CONCHA ESPINA'S BASIC CONCEPTS AS REVEALED
THROUGH THE OUTSTANDING CHARACTERS IN
HER NOVELS AND SHORT STORIES

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This thesis is based on a study of the basic concepts of Concha Espina de Serna as revealed through the outstanding characters in ten of her novels and five volumes of short stories: Despertar para morir (1910), Agua de nieve (1911), La esfinge maragata (1914), La rosa de los vientos (1916), Ruecas de marfil (1917), El metal de los muertos (1920), Dulce Nombre (1921), El cáliz rojo (1923), Tierras del Aquilón (1924), El príncipe del cantar (1929?), Altar mayor (1926), Llama de cera (1927), La virgen prudente (1929), Can- delabro (1933), and La flor de ayer (1934).

The novels enumerated above will be grouped into three categories, determined according to the geographical location of their settings. These categories are entirely arbitrary, and serve the sole purpose of chapter division. They constitute chapters one, two, and three respectively, as follows: those which have as their setting Concha Espina's native region of Cantabria in northern Spain; second, those in which the setting is in regions of Spain other than Cantabria; and last, those in which the action either occurs outside of Spain, or in which the theme is foreign. To the first category pertain the bulk of Espina's novels, as follows: Despertar para morir, Agua de nieve, La rosa de los vientos, Dulce Nombre, La virgen prudente, and Altar mayor. The next
group of novels, considered in a different chapter, are those which occur in other regions of Spain. There are two of these, the first being *La esfinge maragata*, which has for its setting the region of Maragatería, and the second one, *El metal de los muertos*, whose action develops in Andalucía, in the south of Spain. The third chapter is devoted to those novels which are concerned with countries outside of Spain. Into this class fall *Cáliz rojo*, which has a German setting, and *La flor de ayer*, which is an American novel. The five volumes of short stories will be considered in a special chapter apart from the above-mentioned categories because they deserve to be considered collectively and as a complete unit. They include the following volumes: *Ruecas de marfil, Tierras del Aquilón, El príncipe del cantar, Llama de cera*, and *Candelabro*.

Concha Espina's first novel, *La niña de Luzmela* (1910), has been omitted from this study. It was written in the same year as *Despertar para morir*, the initial novel to be discussed, and has no special significance other than the fact that our author regards it with a great deal of favor and affection. It appears to represent her happy infancy, portrayed by Carmen, the protagonist of the novel. The latter is unique in that she is the only one of Espina's literary heroines who achieves a romantic ideal of marital felicity, and this comes only after much suffering and martyrdom.
CHAPTER I

CHARACTERS IN THE NOVELS OF "CANTABRIA"

The initial novel to be considered in this thesis, *Despertar para morir*, is of the "montaña," Concha Espina's own native mountains of Santander. This work, along with the author's first one, *La niña de Luzmela*, sets the pattern for her entire novelistic literary career. As in all of her novels, the women characters form the philosophical, moral, and physical core. Divided into three "libros," and containing a total of twenty-six chapters, three principal types of women are represented in this novel: the wife, the mother, and the servant. However, we are only concerned with the two wives, two of the outstanding characters who are introduced when they are still maidens. One is the direct antithesis of the other. Eva Guerrero, a decided brunette, is from the upper social bracket, the possessor of an ample fortune, arrogant in speech and bearing, and ostentatious in dress. Quite the opposite is Pilar Ensalmó, a blonde beauty who is a pillar of Christian virtues. She is reserved and melancholy, the result of a solitary youth, and knows little of the ways of the world.

We are first introduced to Eva, daughter of the Marchioness de Coronado. Arrogant and beautiful, she is envied by all the young ladies, with one exception—"la niña rubia."
This is the first mention that is made of Pilar Ansalm. Eva is described as having an ardent and covetous heart, inclined to all the vain pleasures of the world. She contemplates with distress the decline of her youth. She secretly envies those who are younger, richer, and more beautiful than she, and for this reason she envies the beautiful blonde girl with the blue eyes. Her father is now dead and she has lost her fortune.

At the summer resort of "Las Palmeras," two guests arrive who are already known and anticipated by the other guests. The first of these is Gracían Soberano, a man of adventure and action. In his character is revealed, as forcefully as in her women characters, Concha Espina's admiration for the modern spirit. We find that Gracían returned to Spain from his many foreign adventures, not for political reasons, as was supposed, but for business reasons. Here, Espina gives some of her views on politics by way of Gracían:

La política es el arte de los pueblos nuevos, enamorados del porvenir, resonantes de fábricas y de oro, coronados por las altas virtudes del trabajo y de la inteligencia.... El mundo vive y progrresa por razones económicas... Los hombres de Estado son prisioneros de los hombres de negocios.¹

He thinks that politics contaminates everything in Spain, and that her youth needs to be oriented in the paths of free activity. It is well to note at this point that Gracían is

¹Concha Espina, Despertar para morir, p. 41.
one of the most vigorous and virile characters ever created by Concha Espina.

Gracián's eloquent oration and magnetic personality create a rivalry between the two most attractive girls at "Las Palmeras" which is not soon ended. Pilar is very much attracted to this charming young man. Not until now do we learn anything about her background or her character. Her parents had died young, leaving her alone in the world. She had inherited a considerable fortune, but remained solitary and unhappy. The Marqués de Coronado, her uncle, had invited her to come to "Las Palmeras," along with her "dueña," Doña Cándida.

It is quite clear that Pilar had lived a very secluded and sheltered life in a good small-town society, while on the other hand, Eva was a worldly-wise woman. Everything about her seems to hint of a future of bondage and sorrow. Nevertheless, "creíase con derecho a la felicidad por haber nacido hidalga y hermosa."²

Espina does not try to leave an impression that, because Pilar is so good, innocent, and unspoiled, she has an option on freedom from suffering and sorrow; but she and Eva will travel different and individual roads of sorrow. However, in the second of the three "libros" of this novel, these "caminos de dolor" are discussed in detail.

²Ibid., p. 110.
A more complete picture of Gracían is given later. Because of his eloquent speech, exquisite manner, and handsome appearance, he has the women deluded and the men hoodwinked. But we are assured that he is not what he appears to be. In fact, throughout his whole life he has made an art of lying and hypocrisy. All of his power and persuasive personality are derived from the spoken word.

The second outstanding man character is presented in the person of the poet-artist, Diego Villamor. He is from the same background as Pilar, with the characteristically northern fairness, melancholy disposition, and reticence. The only person at the "quinta" who makes him feel at ease is the blond Pilar, the girl so much like himself. But Diego is soon to understand that Gracían is falling in love with Pilar. Again he feels alone and rejected. Eva is once again bitten by the stings of jealousy as she sees how the poet favors the "niña rubia" over her.

In a discourse between Gracían and Diego, one may notice almost as great a contrast between the two men as between Eva and Pilar. Here we have expressed by Gracían, with more than a little arrogant contempt for Diego, his idea of what a man should be:

Los hombres, amigo mío, para cumplir una elevada misión, necesitamos hacernos duros y valerosos. No basta con tener talento, se necesita fuerza para imponerle.\(^3\)

\(^3\)Ibid., pp. 59-60.
Gracían ridicules the poet for his timidity and excessive modesty. He advises him to go out into the world, facing it boldly, and seek glory, money, and popularity. But Diego answers him quite simply: "¿Por qué buscar tan lejos lo que está dentro del corazón?"\(^4\)

Gracían falls in love with Pilar quite suddenly. When Eva learns about it, she puts up a renewed effort to conquer the boisterous young man, but soon realizes the futility of it. After this failure, she starts directing all her attention toward Diego. The young poet, deceived by her promises, yields completely.

