished manuscript submitted.³

From the ranks of young Spanish writers who responded to this and other such awards, emerged Elena Quiroga, described by at least one critic as one of the "most able and interesting."⁴ Six years after the establishment of the annual Nadal Prize, it was accorded to Elena Quiroga for her second novel, El viento del norte.

²Willis K. Jones, "Recent Novels of Spain: 1936-56," Hispania, XL (September, 1957), 303.

³Ibid., p. 305.

⁴Albert Brent, "The Novels of Elena Quiroga," Hispania, LXII (May, 1959), 210.

Although all of the young woman's novels are penetrating character studies related thematically; they can be read as a testimony of her continuous stylistic experimentation and versatility. Juan Luis Alborg remarks of her: "Desde Viento del norte . . . hasta La Careta, su novela más reciente, Elena Quiroga ha recorrido una distancia tan larga, que los extremos del trayecto bien podrían suponerse de dos escritores distintos."⁵ Since Alborg's statement in 1958, Elena Quiroga has had two additional novels published which further bear out the critic's remark.

Certain biographical and critical details may be injected at this point. Elena Quiroga was born in Santander, Galicia, in 1921. While still an infant, she moved with her parents to their estate in El Barco de Valdeorras in the province of Orense. A great part of her life has been spent in the region of Galicia, and her love for that part of the country as well as her intense interest in it and its people are evidenced by her novels. Although she could hardly be classified as a regionalist, five of her eight full-length novels have their settings in Galicia. The North American Hispanist Terrell Tatum has described them as "resplendent with the earthy savor of Galicia." The same authority adds: "In these books Galicia

⁵Juan L. Alborg, Hora actual de la novela española (Madrid, 1958), p. 191.

is interwoven realistically, in balanced proportion, and with succinct descriptions as natural background for her characters and plots."⁶

Elena Quiroga, at one time, resided in the seaport of La Coruña. In fact, it was the Diputación Provincial of La Coruña that published, at its own expense, her first novel in 1948. This work with its paradoxical title, La soledad sonora, received little attention and no acclaim.⁷ Since it pre-dates the period treated in the present thesis, only a brief summary will be given of it in Chapter II.

Nineteen-fifty, however, proved to be a more successful year, witnessing both the novelist's marriage to Dalmiro de la Valgoma, a historian specializing in heraldry, and her receipt of the Nadal Prize for her second literary attempt. Thenceforth, she was to have no difficulty in securing publishers for later works. The dates of her efforts published after 1950 are as follows: La sangre, 1952; Algo pasa en la calle, 1954; La enferma, 1955; La careta, 1955; Plácida la joven y otras narraciones (three novelettes), 1956; La última corrida, 1958; and Tristura, 1960.

Interest in Quiroga's novels was not slow in spreading to other countries. A German publishing house has requested

⁶Terrell Tatum, Cuentos Recientes de España (New York, 1960), p. 97.

⁷Federico Carlos Sáinz de Robles, La novela española en el siglo (Madrid, 1957), p. 266.

authorization to translate and publish all of her works; En sangre has been translated into Finnish, Swedish, Italian and French; Algo pasa en la calle is available in English and French versions.⁸

In her own country, Elena Quiroga has been well received by critics and reading public alike. Among recognized authorities who have appraised her works are the following: Gonzalo Torrente Ballester, José L. Cano, R. M. Hornedo, Sáinz de Robles and D. Pérez Minik. Such publications as Indice, Insula, and the Revista de literatura have carried reviews of her novels. Among North American scholars who have shown interest in Quiroga's novelistic production is Albert Brent of the University of Missouri, who states:

Notably manifest in the novels of Elena Quiroga are the qualities most essential in a writer of fiction: imagination, creative ability, and command of subject matter. Perhaps the highest compliment that can be offered this author is to say that interest in her stories rarely ever flags. Her novels possess that power of sustained attraction, which Ortega y Gasset calls "imperviousness," whereby the reader is held engrossed in a novelistic world from which he has little desire to withdraw. Part of Elena Quiroga's success in this regard can be attributed to her faculty for producing and maintaining a captivating mood or compelling atmosphere into which the reader is readily drawn. Interest in her fiction, however, derives chiefly from character portrayal for which she has a superb capacity.⁹

⁸Brent, op. cit., p. 213.

⁹Ibid.

Willis Knapp Jones, who predicts that Spain may be "moving into a new Golden Age of the novel," includes Elena Quiroga among the young writers responsible for the current literary flourish.¹⁰ Lucile K. Delano in an article published in Kentucky Foreign Language Quarterly makes the following comments on Elena Quiroga's masterly use of imagery:

In all her works Miss Quiroga makes effective use of imagery, generally for some specific purpose: to introduce flashbacks and interior monologue; to create atmosphere; to set the tone for character portrayal; and finally, though to a lesser extent, to describe background and landscape. In her novels with northern settings she uses with great effectiveness images evoked by the sea, by the activities of sea-faring talk, and by things characteristic of the sea There are also many images inspired by her absorbing interest in Galicia: the landscape, the climate (wind, rain, mist), the vegetation; and to a marked degree the people themselves and their customs.¹¹

¹⁰Jones, op. cit., p. 311.

¹¹Lucile K. Delano, "Sensory Images in the Galician Novels of Elena Quiroga," Kentucky Foreign Language Quarterly, X (1963), 59.

CHAPTER II

PLOT RESUMES, SETTINGS AND THEMES

Elena Quiroga's first novel, La soledad sonora, is a character study of young Elisa Pertierra, who marries a man she does not love. Her husband is sent to Russia to fight with the Spanish Blue Division. Only a few months after her marriage, Elisa receives the news that her husband has been killed in action. Later, the protagonist remarries and finds happiness for the first time and a "spiritual fulfillment she had not believed possible."¹ Very shortly, however, Elisa learns that the report of her first husband's death was a false one. She solves her dilemma by renouncing both of her husbands for a solitary life in her childhood home. Albert Brent evaluated La soledad sonora in this manner: ". . . up to this point [the resolution of the crisis brought about by the knowledge that the first husband had not been killed] the work had considerable merit as a first novel and foreshadows many of the attributes of more mature writing to follow."²

¹Albert Brent, "The Novels of Elena Quiroga," Hispania, LXII (May, 1959), 210.

²Ibid.

Although her second novel, Viento del norte, was awarded the Nadal Prize, Elena Quiroga, herself, does not consider it among her best works.³ The setting is rural Galicia. The action takes place over a period of some forty years around La Sagreira, the estate of don Alvaro, an upper-class landlord. In his thirties as the story opens, he has devoted his life to writing a history concerning the various routes of pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. Although his aunt, doña Lucía, considers him a prospective mate for one of her two oldest daughters, Alvaro is only temporarily attracted to both of them. Dorila, the eldest, is an extremely beautiful and haughty young woman whose charm at first holds Alvaro spellbound. Realizing, however, that they have little in common, he turns to her younger sister, Tula, who has fallen ill with consumption. Tula shares Alvaro's love for books, and the kindness and attention that he shows her during her last months of life are mistaken by her family for love. However, after Tula's death, Alvaro returns to the only true love he has known: his historical research and his picturesque estate. While Alvaro's attention has been directed to his two cousins, Marcela, a young illegitimate servant girl has been growing up. Even as a baby she has been feared and avoided by the superstitious servants partly

³Ibid.

because of the circumstances surrounding her birth and partly because of the vicious foreman, Juan, who hated her mother and has transferred his hatred to the child. It is with Marcela's birth that the novel begins. Her mother, a servant called la Matuxa, gives birth to the fatherless baby in the stable and immediately attempts to murder it. The other servants prevent the infanticide; and Ermitas, an old woman who has been don Alvaro's nurse and is now his housekeeper, brings the baby into the shelter of the master's house. It is discovered to have red hair and a birthmark behind the ear, both of which characteristics are considered by the superstitious rustics to be marks of an evil spirit. Some years later, Marcela's mother, who fled the estate immediately after her attempt to dispose of the baby, is found dead in the stable with multiple razor slashes on her stomach. The servants suspect Juan, but la Matuxa's death is kept from Alvaro. Marcela grows up ostracized by all the servants except childless old Ermitas.

It is not until the second part of the novel that one becomes aware of the difficult theme the author has chosen to treat: the love of a highly cultured scholar and gentleman for an illiterate servant who is thirty-four years younger than he. Alvaro's first awareness of his love for Marcela comes suddenly. One evening at dusk, he appears at the window of his study, his work on his manuscript interrupted

by an oxcart driver's song. Quiroga describes the incident in the following manner:

El hombre que llevaba la carreta de bueyes pasó cantando una canción:

"Eu queríame casare Miña nay, non teño roupa" Se confundía su canto con el chirriar de las ruedas. Alvaro se acodó en la ventana, procurando reconocer al cantor. Oyó un chapoteo cerca suyo, y volvió el rostro hacia donde venía el ruido. De espaldas a él, con la bata remangada, Marcela se lavaba en el pozo. Sonrió al verla, tan joven y lozana, en el limpio amanecer. Marcela inclinaba la cabeza sobre el pozo, metía los brazos en el agua y se oía un chapoteo. Alvaro veía el cuello y el nacimiento de la espalda. Quedó un momento distraído, mirándola. Tenía una espalda de potranca, hendida en el centro. Marcela, curvada sobre el pozo, enseñaba las piernas hasta por encima de la corvas. Alvaro había pensado decir: Buenos días, Marcela, pero al ver las piernas al aire, calló. Se retiró, instintivamente. Le oprimía el cuello de la camisa. Sentándose ante el despacho, quedóse un momento con mil estrellitas rojas bailando ante sus ojos. ¡Demonio, qué rapaza! Creía ver de nuevo las piernas, musculadas y macizas, y los muslos rosados. El olor de la pomareda flotaba en el aire. Alvaro ocultó la cabeza entre sus manos.⁴

Alvaro is ashamed of his attraction to the young girl and does not succumb to it without a prolonged and agonizing inner struggle. In an attempt to deny himself what he feels inwardly, he, for a time, treats Marcela in a brusque and hypercritical manner. His passion, however, at times affects his reason in the manner described below:

⁴Elena Quiroga, Viento del norte (Barcelona, 1951), pp. 124-125.

Ya no pudo hacer nada; ni leer, ni escribir, ni ocuparse de los trabajos. Iba a mediodía hacia los campos por desahogarse andando. Arrastraba las piernas. «Me pesan los años.» Y se escondía en su despacho, con la cabeza entre las manos, o caía hacia atrás en el sillón, dejando que el filtro de la noche, la secreta ponzoña del árbol reventando la flor, le envenenasen. Imprecisas imágenes le perseguían; fingíanse, a sus ojos, las ramas brazos. Brazos torneados y suaves, que se le tendían, que le rodeaban. Alvaro, en su delirio, llegó a acercarse a la ventana, y apretar fuertemente una branca del árbol: duro resistente igual que el brazo de una muchacha joven y robusta.⁵

Alvaro's fascination for Marcela is as inevitable as his intense love for the land around him, for Marcela is the embodiment of all that Alvaro loves. She is, paradoxically, both the land and its product. The enamored Alvaro explains to her: "Sé que tú, al lado de las otras mujeres, eres como la tierra al lado de la flor. Yo prefiero la tierra."⁶

When Alvaro confides to his aunt and uncle that he plans to propose marriage to the girl, they explain to him the indelicate situation of having Marcela remain at La Sagreira. Unlike that of La Matuxa, Marcela's conduct is irreproachable. Lucía, unable to deter Alvaro in his decision, suggests that Marcela be sent to a convent for two years for an education and an opportunity to think over Alvaro's proposal. He contemplates:

⁵Ibid., p. 126.

⁶Ibid., p. 224.

Dos años . . . eran el término, el fin, la definitiva renunciación. Veinticuatro eternos meses solo, preparándose a una mayor soledad. Veinticuatro meses, a los diecinueve años, eran días que el viento arrastra. Nada cambiaría en Marcela durante ellos; pero él sabía que, una vez transcurridos, el cabello suyo sería blanco.⁷

Despite Alvaro's reluctance to delay the matter for two years, Marcela is sent to the convent, and there, accustomed to being shunned by others, she isolates herself from the younger girls, and the nuns scorn her lack of refinement. The black uniform and the enclosure of the convent are stifling to her rustic soul:

Ella, tan desordenada, habituada a llevar en pleno invierno batas de percal, con los brazos al aire, a calzar zapatones que al menor descuido usaba como chanquetas, a quitárselos cuando hacía buen tiempo, pisando recia, con los pies desnudos, por campos y maizales, tuvo que sujetar sus impulsos de independencia⁸

The girl silently hates Alvaro for sending her to the convent. Being too ingenuous to be an opportunist, she resents the fact that the master has chosen her to be his wife. It is for neither love nor ambition to be the lady of the estate that Marcela consents to marry Alvaro. She does so merely because of conditioned servile obedience and the desire to return to the countryside she loves. After her marriage, the servants despise her more than ever and consider their previous concept of her as an evil enchantress confirmed by her conquest of the master.

⁷Ibid., p. 193.

⁸Ibid., p. 197.

It is not until Marcela learns that she is carrying Alvaro's child that she begins to realize that there is a bond between them. Upon learning from Ermitas that his wife is pregnant, Alvaro rushes into the bedroom where the latter is resting. She is inwardly gratified to see his obvious happiness, but as a supreme twist of irony the event which promised to bring them together tears them apart. Alvaro gathers Marcela in his arms just as a wave of nausea seizes her, and she involuntarily stiffens in his embrace. He mistakenly interprets her uncomfortable facial expression as a manifestation of complete disgust. Having for some time suspected the real reason for which Marcela married him, he is deeply hurt. In atonement for the wrong he feels he has done the young woman, he promises never to touch her again. Marcela, when alone, weeps in bitter disappointment. Another widening of the abyss between man and wife comes shortly after the birth of their son. At Alvaro's uncle's funeral, Marcela is conscious that she will be in the company of prominent families. Unable to forget her once humble position as servant and not wishing to appear pretentious, she comes to the church clad in a modest peasant dress. Alvaro is infuriated and considers Marcela's action a manner of publicly scorning him. His anger has not yet abated when one rainy and cold evening the baby wanders into his father's study with wet bare feet. In a tirade against Marcela, Alvaro gives vent to his anger

and declares that his son will not wander barefoot like a peasant. For the first time, Marcela overcomes her subservience and spits a single word at her husband: "¡Viejo!" Alvaro leaves on horseback and is gone all night while Marcela, full of remorse, resolves to make amends for her part in the altercation.

