FRANCISCO GARCIA PAVON: CREATOR OF THE LITERARY DETECTIVE STORY IN SPAIN

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The problem with which this investigation is concerned is that of determining how Francisco García Pavón's concept of the detective novel evolved throughout the period during which he cultivated that literary form.

To trace this evolution García Pavón's detective novels and novelettes are studied in chronological order of publication, each work being given a chapter of its own. The character development is analyzed and the style is given consideration in the study.

When we examine the detective novels and novelettes of García Pavón in the chronological order of their publication we find a definite progression toward a literary detective novel with high artistic qualities.

In the early novels plot is definitely García Pavón's main concern. Characters and scenery are described only to the extent necessary to tell the story. The importance of the plot is progressively decreased as we proceed in reading the novels, so that in the last one, Las hermanas coloradas, the plot is almost solely to provide a frame for characterization, philosophy and costumbrismo.

The character of Plinio, the protagonist in all of the detective novels of García Pavón, also develops progressively
in each novel, so that after reading all of the works we know a great deal about his ambitions, frustrations, philosophy of life, and likes and dislikes. In the first detective stories he is the central figure, but he is mainly important as a detective; later he becomes important as a person as well.

In each novel we meet friends of Plinio, and by the time we finish the last novel his circle of acquaintances has been greatly expanded. All of the characters are described very individualistically, and García Pavón has proven himself to be a careful observer of people, highly talented in the art of characterization.

Just as Plinio's character is more fully developed with each new novel, the descriptions become more detailed. Instead of merely relating the details of the plot, fact by fact, the author has intertwined more and more interesting descriptions in each novel, giving the work greater artistic merit. The descriptions of the scenery of La Mancha in the three last novels are very poetic and are rich in metaphors, images and colorful expressions. They show the author's love for concrete details and sensations.

The language in general of the detective novels of García Pavón changes with each succeeding novel. In each new book colloquial words and expressions become more and more frequent.

The accurate geographical and sociological knowledge that the author has of the places he describes has enabled
him to give his readers extremely interesting insights into the lives and customs in a small Spanish town or, to a smaller extent, in a big city, where *Las hermanas coloradas* is staged.

Plinio is not an ordinary, stereotyped policeman, nor are the detective stories of García Pavón conventional detective stories where the main emphasis lies in solving a crime. The combination of excitement and high artistic qualities in the detective stories of García Pavón makes them worthwhile for a wide range of readers. They can be enjoyed by both the reader interested in mystery stories and a person seeking a work of higher artistic value.
FRANCISCO GARCIA PAVON: CREATOR OF THE LITERARY DETECTIVE STORY IN SPAIN

THESIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Francisco García Pavón was born in the town of Tomelloso in the province of Ciudad Real on the 24th of September, 1919. He completed the first years of his education and the bachelor's degree in his native town, and then moved on to Madrid where he studied philosophy and literature and obtained a doctorate in 1945. At present, García Pavón is a professor of history of dramatic literature in the School of Dramatic Arts in Madrid and is director of Taurus Ediciones, one of Spain's largest publishing houses.

In 1969 García Pavón was awarded the Nadal Prize, the most esteemed award given for the novel in Spain, for his novel Las hermanas coloradas. However, he was well known long before this.

Francisco García Pavón ya tiene hechos, y reconocidos, los suficientes méritos para que el premio Nadal le hubiese sido otorgado con anterioridad y, por ello mismo, más oportunamente. No obstante, y si a esto puede llamársele confirmación, el premio viene a reconocer la gran labor de un novelista—como en su día lo hizo con Alvaro Unquieiro—en plena madurez creadora, ya que este nombre es, sin la menor duda, uno de los principales autores de novela con que contamos en la actualidad.1

1"Francisco García Pavón, Premio Nadal," España hoy, No. 2 (Madrid, 1970), p. 34. (Author not given.)
In 1963 García Pavón received the "Premio Nadal de la Crítica." Some of his critical works are *El teatro social en España*, *Antología de cuentistas españoles contemporáneos*, *Teatro menor del siglo XVIII*, and *Don Juan Tenorio y el Burlador de Sevilla*.

The novels are perhaps the most important part of his literary production. *Cerca de Oviedo* was among the finalists for the Nadal Prize in 1946. Eugenio de Nora says:

... , cuando en 1946—es decir, en un momento en que se iniciaba apenas el auge actual de la narración—aparece *Cerca de Oviedo*, visión humorística, burbujeante de agudeza, desenfado y malicia, vetada de conceptualismo y fantasía, de la vida provinciana, pensamos encontrarnos, en potencia, ante uno de los novelistas representativos de nuestro tiempo. La frescura de observación en cuanto a costumbres y psicología local, la vivacidad en la captación de detalles, la zumba y riquesa de fantasía con que sabía aprovecharse ... , la seguridad y eficacia del autor no sólo en la narración, sino también con su excepcional recurso a los sueños y pesadillas reveladoras, el tratamiento matizado de la leve anécdota sentimental en que el relato se apoya, todo, tratándose del libro inicial de un escritor joven, parecía testimoniar al narrador de gran clase que hace sus primeras armas.²

Among the most important works of García Pavón are the short stories—"género éste en el que nuestro autor es un maestro dentro del panorama español actual."³ Perhaps the best representatives of this type of literature are


³"Francisco García Pavón, Premio Nadal," *España hoy*, No. 2 (Madrid, 1970), p. 34. (Author not given.)
Cuentos republicanos, Memorias de un cazadotes, and Cuentos de mamá.

Eugenio de Nora says that his cuentos

... indican una depuración, un afinamiento en la calidad, incluso una hondura humana superior a la de su primer libro, pero también un retroceso en cuanto al aliento y posibilidad de reflejar el mundo real, objetivo, que caracteriza por uno u otro camino el auténtico novelista. Suponemos que ese repliegue, ese a modo de ensayo de sus excepcionales dotes narrativas será sólo una etapa intermedia hacia la gran obra que cabe expresar de García Pavón.

An anonymous reviewer in España hoy writes:

Intentar resumir, en breve síntesis, la aportación de García Pavón al evidente resurgimiento de las letras hispánicas, resulta una empresa difícil. En principio y como una característica esencial a la personalidad del autor, es evidente su facultad de prestar y ennoblecer los géneros que cultiva. Para él no hay hombres ni parajes pequeños. Al contrario, cuando su pluma se ocupa de ellos alcanzan proporciones gigantescas. ¿Es pequeño Tomelloso? Vean La historia de Tomelloso o Los cuentos republicanos, y le verán crecer hasta proporciones insospechadas. ¿Es poca cosa ser "sargento de la guardia municipal" de un pueblo manchego? Escuchen a Plinio, conozcan su mente socarrona y sigan sus deducciones inigualables en la solución de los más intricados problemas. Entonces verán que es grande, que puede ser muy hermosa la figura de un simple guardia municipal, guiado por el amor a sus convecinos y por su espíritu de servicio.

Having now acquired a bit of background information about García Pavón and his earlier works, we will concentrate on the novels and novelettes he has published between 1965 and 1970 and attempt to show that he has created a detective story of high artistic quality.

4 Nora, Ibid., p. 371.
5 "Francisco García Pavón, Premio Nadal," España hoy, No. 6 (Madrid, 1970), p. 45. (Author not given.)
The first of the literary detective works was a novelette, Los carros vacíos (1965). Next appeared Historias de Plinio (1968), which contains two novelettes. The same year he published El reinado de Witiza, which was a finalist for a Nadal Prize, and the following year, El rapto de las Sabinas. In 1970 Las hermanas coloradas was published, after winning the Nadal Prize the preceding year.

García Pavón says in the prologue to Historias de Plinio:

En España nunca creció de manera vigorosa y diferenciada la novela policiaca y de aventuras. Lectores hay a miles. Transcriptores, simuladores y traductores de las novelas policiacas de otras geografías, a cientos. Nuestra literatura de cordel y crónica negra cuenta desastres y escatologías para todos los gustos y medidas; sin embargo, al escritor español, tan radical en sus gustos y disgustos, nunca le tentó este género que, tratado con arte e intención, podría haber alumbrado muchas parcelas de nuestra vida y distraído a infinitos lectores.

He goes on, saying:

Yo siempre tuve la vaga idea de escribir novelas policiacas muy españolas y con el mayor talento literario que Dios se permitiera prestarme. Novelas con la suficiente suspensión para el lector superficial que sólo quiere excitar sus nervios y la necesaria altura para que al lector sensible no se le cayeran de las manos.

All of the detective works of García Pavón have the same protagonist, "Plinio," Manuel González Rodrigo, "Jefe de la Guardia Municipal de Tomelloso." García Pavón says

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that there was in his town:

... un cierto jefe de la Guardia Municipal, cuyo físico, ademanes, manera de mirar, de palparse el sable y el revólver, desde chico me hicieron mucha gracia. El hombre, claro está, no pasó en su larga vida de servir a los alcaldes que le cupieron en suerte y apresar rateros, gitanos y placeres. Pero yo, observándole en el Casino o en la puerta del Ayuntamiento, daba en imaginármelo en aventuras de mayor empeño y lucimiento.

Por fácil concatenación, hace pocos años se me ocurrió que mi "detective" podría ser aquel jefe de la Guardia Municipal de Tomelloso, que en seguida bauticé como Plinio.8

Plinio is a rare figure when compared with the usual fictional detective. He is a very amiable man, highly respected by the people of Tomelloso and especially by his inseparable friend Don Lotario. He usually knows more than it appears on the surface, and he solves his cases by following his intuition rather than modern scientific police methods.

As each new novel is more detailed than the one preceding it and the characters more fully developed, we will learn to know Plinio better and better as we examine the works one by one in the following chapters. We will learn about his philosophy of life, about his likes and dislikes, about his ambitions, and about his personal frustrations.

In the introduction to the Antología de cuentistas españoles contemporáneos García Pavón defines the dominant

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style of the modern Spanish cuentistas, and this same definition applies well to his detective novels. He writes:

... le llamaría "popularismo". De decidirme por varias para enriquecer el concepto, le llamaría "habla del pueblo", "tono campechano", giros vulgares que quieren imitar la entonación del hablante indocto: "tacos", frases hechas, tópicos del habla conversacional..., etc.⁹

Perhaps the most important general characteristic of the detective novels of García Pavón is the realism or the direct observation of life. The descriptions of landscapes, people, local customs, and various incidents become more frequent and more vividly detailed in each new book.

Manuel Jato Macías writes of his detective novels, "His books are neither serious nor deep, but are entertaining, modern with a touch of gentle satire. Humor and somewhat earthy and shocking language make the author extremely pleasant to read."¹⁰ While it is true that the early detective novels of García Pavón are "neither serious nor deep," it will be seen in the following studies of each of the novels that the author has come to regard the detective story as more than a mere device for amusement, that he has, in fact, created a truly "literary" detective novel—a genre in which characterization, philosophical thought,


and *costumbrismo* capture the reader's attention far more fully than the interest in the mere solution of the crime.
CHAPTER II

LOS CARROS VACÍOS

The plot of Los carros vacíos revolves around the murders of four meloneros, all killed at the "Cuestas del hermano Diego" near Tomelloso on the road to Ciudad Real.

The first three killings are identical. Each time a man called Serafín, who lives alone at the "Cuestas," comes to the police of Tomelloso with the victim. Each of the three men has been killed during the time of the year when the meloneros take their products to Ciudad Real to be sold. Each of the men has been killed by a single thrust of a wide-bladed knife near the heart. The only thing taken from the victim is his wallet.

The people of Tomelloso are terrified by the unsolved murders. Plinio is desperate. He feels that the people are losing faith in him and blame him for not having discovered the criminal yet.

A few days after the death of Severo El Tostado, the third victim, a group of furious people bring another body to the police, screaming for justice.