Several years have elapsed between the action of the first and second "libro." The scene of the second opens with Eva now married and with a young son, Tristan. Eva is very unhappy and disillusioned with Diego, whom she considers a dreamer, unfitted for the practical business of making a living for a needy family. Diego is unhappy, realizing the grave error he has made in marrying Eva. He is in love with Pilar, and he tries to tell her about it, but she discourages him. Diego's words are a strong temptation for Pilar. Her courage and determination to resist him show the heroic spirit which prevails in the character of all of Concha Espina's women. Pilar reveals that she loves him also, but that the fulfillment of their love would only mean condemnation, and both of them would eventually be lost.

\(^4\)Ibid., p. 51.
Here we find Concha Espina's own philosophy expressed most emphatically. What Pilar is trying to say is that, with Diego, her suffering would be all the greater because her love for him is so great, sustaining Espina's belief that love means suffering.

Meanwhile, Gracian is carrying on an affair with Eva. But each day Gracian is finding Pilar, whom he had taken for his wife, increasingly more beautiful and desirable, if a bit more arrogant and disdainful.

Diego returns to Cantabria after an absence, his love for Pilar more intense than ever. He tries desperately to get her to yield to his amorous supplications. Then comes the climax, which is Pilar's triumph over temptation, making the supreme sacrifice of rejecting an ephemeral love for the sake of her most sacred duty—remaining faithful to her marriage vows. Concha Espina's implacable belief that the marriage vows should be unviolated and that earthly happiness is futile is fully expressed when Pilar gives her answer to Diego:

El valor de la felicidad está en que jamás puede ser poseída; si la estrecháramos en nuestros brazos como una criatura, perdería su divino perfume... La felicidad, como la belleza, como todas altas y graves cosas inmateriales, rechaza toda posesión, todo contacto...; es un aroma, una luz, una brisa que pasa...; la sentimos, la gozamos tal vez...; pero no la poseemos!\(^5\)

While on a visit at "Las Palmeras" in her pursuit of Gracian, who only used her as a stimulus in his other

\(^5\)Ibid., p. 297.
amorous adventures, she receives word from Pilar that Diego has returned to Cantabria. She hastily jumps to the conclusion that he has returned only to enjoy her absence, and departs from home immediately. Soon after her arrival, her little son dies of meningitis. Now Eva has no one. She is all alone and forsaken. She makes one last desperate appeal for Diego not to abandon her. When she tells him how much she is suffering, he answers:

Pues ya estás en el camino de redimirte. Sólo el dolor puede salvarte... ¡Despierta, alma dormida!
Sal de tu oscuro sueño y bendice el golpe que te hace despertar...

... 

Llora, llora... La vida no es un holgorio placentero, sino el duro y noble aprendizaje de la verdad...
Escucha: llora el río..., llora el viento..., lloran las campanas... La existencia es un arroyo de llanto que fluye en corriente infinita, fecundizando el eterno paraíso de las almas...6

This is only one of the author's testimonials to her basic concepts of life and religious principles—that woman must suffer and weep bitter tears in order to reach a knowledge of the truth, and, finally, salvation. This is the moment of spiritual awakening for Eva, a woman who has been conceited and vain for so long. It is this vanity and selfishness in woman which Espina so condemns throughout her works. It is as though she believed this to be the greatest weakness of womanhood.

6Ibid., p. 337.
Through the character of Diego Villamor, Concha Espina reveals most eloquently her own poetic talent, not only through his verses, but in his speeches as well. He represents the romantic northern type, a poet and a dreamer, which she is so fond of treating in her novels of the "montaña." Although Diego is generally pessimistic and feels misunderstood in a cruel, relentless world, he recognizes the hope which remains for Eva, now that she is awakened into the light of spiritual redemption after having been cleansed and purified by the saving power of grief and agony. Apparently, Concha Espina believes that everyone who hopes to attain salvation must experience part of the suffering and sorrow which Christ suffered for the world.

At last Diego leaves, preparing to set sail for Argentina. Meanwhile, Gracién appears on the scene. He tells Eva that Pilar has disappeared and that he cannot find her. While he is looking for her, Eva decides to go to Santa-cruz to meet the train which will take Diego away. It has been raining and the bridge is slippery. She slides off into the waters below.

Gracién found Pilar at last, returning from the "ermita de la Patrona" where she had been praying.

_Agua de nieve_, the second Cantabrian novel to be considered, is divided into three "libros," "La viajera rubia," "Humos de reina," and "El deshielo." It has as its outstanding character, Regina de Alcántara, who is the sole
protagonist of the story. In the first chapter, which serves as an introduction to the heroine, Regina is seen as a restless, lonely, whimsical woman who is on a transatlantic ship running away from something, searching for peace of mind.

In the second chapter, an account is given of this woman's childhood. Her mother had died when Regina was eight years old. She was left practically alone, since her father was almost always away. Regina's childhood lacked the discipline of parental authority, allowing her to grow up close to nature. She had been an avid reader, stimulating her mind with the desire to travel and learn new things. But at the same time, she developed an irrepressible melancholy spirit to the extent that she thought she was suffering from "el mal del siglo."

Unrestrained by financial worries, Regina's restless, shifting spirit induces her to embark from Torremar for Paris. Then come Italy, Norway, Germany, and finally America. She discovers that her many travels have been to no avail in remedying her illness, which is mental and spiritual rather than physical.

It might be remarked that, not unlike the rest of Conche Espina's young maidens of the northern mountain region of Cantabria, Regina de Alcántara turns to nature for consolation and peace of mind. Only this time the setting is not in Cantabria, but in the high Andes of Perú.
Cruza bosques perfumados por los aromas de la gran datura blanca, cubiertos de espigas rosas y azules y enmarañados de enredaderas floridas, y por senderitos abiertos en las taquitas de las montañas, sube a los Andes ecuatorianos desde el hondo valle del chota, ardiente y feraz, el más profundo de la tierra, hasta el altísimo volcán del corazón, cubierto de nieve perdurable.7

Regina's first love interest is Jacinto Ibarrola, a Spaniard who has made himself a hero in Perú. She has decided that Jacinto is the man she would like to marry. He has, incidentally, been greatly responsible for her recuperation. But when Regina learns that Jacinto has been killed as a prisoner of an Indian tribe, she is so overcome with grief that she has a sudden relapse. It is not long before death throws its shadow over her again when her brother dies, leaving her health in such a state that she consults a physician. He advises her to take an ocean voyage and return to her native soil in Torremar.

On her return to Spain, the heroine stays at a hotel on the island of San Simón. She has made a new acquaintance there with a young doctor, a widower with two children. Regina's great concern for these two children, as well as her sheltering, motherly attitude toward her brother Jaime before he died, are examples of the motherly instinct with which Concha Espina invests her women characters, a quality which the author believes should be an essential part of all womanhood.