Just before dawn, she is awakened by men carrying Alvaro into the house, obviously the victim of an accident. Terrified at first, she is later relieved to learn that although his spine is broken he will live. From his wheel chair, Alvaro completes work on his manuscript and stoically accepts the consequences of the riding accident. As he contemplates Marcela, who sits grief-stricken and expressionless day after day, he realizes the extent of his own blame in the matter. His concern for his wife is demonstrated in the following passage:

. . .no ha dejado de amar a su mujer; sólo que siente más ansia de protección hacia ella que hacia el hijo. Marcela es la equivocada . . . la humillada por la vida Ve la vida de Marcela como un pozo estancado, como una calleja murada. ¿Y qué otra cosa cabría hacer para liberarla? Nada.⁹

In an attempt to make life more bearable for Marcela, Alvaro suggests that she go to Cora to visit his cousins. Although Marcela feels that her place is with her husband,

⁹Ibid., pp. 323-324.

she agrees to go, assuming that he has perhaps grown tired of her. Alvaro's supreme act of unselfishness is his insistence that his wife go regularly to Cora because he knows that don Francisco, a young lawyer who is attracted to Marcela, frequents his cousins' home. The inevitable happens, don Francisco attempts to force his attentions upon Marcela. She finds his kiss repulsive, but the realization of her love for Alvaro comes too late. She rushes home only to find her husband dead and his manuscript in the fireplace being consumed by flames.

In Elena Quiroga's novels, there is immediately apparent an intense fascination for all nature; however, the sea, the land, and trees are among the elements for which the author shows a particular preference. She skillfully employs them in creating imagery, atmosphere, and depth of characterization. Her predilection for trees and her tendency to compare her characters to various trees is especially evident in the novel, La sangre. The narrator of this story is a majestic chestnut tree which observes four generations of Galician landowners as their ancestral manor passes from generation to generation. The device of having a tree narrate the story is as effective as it is unusual. Albert Brent offers the following commentary on the role of the tree:

This anthropomorphic device, which at first seems incongruous, becomes more acceptable as the story progresses, and in time the tree

acquires a personality almost as real as any of the human characters. The reader often finds himself comparing his own reactions to those of the tree, which besides serving as a chronicler of particular persons and events assumes the role of philosopher as well in its comments on human motives and conduct in general.¹⁰

In its contemplation of human vanities, the tree presents this observation to the reader:

Servir a los demás no es malograrse. Este es nuestro destino, y es un destino que nos embellece. ¿Conoceis árbol feo? Yo conozco hombres feos: piensan sólo en sí mismos, y se les altera el ademán y el rostro.¹¹

The personification of the tree involves its endowment with a capacity to experience human emotions such as compassion, fear, anger and love. In fact, it believes that its own comprehension of the universe is superior to that of the human beings it observes. The following passage acquaints the reader with the predestinarian philosophy of the tree:

Así como el agua me sirve a mí, y la planta, a veces, sirve de alimento para las bestias, y yo le sirvo al hombre, el hombre, al fin y al cabo, sirve al Universo. Como todos. Me sorprende que el hombre no se da cuenta de ello.

Sin embargo, fatalmente, lleva sus manos donde tienen que ir. Mientras lo hacen, a veces les he oído decir: "He decidido . . ." Ahuecaban la voz mientras lo decían. Yo sabía que hablaban por hablar, y que tendría que reconocer, a solas, que llegaban a aquello porque sí.¹²

¹⁰Brent, op. cit., p. 211.

¹¹Elena Quiroga, La sangre (Barcelona, 1952), p. 8.

¹²Ibid., pp. 19-20.

The first couple to live on the estate are Amador and his bride, María Fernanda. Prior to his marriage, Amador had been a seaman. Unable to rid himself of his intense yearning to return to his former way of life, he abandons his wife for the sea. As the text informs the reader, " . . . la mar era mala rival para mujeres."¹³ Amador returns after the birth of his daughter, but goes to sea again. During his second absence María dies, and he comes back only in time to see her buried. Thereafter he once more departs, leaving the infant, Amalia, to be reared by servants. When she is of age to marry, her father writes to instruct the servants to make arrangements for her marriage. She becomes the bride of Efrén, who is no match for his strong-willed and energetic young wife. The couple have three children: Gertrudis, Xavier, and Jacoba. With the birth of his grandson, Amador reappears. Although Amalia has greatly resented her father's evident lack of interest in her while she was growing up, she and her father are reconciled. Content to remain at the estate and delight in the growth of his grandson, Amador seems to forget the sea until he overhears a quarrel between Amalia and Efrén in which the son-in-law blames him for María's unhappiness and death. Amador makes his final retreat from the land; later, his family learns of his burial at sea.

¹³Ibid., p. 29.

From early childhood Xavier and his younger sister, Jacoba, are very close, but neither of them cares for their older sister. Xavier hates Gertrudis because he sees in her many of his father's characteristics. Having inherited the strong determination of his mother, he scorns his spineless father for allowing himself to be ruled by a domineering wife. After years of marriage to Amalia, Efrén is described by the pensive chestnut tree in these words: "La muerte estaba en su voz; el dejar de vivir, el dejar de luchar."¹⁴ Full of disgust, Xavier leaves el Castelo and the illegitimate son borrows him by an attractive and promiscuous young servant. Returning only after learning of his father's death, he discovers that his mother has planned a marriage between his sister, Jacoba, and one of their cousins. Opposed to such a union, he kills the cousin in a duel, and Jacoba retires to a convent. Xavier, somewhat mentally deranged after the incident, marries Dolores, the sister of the man he has killed. His wife, whose touch the tree describes as being cold, succeeds in deceiving her husband. Cruel, as well as evil in other ways, she also torments an idiot servant, Eladio, whom Amalia treats as a charge. When Amalia dies, Eladio's grief is loud and frightening. Dolores attempts to have him put away by arguing that his grief is a dangerous show of violence.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 128.

However, the poor servant dies from sorrow before Dolores can have him removed. One of the first orders of the new mistress is to have one of the chestnut tree's limbs cut off.

When Dolores gives birth to Pastor, she has long since alienated her husband. Xavier finds companionship with his illegitimate son, Vicente, who does not know the circumstances regarding his own birth. Xavier finds also in Vicente a means to make Dolores miserable; he has only to make it evident that he prefers the company of a servant to either that of his wife or of her son. Dolores next sends Pastor to the city to live with his Aunt Gertrudis and soon attempts to poison Xavier. Vicente, surprising Dolores with the flask of poison as she is preparing to mix it in a glass of milk to take to her ailing husband, suspects her evil intent and insists that she drink the liquid. Since she can think of no logical pretext for refusing, she resignedly drinks it and dies almost immediately.

When Pastor reaches manhood and returns to el Castelo, his father is an invalid in the care of Vicente. Pastor, in constant need of money, mortgages the estate just as soon as his father dies. Thereafter he marries an actress, Angeles, who gives him a son, Lorenzo. The tree is very fond of Angeles and of her little son, who loves to climb in it. To Pastor, however, it reacts as unfavorably as it has to his vicious

mother. Pastor drinks excessively, fights with his wife and is constantly unfaithful to her. Their son comes to love and respect Vicente, who in turn is silently in love with Angeles. The depraved Pastor, having neither love for the land nor regard for family tradition, constantly speaks of selling or renting the old estate. When he discovers that the chestnut tree's roots are threatening the foundation of the house, he orders it to be cut down. Young Lorenzo cannot bear to see the tree chopped down; and as he runs forward in an attempt to defend it, it falls, fatally crushing the last heir to the estate.

With Algo pasa en la calle, Elena Quiroga achieves some of her best characterizations as she treats the thought-provoking theme of divorce and remarriage within a society where such action is socially and morally unacceptable. The conception and development of the novel are highly original in that the protagonist is killed in an accident only hours before the opening chapter, and the entire action of the work is confined to a period of less than twelve hours prior to the funeral procession. During this brief time, not only does the reader come to know the lives and innermost thoughts of the five people most closely related to the deceased, but through numerous flashbacks, he is able to piece together the twenty years of Ventura's life preceding his fatal accident. The novel reveals Quiroga's sympathetic understanding of the

difficult situation in which she has juxtaposed various characters whose reactions to the death evoke a variety of emotions: indifference, poignant remembrance, intense grief, bitterness and love.

The story begins with the immediate present; Ventura's first wife, Esperanza, and his son-in-law, Froilán, are waiting to be admitted to view the corpse. As Esperanza kneels before the casket of her former husband, the circumstances surrounding their separation of eighteen years and the events which followed that separation begin to emerge from her memories. At the time of their marriage, Ventura was a professor of philosophy, and a writer and lecturer well known in intellectual circles. For a time Esperanza was content to accompany her husband on his tours; however, she soon tired of her role as a devoted wife and companion, and once again sought her familiar circle of superficial friends. The doors of her stylish home and her husband's quiet study were thrown open to an unending stream of sycophants eager to have their names linked with that of the socially prominent Esperanza. Ventura at first took his work to the nursery where he might be with Agata, his five-year old daughter. But Esperanza, jealous of her husband's work and the mutual adoration of father and daughter, rendered impossible his refuge there with the pretext that he was under foot and interrupted the child's routine. At last unable to

tolerate life with a woman whose ambition was to be neither a wife nor mother, but a prominent figure in Madrid society, Ventura left her to her frivolities and joined the army. During the Spanish Civil War, Esperanza had hoped that her husband would be killed so that she could save face by telling Agata her father had died a hero. When the war was over and he attempted to visit his daughter, Esperanza refused to allow such a meeting, claiming that it was better for the child not to be torn between loyalties to her separated parents. Brokenhearted, Ventura accepted a teaching position in the University of San Bernardo.

In one of his classes was a sensitive and serious young woman named Presencia. Unlike Esperanza, Presencia was unattractive, extremely thin and childlike, with a quiet and retiring personality. When she requested that Ventura tutor her, he agreed partly out of pity for the lonely creature and partly because his orthodox religious views were challenged by her agnosticism. In payment for the private lessons, she typed Ventura's lectures and manuscripts. As he grew to look forward to his discussions with the girl and relied more and more upon her efficient secretarial aid, he realized that their relationship was in danger of becoming that of lovers. For a while he attempted to discontinue the lessons with the excuse that he no longer had time for them. Presencia, however, insisted upon helping him with his typing. Next he avoided

coming home until he knew that she had had time to finish the work he had left for her. On an occasion when he learned that his daughter had been very ill, Presencia, worrying about him, stayed at his apartment until he returned late at night. Angry to find her still there, he asked her if she realized the implications of what she was doing. She answered in the affirmative and Ventura's earlier misgivings were soon shown to be well founded.

When Presencia learned that she was expecting Ventura's child, she realized the dilemma in which her lover found himself; his religious beliefs forbade a second marriage while his conscience rebelled against the idea of his child's bearing the stigma of illegitimacy. He insisted, therefore, that he and Presencia be married, and although Presencia loved him, she married him with a certain reluctance. As she sits in the room next to where his corpse lies, she remembers the joyless civil ceremony:

(El día en que nos casamos, en el Juzgado, no me mirabas; estabas irritado. Te pesaba lo que ibas a hacer, pero tu sentido de la propia responsabilidad te ligaba a aquel acto. Yo no procuré sonreír, ni parecer ignorar tu postura. Me senté a firmar la primera. Pensé: ¿Firmo mi condena de muerte? Tracé las letras con el ánimo ausente, pendiente de ti y de lo que aquello podía significar para nosotros. Hablé a Asís--el intransigente Asís que lo ignora--dentro de mi vientre: Es por ti hijo mío. Si no fuera por ti, ninguno de los dos . . . Cada letra escrita decía a la criatura: Te defendemos, te protegemos

Tú [Ventura] firmaste de una vez, rápido y seguro. Sabías siempre lo que hacías. Y tras un breve trámite y unas palabras de cortesía, nos alejamos. Yo noté que los funcionarios nos miraban, sorprendidos, sin duda, de aquellos recién desposados que no se miraban a la cara, que no habían cruzado una palabra entre sí, ni un gesto de ternura, y que marchaban por el pasillo del Juzgado, uno al lado del otro, con aire de penados o como si se odiasen.)¹⁵

Although Ventura had tried to be a good husband and father, and after the birth of his son he never again mentioned the daughter he loved so much, Presencia knew that she and her son were often locked out of his world made up of memories of Agata and his devotion to her.

Unfortunately, Agata did not learn of her father's love for her until after his death. When Agata began to ask questions concerning her father, Esperanza realized that the child idealized the father she could not even remember. Unable to bear the thought that her daughter might care for anyone but herself, Esperanza told her that her father was a sinful man who had deserted them for another woman. Disillusioned, Agata grew to womanhood believing that her father had never loved her.

Agata was not the only child victimized by the pathetic situation; Asís, Presencia's son, was sent away from Madrid to a boarding school. Although Presencia felt that he should

¹⁵Elena Quiroga, Algo pasa en la calle (Barcelona, 1954), p. 213.

be told about Ventura's other family, the father wanted to wait until he thought the boy would understand.

Asís, having learned of his father's previous marriage from a classmate, arrives for the funeral. He shuns his mother, refusing her embrace, and in his grief turns to the bier; his thoughts address the corpse:

No he besado a mi madre. Perdóname. No puedo. Contigo puedo hablar, con ella no, y me apena. Pero no es pena lo que mi madre despertaba, ¿o puede amarse con piedad a una madre?

Está a mi lado, la siento estremecida, mientras yo estoy aquí, de codos en el reborde de tu caja, sin cansar de mirarte, o besándote la estamena blanca que huele raro y pica, o apoyando mi frente, que me duele, donde tu codo dobla.

¿Qué piensa? Also piensa porque no la beso, ni lloro con ella, ni la digo nada. Perdón, padre, si la querías Quiero ser tuyo, tu hijo, costara lo que fuese

¿Por qué no lo dijiste? Sé que me lo hubieses hecho comprender si me hubieses hablado de tu manera seria y tan consoladora. Por difícil que fuese yo te hubiera creído. Quizá en eso pensabas cuando pesaban tus ojos sobre mí. ¿A qué esperaste? Lo debiste decir tú, no otro.¹⁶

Presencia loses both her husband and her son; but she is determined that Ventura will not lose his daughter. She gives Froilan some clippings Ventura had secretly kept in his wallet; one is Agata's wedding picture; the other, an announcement of the birth of Agata's twin daughters. At last, Agata realizes the extent of her mother's deceit and

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 128-129.

appreciates the love that her father had never ceased having for her. Although Agata recovers somewhat from her scars, the situation in which Presencia and her son are left is deeply moving.