This time the man, Calabaino, has been stabbed several times, and a watch and few other things have been taken in
addition to the wallet. Despite the fact that the murder victim has been found again at the "Cuestas," Plinio concludes that the fourth man has been killed by a different person than the three others. Also, considering the things stolen, the last murderer, he feels, must be a poor man who, being unaccustomed to having money, will most likely spend it on wine and games the very night of the crime.

When search of all the taverns and casinos brings no positive results, Plinio goes to see Chavico, a man whom he suspects. He finds him at a woman's house, eating and drinking lavishly. Plinio discovers the articles stolen from the last murder victim and shortly Chavico confesses to having committed the last crime. Passing by the "Cuestas" with Calabaino, he killed him there in order to connect the murder with the three others. Chavico also tells Plinio something very important. He says that Serafín has the habit of talking with passing meloneros.

Because of this last piece of information, Plinio and Don Lotario, a local veterinarian who is Plinio's constant companion and greatest admirer, take Serafín home that same day. At the "Cuestas," Plinio tells the two men how he thinks the first three crimes have been committed. He says that the murderer must live near the place of the murders because it would be hard for anyone else to keep track of the meloneros passing by without causing suspicion. Plinio continues, saying that the murderer probably comes down to
the road, talks to the *melonero* in order to find out when he will be back and whether he will be alone. When he returns, the murderer kills the unsuspecting *melonero*. He then hides the body and later presents himself with the victim to the authorities of Tomelloso, saying that he has found it.

After the explanation, Plinio goes to Serafín's house, where he finds a large amount of money and a knife with a wide blade. Serafín confesses his guilt and is arrested.

Later, Plinio tells Don Lotario that he had begun to suspect Serafín when he compared the last murder with the three others. The orderly and scrupulous manner in which the first three were committed made him suspect this orderly and punctilious man. When Chavico informed him that Serafín frequently talked with passing *meloneros* he was almost certain of Serafín's guilt. When he saw the evidence in his house, he had no more doubt.

Plot is definitely García Pavón's main concern in *Los carros vacíos*. Characters and scenery are described only to the extent that is necessary to tell the story.

The importance of the plot is progressively decreased as we proceed in reading the other detective novels, so that in the last novel, *Las hermanas coloradas*, the plot is there almost solely to provide a frame for characterization, philosophy, and costumbrismo.
Plinio's character develops progressively throughout the novels. In *Los carros vacíos* we learn only very basic things about him; we judge him mainly by his actions. For the purpose of showing how Plinio becomes in each novel a more rounded character it is necessary to tell some of the most important things that we learn about him in each book. In this chapter we will meet the Plinio of *Los carros vacíos*.

Manuel González, alias Plinio, "el jefe de la Guardia Municipal de Tomelloso," is a man who takes pride in solving the crimes alone or with his dear friend Don Lotario. At times, when he finds himself without any solutions to a problem, he becomes very depressed, up to the point of weeping. He wants to help his fellow men and is very sensitive to their opinions about him. When he is in a bad mood, he usually walks slowly with his hands behind his back, looking down. When he is confused, he makes a gesture with his hand as if he were drying his mouth after drinking. When he reads, he wears eyeglasses that come halfway down on his nose. He likes to smoke cigars. Almost every morning he has breakfast at the buñolería of La Rocío.

Basically, this is all that we know about Plinio after reading *Los carros vacíos*. From the other books we will find out whether he is married or whether he is a bachelor. We will learn where he likes to go in the evenings and with whom. We will find out what he thinks about big cities, his job and many other things.
Don Lotario is one of the characters whom we meet in each novel. We will not learn as much about him as we will learn about Plinio, but since he is so close to Manuel, as many people call Plinio, we will spend a little time getting to know him, too.

Don Lotario is a veterinarian by profession. He is married and has daughters, but we do not know how many. This veterinarian is a small man, so small that he needs two big pillows under him when driving his old Ford. He wears his hat so low that one can barely see his suspicious eyes. He is very active in solving crimes or, more accurately, in helping Plinio to solve them. He has a great respect for Plinio, who, in his opinion, is the greatest man in the world. After Plinio has solved the murders of the meloneros, Don Lotario tells him, "Eres muy grande, Manuel, pero que muy grande." He then walks away, "con los ojos húmedos."

It seems that García Pavón has created the character of Don Lotario to play the part of the confidant to whom the protagonist can express his most intimate thoughts. We gain a great deal of knowledge about Plinio through this literary device. He is, in a sense, what Watson was to Sherlock Holmes.

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Progressively, Plinio and Don Lotario will have deeper and more frequent discussions as we proceed through the novels. In *Los carros vacíos* the two friends converse little. Even during the trip they take to the "Cuestas," Plinio either sleeps or prefers to sit in silence.

This same trip to the "Cuestas" gives us a clear example of the lack of descriptions in *Los carros vacíos*. Plinio sleeps most of the way, and there is no mention of the scenery they pass. If this trip had taken place in any of the three last novels that we will study, we would know what kind of places they saw, what kind of people they met, and how Plinio and Don Lotario were feeling. The amount of detail in the description progresses with each novel. In *Las hermanas coloradas*, for example, there is a marvelous description of the things that Plinio observes from the train on the way from Tomelloso to Madrid.

However, there is not a total lack of descriptions in *Los carros vacíos*. Here is a beautiful moment when Don Lotario and Plinio are sitting on the bank of the river Guadiana near Tomelloso:

> El fresco olor de los álamos creaba el ambiente. El agua del río se deslizaba con un murmullo blando, casi imperceptible. El suave viento movía levemente las alzadas puntas de los chopos y los cipreses. A la izquierda, el pueblo entre sus cales. A la derecha, la llanura se despejaba bajo un sol desmedido.\(^2\)

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The only character description of any detail is of a girl whom Plinio meets in the house where Chavico, the murderer, is eating and drinking:

Sentada en una banca, a medio vestir, había una mozoza morena de descomunal esqueleto.

Por cima de la sábana, con la que intentaba cubrirse el pecho, mostraba sus brazos musculosos y tapizados de vello negro. Con el cabello revuelto y unos impresionantes ojos claros, ojos casi irracionalones, miraba a los recién llegados empavorizada.3

As an example of another type of description in Los carros vacíos we will quote here a passage from an incident that took place after the third murder, that of Severo el Tostado:

Corriendo, desgreñadas, enloquecidas, llegaban la mujer y la hija de el Tostao. La gente las dejó pasar con respeto. Las dos mujeres se lanzaron al interior del carro con los brazos extendidos. Como el cadáver estaba en las bolsas del carro y éste era alto, desde el suelo no llegaban al cuerpo con las manos. En vano las tendían hacia el muerto. La hija, mozo de unos treinta años, morena y rechoncha, dio un salto desmañado, mostrando a todos los presentes lo que no era del momento. Y ya sobre el carro, se abalanzó sobre el cadáver de su padre entre gritos y lágrimas.

La madre, en vano intentaba saltar al carro, hasta que dos vendedoras de la plaza, enternecidas, tomándola de las axilas, la echaron al interior de las bolsas, donde cayó revuelta con su hija y el muerto.

Sin dejar de gritar, echadas sobre él, pugnaban por besarle y acariciarlo, con furia.4

The language in general of the detective novels of García Pavón changes with each succeeding novel. For

4Ibid., p. 15.
example, the author uses in each new book colloquial words and expressions more and more frequently.

The language of Los carros vacíos is simple, standard Spanish with few colloquialisms. The only person who speaks the dialect of la Mancha is La Rocío, the owner of the buñolería. She says: "Entonse está ar llega,"5 or "En la cosecha de lo melone, niña de mi arma,"6 or "Tostaito nos ha salio er día, ¿eh, jefe?, pero que mu tostaíto."7

Despite the few literary merits of Los carros vacíos, it is an enjoyable book, especially because of Plinio, who, as little as we know about him yet, is already our friend.

5Francisco García Pavón, Los carros vacíos (Madrid, 1965), p. 11.
6Ibid., p. 11. 7Ibid., p. 12.
CHAPTER III

EL CARNAVAL

The plot of El carnaval deals with the deaths of an old servant and her mistress. Every night Antonia, an old servant in the house of Don Onofre, goes to buy milk. The last night of the carnaval in Tomelloso, however, she does not go alone. She is followed by a masquerader, who beats her with an iron staff, leaving her dead. Since the masked killer has disappeared into a crowd of masked figures, Plinio knows that the case will be difficult.

He goes to talk to Don Onofre, who denies having any information about the murder. Leaving Don Onofre's house, Plinio finds a theater ticket stub that has the name of the theater and the date of the murder.

The following day Plinio goes to see Doña Carmen, wife of Don Onofre. She is a woman whose only happy moments are those spent thinking about her ex-fiancé, who died long ago. The only meaningful information that Plinio gets from Doña Carmen is that she, her husband and Joaquinita, the beautiful and young maid of Doña Carmen, were at home at the time of the murder.

Some time later Doña Carmen gets very ill. A week later her doctor tells Plinio that the illness has passed
the crisis; however, that same day she dies. Don Onofre tells Plinio that he discovered that his wife was dead when he went to kiss her good night. Joaquinita was sitting at the bedside of her mistress, but she says that because of the darkness she noticed nothing unusual. Officially, the cause of death is listed as a heart attack, but the doctor suspects something else.

After several months Don Onofre and Joaquinita are married. At about this time, Plinio finds the iron staff, the murder weapon, and a sheet, which he suspects to be a part of the killer's carnavał disguise. Plinio finds the articles carefully hidden in the theater, which he decided to search because of the ticket stub found at Don Onofre's home. From the initials on the sheet, Plinio believes that the sheet belonged to Don Onofre's former wife.

After the wedding, Joaquinita and her husband move to the country. When Plinio shows Don Onofre the articles he has found at the theater, Don Onofre admits that they belong to his house. Later, Plinio and Don Lotario visit Joaquinita, whom they find talking with her father, Inocente. Both the father and the daughter deny any knowledge of the murders. Inocente denounces Don Onofre as the murderer of Antonia, saying that his daughter saw him leave the house, wearing a military suit and carrying a bundle under his arm, shortly before the murder took place. Joaquinita believes that Doña Carmen was also killed by her husband.
Plinio takes Inocente and Joaquinita to the police station and goes to see Don Onofre, who insists now that he did kill his wife and the servant. He cannot convince Plinio, however. Upon examining the military uniform supposedly worn by Don Onofre on the night of the murder, Plinio at once decides that it is much too small for Don Onofre but that it would fit Inocente perfectly. Confronted with this evidence, Inocente confesses.

After the confession, Plinio learns that Antonia had threatened to tell Doña Carmen that Joaquinita and Don Onofre were having an affair. Inocente and his daughter made plans to get rid of the two women who stood in the way of Joaquinita's marriage to this wealthy man. Inocente killed Antonia, and Joaquinita smothered Doña Carmen with a pillow. Don Onofre had been totally unaware of Joaquinita's and her father's actions.

El carnaval is one of the two novelettes in a book entitled Historias de Plinio. García Pavón says in the introduction to this book that the praise he received for Los carros vacíos prompted him to write two new novelettes about Plinio, El carnaval and El charco de sangre. He goes on, saying: "Aunque estos últimos 'casos' son completamente imaginados, procuro retratar o reinventar tipos reales o
Plot is emphasized over characterization and style in both *El carnaval* and *Los carros vacíos*. However, when we compare the two books we notice a small progression toward a literary detective novel. This can be judged mainly by the increasing amount of detail and description we find in *El carnaval*. The content of this novelette is divided into narrative and descriptive passages. The descriptive passages are found mainly in the beginning of the book. Here the author follows the wanderings of the killer of Antonia from a place near the cemetery of Tomelloso to the house of Don Onofre. Following the killer, we are presented a detailed description of the carnaval festivities in Tomelloso. Especially vivid are the descriptions of the carnaval costumes of the residents and an outdoor theatrical presentation. The descriptions in *El carnaval* are still simple observations. There is hardly any interpretation of the scenes presented, only objective reporting of physical appearances and occurrences.