7Concha Espina, Agua de nieve, p. 73.
An outstanding subplot is contained in this work. It involves the protagonist only indirectly, yet it changes her entire outlook on life. The story of this subplot is related to Regina by a good friend from her childhood, Carlos Ramírez. The central figure is his mother, Carlota, who mysteriously fled from home two years before, creating quite a scandal. It seems that his father was an extremely cruel, unsympathetic man, who made the entire household unhappy, the type of man Espina condemns consistently throughout her works. He tells Regina that he has never doubted the sanctity of his mother's motives for leaving, and he intends to defend her as long as need be. But the important thing is that Carlos has at last found a refuge for his secrets and his sorrows in the person of Regina.

Regina learns that Carlota de Heredia ran away, and that she had left in a boat destined for France with a priest, an old man and a poet. Regina speculates as to which one it could have been with whom she was in love. Carlos tells her of a sympathetic friendship between his mother and Manuel Velasco. His mother had left alone, promising to return some day. But she never fulfilled her promise.

The story of Carlota is interrupted when Carlos declares his love for Regina. She disdains his professed love by laughing at him. He does not know that he is only one of the many suitors which her beauty and dowry have
won for her. But it is Velasquín, the fiancé of Carlos' sister, who has the whole town talking.

Some of Regina's qualities which the men so admired are expressed in the author's own words as follows:

Para ellos, las libertades de la moza rubia, lucían un fuerte matiz de honestidad; aquella mujer pensaba alto, sentía ligeramente, era ingeniosa, franca, voluble. En su palabra, ingenua y procer, hialina como arroyo cantarín, nunca advirtieron el amargo danino de la murmuración...

This strange power which Regina had over men was instantly decisive in Adolfo.

Regina's philosophy, which seems contradictory to the philosophy of our author, is stated thus:

El bien es el placer; el mal es el dolor. Dolor es todo lo que pone obstáculo al placer. El hombre es un lobo para el hombre, y la vida una cacería incesante donde cazadores y cazados se disputan su presa... Cada uno tiene el mismo deseo que los demás y sólo el fuerte sale vencedor en esta batalla de todos contra todos.

This aggressive philosophy launches her on a road of conquest in which she and Ana María, the sister of Carlos, are the wolves, and the prey is Velasquín. She writes to him, demanding that he make a public manifestation of their love.

Carlota's story is finally resumed, telling of her intimate friendship with Manuel Velasco before she met and married Don Juan Ramírez.

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8 Ibid., p. 202. 9 Ibid., p. 207
Regina and Velasquín are found married to each other in the last "libro," not without remorse and reproach on the part of both the newly-weds. Regina is unwilling to face the permanency of marriage. Velasquín cannot forget Ana María or forgive himself for going against his family's will by marrying Regina.

Now Regina is paying the consequences of her folly, fully realizing how little she really loves her husband. Still searching for the right philosophy of life to find happiness, she is beginning to take an introspective view of herself, becoming aware of the shallowness, the futility of her concept of life.

The end of Carlota's story is finally reached. Carlos has heard a rumor among the citizens that his mother is living in a French convent. When Regina learns that Juan Ramírez has almost killed Ana María in an outburst of insane rage, thinking she was Carlota, she goes to the Ramírez home. On the way she encounters Carlota de Heredia. What Carlota has to say to Regina is the climax of this novel. At last, what Regina has been searching for so long is at hand: the key to a bright new world of true happiness as revealed in the following words spoken by Carlota:

Yo conozco la alegría de mis penas... he saboreado los frutos divinos del dolor.10

10Ibid., p. 303.
Carlota tells Regina that to love is to re-create oneself with the good of another, and to do good is to have charity towards one's fellow man. She advises her not to look for happiness, but rather to look only for that which is good, and the rest will be added.

These words, spoken by Carlota, express the precise philosophy of the author, not only of religion but of life as well. The ambitious, vain and conceited woman who seeks happiness through worldly pleasures instead of first seeking good, never escapes Espina's severest criticism and chastisement. She inevitably ends in disaster unless she mends her ways. If she redeems herself in time, happiness will come to her only after she drains the bitter cup of sorrow to the last dregs.

Velasquín launches out to sea while a storm is raging and is drowned. Regina blames herself for the disaster; remembering how she had called him a coward, she realizes that he has deliberately risked his life to prove otherwise to her.

11 Ibid., pp. 305-306.
In spite of Carlota's words, Regina feels that she is destined to suffer, unworthy of alleviating tears or hope, and no heart through which to sanctify herself. But it is Pablo who tells her to listen and she will hear a very small heart beating faintly inside, just being born.

La rosa de los vientos is the third novel with a Cantabrian setting. It contains a total of twenty-five chapters, these being the only divisions made in the entire novel. The heroine of this work is the same young and very beautiful maiden presented in El c6iliz rojo, Soledad Fontenbro; this novel tells only of her childhood and early womanhood. Soledad, as all of Concha Espina's conventional maidens are, is of the upper class, with a frivolous, neglectful mother. She has an adoring stepfather, but she has been reared by a "dueña" whose son, Agustín, was her first playmate.

In the first chapter we see the literary blazon of the author which is seen a number of times throughout her works: "Velar se debe a la vida de tal suerte que viva quede en la muerte."¹² This is the motto written on the coat of arms at the house of Soledad's aristocratic father.

A description of the elements of nature as a powerful, sustaining influence in the life of the heroine is well represented in this novel. This is especially true in the formative years of Espina's conventional virgin, and so it

¹² Concha Espina, La rosa de los vientos, p. 10.
is with Soledad. She is very observing of the natural wonders of the heavens, and one day while swimming she imagines that

... el sol se bañaba también. Había caído en el agua vivo y rojo, fulgurante como una antorcha, y esparcía su fuego y su luz sobre las olas y las nubes. Entre el cielo y el mar dibujaba el horizonte su linde oscura, y el astro, al partirla, me pareció una enorme 'rosa de los vientos,' marcando infinitos rumbos sobre la eterna 'línea de fe.'

From this celestial body which Soledad contemplates, Espina draws her inspiration for the title of this work. We might mention also that the sun is used as the subject for another metaphor in the title of El cáli rojo.

As a child, Soledad was enrolled in a school in Madrid. She spent her summers either in Traspeña with her governess or in Alcalá with her aunt and uncle; in the meantime, her mother traveled, finally returning to Traspeña with a new husband, Don Germán Ercilla, who had previously visited Soledad at the convent school. The girl is fifteen at this time.

Later we see another influential factor in her education--her extensive reading. From books she stimulates a fertile imagination which directs her thinking into romantic channels and impels her to search for an ideal love. At this time she is beginning to resent Don German's presence

\[13\] Ibid., p. 76.
as an intruder whom she cannot accept as taking over the rights of her deceased father, whose memory still remains with her.

In none other of her works does Espina give a more penetrating analysis of the moods and emotions of a woman character. It is difficult to determine whether this analysis is objective or subjective.

After being separated from her "dueña," who goes to live with her son, Soledad is independent and alone. More than ever, conflicting emotions invade her thoughts. She asks herself: "¿Qué es la vida?... ¿Qué es la muerte?... ¿Y el espacio?... ¿Y la eternidad?... ¿Y el alma?... ¿Y el amor?..." With these eternal questions in mind, she reads all the books she can find to console her and give her hope and happiness. Her reading only causes her greater anxiety, but at the same time it makes her aspire unceasingly to know the truth:

Yo sé que en la insignificancia de mi vida sólo existe una cosa fuerte y grande: el insondable anhelo de conocer a Dios; de amarle y sentirle, plenamente, en los misterios rotos, en las verdades claras y en las eternas luces.15

Now Soledad is certain she could fall in love; but with whom? "¿Qué es el amor?," she continues to ask herself. She thinks she has fallen in love with Adolfo Velasco, the posthumous son of Velasquín, shipwrecked at sea, and Doña

14Ibid., p. 134.  
15Ibid., p. 170.
Regina de Alcántara, whom we already know from *Agua de nieve*. But this love is short lived, for her suitor's courtship is too commonplace and normal to satisfy her romantic fancy. After an investigation of friends and neighbors to find an expression of some dramatic and powerful passion, she finds a pack of letters written years ago by her stepfather to a certain Carmen. In them are expressed the ardent passion and unbridled emotion with which her idealistic mind is already inflamed, and she becomes a second Carmen waiting for her lover.