Quiroga's next novel, La enferma, is strangely reminiscent of Emily Brönte's Wuthering Heights. An examination of the many parallels in mood, plot, and characterization between the two works would no doubt lead to interesting and possibly significant conclusions, but such an investigation is outside the scope of this study.

La enferma involves a nameless protagonist whose life is profoundly affected by a curiously deranged and mute invalid. The setting is a Galician fishing village to which la forastera, the imaginary narrator, comes from her home in Madrid. The author's vivid description of day-to-day life in this small, impoverished town is no less an artistic achievement than her excellent characterizations, which are approached in a more impersonal and objective manner than is the case in some of her earlier novels.

The first few chapters of the book disclose the thoughts of la forastera as she makes her journey to the village. She has come on the pretext of disposing of a plot of land purchased by her husband a number of years ago. By means of flashbacks, the reader learns that the middle-aged protagonist is disturbed by her growing awareness that she and her husband,

having remained childless, have grown apart and can no longer communicate. A possessive person by nature, she is unable to accept the fact that two people can spend years of married life together and still not really know everything about one another. The trip occasioned by the land transaction permits her to get away from her problem at home and to view the place where her husband had spent so many solitary hours as a young man. She remembers her hurt at his remarks revealing his veritable passion for the strip of land.

Having sensed in her husband's memories of the land an intangible, but potential rival, she became jealous of ". . . aquella ancha gloriosa libertad en que no había lugar para mujer alguna."¹⁷ Thereafter she had been determined to have the land sold.

When the protagonist arrives at the village, she stays in the home of the invalid cousin of a friend in Madrid. Prior to arrival she had learned that the invalid's illness was of a mental nature; and fear for her own safety haunts her until she learns that Liberata, the invalid, has not left her bed for twenty years. From various sources, the visitor is able to piece together the circumstances of the invalid's complete

¹⁷Elena Quiroga, La enferma (Barcelona, 1955), p. 25.

withdrawal from life. Alida, Liberata's devoted nurse and servant of many years, explains that her mistress had been an extremely attractive and introverted child and early in life had set herself apart from the villagers as well as her own family, caring for only one person: Telmo, her older brother's handsome and egotistical companion. All other persons' relationships with him and all of his interests aroused her jealousy. "Telmo era todo 'yo,'" relates don Simón, the parish priest; "Liberata era todo 'Telmo.'"¹⁸

Although Telmo recognized Liberata's possessive power and struggled against it, he was like a helpless moth simultaneously attracted and repelled by a consuming flame. As though cursed by their mutual attraction, the two grew up cognizant of the ability each had to inflict injury upon the other. As often as Telmo struggled to free himself of Liberata's hold on him, he would return to her ". . . fatalmente, como quien va a la muerte o al peligro."¹⁹

La forastera learns even more of the strange relationship that existed between the two children from the old parish priest. As don Simon speaks with the visitor, he remarks.

. . . Y aquel niño [Telmo] . . . ¿Le entra a usted en la cabeza que le escribiera [a Liberata] a los diez años: "Me vas pisando el corazón cuando caminas."

¹⁸Ibid., p. 126.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 132.

No me acuerdo ya bien si era "cuando caminas," o "con tus sandalias" Impropio. Ella calzaba unas sandalias rojas iguales a las que puede tener cualquier niña. Pero aquí decir "sandalias" era doble decir; casi todas las otras caminaban descalzas Parecía que sólo ella llevase sus sandalias, eso era verdad, por la manera de andar, quizá, o porque hacía tan gracioso, tan vivo, el pie moreno y delgado como un pececillo entre las tiras rojas Ella, desde entonces, usó siempre sandalias, en cuanto dejaba de llover. No era moda, en aquel tiempo, y se nos hacía raro: parecían más desnudos sus pies así que si fueran descalzos. Tengo entendido que no se descalzaba en la arena, y que entraba con ellas al agua, sin desceñírselas, lo mismo que una reina. Decía que en el fondo de la ría había conchas y piedras que le herían las plantas de los pies, y eso es verdad.²⁰

Although Telmo loved Liberata, he, at the same time, keenly resented her attitude toward him. In a final attempt to escape her influence, he decided to leave the village. Curiously, on the occasion of his last visit to her, he could not bring himself to say good-bye, since there seemed no way to say good-bye to a part of one's self.

Telmo wrote regularly to Liberata. Even after his marriage to Flora, which was unknown to Liberata, he declared in a letter to her: "¿Dónde están los caminos de nuestra infancia, Liberata? La arena me ha borrado los caminos."²¹

The day that Telmo returned with his bride, Liberata, as though sensing his nearness, went to the window to watch

²⁰Ibid., pp. 118-119.

²¹Ibid., p. 213.

the passengers disembark from the boat. Seeing her former sweetheart with another woman, she went into convulsions and had to be tied in her bed. As the convulsions subsided, they were followed by a kind of catatonic stupor from which she never recovered. Telmo, upon learning of Liberata's condition, seemed to sense in it his own destruction. His marriage to Flora, whom he had known only a short time and did not love, had been a final, desperate attempt to be free of Liberata; but the final triumph belonged to the latter. By rejecting life she too asserted strongly her own free will. Don Simón Pedro explained Liberata's action to la forastera: "Tuvo su vida entre las manos, todos la tenemos. Y la destruyó."²²

Just as Liberata had freed herself from life, Telmo had condemned himself to a life he did not have the heart to live; the contest of pride and independence had been carried too far. Fleeing to Argentina with his wife, he began an excessive use of alcohol which led to his death at the age of forty-five.

At first la forastera's sympathies lie with Liberata; but when she meets and talks with Telmo's sister Angustias and don Simón Pedro, she sees the situation from another point of view and wonders "¿Cuál de las dos ha sido la engañada, la escarnecida?"²³

²²Ibid., p. 85.

²³Ibid., p. 213.

During her stay with the villagers, the protagonist comes to the realization that in regard to her own life she has not been an active participant but has merely permitted herself to be carried along in grudging resignation. In *Liberata* she sees a likeness to herself; and when she returns to Madrid and her husband, it is with the knowledge that ". . . nadie es libre si no renuncia a serlo, que nadie está solo si lo acepta"24

With La careta Elena Quiroga returns to the setting and type of indirect narration found in Algo pasa en la calle. For the most part, the novel is an interior monologue with the many time shifts and fragmentary thoughts characteristic of the so-called stream-of-consciousness technique. Its plot is thus extremely difficult to follow. ". . . el libro," remarks Juan Luis Alborg, "está escrito con un cabrilleo impresionista que fatiga y--a mí al menos--no satisface. La lectura es difícil, y en muchas de sus páginas se me ha ocurrido preguntarme si el sostenido esfuerzo que requiere merece verdaderamente la pena."25

There is, however, partial justification for the complexity of the narration: the reader must bear in mind that he is viewing the characters and their actions through the mind of a tormented alcoholic.

²⁴Ibid., p. 219.

²⁵Juan L. Alborg, Hora actual de la novela española (Madrid, 1958), p. 197.

Moisés, the guest of his six cousins at a reunion dinner, seizes the opportunity to rebuke his relatives for their condescending attitudes toward him. During the course of the dinner and of a parlor conversation which follows, he mentally rips from the face of each cousin the mask of hypocrisy behind which each hides from the actualities of life. Ultimately, his thoughts reveal his own masquerade.

As the cousins sit around the table reminiscing and discussing the frivolities of their childhood together, Moisés, in bitter anguish, broods over the childhood that was denied him. Unlike the parents of his cousins, his own had stayed in Spain during the Civil War. His father had been a proscribed officer in the army and, after months of hiding from the enemy forces, was detected and shot in his home. Attempting to protect her husband, the wife also was shot. Moisés, then a boy of twelve, had been terrified when the soldiers entered the house and apprehended his father. Running to another part of the house, he hid in a closet while the shots were fired. When he finally emerged fearfully from his hiding place, there was no sound but his mother's weak cries for help. The body of his father lay stretched out in a pool of blood and his mother, nearby, was bleeding profusely. In a state of shock and fearful that the soldiers might return, Moisés had thrown himself across his mother's body, smothering with his hand her cries for help. Before

the boy overcame his panic and hysteria his mother died from shock, loss of blood, and, at least in the opinion of the boy, from his own panic-inspired behavior.

Sometime later, the neighbors sensed something amiss and, upon entering the house, discovered the senseless lad still in his prostrate position and stained by his mother's blood. Not yet recovered from his state of shock, he was unable to tell them what had occurred. Sympathetic friends mistakenly assumed that the child had heroically attempted to shield his mother's body with his own.

Moisés was sent to live with his mother's sister on the northern coast of Spain. There he might have found relief, he believes in retrospect, in telling his aunt of the horrible incident and his own part in it, but she never questioned him or spoke of the catastrophe.

Shortly after the war, the cousins returned from South America and learned of their relative's supposed heroism. Agustín, a cousin the same age of Moisés, was particularly impressed by the story. As the two youths grew to manhood, Agustín continued to idealize and worship his cousin, seeking the latter's approval for his every action and thought. For Moisés life had been meaningless since the fateful death of his mother and father. The shame of his unspeakable part in the crime was augmented by the aura of silence enveloping it. On three separate occasions he had attempted to confess the

truth, yet three times circumstances denied him the relief that might have come from confession.

Unable to cope with his ever-increasing sense of guilt, and his inability to communicate his horrible secret, Moisés sought a life of forgetfulness in the refuge of alcoholism. When the weak-willed Agustín followed his example, the cousin's brothers and sister blamed Moisés. In the adoring eyes of Agustín, Moisés found a constant reminder of his gran mentira. His reaction was to scorn, ridicule and insult his idolater. By making himself an object of hatred to his cousin, he felt that his conscience would be somewhat relieved. Eventually he even went to the extreme of having an affair with Agustín's unfaithful mistress, hoping to incur his cousin's wrath and hatred. The spineless Agustín, however, accepted this insult along with all the previous ones.

After years of running from life, Moisés, on the night of the reunion dinner, decides to remedy his situation. The crime, unpunished for so long, will at last be avenged. Very drunk, he encourages Agustín to become equally inebriated, for the cousin is to serve as the instrument of his redemptive assertion of self-will. When they at last are alone and Moisés knows that the other is drunk enough to be provoked into an intense and dangerous fit of anger, he coolly informs Agustín that Choni, the latter's mistress, is going to have a child. When the aghast cousin asks him how he knows such a thing, he

replies that he just happens to possess the information and that, if Agustín doubts the statement, he has but to ask Choni himself. As he turns and calmly walks out of the house, Moisés is aware that, at last, he has committed an insult severe enough to goad his cousin into retaliation.

Moisés, almost with relief, senses that his cousin is stealthily following him with murderous intent in the pre-dawn shadows. For the first time, he admits affection for the relative who had been loyal to him for so many years. He realizes that the other's act will free both of them; Moisés will no longer be plagued by his tortured life, and Agustín will be free from the evil Choni, having finally become convinced of her perfidy. Fearing that Agustín will weaken and not go through with the anticipated assault, Moisés stops and calls back into the shadows with words intended to rekindle the flame of anger should it be diminishing. As he waits for the would-be murderer to stumble up to him, a sudden fear grips him. When Agustín finally attacks, his victim, responding to an instinct deep within him, fights back. Ironically, he forgets everything in his fierce struggle for survival, disarms his cousin, and strikes him with his own weapon. The novel ends as Moisés triumphantly leaves Agustín crumpled in the street, thinking to himself: ". . . ¿Qué importa? Mientras estás, estás."²⁶

²⁶Elena Quiroga, La careta (Barcelona, 1958), p. 213.

Elena Quiroga's succeeding novel, La última corrida, probably presents the foreign reader with his greatest challenge in reading her novels, especially if he is unversed in the terminology of tauromachy. However, any difficulty one may encounter with the jargon employed is only a minor impediment compared to the difficulty resulting from the author's narrative technique. There is the task of puzzling through the complex and fragmented thoughts of not one, but three major characters. Many times few indications are found as to whose thoughts are being reviewed as they occur at a given moment. In the chapters dealing with the corrida itself, comments from various nameless spectators are interjected sporadically. However, the masterful realism with which Elena Quiroga depicts the spectators as they view the spectacle is indeed an impressive proof of her keen sense of observation and her ability to draw the reader into the action of the novel. As in previous works, she sets for herself a strict time limit; the action of the novel is developed within approximately two hours.

The story revolves around the lives, loves, and thoughts of three matadores as each faces his "moment of truth" in a plaza somewhere in Castilla. Manuel Mayor is the principal figure; a man in his late fifties, he has returned to the ring from an unofficial retirement to serve as padrino, or sponsor, for Carmelo, a nineteen year old novillero. The

corrida is to be his last, and he awaits it convinced, as José Cano observes: ". . . sin amargura . . . que ya no tiene nada que hacer en las plazas, en contraste con el torerillo joven que inicia su carrera de triunfos."²⁷

Although Manuel Mayor says the least of the three main characters of the novel, which José Cano describes as being 80 per cent dialogue, the reader is left with the impression of having a clearer understanding of him, his character and personality, than of either of the other two matadores. As in Quiroga's other novels, the action of La última corrida serves as a spring board from which one is able to plunge into an intense psychological character analysis. The plot can be explained, perhaps, even more concisely than any of those that have been previously summarized: a man, beyond the prime of his ability in the ring, returns for one last fight. His handling of his first bull is somewhat less than spectacular. The men billed with him on the cartel are more artistic and skillful in their first endeavors. However, Manuel's second bull offers more of a challenge than the first; amid the enthusiastic cheers of the crowd, he puts on an outstanding performance until the moment of the kill. Then, as he rushes at the bull, he slips on a bit of melon rind carelessly thrown into the arena by some spectator. Falling before

²⁷José Cano, "Los libros del mes," Insula, CLXIV (1958), 6.

the charging bull, he narrowly escapes being gored. In the fall he painfully sprains his wrist and is unable to continue the fight. Due to the accident the brilliant young Pepe Sánchez is left to finish the task the former matador leaves undone. As Manuel leaves the ring, he makes a casual observation figuratively applicable to his own life. For the first time, he notes the proximity of the toril, or gate through which the bull enters the ring, a proud and indomitable beast, and the desolladero, or gate through which it is later dragged to the slaughter house.

In dealing with her familiar theme of man's loneliness, the author draws interesting parallels in the love lives of each of the matadors. Manuel Mayor is married to a woman for whom he feels no affection at all. His wife, Clementa, is thin and unattractive. Recalling that she has always seemed old, he describes her as being "seca como un chumbo."²⁸ He remembers having felt no regret that, shortly after their marriage, she miscarried and was never able to conceive after her illness. Manuel's relationship with his wife is juxtaposed to the relationship he has with Prado, a voluptuous but slovenly prostitute. The latter, whose name suggest fertility, provides a sharp contrast to the barren Clementa.