In places the description is quite detailed, as with the following view of a boy in the street:

> Era un mozo muy fornido. Llevaba la cara manchada

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de pimientón. Se vestía con una chambra de mujer, pañuelo a la cabeza, también de mujer, cortísima falda que apenas le cubría los muslos; medias negras que forraban sus enormes piernas y alpargatas blancas. Tenía un aspecto grotesco y terrible a la vez. A pesar de ser hombre, las prendas de mujer sugerían una oscura impudicia.  

The greater part of the book is devoted almost solely to telling the story. There is very little detail that is not necessary for the understanding of the plot.

The whole narration is a flashback told in the third person. After solving the crimes, Plinio reconstructs all the events, beginning with the journey of the disguised Inocente to his victim. It is a day by day narration; everything is told in correct chronological sequence.

One important characteristic that pertains to all of the detective novels of García Pavón and that should be mentioned here is the author's accurate geographical knowledge of the places that he describes. The author has lived for years in Tomelloso, where all except one of the novels are set, and in Madrid, where Las hermanas coloradas is staged. When we read about the different streets and taverns, the Ayuntamiento, or the plaza of Tomelloso, we feel that we have been there.

In addition to the description of the carnaval itself, there are a few interesting costumbrista elements in El carnaval. For example, there is an explanation of the

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2 Ibid., p. 20.
custom of breaking old porcelain and ringing bells in front of the house of a newly married couple. The author describes a "cencerra," as it is called, outside Don Onofre's house the day that he and Joaquinita were married.

In El carnaval the character descriptions are still very basic, but just as description becomes more detailed, Plinio's character is more fully developed. We learn that he has a wife and a daughter. We do not know yet what their names are, how Plinio feels about them, or how they feel about him. The only time they appear in the novel is when Plinio takes them to a dance. After reading the other novels, we will know that this was a special occasion for the wife and the daughter, for the only other time that he goes anywhere with them is in Las hermanas coloradas, when they go to the bus station to see him off to Madrid. But even then, they have to wait outside while Plinio and Don Lotario have a cup of coffee on the way to the station.

People of Tomelloso have such great confidence in Plinio as the "jefe de la Guardia Municipal" that it is said that they wish that there were more crimes in Tomelloso, so that they could see Plinio solve them. When there are no crimes to be solved, Plinio gets very bored and spends entire days at the casino reading magazines. Because of his prestige as a policeman, Plinio associates occasionally with the upper class of Tomelloso, but he always likes to stay humble and keep his distance.
The discussions between Don Lotario and Plinio concern, in *El carnaval* as in *Los carros vacíos*, the crime at hand, and they reveal little of the character of these two men. Conversations between the two take on an increasingly personal character in succeeding novels.

The language of *El carnaval* is simple and its colloquial vocabulary is again limited to the few sentences of La Rocío:

—Le arvierto que a mí no me importaría que me mataran estando usted vivo, porque tarde o temprano daba con er criminá. . . .

. . . —¡Ay, Manué de mi arma! Si no estuviese ya casao y tan pochito, que se casaba usted conmigo lo saben los guardias, ¡digo! 3

There is on the whole, however, little progression in *El carnaval* toward the extremely realistic language of *Las hermanas coloradas*.

In conclusion, *El carnaval* is still basically a detective story, but it does have characteristics that prove a definite development toward a detective story with high artistic qualities. In the next chapter we will take another step toward this goal.

CHAPTER IV

EL CHARCO DE SANGRE

Someone had been killed near the Tomelloso railroad station. Finding out who the victim is and who the killer is constitutes basically the plot of El charco de sangre.

One night Plinio and Don Lotario discover a pool of blood on the ground near the railroad station. The blood cannot have been there more than half an hour because it has not coagulated yet. Plinio suspects that their discovery has something to do with the people who arrived on the train an hour earlier.

Nobody at the station has seen or heard anything suspicious. Plinio asks everyone present to list the names of the people who either arrived on the train or were waiting at the station. The following day, Plinio learns that the blood is human blood, and he organizes a search for the people on the list acquired the night before. The police locate everyone except Sebastián Carnicero from Alcázar, ex-fiancé of Margarita, the daughter of Don Jerónimo.

A call to Alcázar confirms that Carnicero came to Tomelloso on the night of the murder and that he had a midnight appointment with Joaquín Fernández, who works at
the bank. Fernández tells Plinio that Carnicero failed to keep the appointment.

The following day, Don Jerónimo and his daughter Margarita leave town. Questioning Margarita's two brothers, Plinio is told that they were in Ciudad Real on the night of the murder, though Plinio recalls having seen their father at his club in Tomelloso on the night in question. Several months later, Plinio learns that Margarita has given birth to a baby. He suspects that Carnicero was the baby's father and that Don Jerónimo's family killed him for vengeance. Carnicero's photograph found near Cinco Casas leads Plinio and Don Lotario to a deep, abandoned well, where they subsequently find the body of Carnicero. When Plinio interrogates El Chirimoya, a mentally retarded man who entertains himself by watching trains arrive at and depart from Tomelloso, he now has an eyewitness to the crime. El Chirimoya tells him that he saw Margarita's two brothers kill Carnicero near the station.

Confronted with Plinio's evidence, the brothers confess to the murder and eventually relate the details of the crime. During a long-distance call from Ciudad Real to Tomelloso, through the sheer accident of a crossed telephone connection, one of the brothers overheard a conversation between Carnicero and Joaquín Fernández. After learning in this manner of Carnicero's appointment in Tomelloso, the brothers laid their plans for the crime. The rest was
almost as Plinio had suspected. At eight they left Ciudad Real by car and arrived in Tomelloso almost at the same time as Carnicero's train. On the way, they agreed upon the abandoned well as a hiding place for Carnicero's body. In Tomelloso they parked their car near the station and asked a boy to tell Carnicero that his friend from the bank was waiting for him. When Carnicero saw the brothers, it was too late for him to escape. They stabbed him, put him in the car, and threw his body into the well. They believe that the picture found near the well must have fallen from Carnicero's pocket while they were carrying the body from the car to the well. The crime completed, they drive back to Ciudad Real to establish their alibi. Totally unrepentant, they tell Plinio that if Carnicero were still alive, they would kill him again, a thousand times if necessary.

In El charco de sangre García Pavón uses the old Spanish concept of pundonor as the motive for the murder. Carnicero has tarnished the honor of the Jerónimo family and the attack on their honor must be avenged by the shedding of blood. Therefore, as the people of Tomelloso watch the sons of Don Jerónimo being taken to the prison, they feel in their hearts that the brothers have done right in washing away the dishonor of their sister with blood.

Plinio knows that the Jerónimos are fierce people when it comes to anything that has to do with their family. When a member of the family dies they mourn for ten years.
Plinio says that their concept of honor and of the dead is that of the time of Masicastaña. Whoever abuses their sister has to be killed without pity. Plinio feels that the family has done what their conscience has told them to do. They could never forgive.

In El charco de sangre García Pavón has come a long way in the development of a literary detective novel. Instead of merely relating the details of the plot, fact by fact, the author has intertwined interesting descriptions and details that give the story artistic qualities we have not seen in the first two novels.

The author has created an atmosphere of the vintage season that penetrates the entire story. We find interesting descriptions that tell us what happens in a small town during the vintage: how the grapes are brought to town, how they are processed and what goes on when the buyers and sellers bargain about the price of grapes.

In all of his detective novels García Pavón uses some abnormal characters. In Los carros vacíos we quoted earlier the description of the epileptic girl with masculine traits. In El carnaval we read about Doña Carmen, who had lost all sense of reality and lived dreaming of the past. In El charco de sangre we find El Chirimoya, the mentally retarded man who likes to watch the trains and to ride his new bicycle. Another extremely interesting figure introduced in the novel is Andrés, a blind man who owns a house of
prostitution and is one of Plinio's best sources of information. Also, we meet some of the prostitutes who work in the "Casa del Ciego." In short, by the time we finish El charco de sangre Plinio's circle of acquaintances has been greatly expanded and García Pavón has proven himself to be a careful observer of people, highly talented in the art of characterization. In this book Don Lotario is further developed. We learn that his feelings toward Plinio are not always those of great respect and trust. We learn that he is very human in his feelings, being terribly jealous when Plinio solves some of the details of the case without his aid. He often suspects that Plinio is hiding something from him. Even though he knows that Plinio has proven again and again that he takes Don Lotario completely into his confidence, he cannot avoid the mistrust. Sometimes in his imagination Don Lotario even magnifies and deforms the personality of Plinio to the point of seeing him as a sly fox, capable of duplicity. At other times the deformation is more extenuated: Plinio seems to him so intelligent and capable of such advanced investigation that Don Lotario cannot comprehend it, and he feels that Plinio does not want to lower himself to explain it to him.

Don Lotario normally considers himself an ordinary person. At times he gets excited and believes that he is comparable to Plinio, but this passes soon. On the whole, he likes his position; Plinio is the great chief and he is
a useful assistant, because of his fidelity and especially
because of his Ford. He could not live without helping
Plinio. His profession, his money, his farms—all lose
their interest for him when a "case" is at hand. At times
Don Lotario thinks that there is one thing that Plinio never
would be able to do but that he himself would: to write
the memoirs of their mutual adventures. He could make Plinio
famous.

We learn more about Don Lotario when Plinio arranges a
plan to catch El Chirimoya. Here Don Lotario is getting
impatient in his hiding place:

Durante media hora larga, aparte de un perro olis-
queante, no pasó nadie; don Lotario no sabía bien qué
hacer, si fumar o no fumar, si hacer aguas o no hacerlas.
Por fin decidió rezar algo en latín, que sabía desde
niño, aunque no lo recordaba bien. Luego, descubrió
la lucecilla del cigarro de Maleza, que se ocultaba
entre las sombras, enfrente de él, a cierta distancia,
y con esto se entretuvo un rato... Poco a poco se le
fue el miedo, y, aburrido de todo, comenzó a jugar a
que mataba invisibles enemigos. Apuntaba con el re-
volver, y... ¡pum!1

Don Lotario also shows us a more poetic part of character
in El charco de sangre. In the following passage he de-
scribes the waves of the sea to Plinio, who has never seen
the ocean: "Vienden con mucha fuerza, como para comerse el
mundo... Y luego, nada, se vuelven cansadas, rotas, echando
espuma de rabia."2

1Francisco García Pavón, Historias de Plinio (Bar-
2Ibid., p. 166.
In *El charco de sangre* Plinio, too, becomes a much more rounded character than he has been before. His role in this book is considerably more important than in the previous novels. In the earlier novels he was, of course, the central figure, but he was important mainly as a detective; in *El charco de sangre* he becomes important as a person as well. For the first time many passages are spent explaining his motivations and his way of reasoning. Also, for the first time, Don Lotario and Plinio have long discussions that enable us to know both of them better.

We learn a bit about Plinio's past when he visits a *bodega* where his father used to work and where Plinio went to wait for him after school. At that *bodega* Plinio had gotten drunk when he was a little boy. Some muleteers had given him so much wine that his father had to carry him home. Plinio had also worked at the *bodega*, but he disliked the job. After he came home from the military service and he was offered a post as the "Jefe de la Guardia Municipal," he accepted it.

One of the things that makes the reader like Plinio so much is the fact that even though he is the hero who solves all the crimes and is put on the pedestal by the people who know him, he still is very human; he makes mistakes and often shows almost childish enthusiasm, as he does the morning on which he wears his new uniform for the first time.
... Y Manuel González se vistió aquella mañana casi con emoción. Los botones dorados y los vivos rojos del uniforme destacaban sobre el recio paño azul oscuro. La gorra y la pelliza también eran de estreno. Para que no faltase detalle se lustró las botas y limpió la empuñadura y contera del sable con "Sidol"; y el revólver niquelado, con bicarbonato.