Unceasing in her search for her ideal, she meets it head on when her former playmate, Agustín, avows his love for her. She has never really ceased to love him, but her search for the meaning of love is just now beginning to materialize. But Agustín is not destined to be the fulfillment of the girl's dreams because, being a maiden of Doña Concha Espina's creation, she must experience all the tribulations which life holds before she can free herself of a self-centered existence. Agustín, realizing the hopelessness of their love, commits suicide. After this, Soles realizes how much she needs the love and understanding of her stepfather, having lacked the guidance of an understanding parent. She is more disposed to face the realistic, commonplace things of life, and thus to judge the renewed affections of Adolfo in a new light.
Luzmela, the location of Espina's first novel, is the scene of Dulce Nombre, and this novel is a continuation of that same plot. This work is divided into three parts, with a total of ten chapters.

The interest is sustained by vigorous and rapid action, now physical, now mental. The characters are few in number and sharply defined. Matrimonial infidelity is a central theme and a rivalry between mother and daughter is a subject also found in Agua de nieve.16

Dulce Nombre, daughter of a miller, is the heroine of the story. Just as all of the rest of the author's protagonists, she is a melancholy girl who has lacked the guidance of a mother. Her godfather has been her friend and instructor. She experiences her first romantic love with a young student, Manuel de la Torre; but he has little material wealth to offer her. Then comes a rich "indiano," Ignacio Malgor, who wishes to marry her and presses his suit by employing her lover in Cuba and offering her father a mill in exchange for her hand. Although Nicolás and her father urge her to marry Malgor, Dulce is rebellious at first, but after her lover, Manuel, abruptly departs, she consents to Ignacio's proposal. Of course, this does not bring happiness to Dulce. She is destined to live a life of suffering, but at the same time she is grateful to Malgor for his kindness and generosity, proving faithful but unloving.

In the "Parte Segunda," Dulce Nombre learns that Manuel was deceived and bribed into leaving her, and that his
desertion was actually an act of heroic self-sacrifice. Nicolás vindictively enjoys seeing her suffer from love and jealousy as he had suffered. He is really in love with Dulce Nombre. He knows that his only rival is absent, inaccessible. He has no fear of the girl's husband, who has never won the girl's heart. She seems sacred to him, and a superstitious fear prevents him from laying a hand on her, although instinct and passion induce him to guard her from other loves.

Dulce becomes the mother of a baby daughter whom she christens Dulce Nombre de María. Dulce's husband has been in poor health for some time, and his serious illness offers some hope of escape. Comparable to the moral and spiritual struggle of Regina de Alcántara in Agua de nieve and the emotional conflict of Soledad Fontenebro in La rosa de los vientos, Dulce's soul becomes a battle between the urgent desire to be happy and a sense of Christian compassion.

In the "Parte Segunda," Dulce, upon receiving notice that Manuel Jesús is returning home, tells Nicolás that she wants to be good; that no one should suffer because of her; that he prepare Malgor so that he may not be hurt by the news.

Soon after Manuel's arrival, Malgor dies. Dulce Nombre feels that her dreams of happiness are about to be realized. But it is not long before her own pretty daughter and the man she has loved through sixteen years of marital martyrdom
have met and fallen in love. Now cast into a black abyss of despair, with the prospect of a life without love, Dulce is on the brink of committing suicide; but having a strong constitution and a vigorous body unwilling to die, as any true daughter of Concha Espina, she saves herself. After re-examining herself, she finds a new-born hope of happiness in the arms of Nicolás. Just as Soledad Fontenebro fell short of achieving a strictly romantic ideal, so does Dulce Nombre. Yet such a union offers a sound foundation for serene happiness built on mutual respect and mature affection.

In *La virgen prudente*, there are four "jornadas" with a total of twenty-seven chapters. The first "jornada" introduces us to all the principal characters and takes us up to the departure of the protagonist from her mother's house.

*Aurora de España* is the central figure in this novel. She represents a new type of woman character for Espina. As opposed to the conventional virgin or classic type of Spanish woman, from which the novel satirically derives its title, *Aurora* is the prototype of Doña Concha Espina's modern maiden who heroically struggles for the independence of Spanish women, also treated to some degree in *Altar mayor*. Just as all of Espina's conventional maidens are, Aurora is the victim of an unsympathetic mother. She was reared by her grandfather, a ship captain. She has received
her bachelor's degree through study at various ports of her native land in between her many long voyages. At the death of her grandfather she goes to Madrid to gain the degree of Doctor of Laws. "Y escuchando bien el sonido de su alma llena de ecos, fuerte y contemplativa, le puso un lema audaz al blasón de sus ideales: Querer, Saber, Poder."\(^{17}\) She enters the University with this motto. "She has her eyes fixed on the practical goal of moral, political, and social regeneration for Spanish women."\(^{18}\)

In the second "jornada," Aurora writes the thesis for her doctorate. In it are embodied many of the social and political ideas which belong to our author.

She demands that women be conceded the right to vote, the right to hold public office, and the opportunity of receiving an education on a par with men. She hopes thus to abolish war and capital punishment. She visualizes the revision of a narrow legal code, schools for mothers, and sex education which will reduce the number of abandoned wives and illegitimate children.\(^{19}\)

At last Aurora wins her doctor's degree, along with applause and congratulations. But there is much criticism and objection to her new theories. She is accused of heresies against religion, against social formulas, and good Catholic appearance.

After being forced to leave her mother's house because of intolerable circumstances, she takes residence in a

\(^{17}\)Espina, op. cit., p. 18.

\(^{18}\)Smith, op. cit., pp. 57-58.

\(^{19}\)Ibid., p. 58.
boarding house. During the course of time, Aurora has acquired two suitors, Jaime Solinde and a doctor, Guillermo Casal, both of whom are unsympathetic toward her revolutionary ideas. However, Aurora thinks she is in love with the young doctor. She now dreams of being a champion of the ideal matrimony; her heroic spirit reaches a peak.

In the third "jornada," the first chapter is devoted entirely to the subject of love. Concha Espina's basic concepts of love, as expounded by her literary heroine of Spanish womanhood, Aurora de España, are expressed most eloquently and directly: "El amor es la Vida. Y cuanto más se sufre por él se vive mucho más... hasta el punto de no morir." Then Aurora speaks of a different kind of love--a compassion for suffering humanity: "No sólo hay que abolir la pena de muerte y la trata de blancas, sino el servicio militar obligatorio." Her faith in love is so great that she is confident that, defended by love, if all women would unite, universal disarmament would be possible:

Los ejércitos de hombres han de disolverse por inútiles, y cada uno de sus individuos será feliz al dejar las armas que mantuvo sólo por un atavismo ancestral. Después, las generaciones venideras juzgarán increíble que haya existido una ciencia humana de matarse los pueblos refinadamente, unos a otros; hermanos, algunos, entre sí...