²⁸Elena Quiroga, La última corrida (Barcelona, 1958), p. 63.

Manuel loves her despite her vices, yet she scorns the love he professes for her and laughs when he asks her to bear him a child.

Pepe Sánchez, the second character in importance and a famous young matador at the height of his career, has been courting Hilda, a wealthy and socially prominent young woman. Having come from a poor home himself, he realizes that the servants in Hilda's home are better educated than his own mother. While attempting to reconcile such differences of background, he meets a young songstress in a cantina. With such a simple person he feels that he can have a more meaningful relationship. However, the pretentious Hilda persuades him to abandon the singer because she is socially beneath him. Thereafter he is again left with his indecision about the future, and his inability to feel free and at ease around Hilda and her family.

The third matador, Carmelo, has been involved in an unenthusiastic liaison with Juana. His one ambition and love is bullfighting, and the love affair leads him into a trapped feeling of obligation to the woman involved. He realizes that she understands nothing of the meaning that his career holds for him, nor of the noble struggle between man and beast involved in the corrida. To her the contest represents only a brief superficial thrill. When Carmelo finally tells

Juana that he will marry her, he feels "una tristeza enorme, más que nunca."²⁹

Tristura, the last work to be dealt with in this thesis, has its setting in Santander, and is both a character study and a novel of mood. As the title indicates, the mood is one of desperate sadness. It is evoked by the account of the life of Tadea, the sensitive ten-year-old protagonist, whose mother died in childbirth when her daughter was only a year old. For a while, the father kept his five motherless children with him. At length, however, he realized that he was unable to give them the time and supervision they required. Tadea's four older brothers were sent to a Jesuit school, and she went to live with her maternal grandmother. The father felt that Tadea would be well cared for, since the grandmother had been so fond of Raquel, the child's mother. However, Tadea's Aunt Concha, and her three children also live with the grandmother. The aunt, a hypocritical, puritanical and frustrated neurotic, has always been jealous of her sister, Raquel; therefore, she greatly resents the fact that her sister's child should be sent to live with them. Unknown to the grandmother, tía Concha deals Tadea much misery. She makes unkind remarks to the latter about her deceased mother, holds her responsible for any mischief of her unruly cousins, and

²⁹Ibid., p. 159.

constantly criticizes her, warning that God is watching her every move and will certainly punish her for each wrongdoing.

Soon after her arrival, Tadea overhears her aunt's cruel remark: "Cuando una madre se muere, si deja hijos pequeños detrás, deberían meterlos con ella en la misma caja, es lo que yo digo."³⁰ Tadea begins to withdraw as she is made to feel as an outsider. She dissembles her misery, however, as though she had too much pride to allow anyone to know of her suffering. At no time does she mention to her aunt or cousins the father and home for which she so desperately longs. At home Tadea and her brothers had enjoyed an unhampered childhood, able to give vent freely to their boundless energy by indulging in a multitude of childish pleasures, such as walks in the country, tree climbing, and horseback riding. However, under the watchful eye of tía Concha, neither she nor her cousins are allowed to play in the water, muss their clothes by romping with the dog, or leave the courtyard to go to the orchard to gather the over-ripe fruit that has fallen to the ground. The following passage reflects the lack of freedom and the frustration that Tadea experiences:

Mientras estudiábamos, cerrada la puerta de nuestro cuarto. Mientras dormíamos, cerrada la

³⁰Elena Quiroga, Tristura (Barcelona, 1960), p. 100.

puerta. Para jugar, al fondo de los platános, cerradas las cancelas de la huerta, sin traspasar las aberturas del seto. Cerrada la puerta del baño, con Suzanne [the governess] dentro.

--No te cierres por dentro en el retrete.

Cerrado el camión sobre nuestro cuerpo al desnudarnos.

--Cerrad los cuadernos.

Cerrado el estercolero, cerrado el pozo.

--Se hable más bajo.

Cerradas las voces.

--No se corre como si estuvieras loca.

Compostura.

Cerrado el aire, cerrados los caminos.

--A nadie le importa lo que tú piensas.

Cerrado.

--Otra vez las lagrimitas. Se guarda cada cual sus penas, si las tiene.

Cerrado el borbobón de las lágrimas.³¹

Although Elena Quiroga's description of Tadea's plight evokes a great sympathy from the reader, the author's sound judgment saves the plot from ever sinking into mere sentimentality. One particular incident of cruelty shown Tadea on her first Christmas away from home is extremely touching, yet it serves to demonstrate a facet of the child's developing personality. She and her cousin Clota have both written letters to los reyes requesting large baby dolls with closing eyes. After the visit of the Wise Men, the children rush to discover what has been left for them. Tadea's hurt and humiliation and her refusal to acknowledge her extreme disappointment are evidenced in a conversation between the cousins:

³¹Ibid., p. 167.

En mi zapato, asomando, un muñeco pequeño, tan pequeño, me cabía en la palma de la mano. Apreté la mano en torno al celuloide (traía una camisita y una braga de percal blanco) me pareció tibio, con sus ojos pintados de claro. Estreché el muñequin en la mano, sintiéndome roja hasta las orejas.

.....
 --Mira, Tadea, exacto. Exacto.

El muñeco de Clota, exacto al que habíamos visto en el Paraíso. Demasiado grande, demasiadas pestañas. Apreté mi muñeco más y más, era como un pájaro.

--Qué pequeño el tuyo. Pero no habías pedido uno como éste?

--Me gusta más así.

--No digas mentiras. Le pediste como el mío. El tuyo no cierra los ojos.

--Me gusta más.³²

The only person to whom Tadea gives her guarded confidences is her grandmother's elderly cousin, Julia, who comes for a visit every year in the fall. Like Tadea, she is tolerated but not particularly wanted in the home. The cousins ridicule her bulky and awkward figure, but the love and understanding which she attempts to give Tadea make her beautiful in the latter's eyes. At Tadea's first communion, Julia gives her a gold-colored mechanical pencil. The little communicant cherishes with great pride the gift that appears so impressive to her. However, Odón belittles his cousin's prize and scoffs that the pencil is cheap and gaudy. Tadea is quick to defend poor Julia and the gift against the jeers

³²Ibid., pp. 162-163.

of her cousins. From that time on, the protagonist becomes increasingly sensitive and irritable.

Some time after the incident of the mechanical pencil, Clota offers a comment about Tadea's father which displeases the girl. Losing all self-restraint, she kicks her cousin and retorts: "¡Cállate la boca! ¡Más te valiera no haber nacido!"³³ When tía Concha learns of the incident, she complains to the grandmother that Tadea's unseemly conduct and violent temper will soon contaminate the other children if immediate action is not taken. The unfortunate and misunderstood child is first reminded of her sins, then told that tía Concha and her grandmother are considering sending her away to a boarding school. During the days of deliberation in which her fate is being decided, the child's punishment is to remain isolated from the other children and locked in the library. She may leave only to take her meals with one of the servants. All forms of diversion, even that of reading, are denied her. However, for one hour each day she may go to the window and watch her cousins ride their new bicycles in the courtyard below. Although the disciplinary measures taken against her have all been attempts to make her submissive and obedient, the child accepts injustice after injustice without permitting anyone the satisfaction of hearing

³³Ibid., p. 254.

her complain. Her ability to conceal her true feelings causes the family to believe that she shows an abnormal lack of emotion. However, the most severe test of her stoicism comes when she learns that Julia is dead. Her own description of her grief follows:

. . . me latían las sienas a romperse . . .
 una mujer humilde Eran olor y amor
 de una persona, perdidos, corazón apretado por
 la muerte--sabía que era muerte--, con las sienas
 ardientes, oprimidas, feroz deseo de taponarme los
 oídos, de romper desde el pecho todos los límites
 del mundo de mi casa, desgarrarme de aquello que
 ataba, altos árboles, correr, correr El
 corazón róiido por la muerte, ahora sabía qué era
 muerte Y ansia, ansia, ansia.³⁴

A moment later, with the sudden realization that inquisitive eyes are observing her, she turns to the servant with the casual remark: "Tengo hambre."³⁵

³⁴Ibid., p. 232.

³⁵Ibid.

CHAPTER III

CHARACTERIZATIONS

Although Elena Quiroga's character portrayals are numerous and complex, they can readily be classified into three general categories: (1) protagonists, (2) secondary characters, and (3) servants. Viewing them in retrospect, the reader can see how the author uses each group for a specific effect. The protagonists, for the most part, exemplify a view of life much akin to the existentialism of Sartre; frequently the secondary characters afford opposition to this philosophy and are employed as types representative of popular religious or social precepts; ultimately, the servants perform in varying fashions the following functions: (1) they demonstrate the ties that once bound the servant and Spanish master, (2) they suggest or create a certain atmosphere or mood, and (3) they add much local color to the author's works.

Generally, the female protagonists, who outnumber the male ones, are more fully and convincingly delineated. With the notable exception of Manuel Mayor in La última corrida, Quiroga's male protagonists are somewhat idealized and they lack the masterful depth she achieves in depicting members of her own sex.

Marcela is the only character in the novels discussed who is of the servant class yet whose characterization places her among the ranks of the protagonists. Even before the author's intention of having Marcela marry Alvaro becomes evident, the reader is told that the girl ". . . no era mujer para labriego."¹ Although the farm workers cast longing glances in her direction, Marcela remains apart from the other servants. References to the love entanglements of the field hands and women servants provide an air of sensuality which permeates the novel. Alvaro sees in Marcela a 'gracia salvaje' which reminds him of the rich Galician earth he loves so well, and he senses in her an inner strength which he frequently compares to various deep-rooted trees native to that region. Indeed, it does seem as if she derives strength and sustenance from the land around her. Her happiest moments are those spent in roaming about the picturesque estate or walking along the beach and seeing the vast expanse of sea before her. Even after her marriage to the master, she finds it difficult to conform to a life indoors away from nature. She cherishes the rare moments when she can steal away alone, barefoot in her unencumbering peasant attire.

Perhaps by circumstance rather than choice, Marcela becomes an introvert. After her marriage, she no longer belongs

¹Elena Quiroga, Viento de norte (Barcelona, 1951), p. 110.

to the servant class, but she is unable to adapt to her newly acquired station as mistress of the estate. Due to her introverted nature and her unconquerable feeling of subservience to her husband, Marcela finds communication with Alvaro and his friends impossible.

The mood of the novel is one of complete frustration as the young woman stoically suppresses her desire for the freedom to be herself. Marcela remain completely passive and complies with the wishes of her husband. Her first attempt at self-assertation leads to disastrous results and an even wider breach in understanding between the couple. When Marcela finally overcomes her submissiveness and decides to take the initiative in clearing up the misunderstanding by declaring her love for her husband, her efforts come too late.

Alvaro is portrayed as a righteous man devoted to a quiet life of research and writing. His love for his estate, La Sagreiera, is only surpassed by that for his wife. His marriage is a difficult one, because he senses his wife's indifference. However, because of his deep love for his bride, he remains almost incredibly patient and understanding with her. Instead of being angered when he realizes she married him in obedience to his wishes rather than for love, he is grieved at the plight in which he has placed her.

The husband idolizes Marcela as a creature who embodies all the strength and beauty of his native Galicia. Although he is strong, his strength is more of a quiet, sub-surface nature contrasted with the vibrant vigor of Marcela. Alvaro is fascinated by exciting things. During a furious wind storm, Marcela enters Alvaro's study to close the windows and finds him standing before the open window, absorbed in the display of violence: ". . . estaba el señorito Alvaro, de pie ante la ventana abierta. Tranquilo y fuerte, ni se movía, como un árbol a quien la tormenta no alcanzaba."²

Depicted as an altogether admirable person, the husband is just and kind in dealing with his servants, and has their respect. In Quiroga's words, "No era Alvaro gazmoño, ni exageradamente devoto, o amigo de ceremonias religiosas; sincero en su fe, conservaba, en relación con la Iglesia, la misma respectuosa distancia que sus gentes hacia él."³

The fact that Alvaro is not a slave to superficial social convention is evidenced in his marrying the woman he loves despite the fact that she is a servant of illegitimate birth. Alvaro never thinks of his wife as being beneath him socially; rather he always accords her the same respect he would give any high-born lady.

²Ibid., p. 78.

³Ibid., p. 15.

The master of la Sagreira is not one to indulge in self-pity even as a paraplegic. His courage to face life does not forsake him as he continues the work on his manuscript. His sympathy is for Marcela, who accepts complete blame for driving him away the night he met with his crippling fate. A further revelation of his selfless nature can be found in his attempts to get Marcela to leave his side and enjoy the company of his cousins even though he is aware that it will mean hours of loneliness for him.

The servants in Viento del norte lend much local color to the author's description of life on an agricultural estate. They also serve as a constant reminder of Quiroga's love for the land and her sense of identity with it. Still another function of the servants (with the exception of Ermitas) is that of adding atmosphere to the novel. Just as they till and harvest the land, their role is to suggest an earthy or sensual tone to the work. An example of this role comes during the grape harvest. The women servants climb to reach the fruit on the highest branches while Marcela observes the following:

. . . Entre el revuelo de las faldas veíase más pierna de lo decente; las cabezas quedaban ocultas entre las hojas, mientras desprendían los racimos. Los hombres no perdían ripio. Fingían que las ayudaban, y andaban de acá para allá con los cestones, y las mozas les gritaban que se fueran.⁴

⁴Ibid., p. 63.

Ermitas is the one servant who does not fall into the above category. Although she has ". . . la filosofía de la naturaleza,"⁵ Ermitas is above the crude jokes and actions of the others. In fulfilling her duties as housekeeper, the elderly and compassionate woman never flags in her loyalty to the master whom she has reared from infancy. Later she gives the same motherly care to the ostracized Marcela. In her superstitious ignorance she is, at first, not at all certain that the infant has escaped the savage and diabolical likeness to her mother, La Matuxa. Nevertheless, upon seeing the forsaken criatura, such is the goodness in Ermita's heart that she is not long in overcoming her fears and renouncing her superstitions. Thenceforth she dedicates all her energy to protecting Marcela from the expressed scorn, jealousy and hatred of her fellow servants. The old woman's faithfulness is later rewarded as the ultimate in happiness comes for her with the union of Alvaro and Marcela--the two people to whom she has devoted her life and all her love.

La sangre, because of its broad scope of four generations, does not contain the complexity of characterization found in the author's succeeding novel. It is, nevertheless, a novel which depicts a greater intensity of emotional violence with perhaps less background devoted to supplying motivating drives responsible for the various actions and feelings of the

⁵Ibid., p. 220.

characters. These characters contrast sharply with the compassionate, yet objective and philosophical narrator personified in the chestnut tree. Of the six characters dealt with at length, Quiroga portrays those of Amador and his daughter, Amalia, with more depth than perhaps any of the others.