Iba radiante con su uniforme calle Socuéllamos abajo. Casi le daba vergüenza mirar a la gente. En tal situación y estado de ánimo, pensó que lo mejor sería ir a que lo viese Rocío.  

When there is no case to solve Plinio gets very dispirited and even considers changing his profession; when he starts to work on a new case he is nervous. He is a very cautious man who wants to be absolutely sure before making judgments. He expresses clearly his disdain for scientific methods in solving crimes. He says that all crimes can be solved by understanding people and using one's brain.

The atmosphere of the vintage season does not go unnoticed by Plinio. This year, more than ever, he gets involved with the vintage. He goes down to the road to see the carts arrive loaded with grapes. He follows them to be weighed, he tastes them, and he even goes to the pit where they are pressed and converted to wine. "En aquellos días de la vendimia, Plinio se sentía más ligado a su tierra que nunca; el olor a mosto, el unánime trajinar, la ilusión común le gustaban." He liked to be part of the spectacle of the vintage: "Los carros arimados a la piquera y

\[3\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 195.}\] \[4\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 141.}\]
descargando a golpe de azada ... Los pisadores, medio desnudos, chapoteando en el oscuro jaraíz ... Los carros que llegaban del corte cargados de vendimiadores cantando ...

The atmosphere of the vintage is present everywhere.

We experience it at the bank of Tomelloso, where men crowd to the windows with their checks and notes from the vintage in their hands. We see a fat man, Bombero, and his small, sad wife come in carrying coins. He looks very proud, with a cigar in his mouth, showing his money to his friends. His wife walks behind him, bashful, as if she were ashamed.

The vintage season is also strongly felt at the casino:

En el Casino se notaba la euforia de la vendimia. La gente, vestida de trapillo, entraba y salía como excitada. Hasta los señoritos iban sin corbata y con trajes usados, para demostrar que andaban en plena actividad.

El motivo de tantas entradas y salidas de los socios era husmear la cotización de la uva en las distintas casas; saber si a fulano o a mengano le "entraban" uvas o no; y, sobre todo, el hacer política; los vendedores de uvas procuraban propalar con los más ingeniosos argumentos que la cosecha era escasa, que había muchas uvas menos de las que parecía a simple vista; y que en los pueblos próximos se pagaba el fruto a más alto precio.

Por el contrario, los compradores, de manera sutil, dejaban caer en este y aquel corro que la cosecha era inmensa, que la uva era mala, de poco grado, y que en todos sitios se pagaba a menos precio que en Tomelloso.

En este juego, tan viejo como la misma uva, no se engañaba nadie, porque la realidad tenía una elocuencia incuestionable, pero era divertido y excitante.

We see the vintagers at the hotel: "A la luz amarillenta de una sola bombilla que había en el centro, se veía mucha

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5 Ibid., p. 141. 6 Ibid., p. 134.
gente, casi hacinada, durmiendo vestida, sobre sacos, entre maletas viejas y hatillos. El ambiente, espeso, olía a paja y a sudor."

When the vintage is coming to an end, Plinio and Don Lotario are sitting near the station, watching the vintagers pass by:

Y llegaban con las mulas enjaezadas a lo majo, con arneses bordados de tachuelas doradas, borla roja en la cabezada y tiros de lujo. Los carros venían ornados de guirnaldas de pámpanos y papeles de seda.

El carrero, en el estribo. Y las vendimiadoras, bien coloradas, a ambos lados del carro. Al entrar en el pueblo cantaban a toda voz jotas y seguidillas.

Deambulaban los carros vendimiadores por todas las calles del pueblo, y concurren en la plaza, en competencia de majeza de arreos, gallardía de mulas e intensidad en el canto.

El atardecer del final de vendimia, entre el polvo incendiado por un sol sanguinolento, era un jubileo de carros, de pámpanos secos y cantares.

Of the detective novels whose action takes place primarily in Tomelloso, El charco de sangre is probably the richest in costumbrista elements. While the author has made no major change in his style in this novel, he has included, as we have noted, far more detail in description, both of places and of people. The colloquial vocabulary is still limited to a few sentences of La Rocio and some gypsies; it does not approach the colorful style of Las hermanas coloradas, a novel which is quite rich in tacos and dialectal expressions. The novel as a whole, however,

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[7Ibid., p. 132.]
[8Ibid., pp. 162-163]
represents a major step toward a truly "literary" detective novel. An even larger step is taken in El reinado de Witiza, which we shall examine in the following chapter.
CHAPTER V

EL REINADO DE WITIZA

In El reinado de Witiza the body of an old man has been found in someone else's burial vault. It is Plinio's job to identify the man and to find out who left the body in the cemetery.

Antonio, known to his friends as El Faraón, reports to Plinio that someone has closed the burial site which he purchased some time ago at the cemetery in Tomelloso. Examination of the grave results in the discovery of a coffin containing the embalmed corpse of an old man. The man is unknown, and there is no indication that he met a violent death.

In an attempt to identify the deceased, Plinio has the body put on display. From the many possible identities suggested by the citizens of Tomelloso, Plinio narrows the field to two likely candidates: Don Ignacio de la Cámara Martínez, wealthy owner of the Miralagos estate, and an old man of unknown name, seen recently at a fair.

Investigating the first possibility, Plinio and Don Lotario go to Miralagos to talk to Don Lupericio, the administrator of Don Ignacio, who tells them that his master lives abroad and has not been at his Miralagos estate for years.
Back in Tomelloso, Plinio and Don Lotario learn that a wealthy lady has arrived from Madrid and identified the body as that of her husband, from whom she has been separated for some time. The following night, unfortunately, the body disappears, and the following day Plinio learns that the husband of the wealthy lady is alive. His suspicions now turn to Miralagos. He goes there with Don Lotario and discovers that Don Lupercio, the administrator, has stolen the body and brought it to Miralagos believing it to be that of his master. The administrator and an accomplice are taken to jail, and the body is returned to the cemetery.

Following a clue, Plinio goes to see Jacinto el Pianolo, a friend of El Faraón. El Pianolo tells them that one day a truck brought to his house the coffin with the old man inside it and a letter from his friend Rufilanchas. In the letter Rufilanchas greeted his friend warmly and said that he hoped that the "gift" he was sending would adorn El Pianolo's home. There was no mention of the identity of the man in the coffin. El Pianolo decided to extend the joke to El Faraón and, with the help of his son, sealed the coffin in his friend's future burial site. El Pianolo and his son are put in jail; they are soon set free, however, because of the illness of El Pianolo's wife, who subsequently dies.

The following morning Plinio, Don Lotario and Matías, the gravedigger, find Rufilanchas in an empty grave, securely
bound. El Faraón, El Pianolo and his son have placed him there for revenge.

Questioning Rufilanchas, Plinio finally learns the truth. Rufilanchas, during a recent trip to Madrid, met a group of medical students at the boardinghouse where he was staying. The students told him of an old man near death in the hospital who had paid them to embalm his body and send it to his native Tomelloso for burial. Since Rufilanchas would soon be returning to Tomelloso, they asked him to transport the corpse there for them. Though at first reluctant, Rufilanchas remembered a trick played on him by El Pianolo and decided to return the favor by sending him a "gift." He planned to reclaim the body and give it a proper burial as soon as he reached Tomelloso.

El Pianolo gives Plinio some personal papers of the deceased from which it is learned that his name was Don Fernando López de la Huerta and that he was the man seen earlier in Tomelloso at the fair. The case solved, the body is buried with great respect in the Tomelloso cemetery, with El Faraón, El Pianolo and the son of the latter serving as pallbearers.

El reinado de Witiza, a finalist for the Nadal Prize in 1967, differs considerably from the three detective works of García Pavón that we have examined in the preceding chapters. The most outstanding difference is in the language.
That of El reinado de Witiza is saturated with colloquialism, all the characters speaking the language of La Mancha to some extent.

Some of the local words have been explained in an appendix added by the author. There we learn that an interesting word like quiquilicuatre means simply "exactly," and that ánade means in standard Spanish "un viejo bodeguero que cayó en una tinaja y estuvo nadando hasta que lo sacaron."

The following short conversation is typical of the ones we see in El reinado de Witiza. Here Plinio is talking to a man at the police station:

—Me dicen que llamó el señor Juez.
—No, es o yo que er señó Jué está en Arcasa.
—¿Y qué pasa?
—Pue na, que al Antonio l’an birlao un nicho.
—¿Cómo que le han birlao un nicho?
—Si, que le han enterrao un forastero en su patrimonio...
Vamo, que ya le van a roba a uno hasta la sepur-tura.1

The prose of El reinado de Witiza is at times almost poetic, as when Plinio is observing butterflies that fly into the room where the dead body lies:

Algo se movió junto al cristal de la ventana. Era una mariposa blanca. Quedó durante unos segundos inmóvil. En seguida llegaron más, blancas también. Serían mariposas nacidas a la vera y al olor de muertos párvidos y de muertas vírgenes. Mariposas tejidas con mortajas de impúberes y cabellos rubios de mocitas que en flor tuvieron la suerte de marchar a la otra ladera, donde siempre quedarán jóvenes intactas. Mapi- rosas, últimos trasuntos de las viejas familias del lugar: Serranos, Torres, Laras, Cepedas que ahora formaban...

una rueda perfecta. Una rueda voladora que entró por la ventana entreabierta y quedó junto al cristal.\(^2\)

The prose is also poetic when Plinio is contemplating the beautiful landscape of La Mancha on the way to Miralagos:

A la derecha de la ruta, aguas quietas, matriz del Guadiana. Aguas anchísimas que ni corren ni ondean. Ni mar ni río. Aguas que se sangran por el pie y conservan la cabeza lúcida. Los ríos cantan y la mar marea, pero el agua de laguna es melancolía. Sólo para mirarse la cara en sus espejos, ver marcharse la tarde paso a paso y recibir el amanecer en su bandeja. Las tardes junto a las lagunas son de añoranza . . . Tal vez las aguas no se hicieron para estar quietas, como ojos cansados.


There are numerous descriptions in El reinado de Witiza that do not express solely what the observer sees, but also what he hears, what he smells and how he feels. This is the case in the following passage. Plinio and Don Lotario are sitting one lazy afternoon smoking and contemplating the panorama of the plaza of Tomelloslo:

Aquél plomazo aplastaba las gentes y los coches. El Ayuntamiento, que estaba a la derecha, parecía sin

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 159. \(^3\)Ibid., pp. 89-90.
respiración, sin guardias, sin alcalde y sin serenos cantores, decoración vieja de teatro requesta sin motivo. Enfrente, la Posada de los Portales, con su aire norteño de solaneras, columnas, almagres y cales, posada de antiguos arrieros y tratantes que dormían en el suelo escuchando cocear las caballerías sobre la piedra todas las horas de la noche. Y a la izquierda del Casino, la iglesia. Plomo sobre piedra, torre chata y hechuras sin gracia, donde fueron bautizados cinco siglos de tomellosinos. Suspiradero de beatas, alivio de afligidos, oficina de funerales, catálogo de purpurinas y amenes. Tras este redondel de la Plaza, alrededor de este despobló, se extendía todo el pueblo llano, de cales, con más de treinta mil almas alimentadas por la cepa y sus caprichos. De cuando en cuando una fábrica de alcohol, un agrio olor a vinazas, lumbreras en el suelo que alumbraban las bodegas subterráneas, tractores y remolques, carros olvidados en rincones, aparejos de mulas ya inexistentes. Paz, trabajo, mucho trabajo contra un suelo terco y sin entrañas.

---El caso es que no parece tormenta---volvió a comentar el veterinario.