20 Espina, op. cit., p. 195.
21 Ibid., p. 198.
22 Ibid., pp. 199-200.
In the final "jornada," Aurora ultimately reaches the realization that Guillermo's love has been a lie, and that he would never be in accord with her high ideals and standards. However, during her search for this new truth, she has sought the advice of her past friend, Jaime Solinde. Their old friendship is renewed. Aurora looks at the future with a bright new hope, more determined than ever to work for the end of all social slavery. Now she realizes, however, that she has only conquered the first inquietude, "Querer," of her ambitious motto, "Querer, Saber, Poder." With the support of Solinde, she feels confident that she has the necessary weapons for success.

The sixth and last Cantabrian novel, *Altar mayor*, has for its setting the valley of Covadonga, in the "altar mayor" region of the Asturias mountains. This region has a very rich historical background, and Concha Espina does not hesitate to draw from this prolific source for some very interesting narrative. It was at Covadonga where Pelayo defeated the Moor Alcama's army in the year 718, considered to be the turning point in the Moorish conquest.

The first character of importance to be introduced is Javier, a young man described as placid, somewhat melancholy, and enjoying the privileges of fortune. When we meet him, he is convalescing from a long illness. His mother, who has prepared lodging for him near his cousin, summons him to come to stay with her until his health is restored.
Javier succeeds in recovering his health completely with the diligent care and assistance of his two cousins. In the process, he falls in love with Teresa, the younger of the two.

Javier informs his mother that he has determined to marry his cousin if she will have him. He has a message sent to the object of his affection, declaring his love for her, but she is skeptical, afraid that he is in love with her rival, Leonor, and afraid of a compromise with his family.

Meanwhile, Javier has acquired a rival also, who has declared to Teresa the immensity of his love for her. However, when the decisive point is reached, he has to yield to Javier, whom Teresa chooses over him. Teresa and Javier pledge their love, although Teresa still appears to be somewhat skeptical. The two become engaged, and Javier presents his loved one with an engagement ring.

During a separation from his betrothed, however, swayed by the influence of his mother and affected by the scandal which she tried to create between him and Teresa, he betrays not only his betrothed, but his own heart as well when he consents to marry Leonor:

... Cederé a cuanto la propone su madre a trueque de recabar la absoluta licencia para disponer de sí mismo con medios abundantes y anchura franca; así recobra el derecho de consagrar la vida a la mujer de su corazón y adquiere, por una efímera condescendencia, el amor, el dinero y la libertad.23

23 Concha Espina, Altar mayor, p. 302.
Javier represents the inconstant lover who promises much, but when the decisive moment is reached he lacks the courage and independent drive to oppose an obstinate, ambitious mother. He sees an opportunity for material gain by marrying a girl he does not love, but his perfidy to the woman whose love and trust he had finally won results in his ultimate defeat. Espina has condemned the vacillating, perfidious lover on various occasions by making him pay the penalty for his folly, just as Javier did.

Teresa Morano, the leading woman character in this novel, is another of Espina's modern maidens. She starts to work in the Grand Hotel of Covadonga, against the traditions of her class, in order to gain independence and obliterate the sorrow caused by an inconstant lover. She is one of Espina's many heroines of the modern spirit. Her physical perfection equals, if it does not surpass, her spiritual grace; and both together make her completely Spanish:

La señorita Morano es aria en la tez; es celta en los cabellos; romana en el clásico perfil; mora en los labios y en el fuego de los ojos; esbelta y dulce como las palmas de Jerusalén; cristiana en el espíritu ágil y superior que ha llegado a su hora cenital; y española, en fin, por el conjunto misterioso de su belleza.²⁴

Teresa possesses all of the noble characteristics with which the author endows all her leading women characters.

Like a good Christian, she has a kind and compassionate

²⁴Ibid., p. 54.
nature which drives her to help all who are in need of it, even to a suitor whom she has just rejected.

Her greatest weaknesses, which lend the human element to the story, lie in her extreme romanticism, a quality which the author has invested in such characters as Soledad Fontenebro in *La rosa de los vientos*, and also in her vulnerability to the wooing of the vacillating Javier.

Her independent nature asserts itself after four years of absence from Javier, who is still endeavoring to win her love: "Necesito merecer una felicidad labrada por mi misma y aplicarme el dolor de la lucha como un cauterio."²⁵

Teresa is skeptical of the sincerity of Javier's words on their first betrothal: "Sólo creo en Dios... No puedo remediarlo; he sufrido mucho por tu causa."²⁶ She is completely disillusioned after their second betrothal, when Javier suddenly and unexpectedly marries another. Her romantic, idealistic fancies give way completely to the modern, realistic side of her nature. She meets the impact of this heart-rending occurrence with a great faith and courage. She returns to the hotel where she has been working, where her perfidious lover and his bride are now staying. "She has wept, but, triumphant over her tears, she has built up the structure of independent felicity by the sincerity of her hope and faith."²⁷

²⁵*Tbid.*, pp. 31-32  
²⁶*Tbid.*, p. 115  
²⁷*Smith, op. cit.*, p. 61.
Yacub Es Sahelí, the Christian Arab philosopher, although not an outstanding character in the plot of this novel, has sufficient merit to be included, in that much of Concha Espina's philosophy is voiced by him in his discourses with Don Manuel and the priest, Don Elías, while Teresa listens.

One may get a deep insight into the psychological and philosophical structure of Espina's personages in the heated contention between the Arab and his two interlocutors.

After being accused of being a pessimist by the priest, the Arab defends himself thus:

... todas las esperanzas terrenas no pueden ir más lejos de una espantosa realidad, que es la Muerte. Y para darnos algún fruto han de convertirse en altruismo, desinterés, benevolencias y ternuras llenas de sacrificios. Esta actitud, sólo compatible con la inteligencia y la comprensión, nos hace sonreír y aún gozar sagradamente en el renunciamiento y la misericordia; pero nunca nos hará felices, porque el Dolor, hijo de los siglos, "es más pesado que las arenas del Mar."28

There is no doubt of Es Sahelí's pessimism, just as it is unmistakably manifested in the lives of Espina's women characters, but it is a pessimism which does not extend beyond death. The Arab believes that death is the eternal reality which is the apex of all our optimistic hopes, and that the dark shadows of life will be lost only in death.

28Espina, op. cit., p. 145.
CHAPTER II

LA ESPINGE MARAGATA AND EL METAL DE LOS MUERTOS

Included in this chapter are two of Espina's novels whose action develops in regions of Spain other than Cantabria; La esfinge maragata, and El metal de los muertos.

The initial novel to be considered, La esfinge maragata, is perhaps the best and most popular of all Concha Espina's novels. It contains all of the ingredients of a great novel: intensive character study, historical interest, poetic description of nature, and the charm of antiquity added to the realism of modern narrative. Furthermore, this work is significant for its local color in the dialectal expressions of Maragatería, as Altar mayor is for its use of "bable," a dialect of Asturias.