Amador greatly loved the sea. His several attempts to settle on his estate and live apart from the sea were unsuccessful; he could not turn a deaf ear to the irresistible call of the sea. Even after his marriage to the lovely María Fernanda, Amador was not content to stay at El Castelo. The tree comments on Amador's restlessness in the following passage:

Dormía [Amador] solo en el cuarto alto, y fumaba y fumaba, acodado a la ventana. Nos hemos pasado noches enteras mirándonos el uno al otro, aunque él me miraba sin ver. A veces antes de acostarse, salía del cuarto. Al rato volvía y se acodaba en el balcon. Parecía que no hubiese encontrado lo que había ido a buscar. Y daba vueltas y vueltas por el cuarto, como si el cuarto se le hiciese chico. Y le vi acariciando el abrigo aquel, el de los botones dorados. Otro día abrió la cómoda y comenzó a mirar despacio algo redondo, aplastado, que Roque y él llamaban el compás. Después desdobló un gran papel, extendiéndolo sobre la cama. Pasó noches y noches inclinado sobre él. A veces seguía con el dedo una ruta sobre aquel papel. Ya de niño marcaba en la tierra líneas imaginarias que no llevaban a parte alguna.⁶

Succumbing to his desire to return to the sea, Amador does not come home until his wife has given birth to a child.

⁶Elena Quiroga, La sangre (Barcelona, 1952), p. 26.

Disappointed that his child is a girl, he does not even attempt to see the baby. Roque, Amador's servant and sea companion, consoles his master with the thought that they will make an admiral out of the next child. But Amador thoughtfully insists: "--No. No será Almirante. Tapiaremos los ventanas de atrás, que no vea la mar nunca. Y que se acostumbre a la tierra, que se haga a la tierra ¡Dios me libre!...¡Dios me libre! En tierra" ⁷

Very shortly when Amador leaves for the sea again, he does not return until he receives word that his wife has died. When he arrives, he comes burdened with a very guilty conscience: he had been home scarcely five months during the time his wife was alive. After the burial he retires to his room; through the open window the tree sees him take his razor and without looking into the mirror raise it to his throat. But his resolution fails him and at length he drops the razor with the exclamation: "Cobarde . . . Cobarde" ⁸

The spell cast by the sea upon the poor sailor is still unbroken and he seeks refuge in its vastness. It is not until his second grandchild, the first male heir, is born that Amador joyously returns to el Castelo. In a jubilant gesture, he plants an elm tree so that it will be the same age as his grandson, Xavier. At last Amador seems to be content to forget

⁷Ibid., pp. 35-36.

⁸Ibid., p. 40.

the sea, until he hears himself accused by his son-in-law of having cruelly broken Mariás' heart and caused her death. Once again overwhelmed by his sense of guilt, Amador finds no other recourse than that of making a last escape to the sea.

Amalia had grown up plagued by the knowledge that her father had virtually ignored her and had only supervised the servants' rearing of her through occasional letters. Resentful of her father's treatment of her, she developed into a beautiful but unruly and headstrong woman. The author describes her in terms of ". . . un álamo, alta y fina."⁹

As instructed in a letter from Amador, the servants married Amalia to Efrén, a rather weak-willed youth. From the beginning Amalia with her quick temper was the dominant figure in the marriage, and the husband gradually receded into the background as a creature of little importance. It was not, however, so much Efrén's submissive nature, as Amalia's energetic drive that denied him his rightful position. Amalia was so active and domineering in making plans for the estate that she unknowingly stripped her husband of every vestige of his self-esteem and manly dignity. Consistent with the imagery employed by the author, one might liken Efrén

⁹Ibid., p. 59.

to a sapling attempting to survive in the shade cast by the more hardy Amalia. Finally in relating the effect of the wife on her husband, the chestnut tree notes:

. . . la mano de Efrén al posarse sobre mi tronco se iba agostando, lo mismo que si la sangre suya fuese tornándose lenta o fría y que la savia le faltase . . . Efrén, al fin, tenía ganas de detenerse en su carrera. Pero Amalia había tomado un impulso y lo seguía, arrastrada por su propio movimiento.

Era ella la que al aproximarse el otoño recorría el jardín o la casa dando órdenes, recogiendo cosas. Y en el despacho o en el cuarto alto de la torre la oía hablar de sus proyectos. Efrén tomó la costumbre de apoyarse en la ventana, de cara a mí, y había laxitud en su postura, como si algo interno le comiese las fuerzas.

Amalia apenas parecía darse cuenta. A veces le miraba así y se le oscurecían los ojos húmedos.

--Tú no estás bueno. ¿Te pasa algo, Efrén?

--Nada. No tengo nada.¹⁰

Despite her domineering nature, Amalia proves to be a good mother to her three children and her ability to forgive a wrong against her is apparent from her ready reconciliation with her vagabond father. Perhaps better than her mother before her, Amalia can understand her father's love for the sea--for she is just as fond of El Castelo. Amalia's smile, eyes, voice and manner are all compared to various aspects of nature in the following quotation: "Amalia sonreía; su sonrisa vegetal parecía nacerle de una raíz hondísima . . . tenía sus ojos de pupila amarillenta--amarillenta y húmeda, sí, como

¹⁰Ibid., p. 127.

las de un perrazo . . . tenía voz de agua . . . era movediza como el viento y la lluvia."¹¹

After the death of Efrén, Amalia, now much more mature, seems to acquire a perceptiveness of human nature previously lacking to her. When Xavier plans to marry Dolores, the mother attempts to warn him of his mistake; Amalia detects a lack of warmth and even harshness in her prospective daughter-in-law. Although silently furious with Dolores, Amalia concedes her position to the daughter-in-law. With little else to occupy her time, Amalia cares for the idiot servant, Eladio. Even as an invalid she spends hours talking to him and consoles him by recalling their childhood together and the time when Efrén, who was always kind to the pathetic creature, was alive.

Xavier admired his mother's determination as much as he felt disgust for his father's weakness. Any similarity between the father and son was in physical appearance rather than in character and personality. The text observes: ". . . los ojos de Xavier eran iguales que los de su padre, sólo que mientras lo negro de aquéllos ardía, como una llama viva, devorante, los de Efrén parecían rescoldos de una lava, cenizas de un fuego."¹²

¹¹Ibid., pp. 36-37.

¹²Ibid., p. 128.

Xavier inherited his quick temper from both his mother and grandfather. His behavior was erratic and he frequently inflicted cruelty upon others in a position to suffer from his harsh temper. Xavier had always disliked his older sister because "Gertrudis, desde niña acertaba con lo que más dolía a Xavier, y él . . . procuró hacer su dolor a los demás."¹³ At times he was even cruel to the younger Jacoba whom he loved very much. Xavier demonstrates the extent of his loyalty to and love for his younger sister when Jacoba pleads with him to prevent her marriage arranged by her mother to Donato. Xavier attempts in a futile gesture to persuade his mother to call off the marriage. When Xavier challenges Donato to a duel with pistols and kills him he almost suffers a mental collapse. Realizing that he has taken a life, for a time he all but becomes a recluse within the manor grounds. He finally regains an interest in life through a small child, Vicente, who he later learns is his son by a servant. It is at this point that Xavier decides to marry. Perhaps by marrying Dolores Xavier feels that he is atoning somewhat for taking her brother's life; however, Dolores is only interested in making her husband suffer for his deed. As a result Xavier rejects his wife and son in favor of his natural son. He knows that the hours he spends with Vicente infuriate the jealous Dolores, and as he withdraws

¹³Ibid., p. 141.

from his own family, he gradually becomes more dependent upon Vicente for understanding and companionship.

The narrator comments upon Dolores' arrival at El Castelo in the following passage:

Vino Dolores con su sonrisa tranquila y fría, mirando entre las pestañas muy juntas, cuando hablaba. No oí nunca reír a Dolores en alegre explosión, pero tampoco casi nunca la vi dejar de sonreír. Así supe que una sonrisa puede llegar a ser cansada y agobiante como una gota de agua. La sonrisa no llegaba a mostrar sus dientes. Estaba en su boca ancha, partida y fría como la boca de la rana, y quizá residía en la línea de sus ojos oblicuos. Al verla en la habitación de Amalia, a no ser por su ropa hubiese dudado de que fuese mujer, porque tenía la tabla de los pechos rasa. La ropa la colgaba por delante y por detrás, como si no hubiera carne a qué amoldarse. No daba la sensación de delicada y frágil como Jacoba; pese a su extrema delgadez, se la adivinaba fuerte, resistente e inflexible. Era una criatura inquietante como ninguna vi, y su mano sobre mi tronco tenía un viscoso, helado.¹⁴

Dolores, through devious methods, is able to keep Xavier at a safe distance without his suspecting her indifference toward him. Realizing his need for her forgiveness and love, she slowly withdraws, leaving a torment in his soul that only her affection and understanding could cast out. The reader becomes more and more aware of the appropriateness of this character's name, for "Dolores" is constantly evocative of the situation in which she places Xavier and later herself. As Xavier accepts her rejection of him and seeks the companionship of Vicente, Dolores is overcome by jealousy and surprise.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 173-174.

Now she is willing to go to any length to regain his affection, but the husband prefers to leave her alone. Exasperated at having lost her husband's love, she possessively turns to their son and constantly seeks reassurance of his love for her.

It is a significant index to her personality that, even as Dolores is making every effort to regain her husband, she plants the darnel in the garden. The tree comments on her intentions and likens her to the poisonous plant:

. . . Dolores sembró cizaña. La cizaña es caña que crece en el sembrado y lleva en su interior veneno. Dolores la sembró, quizá por asolar la siembra del corazón del hombre.

[Ella] No atacó de frente como hubiera hecho una loba o Amalia, ni gritó ni lloró. Entrecerró los ojos entre sus pestañas, y debió de ir así acumulando su veneno para sembrarlo luego.¹⁵

When she is caught in her plans of revenge, Dolores unflinchingly drains the glass of poisoned milk intended for her husband. The reader may be presumed to infer that being the strong and unbending woman that she was, she preferred death to the loss of dignity implicit in the revelation of her wickedness.

Pastor, born of the disastrous union of Xavier and Dolores, is the only character of the novel who is never dealt with sympathetically by the author. His faults are too

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 216-217.

numerous and his virtues non-existent. Although he does not share her love for the land, Pastor has other qualities he has inherited from his grandmother:

A través de Xavier le llegó de Amalia la caliente sangre, y su afán por la vida, y su querer devorarla a boca plena.
 Ríe como reía ella, alborotando el aire.
 Pero hay en Pastor algo cruel que Amalia sofocó.
 . . . Se parece a su abuela.
 Pero a una Amalia libre, sin freno y sin bondad.¹⁶

Pastor is of a restless and unsettled nature; he frequently scoffs at the tradition of his ancestors and derives satisfaction from the fact that they would be displeased with his lack of attachment to the estate. He is willing to sell El Castelo to some wealthy North American who might feel that he was getting a quaint bargain in the old house with its tower containing the bones of three generations.

Proud of his oratorical talents, Pastor employs them in his capacity as a propaganda agent for the Communist Party. He seems unaware, however, of the inconsistency in his philosophy; while he proclaims all men brothers, he does not even bother to learn the names of his servants. Acting with extreme egocentricity, he marries a beautiful actress not because of love for her, but in order that other men will envy him in his possession, and he is unfaithful to her so that all men will know of his freedom to do as he wishes. Pastor

¹⁶Ibid., p. 204.

marries Angeles cognizant of a previous indiscretion on her part, but he later uses her admitted mistake to taunt her and as an excuse for his own promiscuous activities.

It is curious to note that Vicente, the son of Xavier and the fiery servant, Justina, is of so compassionate and humble a nature. He is as gentle and noble as his half-brother is cruel and base. Whereas it is the instinct of many of the other characters in the novel to destroy, Vicente has the instinct to create. His rough gardener's hands are responsible for the most abundant and attractive gardens ever viewed at El Castelo.

Since boyhood Vicente had been devoted to Xavier when the two had first sought in each other a much needed companionship. Together they had made rounds of the estate to see that all the gates and doors were tightly secured. Although Vicente must have wondered at the master's nervous state until this ritual was accomplished nightly, his respect for him and his pleasure in being with him silenced the youth.

All during Xavier's illness, Vicente remains in constant attendance. When he apprehends Dolores with the poison and thus prevents the death of his beloved companion, he is horrified and tormented by the thought that he is responsible for the death of even a would-be murderess.

In the last testament, Xavier acknowledges Vicente as his natural son. Although Vicente is profoundly disturbed by the

news and humbly denies it, he fulfills the wishes of the deceased by continuing at El Castelo in the service of Pastor. However, Xavier has made no easy request, as Vicente silently and futilely adores the wife so mistreated by his half-brother.

With Algo pasa en la calle Quiroga attempts to delineate her first male protagonist of full dimensions. Doubtlessly the author intends for the work to be the story of Ventura's life and a revelation of his character as viewed through the thoughts of his survivors; however, Quiroga proves herself so masterful in a depiction of the two wives who destroy Ventura that the figure of the husband is frequently overshadowed by the brilliant portrayals of the women. Through a series of flashbacks in the first wife's memories, the space of approximately twenty years is traversed so that the earliest focus upon the characterization of Ventura comes when he is a young man and just prior to his marriage to Esperanza.

Esperanza is attracted to Ventura because of a certain strength and determination in him which she finds totally lacking in her other, puppet-like suitors. Her description of him reveals that he was a man who "Respetaba infinitamente la individualidad de los demás, y se volvía duro, intratable cuando pretendían vulnerar la suya."¹⁷ Although he is deeply

¹⁷Elena Quiroga, Algo pasa en la calle (Barcelona, 1954), p. 30.

in love, Ventura hesitates before the wealth and goddess-like beauty of Esperanza; perhaps he senses in these qualities an underlying danger to himself and to his dedication to his scholarly pursuits. By no means a completely somber personality, ". . . se rió con risa tan jovial, tan franca . . .," he nevertheless, approaches his profession as lecturer-philosopher with total consecration.