---¡Qué va! Es ganas de fastidiarnos el mes de junio. Tras ellos se oían los fichazos de los jugadores de dominó, alguna risotada y las musiquillas de los anuncios de la televisión.4

Returning from Miralagos, Plinio and Don Lotario stop at a bar to eat and to have a drink. The description of the bar is so vivid that we can almost see it; it is as if we were sitting at the table with Plinio and Don Lotario:

La luz del soletón no conseguía inundar al amplísimo local de la taberna, porque unos papelones azules velaban la cristalera de las puertas, dejando una umbraña sedante. Las paredes estaban pintadas de verde rabioso. Las mesas, alineadas junto a ellas. Unos taburetes servían de asiento. En el extremo, frente a la entrada, un mostradorcillo ante un anaque, con viejo muestrario de botellas de aguardiente, anisados, marrasquinos y coñacs del terreno. En un hueco de pared, sobre una repisa, tres jaulas con codornices, que cuando se hacía silencio se solazaban con su "palpala", "palpala". Como aparte de ellos y los pájaros no había

4Ibid., pp. 10-11.
otro mortal que la mujer que cosía tras el mostrador, el ambiente era plácido y silencioso... A veces, cuando Plinio callaba, cantaban las codornices.\textsuperscript{5}

Another important development toward a literary detective novel of high artistic quality is apparent in the character descriptions that we find in \textit{El reinado de Witiza}. Even some of the minor characters become familiar to us. With this novel García Pavón begins building a stock of familiar characters who will appear in subsequent Plinio novels. The most outstanding of these are Antonio el Faraón, a fat, jovial libertine, and Braulio, the local philosopher, who often seems to serve as a spokesman for García Pavón's own philosophical observations.

The nature of the plot of \textit{El reinado de Witiza} makes it easy for the author to introduce many different types of people. When large crowds come to attempt to identify the unknown corpse, García Pavón describes many of these people in detail. He also goes into the lives of two of those suspected of being the corpse in such detail that their biographies are almost like separate "insert novels" within the novel.

In this novel García Pavón also shows continued interest in people who are in some way abnormal. Don Lupercio, the administrator of Don Ignacio, and his assistant are homosexuals. Fat María, one of the three sisters who come from

\textsuperscript{5}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 103-104.
Madrid, always has a strange smile on her face, no matter what the people around her are discussing. Four prostitutes come to the cemetery:

... llegaron cogidas del bracete, los labios rojos y gran molino de culos. Fueron tambièn a guipar al muerto, por si un casual habita sido parroquia y podían echarle una mano a la poli. También aprovechaban la ocasión para poner bando con miras a la sesión de la noche, porque, como decía la mismísima Bernarda, los hombres o andaban descuartados o se habían pasado al bando homrosexual. ... Aquel puterfo emparejado dio a la "Sala Depósito" tal aire de chunga y esperpento, que hasta al pobre muerto parecía escurrirsele el labio hacia el rincón de la risa.6

The characters García Pavón presents are not stereotyped; they are people with individual characteristics that separate them from everyone else. Such a person is Fabián, one of the minor characters:

Fabíán tenía el cuello muy largo y una nuez colosal que le botaba sobre el cuello de la camisa, particularmente cuando hablaba. Llevaba una boinilla insignificante y sus manos eran tan enormes y huesudas que más se iban los ojos a ellas que a cualquiera otra parte de su cuerpo con ser todas de pareja fealdad.7

Another interesting description is that of El Pianolo:

El Pianolo, como de cincuenta años, era de un prog-natismo exagerado. Le quedaba tan sobrero el maxilar de abajo, que le salían las palabras en vertical, que no de frente como a las personas normales de boca lisa. Como además era recio y musculoso, de poco cuello y bóveda plana, parecía un prehistórico, aunque lleno de sorna y malicia.8

In El reinado de Witiza Don Lotario's character is more fully developed. We learn that he likes his profession, but

6Ibid., pp. 106-107.  
7Ibid., pp. 189-190.  
8Ibid., pp. 192-193.
because of mechanization of farming there is little for a veterinarian to do. Since he had been able to accumulate a small fortune during the past years, he is now free to accompany Plinio at any time there is a case to be solved. His wife and daughters do not resent his passion for police work now, but earlier they could not understand why a man of such a respectable profession would want to be a detective. There are times when Don Lotario wants to remind people that he is an educated man, and he does this by expressing himself in Latin.

Don Lotario is so proud of Plinio and of being associated with him that whenever there are pictures taken he clings to Plinio's side if possible. When he is interviewed about a case, he is unwilling to express his own opinion because it is usually the same as Plinio's. El Faraón comments once that for Don Lotario Plinio is second only to God.

In *El reinado de Witiza* we learn also something about Don Lotario's philosophy of life. He is basically a realistic man although he admits that he has dreamed about being in charge, along with Plinio, in the investigation of the assassination of President Kennedy.

The fact that Plinio is not an ordinary, stereotyped detective becomes more and more clear as we proceed through the novels. In *El reinado de Witiza*, we see several new traits of his personality. He is sentimental and poetic
when we see him contemplating the beautiful panorama of La Mancha. He is realistic when he tells Don Lotario:

"... si uno empieza a darle vueltas a esas cosas de misterios, pica. Y yo no pico. La vida es como es: agua, tierra, sol y aire; carne, huesos y ni más mariposas ni más na."\(^9\)

Plinio is not impressed by wealth and ancestry. When the wealthy lady from Madrid tells the story of her prominent family, Plinio is thoroughly bored. He wants to leave, but he waits, hoping to get some useful information regarding the mysterious body. He is very intelligent in his understanding of human motivations. When the lady from Madrid tells Plinio that the dead man was her estranged husband, Plinio is immediately suspicious. If they were separated for years, he reasons, why is she now so anxious to claim his body? The lady plays her part well, but not well enough to fool Plinio.

He is very upset when the whole town wants to play detective and he is not allowed to solve the case alone:

"... a mí no me gustan ayudas, que a mí lo que me gusta es guisar en mi cocina, con mis especias y cacerolas, sin que me echen cables todo quisque y esperar a que suene el teléfono."\(^10\) Plinio likes to be alone at times to contemplate. One of the things he most likes to think about is

\(^9\)Ibid., p. 104. \(^10\)Ibid., p. 209.
his town and life in it:

... Vidas quietas como lagos. Miles y miles de días iguales. Y muy de tarde en tarde un raro acontecimiento, un crimen, una catástrofe que a todos saca de su letargo y queda como una página histórica, molturada en miles de conversaciones durante años.11

At home Plinio has a loving wife and daughter who worry when they know he cannot sleep because he is thinking about the case. They see to it that Plinio is always clean and neat. They like to tell him about the little things that have taken place while he has been absent. Plinio spends very little time at home with his family, and even at this point we do not really know how he feels about his wife and daughter.

It is easy to understand the anguish that Plinio feels at times when he cannot find the solution to a crime when we consider the reputation he has among the people of Tomelloso:

Cuantos había allí miraban a Plinio con curiosidad. La gente modesta sentía el orgullo de que Plinio fuera de los suyos. Los adinerados consideraban también que, de cierta manera, Plinio les pertenecía. Manuel González, alias Plinio, "el primer listo del pueblo", como solía decirle Angel García, era profeta en su tierra. Todos le querían y admiraban a pesar de que era poco "alujero" y en cuanto a ideas y criterios, solía tener su alma en su almario y no se dejaba arrastrar por esos ventisqueros de cabeza que echan a cada nada las masas de un rodal a otro.12

The costumbrista elements in El reinado de Witiza are not as evident as they were in El charco de sangre, but we do find some throughout the book. We see a pregonero walking the streets of Tomelloso, announcing the news of

the body and calling for people to come to identify it.
We hear men sitting in the bar improvising coplas, and we
read about two velas.

The night of the discovery of the body several people,
including Plinio and Don Lotario, are sitting on the grave-
digger's porch at the cemetery. The scene is described so
vividly that we almost feel that we are there;

A la luz linaza del zaguan se veía el corro, cual de
cómicos en un teatrillo de candilejas menguadas. Los
vasos de blanco, las lumbres de los cigarros, el meneo
de brazos, y pasos adelante de los que estaban de
pie, componían la escena.

Al señor Juez, sentado en una silla muy baja, las
rodillas le quedaban muy cerca de la cara.

Don "Tomaito", con el sombrero puesto y las gafas
de armadura dorada, tenía el vaso entre sus dedos con
aquella delicadeza que Dios le dio para tratar el vino.
Claro que "su vino" era el de Jerez. Y como andaluz
de ley, al manchego le daba trato de pariente subde-
sarrollado.

Plinio permanecía de pie, con la gorra de paño
azul un poco volcada hacia el cogote, el vaso en la
mano derecha y la izquierda en la porra de goma. Ac-
titud heredada de sus tiempos gloriosos, cuando lleva-
ba sable con empuñadura dorada. En esta postura el
sable basculaba y componía una estampa bizarra. Sin
embargo, la porra, al quedarse horizontal bajo la pre-
sión de la mano, resultaba un apéndice desgraciado.

Don Lotario, sentado junto al Jefe, escuchaba con
las piernas y brazos cruzados. El Paraón había conse-
guido atrapar un serijo y, bien abierto de piernas, de-
jaba al aire su barriga saludable. Cada vez que toma-
ba del vaso, se gamuceaba el labio con su lengua rosada
y sensual.

Los hijos del enterrador duendeaban en la cocina.
Y Matías, con la blusa azul anudada a la altura del
ombligo y la boina parda hecha visera sobre la frente,
escuchaba a todos con la boca abierta y ojos de sueño.

Y al fondo, por la puerta abierta de la "Sala De-
pósito", salía la luz pobre que velaba al muerto.
Esta escena así, quieta, como una fotografía oscura, quedaría durante toda la vida en la memoria de los que allí estaban.¹³

The humor found in El reinado de Witiza separates this book from the other detective novels we have examined. The humor is produced mainly by El Faraón and La Rocío, though even Plinio is treated lightly on occasion. One morning at five he receives a phone call from Matías; his wife finds it impossible to awaken him: "Despertar a Plinio no fue cosa fácil. Hubo que zarandearlo muchas veces y decirle que lo llamaba Matías. Explicarle luego quién era Matías, qué era un teléfono y recordarle su obligación ineludible de escuchar por el aparato negro."¹⁴

In conclusion, El reinado de Witiza is a definite proof of the fact that García Pavón regards his detective story as more than a mere device for amusement. He has, in fact, created a truly "literary" detective novel, and he will improve the form in the detective novels which follow.

¹³Ibid., pp. 36-37. ¹⁴Ibid., p. 235.
CHAPTER VI

EL RAPTO DE LAS SABINAS

In *El rapto de las sabinas* Plinio solves a case involving the mysterious disappearance of three girls and the murder of a fourth.

The first of the girls to disappear is Sabina Rodrigo. Plinio questions her parents and neighbors but does not receive any useful information. He also talks to Braulia, a go-between who runs houses of prostitution. Braulia tells of having seen Sabina at about the time of her disappearance, but she says that she knows nothing of what happened to her.

Later, the body of a girl is found in a plastic sack in a deserted area. The girl's face is disfigured, as if she has been dragged on the ground, and no one recognizes her. Plinio knows, however, that the girl is not Sabina. On the same day Don José, a prominent Tomellosan, tells Plinio that the girl in the sack probably is his daughter, Rosita, who has disappeared. He is relieved to learn that his suspicions are false.

Continuing his investigation, Plinio learns that Rosita was seen talking with her cousin, José Vicente, the day she disappeared. José, a man of about forty, admits to having
talked to Rosita, but he says that he knows nothing of her disappearance. From Don José, Rosita's father, Plinio learns that José Vicente has been in love with Rosita for years. They were going to be married, but she cancelled the engagement when she learned that José could not give her children. José searched in vain for a medical cure to his problem and even spent some time in a psychiatric sanatorium.