The protagonist and heroine of La esfinge maragata is one of the most beautiful characters ever created by Concha Espina, Mariflor Salvadores. She is not only physically beautiful, but spiritually as well. She has bright blue eyes, dark masses of curly locks, and the gentle curves of a maturing form. Mariflor has been reared in a middle-class home in La Coruña. Known as Florinda Salvadores, she lived there until the death of her mother, after which she made the journey to Maragatería with her grandmother to
live with her relatives. Before making the journey, her grandmother required that she change her name to Mariflor. Unlike most of Concha Espina's women protagonists, Mariflor had apparently enjoyed a happy childhood up to the death of her mother. Her father then lost all of his interests and sailed for Argentina. He sends Mariflor far from her home to Maragatería, hoping to earn some money to send to her, and to rejoin her there sometime. She meets a young and attractive poet, Rogelio Terán, while traveling on the train to Astorga. He is immediately infatuated with the beautiful young lady, and by the end of the journey she has confided in him many things. He learns that her father and her father's brother wish her to marry Antonio, her cousin; however, they have left her the liberty of deciding for herself. She is not in love with Antonio, who is a groceryman in Valladolid, but he is wealthy and is the only hope of saving her grandmother's homestead from debt.

Mariflor has a spirit of sacrifice early in life, although it has not been put to the final test yet. She feels the full force of her moral obligation to aid those who are depending upon her, but she also knows that she has lost everything except love, and since meeting Rogelio and falling in love with him, she steadfastly refuses to make this final sacrifice. This unwillingness to sacrifice her personal happiness is not unusual among Espina's leading
women characters, but rather is recurrent throughout the majority of her novels. "Every day brings new evidences of the sordidness of loveless marriages and lives of abject slavery and, as a very human mixture of egoism and charity, of obstinacy and tenderness, she cannot accept the life of a Maragatan sphinx with meek passivity."

The dread which Mariflor has of entering into wedlock with a man she does not love is a persistent theme of the author. It would seem that the latter considers "mariages de convenance" to be one of the principal causes of so many unhappy marriages. In reality, she is protesting against an antiquated society which needs to be rejuvenated, giving greater liberty and more rights to the individual.

Mariflor reflects to the scene of her home and to the bliss which her mother and father had shared, the truly profound love which they had found in each other. Then she looks into the dismal, foreboding future, to the kind of life to which every maragatan woman must submit herself--to a life of slavery. Each day the thought of living in Maragateria is more repulsive to the young girl.

After having been away for some time, Mariflor's romantic young suitor returns to discover that she does not wish to marry her cousin in spite of the hope such a marriage promises of rehabilitating the family homestead. Out of

1Charles Wesley Smith, Concha Espina and her Women Characters, p. 34.
tenderness and gratitude he decides to ask the unfortunate girl to marry him and take her away from such miserable surroundings. Vacillating before uncertainties, realizing that he has nothing to offer the girl but an insecure future, he finally proposes to her. But Mariflor, irresolute, frustrated, declines his offer, confessing to him that she must hold true to the oath she had made to relieve her people from their grave predicament. Now resolute, after this confession, she reaffirms the sincerity of her stand; "Yo no puedo pensar en mi propia felicidad sin resolver la situación de esta casa."  

However, Mariflor still resists the idea of marriage with her cousin. Don Miguel offers to free her from the oath she made, but she tells him that she still wishes to carry through her resolution. Antonio comes to Maragatería with the anticipation of marrying Mariflor, but he rejects her when he discovers that she does not have a dowry. He soon regrets such an action, however, and comes back pleading with her to marry him, but she refuses him.

Mariflor now turns to God and spiritual things, as Espina's maidens always do; "Ha fijado los ojos en Dios con suprema esperanza."  

Suddenly Florinda received a letter from her father, who begs her to go through with the marriage to her rich

\[\text{2 Goncha Espina, La esfinge maragata, p. 170.}\]
\[\text{3 Ibid., p. 288.}\]
cousin because of his desperate financial circumstances. The poor girl, although grieved to deny her father this favor, refuses to sell herself to a man she does not love.

Nevertheless, a tremendous change is occurring within the soul of Mariflor. Her saintly aspirations have not been in vain: "Le pareció que sentía levantarse en su alma el infinito poder del sacrificio, libre ya de egoístas propósitos, santo y puro, a humilde semejanza del que probó Jesús agonizante." 4

For some time Don Miguel has carried with him a letter from Rogelio, waiting for the right moment to hand it to Florinda. In the message, Rogelio makes an admission of what a fool he has been ever to have thought he could make the girl happy, and asks her forgiveness, now that he has begun to face realities. Upon reading this, Mariflor asks that the priest write her father and tell him that she will marry her cousin just as he has wished.

Florinda's grandmother, Dolores Salvadores, is a perfect example of the Maragatan peasant woman. She has never known any other than a life of toil and suffering, being oblivious to any joys or pleasures of the world. Her emotions have been repressed so long that the possibility of expression is quenched by the petrification of her sentiments. "In a darkened corner of her fireside, stooped from wearing toil,

4Tbid., p. 358.
arms folded across her withered breast, silent and brooding, sits Tía Dolores, the Maragatan sphinx, with all the misery that has filled seventy long years of abject labor crying for the betterment of conditions which make possible such wretchedness. Among Espina's women characters, Tía Dolores represents an ancient race, tired, weary, yet venerable and heroic.

A third outstanding character in *La esfinge maragata* is Ramona Salvadores, the relative with whom Florinda comes to live. Ramona, like the typical maragatan peasant woman, is a rough, strong woman with hard limbs and withered features. She is some forty years of age. Like Mariflor's grandmother, she is a stoic, having known only toil, hardship, and suffering. Like other Maragatan women, her sole mission and destiny in life has been procreation. She is silent and brooding, her life having been embittered by a worthless husband, the loss of several children, and the danger of losing her home.

The only love in the sordid life of the sphinx is the maternal affection which prompts her to become a living sacrifice to the life of her offspring.

Despite the ignorance and candor of this rude archetype of the primitive mother, she possesses a certain savage and heroic majesty which Concha Espina admires as she utilizes this type to combat the spiritual sterility and lack of enlightenment among the peasants who live near Astorga.

The overwhelming motherly affection which Ramona possesses is completely in harmony with the spirit of maternal sympathy

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which prevails throughout the author's books, a human sentiment closely akin to divine compassion. Espina believes motherhood to be a very worthy goal for womankind, *thence* she must not forsake her responsibilities toward her offspring no matter what the cost. Although the peasant woman, such as Ramona Salvadores, has suffered and loved in a different way than Espina's other women characters, she has, nevertheless, fulfilled the common lot of all women according to the author's basic concept—to suffer and to love.

*El metal de los muertos*, a sociological study of Spanish mines, unfolds in Andalucía, and is a result of the author's experiences in the Riotinto mining region of the Sierra Morena. It contains the history of the foreign exploitation of Spanish mines for a period exceeding three thousand years. In regard to its literary style we have the following statement:

Concha Espina has perfected her classicism in *El metal de los muertos*; dialogue, narration, and description have the same grave moderation that has long been admired in the classics; they are united by the same common harmony despite the fact that her spirit is modern.\(^7\)

Northern Spain furnishes at least three characters in *El metal de los muertos*, a novel whose action unfolds in the sunny region of Andalucía in Southern Spain. One of the three, Gabriel Suárez, is identical with Charol of *La rosa de los vientos*.

\(^7\)Ibid., p. 34.
Aurora, the protagonist of this novel, is also from the mountains of northern Spain. She has been the unfortunate victim of a wanton mother until being rescued by relatives who send her to America, where she gains an education and refinement. After returning to her home at the age of eighteen, she is employed in the sardine trade. It is here that she meets Charol, the sailor-fisherman.