During one of his lectures some months after their marriage, Esperanza listens to his words "puras como cristales" and bitterly ponders:

--Parece un monje
 Sí, parecía un monje de una religión pura, con sus afilados dedos . . . levemente cargado de hombres, el rostro ascético. ¿Por qué le causaba esta impresión? ¿Quizá por la frente alta, con las sienes abultadas, por el rostro anguloso, demacrado? Les miraba a todos con ojos deshumanizados. Miraba a las personas a los ojos, como esperando algo de todo el mundo, como si estuviese esperando una respuesta que no darían palabras. Y que él supiera de antemano lo que iban a contestar, rodeado de silencio.¹⁹

As Esperanza's increasing indifference toward his work and his love for her cast him into pathetic straits, Ventura transfer his rejected devotion to their daughter. It is as a father that Ventura is most vulnerable. Able to overcome the loss of his marriage by once more throwing himself into study and contemplation, he, nonetheless, finds the loss of his daughter an irreparably tragic one.

Forced to compromise his religious convictions by marrying his pregnant mistress, Ventura's efforts to be a good

¹⁹Ibid., p. 42.

husband and father are both admirable and sincere; however, Presencia later acknowledges: "Hay una zona de soledad en él a la que no llego, no porque no lo deseo, sino porque él me la veda."²⁰ Regarding her deceased husband she also adds: "No fué nunca del todo dichoso . . . procuró al menos, que se salvara mi felicidad."²¹

Perhaps the best manner in which to approach the characters of Esperanza and Presencia is through a study in contrasts, for they are complete opposites in both personality and circumstances. Esperanza is confident in the knowledge that her wealth and beauty have made her sought after in the most prominent social circles. Presencia, thin and unattractive, has lived as an unwanted orphan in the home of her cousins a constantly gratifying evidence to them of their generous and charitable gesture.

The selfish and proud Esperanza is envious of the time Ventura devotes to his profession, and she hinders his endeavors with every conceivable obstacle. Presencia, on the other hand, respects her husband's chosen work and encourages him. She discusses the manuscripts with him and acts as his secretary in addition to discharging her household duties.

Even in regard to the treatment each gives her child, many differences between the two women can be further noted.

²⁰Ibid., p. 87.

²¹Ibid., p. 88.

In her jealous manner one mother attempts to stifle any father-daughter companionship with the pretense that Ventura's frequent visits to the nursery spoil Agata and tend to interfere with the child's meals, bedtime schedule, and general welfare. When Esperanza discovers that Agata is curious about her absent father, she contemplates lying to the child by telling her that Ventura is dead. Despite the cruel implications and without regard for her daughter's feelings, the mother later explains that Ventura was an evil man who abandoned them both for another woman. Esperanza achieves satisfaction in knowing that her slyly distorted statement succeeds in destroying the child's image of her father.

Presencia, acting in a more natural motherly role, makes every effort to encourage a close father-son relationship. Knowing of the adoration Asís has for his father, Presencia gladly leaves them alone to enjoy one another's company and to talk freely. Asís recalls his mother's consideration as in his thoughts he addresses his father's corpse: ". . . cuando yo venía del colegio, madre se retiraba a la sombra de casa y me dejaba toda tu luz a mí."²² Instead of hiding the truth from her child, Presencia wants to tell Asís about his father and his other family; however, Ventura persuades

²²Ibid., p. 125.

her to abandon the idea until the boy is older and can better understand the circumstances in which his parents found themselves.

Esperanza's insensitivity and lack of emotion are very clearly exemplified in the following remembered dialogue between the man and wife:

- (-- . . . No te he visto llorar nunca.
 --Sabes que no es verdad. Mil veces
 --Pero no lágrimas, lágrimas Hasta en eso eres compuesta, medida Pero no llanto de verdad, un llanto que descomponga, que deshaga. Créeme, Esperanza, aunque no nos veamos más me gustaría saber que alguna vez habías llorado así con toda tu alma.
 --Por ti, ¿verdad?
 --No soy tan egoísta. Por ti misma.)²³

On still another occasion, Esperanza remembers her husband's criticism of her:

- Si pudieras liberarte del medio en que vives Tan absolutamente superficial No haces nada, ni piensas nada hondamente humano. No, no es cuestión de clase social, créeme. Es cuestión tuya, personal, de tu ambiente determinado; tener la mejor casa, recibir bien, no dejar al día espacio para nada trascendente Todo el día con el rostro compuesto, sonriendo. Se siente uno agotado, fatigado mortalmente de tanto constreñir el alma. Porque no es elegante dejar traslucir el alma; no se lleva. Resulta indiscreto²⁴

²³Ibid., p. 26.

²⁴Ibid., p. 108.

Upon learning of Ventura's death, the ex-wife feels no remorse--only a profound relief. Just as her name might imply, she had long hoped and waited for it. The only discomfort and unpleasantness of the situation for Esperanza is her anger that the priest has absolved Ventura of his sin and accorded him the last rites of the Church.

Presencia, who unselfishly loved Ventura, is heartbroken that Agata does not want to pay her last respects to her father. She thinks: "Tiene que venir Agata. Debe venir aquí. Yo no saldré. No iré al cuarto [donde está Ventura]. Pero tú ¡ven, ven! ¡Una sola vez, un minuto sólo!" ²⁵ Of the fifteen years she has shared with Ventura, Presencia realizes "todo su vida era, cabía, sería aquellos quince [sic] años." ²⁶

While Esperanza would have desired eternal damnation for Ventura, Presencia falls on her knees and, rejecting her agnosticism, begins to pray:

¡Dios mío, no fué suya la culpa! Yo, yo Ha tenido el infierno en vida; pasaba delante de las iglesias como un desterrado. Ha vivido en contraposición con lo que pensaba. Eso para él, aplomado en el pensar y en el sentir, fué un tormento. No poder dar ni ejemplaridad al hijo. ¡Líbrale, Señor!

--El--Tú lo sabes--me dió a leer los Evangelios. Me llevó hasta las puertas de la Iglesia. No me las abrió porque no podía, pero me condujo hasta el umbral. Para él fue la Iglesia su muro de lamentaciones. [El] Dijo: « Quisiera liberaros. » Le escuchaste. Me le arrebataste para que yo pudiera, ahora, entrar ²⁷

²⁵Ibid., p. 63.

²⁶Ibid., p. 217.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 218-219.

The protagonist of Elena Quiroga's next novel, La enferma, is known only as la forastera. Her name is significant in two respects; one, she is a stranger to the village where she has come to spend some time, and the second implication of her name lies in the fact that she is a stranger even to herself. The middle-aged protagonist is disturbed by the awareness that she and her husband seem to have grown apart. She believes that this alienation and inability to communicate springs partly from the fact that they have remained childless. A possessive person by nature, she is unable to accept the fact that two people can spend years of married life together and still not really know everything about one another. She is greatly depressed and made to feel insecure in her marriage by the knowledge that she is neither so young nor so attractive as she once was. Grippled by the neurotic fear that her husband no longer loves her and that he regrets their marriage, she decides to take immediate action to tighten her hold on him.

In reviewing their past life together, la forastera recalls that Victor has spoken of a plot of land he once purchased outside a peaceful Galician fishing village. Even then, she had felt jealous of the many solitary and happy hours he had spent there as a young man. She remembers her hurt at one of Victor's remarks about the strip of land:

. . . Puse amor en aquel sitio. Lo acertaste.
Te diste cuenta de que había pasión en mí

cuando hablaba de la arena y de la ría y de aquellas noches de extraña fluorescencia. Alguna vez pensé: "Aquí me gustaría vivir. Solo. Sin vínculos ni obligaciones. Sin dañar a nadie."²⁸

Now interpreting his nostalgic remark as bitter regret, the troubled wife senses in her husband's memories of the land an intangible, but potential rival. Made insensitive and selfish by her blind jealousy, she is determined to be rid of that ". . . ancha gloriosa libertad en que no había lugar para mujer alguna."²⁹

Although la forastera resembles Esperanza in one respect, she, unlike the latter, is not beyond self-redemption because she has compassion--a quality totally lacking in Esperanza. Another saving grace is her sincere, but immature, love for her husband. However unsuccessful she has been in doing so, she does attempt to understand Victor, and she regrets that his career has forced him to compromise his ideals.

Almost without her realizing it, the protagonist responds to the therapeutic effect of life in the peaceful village. She reacts to the story of Liberata and Telmo with a realization that her own attitudes closely parallel those that had destroyed the two young sweethearts. She reasons to herself:

²⁸Elena Quiroga, La enferma (Barcelona, 1955), p. 25.

²⁹Ibid.

No he respetado la libertad de Víctor, fui exigente y tenaz. Procure que no hubiese horas que yo no conociese, pensamientos perdidos. Con esta inquietud que engaño desde niña, he querido poseer entero un corazón humano, y saber más, palpándolas, su sístole y su diástole. Pero olvidaba que aun cerca de mí, escuchándome, ha podido evadirse, porque él tenía (como yo, como todos) ese espacio de sombras y de luz, ese rastro de un Dios: el pensamiento.³⁰

Although time has grown short and she realizes that she may fail in her endeavor, she has learned to respect the individual, knowing that without private thoughts and moments of introspection there can be no strength, peace or happiness.

The characterizations of Liberata and Telmo and their relationship to one another provide the novel with much of its mood of anguish and frustration. Although her parents did not realize it, Liberata's personality was abnormal from childhood. Whereas young children are generally most strongly attached to their parents, this mysterious and beautiful child preferred her playmate Telmo above all others. The village priest recalls that he never saw Liberata smile unless it was a smile occasioned by Telmo's presence. Don Simón further states: "Ella, cuando él no estaba, se volvía huraña y retraída, celosa y absorbente como una persona mayor."³¹ If Telmo neglected her in games with his other playmates, Liberata would watch from a distance: ". . . les miraba jugar . . .

³⁰Ibid., pp. 111-112.

³¹Ibid., p. 115.

'les' en un decir; clavaba los ojos en él hasta que se fastidiaba."³² When Eugenio went fishing with Telmo, Liberata would plague her brother with questions upon his return: "¿Qué hicisteis? ¿Dónde fuisteis? Telmo qué hacía?"³³

Whenever Telmo did something to displease her, Liberata's headstrong and vengeful nature brought about frightening consequences. On one occasion Telmo had failed to visit her at the appointed time, and Liberata promptly had to be put to bed because of a high fever. Telmo knows that her self-inflicted illness and her refusal to see him when he finally does arrive are born of her spitefulness and a desire to cause him to suffer.

With time Liberata's extreme pride and lack of humility become increasingly evident. When the priest asks the young woman to make her confession before the New Year's Communion services, he receives the disdainful and laconic answer: "No he pecado."³⁴ The haughty Liberata receives her first lesson in humility when Telmo leaves the village to go abroad. The following passage describes her pathetic attempt to hang on to the absent sweetheart:

³²Ibid., p. 116.

³³Ibid., p. 117.

³⁴Ibid., p. 127.

Liberata entregaba todos los días dos cartas al correo. No tenía confianza en el servicio del pueblo, ni siquiera en Alida Debía de creer que íbamos a leerlas, a hurtarlas, porque iba ella misma a la salida y a la llegada del barco, con su carta en la mano. Daba pena. Con lluvia, con viento y con frío, la hemos visto todos cruzar la punta del muelle, ciega, a su capricho. Entregaba su carta al marinero y después se quedaba viendo partir el barco, derecha, al borde mismo del espigón, tiempo y tiempo, hasta que lo perdía de vista y el viento la despeinaba. Así comenzó a despertar piedad. Volvía a pasos agitados, sin hablar con nadie³⁵

Although Liberata must have known that Telmo eventually would have returned despite his marriage to Flora, her final act of revenge is most revealing in regard to her character. She had rather condemn Telmo to a life of torture than regain him later.

Telmo, an aspiring poet, is extremely egotistical; curiously enough, however, his downfall stems from his being enraptured with the unusual and exciting rather than with his own introspective thoughts. In describing the boy to la forastera, don Simón relates:

El era impulsivo, distraído y soñador. Un niño al que le gustaban los misterios, que él mismo se urdía cuentos. No sé si por eso quería a Liberata. Podía ser para él como un desván oscuro, o como un túnel donde todo podría sucederle. ¿Qué fué Liberata para aquella imaginación desbordada, infantil? No lo sé, pero le marcó para siempre.³⁶

³⁵Ibid., pp. 133-134.

³⁶Ibid., p. 117.

Although Telmo recognizes the danger to himself in Liberata's suffocating grip, he lacks the strength to resist her. On another occasion, the priest attempts to explain the youth at greater length:

Para el muchacho [ella] fue una obsesión, una persecución. La quería. La quiso. Se que usted lo pone en duda, pero así fue. La quería como uno se acostumbra a un brazo, aunque le duela, o también porque era hermosa y singular y le halagaba su belleza, y la veía aparte de las otras, diferente, y él la idealizaba en su imaginación de artista. Le atraía lo mismo que a muchos el abismo, o la noche, o la mar, o lo imposible.³⁷

Of the two, Telmo was the more sensitive and as a result of his sensitivity, the weaker of the two. In the final analysis, the reader does not find Telmo's motives ignoble. He marries Flora not to grieve Liberata, but in a desperate attempt to prevent his own spiritual suicide. However, upon learning of Liberata's withdrawal from life, his love and compassion for her cause the gradual surrendering of his own will to live. Angustias, in explaining the effect of Liberata's final action upon her brother, employs the following powerful but simple imagery:

. . . [Liberata] conocía a Telmo hasta el fondo, lo que había de dolerle, de enloquecerle, de perseguirle. Y fue a darle de lleno, con la más cruel intención. Le clavó su arpón en el costado y él vivió con aquello clavado que le impedía respirar libremente, defenderse: flotaba.³⁸

³⁷Ibid., p. 123.

³⁸Ibid., p. 204.

In dealing with her theme of human pride the author offers the portrayal of don Simón Pedro as a vivid contrast to that of the previously discussed characters of the novel. The humble parish priest had not always been so lacking in pride, for he had first come to the village years ago with the idea that he would soon be leaving it for a position of greater prestige in a larger parish. He failed to recognize, however, that his aspirations were motivated by the sin of pride which in his vocation was particularly to be avoided. In their simple lives and resignation to a daily struggle for existence, the villagers lacked the ability to understand their priest's restless desire for accomplishments. Thus they judged him to be completely different from them and set themselves apart from him.

The priest finally gains the love and respect of his parishioners by fearlessly leading an attempt to rescue three fishermen. During a storm one of the fishing vessels had overturned in the bay and three men had failed to gain shore. While the villagers watched from the shore and judged the situation hopeless, don Simón leaped into a boat, scarcely waiting for the few volunteers who followed his brave example, and started the precarious journey through the turbulent water. Through the priest's efforts, two of the men were saved, and the third, unable to grasp the life line, even as the undertow was dragging him down, received absolution administered by

don Simón. The uncomplicated piety and true humility of the simple villagers had a chastening and inspirational effect upon don Simón, and thenceforth, the parishioners accepted him as one of them, becoming increasingly convinced that he would never abandon them. Even during the Civil War, despite the personal risk involved, don Simón proclaimed the doors of the church and his own living quarters always open to the villagers. The priest had become reconciled to the fact that it was God's will that he not celebrate mass in the grandeur of a cathedral, but here in a sparsely populated and isolated village. The man of the cloth accepted his charge of this humble flock with complete dedication. Alida speaks of the priest to la forastera with pride and understanding.