Plinio and Don Lotario follow José Vicente to his farm where, after hours of hiding and waiting, they see Rosita drive away. When Plinio and Don Lotario overtake her, she tells them that they can find José in a cave on his farm. She also tells them that José has been holding her captive in the cave.

Late that night, a boy comes to Plinio and tells him that he has just seen a man driving a van abduct a third woman. To solve this mystery, Plinio gets first a list of all owners of vans like the one described by the boy.

Plinio and Don Lotario then question a traveling salesman, who tells them of an incident that took place in a bar some time before. The salesman saw two foreign girls, one blonde and the other brunette, who appeared to be homosexuals. After having a quarrel, they left the bar and he followed them. He watched the blonde get into her car and the brunette run away down the road. He followed the brunette on his motorcycle. When he overtook her, she asked for a ride on his motorcycle, but at that point the blonde
arrived and the brunette decided to leave with her. A week later he recognized the dead girl in the sack as the brunette, but he did not identify her since he did not want to get involved with the police.

A young man named Antónito Bolado tells Plinio that Clotilde Lara, his fiancée, has disappeared. Although her parents insist that she is away visiting relatives, Antónito believes that she has been abducted. Both Antónito and Plinio believe that Clotilde's parents, fearing that she has lost her virginity and that Antónito will refuse to marry her, are attempting to conceal the true reason for her absence. Antónito also puts Plinio on the trail of Adolfo García, a former suitor of Clotilde. García, a former mental patient, is also the employer of Braulio, one of the van drivers on Plinio's list.

During interrogation Braulio reveals to Plinio that the abducted girls, Sabina and Clotilde, are being held captive on García's farm. He confesses that he and García forced the girls into the van and took them to the farm. He explains that García is holding the girls until he can move them to Madrid, where he plans to use them in a club he is opening.

Plinio, armed with this information, frees Clotilde and Sabina and arrests Adolfo García. He then received information that the blonde homosexual described by the salesman has been located in Switzerland and that she has
confessed to killing her brunette companion. Traveling at a high rate of speed, she pushed the girl from her car in a fit of jealousy. Plinio never learns who put the brunette's body in the plastic sack.

In El rapto de las sabinas García Pavón has created a work that is interesting both as an exciting story and as a novel of high artistic quality. Descriptions are more vivid and more detailed than in the preceding detective novels. For example, when we read about the great sorrow of Sabina's mother we can almost hear her sighs in our ears:

In his descriptions García Pavón often gives human qualities to nonliving things, as when he describes the obedient and indifferent lakes or the tired trees that are waiting for the night so that they can go to sleep. In the following description of the countryside we see examples of the personification of both nonliving objects and abstractions. It is typical of the description of nature found in the author's later detective novels, being interpretative, philosophical, and poetic.

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Sobre el terreno esponjoso, los viñedos dorados, con las alas de los pámpanos declinativos por el frontero otoño. No sé qué extraña reflexión, no sé qué ars muriedi pone la otoñada en los lienzos de esta tierra. En la lente del horizonte, en el polvo leve que levanta el can que hocea; en la oveja que busca las últimas verduras o en el pájaro pinto que, sobre un sarmento, se confunde con el grumo oro y ampara en la pámpana viscosa. Isra, aquél, otoño precoz, casi otoño del llano manchego: una eclosión de violetas y rojos cansados, de aguas con hojas flotantes, de grillos caducos y de cielos que espejan capirotes morados. Una depresión casi homicida, que sorbe el corazón de los hombres, traga alegrias, hace las cúpulas dolorosas y reduce a los humanos a un gran llanto geológico. Con el despertar de la primavera, este paisaje se siente pujante y decorativo, reina sobre los animales y los hombres que se deslizan sobre él como detalles delgados. Pero en el otoño, esta tierra sin árboles siente miedo y todo lo recoge, abriga y quiere llevarselo a la honda galería de sus sienes y podres sin esperanza. El otoño solidariza lo vivo con su menopausia y hace un gran panteón con todo lo que crece, grita, hoza, rellincha, ladra, maya, canta y se mueve. Quiere hacerle el féretro al pecho en flor, al gozquecillo rabicorto, al mirlo guacharo, al lobezno de dientes recién estrenados, al cisne implume y al muslo joven que goza en la cuneta. El otoño en este campo es un gran dolor de pecho y espalda, ganas de morirse sobre las moras podridas, entre las uvas tintas comidas de avispas, sobre la pinchería de los barbechos antiguos, casi cobres. El cielo se viste cinturones malva, los caminos se anegan y el agua de los esteros es barrizal de hojas caídas, frutas oscuras, pájaros muertos, cartuchos vacíos y gorriones de tela sin color.

Ya desde la carretera de Ruidera, hacia Tomelloso, vieron un espejismo. Un espejismo que figuraba aguas sanguíneas, altísimos árboles desmochados, castillotes dentones y no sé qué banderas moradas, larguísimas, paralelas al viento. En las llanuras manchegas hay espejismos como en el desierto. Espejismo que copian ciudades que nunca llegaron a ser, fincas floridas y árboles sin nombre en las botánicas. A veces los labradores, seducidos por el espejismo lontano, se salen del surco y echan a andar besana adelante pensando llegar a un oasis de aguas y flores, de casas albas y árboles mocísimos; a un campo de verdad sin sed, tapizado de lagos verdeazules.2

2 Ibid., pp. 60-61.
The following passage would certainly be out of place in what we usually think of as a detective novel. The feelings of nostalgia and timelessness sensed by Plinio and Don Lotario as they drive through the countryside near Tomelloso give the novel a particularly Spanish flavor.

Desde que se acabaron los carros y las mulas, desde que labriegan las máquinas, aquellas llanuras se han quedado solas como plazas de toros en lunes. Han vuelto a ser el desierto de antaño. Leguas y leguas sin arado, mulas, carro, perro ni oveja. Campos sin solar ni población. Solar del sol y de la luna. La ganancia ya duerme en el pueblo. No hay asnos camineros, ni carros con el carrero dormido. Los viñeros ya no echan pitos en las llanuras, en el desierto. Los segadores, no liberados por la justicia social, sino por la máquina, acabaron gracias a Dios... Te ganarás el pan con el sudor del segador. Ya no hay de eso. Encadenan muchos días con muchas noches sin verse sombra de hombre en los barbechos. Ya no se ven caporales con los calzones bajados entre las cardenhitas. Las visitas al campo son ahora como las de los médicos. Rápidas y caras. Entre un amanecer y mediodía una cosechadora pela al cero doceñas de fanegas de mies rubia. Las gentes del agro ya se acuartelan en el pueblo. Casi diez mil personas de estos contornos marcharon a las grandes ciudades o al extranjero... 

Los campos desoladores, solos. Llegar, quitarles el fruto y a la sombra, que salen pecas. Los pájaros planean más libres sin ligas ni escopetas. La solanera para los bañistas. Aquella alegría de los campos antiguos con tanto ir y venir, con tanta voz y tanta piel de tierra, pasó a la historia de los cancioneros. Otra vez los surcos y el cielo mano a mano. De vez en cuando un tractor solitario entre la tierra. El tractorero escucha un transistor y en vez de seguidillas aprende las canciones del Festival de Eurovisión. Todo el mundo es de Dios. Las fronteras de la cabeza y de la geografía, las alambres de las nacionales las va derrumbando el carajo, a Dios gracias. Los últimos nacionalistas del mundo se mueren añorando un pintoresquismo miserable. Los orgullos de raza y de pueblo han pasado como una broma funesta... Hermano francés, hermano inglés, hermano alemán, hermano luterano, hermano anabaptista, hermano de Jehová, salve. Se vaciaron los campos para irse a dar la
The use of naturalistic detail is one of the most important characteristics in the later detective stories of García Pavón. In El rapto de las sabinas the realism is at times very crude and repulsive, more so than in any other of the detective novels.

One day Plinio, Don Lotario and some of their friends are in the garden of La Roció. One of the group, Samuel el Rojo, is known for his ability to cook meat. While the others are talking and drinking, El Rojo goes aside to cut up a lamb. A short time later La Roció and her guests witness a scene that leaves all of them stupefied:

... Y vieron cómo Samuel el Rojo, asido con cada mano a una paletilla de la res y muy abocicado en la parte del pecho haciendo ruidos caninos y resoplando sonoramente, mordía el corazón y los bofes del cordero crudo. Tan hundido estaba en aquella fierza, tan enlobado, que no advirtió que lo observaban. . . . Entonces Samuel el Rojo, como si entreoyese que le llamaban desde lejos, aflojó la presa y volvió la cara lentamente hacia donde estaban los espías. La tenía tinta en aguasangre, con fibras de carne entre sus dientes jabalinos. Y con ojos fijos miraba como somníbulo que no entiende bien lo que pasa.4

Another rather grotesque description is that of the dead girl found in the country:

... El cabello negro de aquella mujer, hecho una plasta endurecida, cubría toda la cara. El médico tuvo que tirar con verdadera fuerza para despejar el rostro. Era imposible de reconocer. Como si la hubieran arrastrado cara al suelo durante mucho trecho o la hubieran mutilado. Los músculos del rostro estaban desgarrados,

3Ibid., pp. 107-108. 4Ibid., pp. 56-57.
sin nariz, sin ojos y los dientes a la vista, muy
apretados. Todo era un boruño morado e informe.
Tenía las manos atadas atrás y los pies con sólo un
zapato, también maltrechos. La ropa, una blusa que
fue de colores y unos pantalones azules oscuros, es-
taban embarrizados y pegados al cuerpo.5

In *El rapto de las sabinas* García Pavón presenta again
many different types of characters. We read about a mentally
retarded man, two homosexual girls, an impotent man, two
senile ladies and about many other more or less unusual
characters.

Comparison by contrast is one of the techniques García
Pavón uses to make his descriptions more effective. In
*El rapto de las sabinas* he uses this technique when Plinio
compares Sabina and her sister Lorenza:

... Si la Sabina era el sol padre, la Lorenza era
una perra chica. Si la Sabina era el triunfo de la carne,
Lorenza el apoteosis de las magras. Si la mayor era
sobresaliente en curvas, la menor en perfiles arrecíos.
Si la Sabina era la campeona de los muslos y el culo
retrechero, la Lorenza lo era del horcate y el culo
tablaero. Si la Sabina era una risa llena de luces
y enjalbiegues, la Lorenza un pliegue de labios de
tela y dientes ignorados.6

On the whole, the character descriptions in *El rapto
de las sabinas* follow the line of those examined in *El
reinado de Witiza*. However, there is an important literary
development to be noted in *El rapto de las sabinas*. Some
of the discussions between the characters are much deeper
than they have been before. We read about their ideas on
war, peace, and man in general. One of the minor characters

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comments:

--La paz es así. Quienes buscan cambios son los bélicos, que cuando se hastían arman una zapatiesta. Yo no creo que las guerras vengan sólo por apetencia de cuartos y negocios, sino porque los hombres se cansan del bienestar y empiezan a meterse con el vecino para buscar variación. Cuando el hombre está mucho tiempo quedo, piensa en lo que es, en su miseria y vecindad de la muerte, y enloquece.\(^7\)

There are several very enlightening discussions between Plinio and Don Lotario in this novel. Here they discuss the concept of friendship:

--Manuel, ¿qué piensas tú que es la amistad?
Plinio sonrió y se acarició los labios:
--¿A qué viene eso ahora?
--Anda, Manuel, contéstame. ¿Qué crees que es un amigo?
--Primero, Manuel, creo que es lo único que en esta vida puede uno escoger con libertad. Todas las demás relaciones nos llegan impuestas por algo.
--¿También el matrimonio?
--Incluso al matrimonio, porque no vamos a la mujer por las potencias libres, sino por las potencias oscuras.
--Pero a la mayor parte de los amigos, Manuel, también nos los impone la vida.
--Sí, la mayor parte, sí. Pero los verdaderos, que son muy pocos, no. Tan es así que no todo el mundo vale para tener amigos verdaderos. Hay quien no los conoce nunca. Los hombres falsos, los maricones y los malos de cualquier maldad, rara vez tienen amigos verdaderos. Decir amigo es decir lealtad. Es decir confianza sin límites.\(^8\)

In El rapto de las sabinas Don Lotario contemplates his past life. He believes that his life without the friendship of Plinio would be nothing and that the years when he did not yet know Plinio were wasted. He prefers men to women and regrets that he never had sons. He feels that women are a world apart from men—neither worse nor better than men, but very boring. He comes to the following

\(^7\)Ibid., p. 19. \(^8\)Ibid., p. 167.
conclusion about his affection for Plinio:

... A él lo que de verdad le gustaba—había llegado a esa conclusión—era Plinio. Era Plinio, el hombre bueno. Plinio, el honrado. Plinio, el amigo, Plinio, el de los palpitos. Plinio, el entusiasta de su profesión. Si Plinio hubiera sido carnicero, cura, aparejador, o médico, sería igual, estaba seguro. Plinio era el semejante más próximo a lo que él había pensado siempre que debía ser un hombre. Sin orgullo, sin petulancia, tan llano, tan auténtico, tan justo y benigno. Con una idea de los hombres y de la vida llena de contenida ternura y de prudente admiración por cuanto era admirable. Le hubiese gustado a don Lotario que Plinio fuese su padre. No lo concebía como hijo; como padre o como abuelo, sí.  