Their mutual love is passionate, probably inspired by the similarity of their origin and the identity of their ideas. She considers her complete surrender to this love as an irresistible decree of fate which she views without shame and without remorse but with a vague feeling of humble sadness not devoid of pride in the affection of a good and kindly man.

Charol becomes a miner in Andalucía, where he is known as Gabriel Suárez. In the meantime, Aurora has given birth to a daughter, who relieves her loneliness during his absence. After Charol’s letters cease, however, she puts forth a determined effort to be reunited with him in Southern Spain by keeping up her faith and hope. By strict economy she saves enough to make the journey.

When she arrives in Andalucía, she is at first unable to find her husband. She hears that he is accused of being an anarchist. At last reunited, however, their felicity and bliss which they share with one another has been greatly augmented by their long separation. Gabriel’s love is even greater because of the pride of fatherhood.

Our author has endowed Aurora with all of the traits which she believes every wife and mother should possess. Our young protagonist's faith is strong enough to sustain her through much poverty and hardship, and has taught her to be long-suffering and patient in the absence of her husband. She is consoled by the hope in her heart during her perseverant but frantic search for him. The love which she holds for her spouse is unceasing and boundless. Her faith in him is firm and steadfast, trusting in his loyalty to her, even though grieved by the vain attempts of a pretty young rival to lure him away from her. During the hardships of a strike she is the personification of charity and compassion. Aurora does not believe that their marital partnership will be ended by death, but rather that death is a ford between two worlds which must be crossed in order for them to be reunited.

Aurora's life represents the triumph of mind over matter. Her faith and love overcome despair and seemingly insurmountable obstacles. The hope in her breast symbolizes the immortality of the soul. She is lost from sight only after she has passed through the fires of the pit and emerged calm and purified, a tribute to the constancy of Spanish women.9

Many of Concha Espina's social ideas are expressed in the pages of this novel. Although they have varied at different periods during her literary career, the social ideas which she maintains at the time this book is written manifest a strong inclination toward socialism.

9Ibid., p. 73.
The instrument by which Espina expresses her distaste for the heartless oppression of miserable humanity and the exploitation of Spanish natural resources by foreigners, is found in the person of Rosario Garcia. She is a pretty brunette of the middle class, a writer and artist. Her earnings are sufficient to make her entirely independent. She is an example of the modern career woman who has achieved the type of independence which Espina so ardently advocates for Spanish women in *Altar mayor* and *La virgen prudente*. Rosario is a champion of suffering humanity much like Aurora de España is of Spanish womanhood in *La virgen prudente*. She is a correspondent of a Madrid socialistic organ, *La Evolución*, and she is engaged in making a survey of Spanish mines, and particularly those of Riotinto.

Rosario becomes acquainted with Echea, the leader of the local miner's union in Dite, and she joins forces with him against their common enemy, the "Nordetanos," by writing in *La Evolución* bold and strong accusations against the foreign exploiters. Furthermore, she offers her assistance in remedying the miserable conditions of the poor downtrodden workmen and their families.

Comparable to the heroic struggle of Aurora de España in *La virgen prudente* to organize Spanish women for equality with men, Rosario organizes the wives of the miners and advocates the rights and fraternity of man before the unyielding directors of the company. Her work of charity
knows no limits, sacrificing and sharing in the general misery and hunger which abounds. She is an angel of mercy, going about ministering to the sick and dying, a herald of good cheer to the despairing, keeping her faith in the face of oppression with a strong conviction that their just cause will triumph in the end. Her charity continues and is even more intense during the misery of a general strike of the mineworkers against the "Nordetanos," a strike which is long in the making, but which is destined to make a decisive change in the state of affairs. After the strike is over, the mines are shut down and the miners' city is soon abandoned, and many of the strikers emigrate to other countries, leaving behind only death, loneliness, and loss.

In all of Espina's works, a profound spirit of compassion prevails. There is a humanitarian and Christ-like clemency for all oppression and suffering, and Rosario seems to be the personification of compassion. Her courageous spirit is essentially a characteristic element in all Espina's women protagonists.

Casilda Rubio, the next important character in this novel, is from a lower social level, being a miner's daughter. She is, however, an extremely attractive brunette. Her body, lithe and graceful in movement, is well-suited for the songs and dances which she interprets with a natural dexterity, as do most all Andalusian girls. Naturally reserved, she has regarded most of her suitors with an arrogant disdain. Not
until Gabriel Suárez comes along does Casilda unreservedly submit herself to any man. She is perfectly aware that he belongs to another woman, and although he has never paid court to her, she yields herself to him completely, determined to win him from Aurora. When she discovers that his loyalty to wife and baby is not to be shaken, she resorts to desperate measures, her mind a whirlpool of mixed emotions, of delirious passion and the desire for vengeance.

Casilda exemplifies a feminine type who is practically the antithesis of the author's ideal of Christian womanhood. She is morally unethical, her passions are unbridled, she is covetous, selfish and deceitful. She embodies practically all of the characteristics which Espina constantly warns against. She is the embodiment of primitive emotions, primitive desires. Even her religious ideas are half pagan, half Christian. Finally, unable to contain her mounting wrath any longer, she seizes a pistol and fires at her rival during the confusion of a strike, killing Aurora’s infant instead. She flees into the mountains in a wild attempt to escape apprehension. While there, she meets Thor, a giant miner who offers her refuge in his powerful arms.

Thus is ended the account of Casilda. Concha Espina has used her for the purpose of showing the disastrous results of unrestrained passions and of an unsound religion which neglects the power of God to pardon.
CHAPTER III

EL CALIZ ROJO AND LA FLOR DE AYER

In devoting a separate chapter to Concha Espina's novels with foreign subjects, it will be noted that they are extremely limited, only two being discussed: El caliz rojo, and La flor de ayer. The former has a German setting while the latter is an American novel.

El caliz rojo is a sequel to La rosa de los vientos, the action centering around the heroine, Soledad Fontenebro. The setting is German but the theme is Spanish. Charles Westley Smith has said of this novel:

If there exists such a style as modern classicism, it might be justly applied to this symphony of sorrow. The theme of El caliz rojo is not new in Spanish literature. This fact, however, does not indicate any lack of originality on the part of Concha Espina, since her development of the situation has no counterpart.¹

No introduction could serve better than our author's own prologue to El caliz rojo in expressing the nature of the work, as well as in identifying itself with many of our author's other works in expressing her literary philosophy. Her admitted sincerity, her earnest desire to present the truth to her readers, is the foundation of Espina's literary philosophy, although it necessarily penetrates human suffering

¹C. W. Smith, Concha Espina and her Women Characters, p. 19.
and brings forth bitterness. She not only makes it clear that she does not attempt to appeal to readers by writing pleasant lies filled with exterior incidents, but she advises them to seek elsewhere if they wish to read books only to "kill time." She protests against our modern civilization as having fallen to a base, degenerate level, renouncing the inner, contemplative side of life in favor of worldly pleasures and "amores fáciles," disdaining all that is pure, serious, and lasting:

En este ambiente universal, las pocas almas superiores, de honda vida interior, que por saberse firmes e inmortales aciertan a poner en sus deseos, en sus obras, rumbos y aspiraciones de infinito, van por la tierra tristes y peregrinas, en angustiosa contradicción, en amarga soledad, siempre extranjeras, incomprendibles, enigmáticas, a los ojos ciegos y burlones de la muchedumbre.2

The following quotation, translated from the Spanish, tells us more about El caliz rojo in the author's own words.