Donde hacía falta, allí [él] estaba; nunca cerró la puerta a un pobre. No le dejan vivir. Que si una partija, que si un pleito, que si hay que ir a la ciudad El tiene consejo para todo, y, sobre todo, oye. No es fácil encontrarse así, uno que oiga sin cansarse.

Había sido un varón fuerte. Se había mantenido como el Evangelio sobre el ara dando testimonio. Y había sabido que a aquella gente ruda y de vida humilde no podía írsele con palabras. Se ocupó antes que de nada de sus cuerpos, para darles categoría humana. Vivió entre ellos. Fácil de decir ¿verdad? Vivió entre ellos, día tras día, sin cansarse, comiendo el mismo pan, bebiendo el mismo vino. Y poco a poco, casi sin darse cuenta los demás, fué envejeciendo, tardaron en darse cuenta porque seguía caminando derecho, y no se hurtaba a nada.³⁹

³⁹Ibid., pp. 67-68.

La forastera, herself, is properly impressed by the elderly priest's serenity and sincerity regarding life and his role in it. She regards him as he officiates at the mass and respectfully notes:

Oficia de una manera escueta, con convicción y sin teatralidad. Vive, no representa. Tiene una hermosa voz que no tiembla, se le oye de todos lados Para dar testimonio de la verdad está Don Simón Pedro en el pueblo. La manifiesta con sencillez. Oficia con sencillez. Hace todas las cosas de una manera elemental y simple⁴⁰

The characterization of Alida seems closely patterned after that of the prototype of Ermitas in Viento del norte. They share almost the same attributes. When Liberata's mother died after the girl's mishap, Alida had promised to care for the invalid. For approximately twenty years the servant has tirelessly bathed, dressed and fed la enferma. Alida's husband shares his wife's devotion; he always reserves the choice fish of his daily catch for Liberata.

Alida tells la forastera of her intense anger toward Telmo when he appeared with his bride. She blames Telmo completely for Liberata's present state and speaks of her own anguish caused by the event:

No he vuelto a llorar hasta esta noche, aunque éstas no han sido lágrimas de dolor, sino de rabia, y no cuentan como dolor. Y ahora yo también sé que usted me ha dado consuelo, sin hablar. El consuelo que yo le di a la madre de llorar junto a ella, usted me lo ha devuelto, escuchándome esta noche.⁴¹

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 63-64.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 177.

Blinded to the true situation by her devotion to her mistress, Alida is unable to forgive Telmo even when she learns of his misery in life and of his premature death. When the news of his demise arrives, Alida uncorks a bottle of champagne at Liberata's bedside and hysterically celebrates her mistress' triumph by first forcing the wine down the invalid's throat and then drinking some herself.

The fifth novel in this study, La careta, is unique in that it is the author's only novel dedicated to the portrayal of one character rather than of several. Although the protagonist has six cousins, their action and function in the novel are greatly limited. The cousins, for the most part, are seen only through the eyes of the protagonist Moisés Estévez. The latter feels varying degrees of contempt for each of his cousins, and his comments about the six relatives serve as a means of revealing in depth the character of Moisés. Thus the impressions that Moisés has of each of his cousins allow the author to portray the protagonist's own personality rather than to encumber the novel with more lengthy characterization of six additional minor figures.

Moisés has lived for about thirty-eight of his fifty years in a state of increasing torment brought about by intense feelings of guilt aggravated through the years by his addiction to alcohol. His life of misery had begun as a child when he had witnessed the loss of both parents in one of the

atrocities of the Spanish Civil War. Through the various fragmentary recollections of the protagonist, the reader is made to understand the traumatic effect of this particular event in the development of Moisés' character. Moisés recalls the great respect and pride he had felt at seeing his father in the attractive uniform of a Cavalry Commandant. Later, however, enemy forces had disbanded the troops of which the boy's father was an officer and the latter considered it necessary to seclude himself, fearing for his life. The twelve-year old Moisés, previously so proud of his father, now felt shame at what he considered cowardice on the part of the former officer. The months in which the father lived concealed in his own home had a nerve-shattering effect upon the son. At that time unable to comprehend the situation and living in constant fear, Moisés began to feel scorn and shame for his father's action:

No sabía bien por qué, pero le despreciaba
 [al padre]. No era valiente, no les recibía
 [a los soldados] con el sable o la pistola al
 puño, se escondía en la alacena del cuarto de
 plancha y mama tapaba las puertas con un armario
 enorme, medio vacío⁴²

When the father was finally apprehended and dragged from his hiding place, Moisés, panic-stricken, sensed the impending danger and fled from the room where his parents faced the armed soldiers. From a closet in another room, the boy had heard the

⁴²Elena Quiroga, La careta (Barcelona, 1958), p. 196.

shots that had killed his father and left his mother critically wounded. Prompted by the fear that his mother's pleas for help might cause the soldiers to return, Moisés anxiously attempted to silence her:

«Cállate. ¿No te callas?» Le tapó la boca el hijo con su mano, pequeña pero firme, apretándola. Ella se defendió un poco, se hizo a un lado para respirar o gritar. (Oh, horror.) El no discurría ya más que aquello, seguro: no gritar, no moverse, que no vuelvan.

«Cállate. Cállate» . . . aunque ya no hablaba. Había ladeado la cabeza y le miraba, tan fija. Para siempre aquellos ojos en él Le miró con horror, sólo un segundo. Luego, los ojos parecieron sonreír, comprender, apiadarse, aceptar. Debíó de pensar: «Hijo, tan pequeño, no sabes lo que haces».

Quizá hallara mejor morir, ayudada por el hijo a morir, que por aquellas violentas manos extrañas.⁴³

The boy's action, induced by his state of shock and panic, were to plague him all his life. When the neighbors discovered Moisés in blood-soaked clothing lying across his mother's body, they had mistakenly interpreted his behavior as an act of heroism on the part of the child. Lacking the courage to correct their impression, Moisés remained silent before their sympathetic but admiring eyes.

Made miserable by his gran mentira, Moisés attempts to confess his crime on three different occasions. His first endeavor to do so comes while he is in the Jesuit colegio. The priest who attends him in the confessional knows the boy's tragic loss but not the instrumental part Moisés had

⁴³Ibid., p. 203.

played in it. Fearing that the remembrance of the event will provoke the boy into hysteria, the priest forbids him to mention the episode. Moisés later recalls how his frustration at having to remain silent left him with a great change in feelings and belief:

Por vez primera deseó decir algo brutal,
hiriente

Cuando la ira y la burla se aplacaron en él, le empezó el cansancio de sí mismo, y aquella arteria para percibirlo todo, para rastrear los fallos, llegar aviesamente, implacablemente a la raíz última de las cosas. Buscó los libros que de antemano deseaba hallar, los razonamientos que él exigía para afianzarse--huyó de todo aquello que apuntalase su fe porque la odiaba--, intuitivamente eligió, hasta que pudo decirse: «No creo en nada». Y se sintió más fuerte, robustecido.

«No creo en nada» .

Las cosas perdían peso, sin fe.⁴⁴

In this attitude of negativism Moises attains manhood, devoid of any ambition. His only goal is to push out of his mind the source of his misery and desperate loneliness. For a time the consumption of vast amounts of alcohol seems to provide forgetfulness; however, even this activity cannot rid him completely of his guilt.

Once more he seeks someone with whom to share the horrible truth about himself. In desperation Moisés goes to church and asks to receive confession. Perceiving that the penitent has been drinking, the priest refuses to hear him and turns his back on him. The dejected and frustrated figure of

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 129.

Moisés attracts the attention of a second priest, who offers to hear his confession. Moisés unburdens his tormented conscience in eager anticipation of consolation. The priest believes the account to be a mere fantasy--the hallucination of an alcoholic; however, he makes a compassionate effort to alleviate the drunk's obvious suffering with the following words: "No hubo pecado, fue' un instinto natural."⁴⁵

Even in his inability to think clearly, Moisés comprehends a horrifying significance in the statement: Man, even as a child, is a monstrous creature who lives at the expense of another's pain and agony. Moisés discovers the general truth of his conclusion through his observation of those around him. In his obsession with finding and enumerating human faults and frailties, he turns to the dinner table around which his six hypocritical cousins are seated and mentally unmask each one. The oldest cousin, Gabriel, had abandoned his children after the death of his wife and gone to sea; Ignacia is extremely pretentious and insincere even to herself; Bernardo is a wealthy philanderer; Nieves is selfishly wrapped up in herself; Flavia who had always feigned compassion for Moisés, in truth scorns him as much as do her brothers and sisters; and finally, Agustín is weak-willed and masochistic.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 150.

In his distorted concept of life Moisés decides that death is better than enduring his purposeless state of disillusionment. His diabolical plan for ending his own life of torment involves provoking the anger and jealousy of the only cousin who has ever really cared for him. He plans to incite Agustín to murder him. Moisés engages the drunken Agustín in a conversation regarding the latter's mistress. Hinting that in her perfidy to Agustín Choni has become pregnant, Moisés finally succeeds in getting the cousin to attack him with murderous intent. However, Moisés' plan for escaping a life he has found painfully meaningless is thwarted; he has not counted on the fact that although he wishes with all his heart to die, his instinct for survival is stronger than his wish for death. In the resulting fight, Moisés kills Agustín; now, he must live with the fact that he is responsible for the death of a second person.

Although primarily a novel of atmosphere, Elena Quiroga's next novel La última corrida provides an interesting study of three toreros and their mental and physical contrast to one another. Their involvement in the popular contest between man and beast provides the occasion for portraying the manner or attitude in which each man approaches his career and thus reveals much about his character. Of the three men described, the author goes to greater lengths in dealing with the figure

of Manuel Mayor. Although Manuel possesses some of the same qualities as those of the virtuous characters of Alvaro and Ventura, found in two previously discussed novels, he also bears a resemblance in certain respects to the degenerate Moisés of La careta. By virtue of his complexity, Manuel becomes a somewhat enigmatic figure to both the other characters in the novel and to the reader. Silent and introverted by nature, he has found a more tranquil existence on the vast lonely plains than he had previously known. He associates a sense of liberty with the solitude into which his life as a shepherd places him. From the author's vague reference to Manuel's experience in the Spanish Civil War, the reader may infer that this man's exposure to the senseless human slaughter during those turbulent years had greatly affected his personality and was a primary reason for his desire to live apart from others. In speaking of the effect the war produced upon Manuel the author observes: "Quedo' después como quien deja una carga de dinamita abandonada."⁴⁶ There is implicit the suggestion that previously he had been attracted to the profession of torero by the opportunity it afforded him to give vent to his feelings of suppressed violence.

In his awareness of man's precarious role in the universe, Manuel recognizes a need for something--indefinable and evasive--

⁴⁶Elena Quiroga, La última corrida (Barcelona, 1958), p. 122.

but a something which will fill the void wrought by his disillusion with humanity. Like Moisés, Manuel struggles with the idea of "nothingness;" however, the latter rejects that which Moisés seemed to accept. Manuel comes to the following conclusion: "Un hombre necesita de algo grande y oscuro, más fuerte que él, más libre Un hombre se la juega cara a cara con algo mayor que él, o igual que él--mejor mayor--y pasa pena así"47 The preceding quotation together with the man's attitude toward both his wife and his mistress supply the most important interpretative key to his character. The wife Clementa is depicted as being gentle, submissive, and kind, but her husband refers to her as "nada;" significantly enough, she is barren. Prado, the shrewish prostitute for whom Manuel has an unrequited love, symbolizes for him "lo negro, lo perdido, lo condenado, de la vida, y lo único bueno totalmente, y la única ansia;"48 curiously Manuel equates her with "algo;" the implication is further stressed by the fact that her name seems to connote fertility.

Thus the reader may discover an even deeper insight into the character of the protagonist through an analysis of Manuel's philosophy and its logical conclusion. Manuel does not specify that "something" must be "good," but rather that

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 48.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 49.

it merely be the opposite of "nothing." For Manuel, the inherent value of "something" lies in its quality of replacing "nothing."

When Manuel returns to the plaza one last time in order that he may serve as the sponsor in Carmelo's alternativo, he finally ends his quest for the "algo" which will supposedly lend reason to his existence. In retrospect Manuel views the whole situation in its absurdity. The parallels it presents to his own life are very obvious. Although circumstances had forced him into unwilling participation in this last corrida, he rises to the occasion and makes every effort to display his best skill. Just as he is on the verge of enjoying a tremendous success, he slips on an insignificant bit of melon rind and in effect his performance slips from the sublime to the ridiculous. With resignation, Manuel also observes that even the bull in his elemental force and energy, symbolic of "algo," succumbs to his own inevitable and absurd "nada" as he dies at the hand of another matador.

Although Carmelo, the nineteen year old novillero, does not fully comprehend the actions and attitudes of Manuel, he respects him and has a great deal of affection for him. The young man owes much of the knowledge of his art to the older torero and he manifests his loyalty by defending him against the disparaging remarks of others.

Carmelo, like Manuel, has restlessly searched for something. In recalling the contentment of his friends, the novillero had wished he could feel the same complacency, but he had never been sure of anything except his desire to be a matador. He approaches his newly-launched career with the same dignity and seriousness he had observed in Manuel. Carmelo had always had the ambition to participate in the corrida: ". . . aquello de los toros le había venido como el habla, sin saber."⁴⁹ Although the success that he enjoys on the occasion of his alternativo fills him with a confidence and a feeling of accomplishment that he had never before experienced, he is filled with anxiety about the future. His sense of liberty newly found in his dedication to the toro is fleeting as he remembers his commitment to Juanita. His infatuation with the attractive girl had led him to promise to marry her, but he knows that she will only prove an obstacle to his career, for she cannot appreciate the importance of his need to express himself in his profession.

The third bullfighter is the young and spectacular Pepe Sánchez. He is at the zenith of a very successful career to which he has dedicated himself for reasons very different from those which had prompted Manuel and Carmelo to become toreros. Pepe had been reared in dire poverty by doting

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 150.

parents, who despite their lack of means, wanted him to become an engineer. However, after the death of his father, the boy became so concerned about his over-worked mother that he resolved to succeed in the most lucrative and spectacular career possible. Thus he would be able to guarantee his mother freedom from financial worry and a place of respect in the eyes of others.