In this novel we also learn more about Plinio as a father and a husband. We learn that he is very affectionate:

"... quería a la manera castellana, sin alujerías ni mimos, sin cortesías ni finuras, con el ademan recortado y la palabra seca, temeroso de que le diera la luz en el corazón de puro blando y caramelo."  

Plinio regrets not having sons just as much as Don Lotario. Here he expresses his views on sons and daughters:

... Si el hijo sale listo, calmo y trabajador, es una bendición de Dios. Pero si sale tuerto de entendederas o de nervios, es el peor drama que puede caerle a un padre. Las mujeres, en cambio, aunque salgan gilipollas, se les nota mucho menos. Porque no hay más que dos clases de mujeres: las malas malas y todas las demás... En cambio, el catálogo de hombres es infinito.  

In spite of the more philosophical tone in this novel, the poetic quality which we have noted in previous novels is still present. When Plinio goes to the home of the

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9 Ibid., pp. 166-167.      10 Ibid., pp. 84-85.  
11 Ibid., p. 85.
Monjes, the parents of Clotilde, we have a very interesting description of the parents. There is an air of mystery in the house, and Plinio loses all concept of time.

... Los tres parecían figuras de retablo. Sin pasado ni futuro. Sin más razón de vida que la de estar entre aquellos ángulos, superficies y luces. Por un momento, Plinio pensó si los tres estarían ya muertos. Si estaría ante una fotografía de los periódicos de mañana. ¿Cuánto tiempo había pasado desde que llegó? ¿Se habría resuelto ya el rapto de la primera Sabina? ¿Vivía todavía don Lotario? ¿Qué noche cenaron en el bar Alhambra? No se oía por la calle un solo ruido. Ahora, el monje padre miraba al suelo. La Monje lo miraba a él, mejor dicho lo traspasaba con la mirada, como si fuese un vidrio, mirando algo que estaba detrás. Y Plinio pensó en las ánimas del purgatorio y en el zaguan del cielo. Tal vez así lo recibirían a él sus padres y abuelos el día que llegase a ocupar su coche-cama definitivo.12

When his thoughts return to Clotilde, Plinio is struck by the sharp contrast between the girl and her parents.

The sensuality of the following passage is typical of the author's later detective novels.

... No parecía de aquella raza de gentes erectas y lisas, de aquella familia de gesto torturado y carnes magras. Clotilde, desde muy joven, casi niña, fue un reviértó de la naturaleza. Sus tetas, duras y salidas, debían ser una profanación en aquel ambiente casi monástico. Su culo, alto, redondo y volatinero; aquellas piernas jugosas y de tan visible repisa... Aquella dentadura, hecha para la risa sin fatiga, aquel lunar en el labio y, sobre todo, aquel guíñar de ojos cuando miraba, debía ser un pecado vivo para sus padres preconciliares. Apenas la dejaban salir a la calle. Debía parecerles una denuncia de no sé qué enconados regodeos y delicias, logrados ante los cuadros vueltos a las horas espaciadísimas de la fornicación matrimonial. Debían considerarla como la exhibición de un pecado. ¿De dónde, señor, salieron aquellas tetas rebosantes? ¿De qué vientre y de qué falo aquella sonrisa de revista musical? ¿Cómo era posible que de

12 Ibid., p. 213.
Regarding the language and the costumbrista elements in *El rapto de las sabinas*, Manuel Jato Macías says in a review of this novel:

Censorship in Spain must be diminishing because the language permitted in this book is earthy, caustic, non-academic, and often the "tacos" must be guessed at and surmised. Yet, his style does not offend good taste, rather, it enhances the readability and enjoyability of the book. Not to be lost is the costumbrista value of the work. García Pavón knows that region of Castilla la Nueva well and uses the language of the area generously, but not to the point of hindering the pleasure and understanding of the story. A glossary of terms in the back does explain the more difficult regionalisms, but the tacos must be learned from a native Spaniard or left up to the imagination.

Jato Macías concludes: "For truly enjoyable, relaxing and worthwhile murder-adventure story, the reviewer highly recommends this novel and others of García Pavón."#endfootnote15

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15Ibid., p. 395.
In Las hermanas coloradas Plinio solves a case involving the mysterious disappearance of two sisters.

Plinio gets an invitation from the Madrid police to go to the capital to work on a case that involves two Tomellosan sisters who have lived the past several years in Madrid. Though reluctant at first, he is persuaded to go by Don Lotario, who has received an invitation to join his friend.

When Plinio begins his investigation in Madrid, he learns that the sisters, now about sixty years old, are the daughters of Norberto Peláez Correa, whose family Plinio used to know well in Tomelloso. He questions several people who know the sisters, but the only real clue that he gets is that on the day of their disappearance the sisters received a mysterious phone call. The sister who answered the call sounded very surprised and seemed to ask the caller where somebody or something was. After the conversation the two sisters left the house in great haste, saying that they had to take care of some urgent business. They left in a taxi and were never seen again.

One day when Plinio is examining the house of the Peláez sisters he discovers an address on the cover of a telephone
directory. It seems to have been written hastily, and he can hardly read it. The address is that of Doña María de los Remedios, a middle-aged lady who sat beside Plinio in the bus from Tomelloso. She now lives in Madrid with her mother.

Plinio goes to visit them, pretending to want to see their beautiful home. The ladies give him a warm welcome, but when María de los Remedios is showing him one of the rooms in the house she suddenly disappears, and Plinio finds himself locked in. To his surprise he discovers that the missing Peláez sisters are also captives in the same part of the house. With them is a man who turns out to be Manolo Puchades, the ex-fiancé of one of the sisters. Puchades disappeared some thirty years earlier, and it has been assumed that he died during the Civil War.

Plinio listens to the story of Puchades' life. In 1936 Puchades became an activist among the Socialists, one of the leading factions within the Republican party. He knew the top leaders of his party and was himself well known all over Spain. In 1939 the Republicans were defeated. Puchades, saddened by the outcome of the war and the disappearance of his father, needed a place of asylum where he could regain his health and collect his thoughts. Fortunately, his good friend Julián Ramales, husband of María de los Remedios, invited him to live with him, his wife, and his mother-in-law, and Puchades accepted the invitation. Because
of the persecution of the Republicans by General Franco, he remained in hiding in the huge house, and, except for the family, no one knew that he lived there.

Near the end of 1939 Julián died, and immediately his wife began to show interest in Puchades. Little by little the guest took the place of her deceased husband, and Puchades remained with her for years. When Puchades finally learned that Republicans were no longer being so severely persecuted, he started thinking of leaving the house. He called the Peláez sisters for help. Learning of the call, María de los Remedios locked him up, and a short time later the two sisters were pushed into the room with him.

After Plinio has heard Puchades' story María de los Remedios enters with a pistol in her hand. She tells Puchades that he must choose between her and his ex-fiancée. Puchades leaves with María de los Remedios, and Plinio and the sisters are left behind locked doors.

Late that night Don Lotario arrives with the Madrid police to free the three prisoners. On the way to town Plinio feels good for the first time since his arrival in Madrid.

Las hermanas coloradas, the winner of the Nadal Prize in 1969, is much more than a detective novel. In fact, the plot is only of minor significance in measuring the total value of the book. The plot, in fact, is somewhat frustrating for the reader who expects a traditional detective
novel, for none of the several apparent clues investigated by Plinio during the course of the work really has anything to do with the solution of the crime. Plinio has almost decided that the case cannot be solved when he suddenly stumbles upon its solution quite by accident. The value of the work is not in its plot but in its interesting character studies, poetic and analytical descriptions of the environment, expressions of philosophical thought, and its costumbre.

Plinio, who has received the title of "Comisario Honorario de la Brigada de Investigación Criminal" because of his extraordinary services, is again important as a policeman; however, he is in this novel much more important as a human being. Far more introspective than in previous novels, he spends much of his time pondering on life, on himself (as a person as well as a policeman), on his family and on people in general. He also makes keen observations about his new environment.

From the beginning of his visit in Madrid Plinio begins to feel the dehumanizing effect of the big city. He feels that he is an object among the lights, the noise, and the people who do not seem to care for anyone but themselves. He cannot understand the detachment of the madrileños, how they can live so near each other without ever really getting to know each other. When Plinio sees a man help a blind man across a street in Madrid without even looking at him,
he states that the man will soon forget whether the object of his aid was a man or a basket.

Plinio is clearly outside his natural environment in Madrid, where people pass him by as if he were a piece of furniture. At times Plinio feels childish nostalgia for Tomelloso, and he feels that he has been in Madrid for months when he only has been there a few days. What he dislikes most about the city is the indifference of its people; he is not used to people not noticing him.

... Tiene uno metido el pueblo hasta las cañas de los huesos, hasta el último rodal del pecho. Soy un paletó de cuerpo entero, un paletó aterido por aquel aire, aquellas voces, aquellos ojos y aquellos alientos. No hay tierra buena ni mala. No hay más que la de uno. Con la tierra pasa lo que con la madre o con los hijos. El que vive lejos de sus solares vive con medio corazón perdido. Le falta ese anclaje profundo del terreno que todavía no se sabe qué es.1

Plinio often compares life in the country to life in the city. He says that in the country the environment causes people to forget the past:

Las nuevas mieses, los pámpanos a estreno, el flamante mantillo de la tierra, las margaritas que deja cada noche la varía composición de las nubes, el aire que cambia de flecha, las recientes golondrinas, como los niños, olvidan pronto lo que pasó, lo que ha ocurrido y lo aparejan todo para la fecha nueva.2

It is different in the cities, where

... todo es molino de nostalgias, de testimonios temerosos, escaleras por donde tantos bajaron, camas con varias generaciones de partos y estirados, cortinas de damasco que secaron tanta lágrima furtiva, armarios

2 Ibid., p. 113.
Plinio thinks that it is best not to think about the past or to fear death. However, he is often preoccupied with these things, and he also worries a great deal about old age:

... Con los años nos hacemos baúl cerrado, gabinete sin puertas, oíre sin espita, hasta devenir en licor tan fuerte y concentrado, en caldo tan negro y pervertido, que nos altera los últimos motores, quemamos los hilos del cerebro, perfora el tinto corazón y nos deja talmente como una cosa.4

Plinio considers his job to be a good antidote against the melancholy of approaching death. When he is busy with his work he does not have time to worry.

One day Don Lotario observes pictures hanging on the wall in the house of the Peláez sisters. They are pictures of friends and relatives who are dead. Some of the pictures are discolored by age to the extent that one can hardly see the faces. This makes Don Lotario think that just as the pictures fade, the memory of those who die will fade from our minds and soon be completely forgotten.

One day when Plinio takes a walk through the streets of Madrid he observes a group of blind people, and we have an interesting description of his reaction to them:

... Ya en la calle de Prim, donde está la Organización Nacional de Ciegos, se tropezaba con invidentes por todos lados que pedían que les ayudasen a cruzar la calle, que les tomases un taxi, y ofrecían sus tiras "iguales", con voces sostenidas, monótonas. Voces no

3Ibid., p. 113. 4Ibid., p. 34.
alteradas por reflejos de imágenes ni luces. Voces mecánicas para ser escuchadas por ellos mismos, como una cayada más que les comunicaba con el exterior. Los ciegos vocean desde lo absoluto, llamando a otras tinieblas. Las suyas son voces "solas"; que no esperan respuesta de gestos o de ojos. Voces rápidas, insistentes, que contienen algo más que el mero texto de su pregón. Avisos articulados de su presencia, de su estar. Testimonios para ellos mismos de que están fuera, de que están a la vista de otros, de que hacen bulto y no están solos en la tiniebla.

La monorrimia de las voces de los ciegos que venden es como la luz de un faro marino. Las voces de los videntes sufren interrupciones y desganas, son arrítmicas, a cada nada interrumpidas por la imagen, el estupor, el sueño, la pincelada cómica, el saludo. Son voces con ojos. Los ciegos, por no ver ni verse, emiten unas voces sin colores, sin tonos, ni semitonos; sin agudos ni calderones. Voces abstractas de un disco rayado, en la cámara negra.5

Plinio then goes to a café, sits at a table and starts to think about the world and its people. All men, he believes, are in a sense like the blind:

El mundo . . . es un turbio mapa de calles de ciegos, una red infinita de cegueras, de obras y voces de ciegos. Cada uno somos ciego a nuestro modo y manera. Tenemos ojos y sensibilidades para unas cosas y somos piedra total para otras. Tenemos luces milagrosas para canales y venas de agua que otros no ven e ignoramos las arterias que son maestros para tantos. Cada cual somos vaso de alguien que de verdad ignoramos en gran parte. Seméjase de unos vecinos que nos metieron en los entrehilos de la carne al darnos el ser. Morada de un sujeto con muchas partes de su rostro, oscuras. Con muchos movimientos de sus manos, ignorados . . . Somos espectadores deficientes de nosotros mismos, semiciegos de nuestra total hechura.6

One day when Plinio is examining the Peláez sisters' house he sees dolls of different sizes and from different periods. He thinks of the dolls as symbols of the frustrated maternal instinct of the sisters, who have never been married.

5Ibid., pp. 107-108. 6Ibid., p. 109.
These thoughts lead him to think about his own daughter Alfonsa, who is already over thirty years of age and is not married yet. She is very dependent on her parents and has never shown any desire to meet people of her own age. She never wants to go out, and when Plinio and his wife encourage her to get married, she always has a look of resignation on her face and wants to change the subject. Plinio is quite concerned about her sometimes.

Plinio misses his daughter and his wife. One day after reading a letter from his daughter Plinio’s thoughts return to his family:

Plinio, llevado por la suavidad de la carta, recordó a sus mujeres, el patio, la amplia cocina donde hacían vida y aquel tiempo de pueblo sin sorpresas. Aquel vivir enfrascado, casi sin accidentes, de quietud en quietud, sintiendo los días como una rueda de luces que ni pesa ni suena. Todos los días la misma torre, el mismo poniente e igual música de saludos en cada esquina. Todo quieto y lucido. Sólo la carne padece. Sobre igual paisaje las carnes adoban y resecan hasta emprender la muerte. Todo es un juego de pequeñas vueltas, de idénticos círculos, de parejas sombras, palabras, caras, fachadas, historias y torre. La plaza, con el Casino, la Posada de los Portales y el Ayuntamiento es el eje de esa ruleta de luces isócronas, de parejos saludos, de risas, campanadas, ladridos, y petardeos de coches. Don Isidoro se asoma a su balcón a las doce, poco más o menos. Manolo Perona que llega al Casino. El relevo de los guardias, la gente que viene de la compra. Todos los días a la compra. Don Saturnino, que va de visitas, al pasar por la plaza saca la cabeza por la ventanilla del coche para ver la hora. Los señores curas pasean por la Glorieta con revuelo de sotanas. Si se muere uno, o se va, viene otro y luego otro, pero siempre hay a la caída de la tarde curas paseando entre pliegues de sotana. Las tinajas de vino cada año se manchan, cada se lavan. Ya llega la noche, la plaza se queda vacía y todos a la cama con cara modorra.
"Sus mujeres" duermen. La Gregoria suspira. ¿Y su hija, la Alfonsa? ¿Hasta qué hora mira el rayo estrecho de luz que filtra la ventana? 7

There are many interesting character descriptions in Las hermanas coloradas. One is that of María de los Remedios, whom Plinio observes on the bus. The following excerpt from that description demonstrates the minute detail with which Plinio observes:

... Y sobre todo en aquel sudorcillo del bigote, tan vital, que lo hacían morro lleno de dulce, fuellecillo de suspiros color claro, de lengua que de vez en cuando se salía de su globo de humedades para chupar el aire. Aquella nariz, que con ritmo de corazón se ahuecaba aspirando un mundo que no estaba allí mismo. . . . 8

There is a strong feeling of longing for the past throughout the book. In the house of the Peláez sisters this nostalgia is present in the little things the sisters have saved, such as locks of hair and a milk tooth found in a vault. There is also a room in the house where several manikins represent dead members of the family and some close friends. The manikins are all dressed to resemble the person they represent, and each has a picture of that person covering its face. The house seems to be a shrine dedicated to the dead and to the past, just as all of Madrid for Plinio is a monument to the past.

The language of Las hermanas coloradas is more colorful and poetic than that of the previous novels; it is very rich in images and metaphors. The author chooses carefully and

7Ibid., pp. 253-254. 8Ibid., p. 36.
with great skill the vocabulary that fits the character of each person, and again the language is often highly colloquial. In the following, the maid of the Peláez sisters comes to tell Plinio something that she had forgotten to tell him earlier:

—Ustedes perdonen y buenas noches, que no he dicho ná, pero los vi subir y me dije: así que bajen voy a decirles a los señores un recuerdo que tengo aquí clavado toa la tarde. Pero como no bajaban, pues digo subo y se lo digo. Lo cual que he encontrado la puerta abierta y telenda telenda me he entrado hasta aquí... Que miren ustedes, desde que desaparecieron las pobres señoritas todos de la casa, de la portería quiero decir, estamos dándole vueltas a la cabeza a ver si caemos en qué percance les puede haber ocurrido. Porque miren ustedes, que unas personas tan rebuenísimas, que las conocemos de toda la vidísima, porque el señorito Norberto cuando se vino de notario, me entiende usted, de Tomelloso, trajo a mi padre que en paz descanses a la portería, y de siempre nos hemos tratado divinamente, y las señoritas y yo como quien dice nos hemos criado con los mismos baberos, porque en Tomelloso mi madre ya asistía a la casa del señorito Norberto, pues que no es cosa vista lo que ha pasado... .

This passage is typical of the many dialectical passages which add humor and color to the novel. Also worthy of note are the crude expressions used by Plinio's friend El Faraón, who visits him in Madrid, and the elegant style of Braulio, Plinio's philosophical friend, who writes him lengthly letters from Tomelloso.

Las hermanas coloradas has more costumbrismo than any of the previous novels. Plinio walks through the streets of Madrid like a tourist and comments on the streets, the buildings, the monuments, foods, customs, the lottery, boinas, and many other things that are part of life in the capital.

9Ibid., pp. 81-82.
Concerning the overall depth and value of the novel, Leonora Guinazzo makes some interesting observations in her review of *Las hermanas coloradas*:

This is more than a detective story. It has an underlying, involved, and disillusionary level of symbolic significance representing the plight of the dreamer who has desperately attempted to retain illusions about Spanish society during the past three decades in order to reissue its immortality. According to Plinio, the war buried alive more than a million agonizing Spaniards who are condemned to a life bereft of human dignity and commitment. There are the bureaucrats who entered a ministry in 1929, were forgotten between 1936 and 1939, and continue to subsist by monotonous killing time on a pension. There is Manolo Puchades, self-imprisoned by fear for thirty years who "ghosted" another man's life. The hermanas coloradas, who have merely acquired thirty-four more years, mirror Puchades' wasted life unnurtured by a Spain grown old and devoid of what she could have but will never again be able to give them. There are also thirty years of silent, sterile disillusion for the lustful barona, Puchades' jailer. In the end, Puchades' alternatives are the same—the boredom of his prison or that of the interminable afternoons with two, nice, musty, old spinsters who have neither a heaven nor hell to offer him. He resigns himself to the prison in which he already finds himself.

Throughout the novel García Pavón echoes the lament of the 'Generación del '98' in his deep psychological probe into the provincial textures and lore of Tomelloso, from its guardia municipal to the souls buried with boina in its cemetery. The author colors Plinio's musings with the lyrical qualities and nostalgia of an Azorín. When Plinio bids farewell to Madrid, he feels a tinge of contentment with his life for the first time. He, a Tomellosan, had been, after all, in Madrid where he was needed to accomplish with Tomellosan know-how an exceptional police mission.10

In conclusion, *Las hermanas coloradas* is an extremely interesting detective novel of high literary merit. It is a book that can be read several times with interest. The

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detailed descriptions, philosophical thoughts and costume-brista elements lend themselves to new discoveries with each reading.
CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

When we examine the detective novels and novelettes of Francisco García Pavón in the chronological order of their publication we find a definite progression toward a literary detective novel with high artistic qualities.

In the early novels plot is definitely García Pavón's main concern. Characters and scenery are described only to the extent necessary to tell the story. The importance of the plot is progressively decreased as we proceed in reading the novels, so that in the last one, Las hermanas coloradas, the plot is almost solely to provide a frame for characterization, philosophy and costumbrismo.

Plinio's character also develops progressively in each novel, so that after reading all of the works we know a great deal about his ambitions, frustrations, philosophy of life, and likes and dislikes. In the first detective stories he is the central figure, but he is mainly important as a detective; later he becomes important as a person as well.

In each novel we meet friends of Plinio, and by the time we finish the last novel his circle of acquaintances has been greatly expanded. All of the characters are described very individualistically, and García Pavón has proven
himself to be a careful observer of people, highly talented
in the art of characterization.

Just as Plinio's character is more fully developed
with each new novel, the descriptions become more detailed.
Instead of merely relating the details of the plot, fact by
fact, the author has intertwined more and more interesting
descriptions in each novel, giving the work greater artistic
merit. The descriptions of the scenery of La Mancha in the
three last novels are very poetic and are rich in metaphors,
images and colorful expressions. They show the author's
love for concrete details and sensations.

The language in general of the detective novels of
García Pavón changes with each succeeding novel. In each
new book colloquial words and expressions become more and
more frequent.

The accurate geographical and sociological knowledge
that the author has of the places he describes has enabled
him to give his readers extremely interesting insights into
the lives and customs in a small Spanish town or, to a
smaller extent, in a big city, where Las hermanas coloradas
is staged.

Plinio is not an ordinary, stereotyped policeman, nor
are the detective stories of García Pavón conventional de-
tective stories where the main emphasis lies in solving a
crime. The combination of excitement and high artistic qual-
ities in the detective stories of García Pavón makes them
worthwhile for a wide range of readers. They can be enjoyed by both the reader interested in mystery stories and by a person seeking a work of higher artistic value.
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