In the attempt to realize his goal, Pepe had hired a publicity manager who had arranged with Seville Films to star his client in a movie dealing with the art of tauromachy. Pepe's showmanship and ability in the ring soon earned him enthusiastic fans in both Latin America and Spain. Although Pepe performs daring feats with the bulls, Carmelo resents his apparent neglect in according a proper and customary respect to the bulls. Pepe does not identify with the noble struggle of the fierce beast and in cold detachment observes "el toro había nacido para eso: para la muerte."⁵⁰

With regard to his successful endeavors as a matador, Pepe displays an obvious confidence which is noticeably lacking in his personal life away from the ring. He permits his life to be dominated by a wealthy socialite for whom he simultaneously feels a command attraction. In his assessment

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 187.

of his entanglement with Hilda, he perceives that the inherent differences in their background precludes the kind of genuine intimacy and interrelation that he would have preferred.

Le parecía que se tenía que vengar de algo con ella cuando le sofocaban las alfombras y el brillo de sus joyas, y los cuadros, y los criados, y las voces bajas, y la manera de dar órdenes, tan nacida de dentro. El también tenía alfombras en su casa, iba a los mejores hoteles, un coche suntuoso, pero no había nacido con ello Vengarse, quizá, de sus maneras, que en su madre [la de Pepe] . . . serían estudiadas y nunca llegarían a aquello, no se aprendía; de su naturalidad, de sus aires de criatura mimada que lo tiene todo a cambio de nada. A veces se daba cuenta que Hilda prolongaba el juego, charlaba, reía con los demás, le hacía sufrir a conciencia, o creía que le hacía sufrir. Era un odio fino, no violento, pero sí agudo como la envidia, porque le hacía sentirse inferior Qué cara pondrían [Hilda y su familia] si explicara Si dijera que su madre era menos educada que aquellos criados correctísimos que se inclinaban ante él⁵¹

Although in past novels Elena Quiroga has dealt with numerous episodes or memories in the childhood of her characters, Tadea of Tristura proves to be the only child protagonist in the works of the present study. In this novel the author depicts the plight of a child who, despite her tender years, is well on her way toward joining the ranks of the many frustrated protagonists to be found in the novelist's works. The girl, motherless from infancy, had lived in a Galician village with her father and older brothers. until

⁵¹Ibid., p. 184.

her father decided that he could not give them the proper attention, and sent his sons to a Jesuit colegio and his daughter to live with her maternal grandmother. In all probability the child would have quickly adjusted to her new home and surroundings had it not been for her Aunt Concha. Tía Concha had taken over the supervision of the grandmother's house in order to relieve the elderly and ailing woman of that responsibility. Concha resents the arrival of her late sister's child as the aunt had never ceased to be jealous of her beautiful sister and envious of her contented life with an obviously devoted husband. While Concha's own husband was ". . . siempre a sus negocios lo mismo que si la casa le quemara los pies . . .," Raquel's husband ". . . no tuvo más negocio que la mujer, en vida de ella"52

Unknown to the grandmother, Tadea becomes the scapegoat of the envious aunt and her three mischievous children. As a result of her aunt's hypercritical supervision and constant reprimands for her failure to emulate the "model" conduct of the other children, Tadea's personality undergoes a radical change. Oblivious to the selfishness, jealousy and lack of compassion in her own children, Concha seems equally unaware of the sensitivity and loving nature of her sister's daughter.

⁵²Elena Quiroga, Tristura (Barcelona, 1960), p. 102.

Unlike her cousins, Tadea feels deep concern and compassion for the children at a nearby orphanage and she befriends old Julia, an impoverished cousin of her grandmother. Julia knows that the children consider her ugly and poke fun at her congenitally deformed hand, but Tadea, responding to the old woman's warmth and goodness, assures her that she is beautiful.

Because she is such a sensitive and sincere child, Tadea is more susceptible to the abuse of her cruel aunt than she might otherwise have been. Her first encounters with Concha's violent disapproval and criticism had caused the child to weep, but her aunt had always retorted: "En esta casa no se llora, sécate esas lágrimas."⁵³ Tadea soon learns to dissemble her unhappiness.

Not only does Concha stifle any display of emotion in the child, but she also warns that God will punish her if she is not always on her best behavior. Although the girl never does anything seriously deserving of the criticism she receives, she begins to fear God as she might a great watchdog, and she lies awake at night unable to sleep in the fear that He might choose an unguarded moment in which to punish her. Convinced by Concha that almost everything is sinful and that she must do her part in eliminating sinful action

⁵³Ibid., p. 47.

from around her, Tadea learns to spy on the servants and report any conduct which might be considered improper. Although attempts to conform to her aunt's concept of ideal conduct, she never fully wins her approval and frequently finds herself copying 100 times the sentence: "Soy una niña soberbia y rebelde y mala!"⁵⁴ At last frustrated by her failure to understand exactly how to please her aunt or to know what the woman expects of her, Tadea becomes silent and withdrawn. Even when the child fails to receive the particular doll she had requested from los reyes, and her three cousins receive their gifts, she stoically conceals her disappointment by insisting that the small inexpensive doll was exactly what she wanted. Julia, during her occasional visits, affords the small girl her only source of consolation and true affection.

Although Tadea had continued to swallow without complaint one personal injustice after another, she begins to become increasingly irritable and finally causes some trouble with her cousins when they taunt her with criticisms of her father and Julia. Because of her retaliation for the unkind remarks regarding the two people whom she loves, Tadea faces the possibility of being sent away to a boarding school. The child is silently awaiting the decision which will decide

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 254.

her fate when she receives a brutal shock: Julia has died. Despite her anguish Tadea feigns indifference in order to rob her relatives of any sadistic pleasure at the sight of her grief.

The characterization of tía Concha may appear at first glance to be somewhat that of the stereotyped villain; however, unlike the villain of melodrama, she is not always aware of her own evil nature. The woman's near insanity and complete lack of compassion are evidenced in her inability to overcome jealousy of a dead sister and to feel any sympathy or warmth for an innocent and abandoned child. Concha's informing Tadea of her father's failure to send a Christmas remembrance and the aunt's satisfaction at the child's disappointment with her gifts, inferior to those of her cousins, testify to the woman's sadism.

In her distorted puritanism she will not allow any reference to sex or to any words or actions even remotely suggestive of birth or reproduction and she insinuates to Tadea that Raquel's having borne six children was indicative of a laxity of character. If the aunt suspects even the most casual romance between any of the servants, they are promptly dismissed. Concha seems so confident of her ability to pass judgment and sentence that she unsuccessfully interrogates the family priest about Tadea's confessions. Convinced of the child's evil ways, the aunt will not give her permission

for her confirmation along with that of the other children. To the end of the novel, Concha displays no evidence of unselfishness or the kind of warmth and understanding that might be expected from an ostensibly pious wife and mother.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Although the seven novels considered in this thesis vary to the extent that they reveal a continuing evolution in Elena Quiroga's style, in other respects they bear a very marked resemblance to one another. The reader cannot fail to note certain recurring character types as well as themes. Outstanding in her ability to depict children and members of her own sex, the novelist falls only a little short of that mark in portraying male protagonists.

To the characters most sympathetically delineated in her novels Elena Quiroga attributes a number of common characteristics. All of the protagonists and some secondary figures are introverts acutely aware of their aloneness. They may be set apart either by circumstances or by choice. In the case of Marcela, Moisés and Tadea, their isolation from others results from situations which they are unable to remedy. As may be noted, many of the characters who do not possess control over their state of alienation are orphans or children abandoned in foster homes where they prove to be unwanted. The above is not always the case, however, for Alvaro, Amador, Ventura, Liberata and Manuel

Mayor have their own particular reasons for preferring solitude to society. Another frequently contributing factor to each character's spiritual isolation is either an inability to communicate his feelings, or to experience mutual understanding with other characters.

Perhaps the second most salient characteristic of the central figures is the manner in which they identify with nature. Of the seven novels discussed, four have their settings in a country estate or hamlet in Galicia, a situation which provides the characters with ample opportunity to express their love for the sea or the land. As a means of conveying to the reader the characters' identification with their surroundings, the novelist compares some of them to certain flora or fauna. Most of these comparisons are accomplished through imagery in which certain characters are associated with trees; however, Telmo is likened to a harpooned fish in one reference and Manuel Mayor, the matador, in several instances identifies with the bull he faces in the plaza.

Even when the setting is placed in the city, the characters express their uneasiness with urban life and the reader is aware of their frequent insistence upon getting out of the house and into the open air. In Madrid Ventura and Presencia enjoy strolls in a nearby park; Moisés is nostalgic in his recollection of days spent in a fishing village during his youth, and Tadea longs desperately for the aldea which was her home.

Still a third common trait of the protagonists is a preoccupation with the search for freedom. Some characters must first learn the definition of freedom before they set out to obtain it. The priest in La enferma informs la forastera that ". . . nadie es libre si no renuncia a serlo, que nadie está solo si lo acepta . . ." ¹ While others are aware of the meaning of freedom, they still must struggle with obstacles which come between them and their sense of freedom: Pepe Sánchez and Carmelo both realize that the woman in the life of each is a threat to his freedom, but each man also is aware that the removal of this hindrance is difficult because of conflicting desires within himself.

With the exception of Liberata, who destroys her life through deliberate withdrawal resulting in insanity, all of the protagonists and most of the secondary figures face life with stoicism. Curiously enough even small children, as if responding to an innate sense of dignity, learn to react to the abuses they suffer with almost incredible detachment or composure.

Another characteristic, shared invariably by the figures of primary concern, is a trait that is possibly the most significant of all because in it seems to lie the key to Elena Quiroga's philosophy and a more complete understanding

¹Elena Quiroga, La enferma (Barcelona, 1955), p. 219.

of her endeavors as a novelist. Quite simply, it is a distinctive quality which results from each character's own awakening at some point in the novel to the necessity of his becoming involved with life. Even if previously he has been carried along in time on a current of passive resignation, he resolves to seek a meaning in an apparently absurd existence through the assertion of his own free will. In his coming to grips with life, the character may or may not be able to comprehend the fact that the outcome of his struggle is unpredictable; nevertheless, for him the struggle itself is necessary regardless of its uncertain consequences. Each character's decision whether to remain a relative non-entity or to become an individual by asserting his freedom of choice results in much of the anguish from which he suffers. Although at first glance *Liberata* may seem to accept resignation rather than act according to her concept of what her particular situation requires, don Simón Pedro, one of the most obvious exponents of Elena Quiroga's implicit existentialist philosophy, explains la enferma's choice: "Tuvo su vida entre las manos, todos la tenemos. Y la destruyó."²

Although the author maintains an objective detachment from all of her characters and never ostensibly condemns any of them for their actions, it is not difficult to detect those

²Ibid., p. 85.

figures whose traits render them reprehensible in the eyes of the novelist. The possession of some or all of the following qualities most generally serves to distinguish the protagonist from the characters of secondary importance: (1) lack of compassion even to the point of cruelty, (2) little, if any, sense of communion with nature, (3) a strong sense of self-righteousness and indignation occasioned by unfavorably regarded actions of others, (4) an unwillingness or failure to become involved in life, and (5) the failure to respect the individuality of others. It may be noted that although la forastera, at one point, can be characterized by the last two traits listed above, she comes to recognize her faults and then resolves to attempt to correct them.

With regard to the author's predilection for portraying servants, the reader may note that only three of the novels related to this study lack these portrayals; they are Algo pasa en la calle, La careta and La última corrida. It may be observed that in the case of servants the author is disinclined to pass any moral judgment. Even after she insinuates that Juan in Viento del norte is both the father of Marcela and the murderer of her mother, and furthermore that in his hatred he is desirous of harming his daughter, Elena Quiroga permits the man to eventually disappear unscathed from the pages of the novel to the somewhat dissatisfaction of the reader.

Although figures such as Ermitas, Vicente and Alida demonstrate loyalties to master or mistress which once were characteristic of Spanish domestics and other servant roles are employed to describe rural life either on an estate or in a fishing village, most of the novels are populated with servants only vaguely portrayed whose sole function seems to be that of providing the motif of fertility versus sterility.

The reader may be acutely aware of Elena Quiroga's development of recurring and utterly depressing themes of an individual's loneliness, anxiety, conflict, suffering and failure to find understanding of himself or others, and hastily deduce that her works are completely pessimistic. However, this conclusion could only be drawn from a superficial examination of the works involved. There is a very definite theme of love in every work and an obscure, but nonetheless persistent, note of optimism. Even in La careta, the novel in which the author portrays the most pronounced spiritual distortion, the degenerate Moisés through compassion for his weak-willed cousin Agustín attempts to raise him from his state of "non-existence" and to induce him to become actively involved with life.

Each protagonist, even as he seems to be confronted with utter despair, futility, or as the existentialist Sartre expressed it, to being condemned to freedom, he finds that he

must continue the struggle which defines his existence. Although the successful outcome of his rational conflict with irrationality cannot be guaranteed, he is ennobled through his efforts. Perhaps Elena Quiroga's habit of leaving her characters abandoned in despair at the conclusion of each novel can best be explained in the words of Ventura concerning his son:

Se entregará al dolor con violencia, dándose. Y después de esta entrega comenzará a infiltrarse en él serenidad, perspectiva humana, amor o caridad, llámalo como quieras.³

There are a number of observations to be made with regard to the author's evolving style. The most noticeable changes begin to occur after the publication of Viento del norte and La sangre. After La sangre Quiroga abandons the use of an objective narrator in favor of interior monologues and stream-of-consciousness narrative technique. The employment of this technique is responsible for the increasing difficulty with which the author is read, even by her fellow countrymen.

As the author deals with succeeding works she becomes less and less concerned with plot. She also places less emphasis on physical descriptions of her characters and deals at greater length with their thoughts. As the reader

³Elena Quiroga, Algo pasa en la calle (Barcelona, 1954), pp. 219-220.

approaches the last novels considered in this study, he is aware that the author has devoted herself almost entirely to delineating character and personality with little, if any, attention to the routine description of personal appearance. It is also at this point that the works become progressively more intense as novels of atmosphere.

Elena Quiroga is not a novelist who may be categorically placed in a school or generation of writers. There is an undeniable current of existentialism in her work but it is colored by a tenuous optimism and a constant awareness of the traditional Spanish sense of personal dignity. She is not a writer whom one would select for light entertainment or escapism, but it is reasonable to assume that despite the arduous demands she makes upon her readers, she will take her well-merited place in the ranks of Spanish writers who have made significant contributions to the art and craft of novel writing.

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