I deliberately simplified to the maximum all novelistic artifice, and in an exotic atmosphere, at the border of a dense multitude, I placed a human soul, alone, a wandering stranger, in intimate and sorrowful communion with the heart of the landscape.3

The protagonista of El caliz rojo is none other than the Soledad Fontenebro of La rosa de los vientos in later years. Now she is a mature woman, no longer a victim of the romantic idealism which led her to center all her hopes on a husband whose infidelity had plunged her into deepest despair.

2Concha Espina, El caliz rojo, p. 10.
3Ibid., p. 11.
Of all the numerous women characters created by Concha Espina, none other is so prone to dark despair, so completely given over to melancholy as is Soledad. Our author has treated sorrow and human suffering with her greatest artistry in this work, rendering them things of beauty.

Soledad flees to a German "Fürsterei" after having been deserted by her husband, in a frantic search to leave all that would remind her of her past life, and driven by a need to start a new life with a surer foundation. Although unable to blot out the memory of her old life, she has no remorse. She believes herself unjustly subject to too great a misfortune, her only crime being that of having loved too much, of having given herself unreservedly and with absolute faith.

The protagonist is not completely exiled from her fellow countrymen, as she meets a "Sefardi," or an expatriated Spanish Jew, who relieves her great sorrow by offering his love and devotion to her out of a compassionate and benevolent heart. Soledad is sympathetic toward the sad and solitary man, and being fully aware of her great physical attraction and realizing her capacity to enjoy the pleasures of the world, she is sorely tempted to accept the love he offers her as a means of escape from her misfortunes and retaliation on her perfidious husband. However, the new life which she has begun, a life of penance based on sorrow, prevents her from repeating the experience:
Espina has endowed Soledad with a great spirit of self-sacrifice and a certain amount of spiritual sadism to match and counteract the inconceivable suffering through which she passes. In no other character does she invest so wholly the immolating quality of draining the cup of sorrow to its dregs, Soledad being sustained not only by a great spiritual force, but by her energy and hardihood as well. She most completely fulfills the author's conception of the Christian martyr, exemplifying her most basic religious concepts, whose abnegation must be voluntary and absolute, who must pardon the one who did her the greatest wrong in order to feel more deeply the bitterness of meriting happiness.

Since Soledad's love for her husband was so great that she worshiped him on a par with God, amounting to idolatry, her sorrow must be absolute and infinite.

A close parallel may be seen between the philosophy of the wise Arab, Yacub Es Saheli in Altar mayor, and that of Soledad Fontenebro regarding the subject of sorrow. In both of them is revealed the subjectivism of Concha Espina, and her own philosophy is clearly recognizable. The Arab taught that the first two syllables we pronounce as a child constitute a symptom of sorrow. Soledad similarly remarks: "Y
dije que toda existencia es sufrimiento... No dude usted que el Dolor ha nacido con la Humanidad."

For Soladad, life without love is like a lamp without light, and since the betrayal of her love, she has nothing. Overwhelmed by the burden of her sorrow, she would have committed suicide but for her strong faith and the consoling spirit of the motto on her family blazon, which happens to be the author's literary blazon: "Velar se debe a la vida de tal suerte que viva quede en la muerte."6

Now the unfortunate heroine of the story would not exchange for any earthly joy the glory of feeling herself living between the contingent and the imperishable, with her sorrow kneeling in the shadow and a timid hope looming on the dark horizon: she has drained the cup of bitterness to its dregs, and piercing the infernal shadows, she begins to find light.

The second and last prominent figure in El cáliq roj is the expatriated Spanish Jew, Ismael Dávalos, the Sefardi of the novel. In spite of being a wealthy merchant, his living quarters are very modest and humble, hidden in the forest.

Ismael has a very observing nature, regarding humanity as if it were a melted candle, a race which has passed from barbarity into decadence without having known a refined culture. It is women whom he studies with the most penetrating

5Ibid., p. 43. 6Ibid., p. 236.
insight, but the majority of them he regards with skepticism. Not until the beautiful Soledad came to the "Fors-tereii" and into his sad and solitary life was he ever so captivated by any woman. Even before he met the young lady, he seemed to sense a certain spiritual kinship which they held in common, after learning of her great affliction.

When Dávalos meets Soledad and learns that their origin is the same, he becomes her constant and faithful friend. He confides in her some of the details of his life. His parents had been exporters of fine cigarettes from the orient. He himself had obtained an education in Paris, and had traveled throughout Europe and part of America. He had just returned to Woltersdorf to rest from a business trip to the United States.

Being a son of the strangest and most mysterious people on the earth, Ismael Dávalos' personality and courtesy believe the mean way in which he lives, and elevate him above his own capacities:

Ya el latir caliente de la sangre semita se bañó en un remanso que muchas generaciones de la casta hallaron en las riberas del mar Egeo. Y así este caminante de la mirada ardorosa, es sobrio y claro en la palabra, tímido a veces como un inglés; los impulsos desbordados de su corazón ríman contenidos por el freno suave de la mesura helénica.?

The Jew had come in contact with Iberian soil because of a stop-over in Gibraltar on one of his many long trips as a trader. Through the influence of a noted Castillian

7Ibid., pp. 35-36.
orientalist, he has remained there, wishing to perfect himself in the language of his childhood.

Concha Espina does not limit her compassionate, merciful spirit to her women characters alone, as the kind and sympathetic disposition of Ismael Dávalos so emphatically demonstrates. The author manifests her heartfelt sympathy for a severely persecuted but noble race, wandering over the face of the entire earth without a country of their own, with Dávalos serving to represent this peripatetic people. The magnetic attraction which draws Soledad to him is not by mere chance, as his condolence and understanding of her great sorrow is founded upon similar experiences in sharing the grief of his oppressed Israelite ancestors.

However, being a man who has learned to face outrageous fortune squarely, to endure the burden and hardship of a cruel and merciless world and bravely overcome almost insurmountable obstacles, he continuously reassures Soledad. He encourages her to keep struggling and not to lose faith, for all is not lost as long as one has hope.

The Israelite is certain that he is in love with the beautiful Spanish lady, and his greatest desire is to remedy her tenacious misfortunes forever. After many years of wandering and yearning for a great love, he thinks he has found it in the person of Soledad. The lonely, abandoned lady, however, has made an implacable decision, which is not to be moved by Ismael's entreaties. She resolves to remain
faithful to the memory of the spouse who has deserted her, living a sacrificial and penitent life, and she leaves the unhappy Sefardi, who is tormented by his jealousy and is on the verge of being consumed by his passions.

When Soledad hands Dávalos a newspaper telling of the liberation of Palestine, in spite of this being the event he has dreamed of so long, he realizes that he will not find a home in Jerusalem, the sacred promise which he may never find in the world.

Dávalos knows that it is impossible for Soledad to find a resurrection of happiness. He is also certain that her only salvation is in the arms of her treacherous husband. But in spite of the hopelessness of their love for one another, Dávalos knows that each has had a profound effect upon the other's life. He is not only a new man since having known Soledad, but he has helped her regain a will to go on living and to face life with hope in her heart.

The second and final work to be discussed in this chapter, La flor de ayer, is considered Concha Espina's first American novel, but the setting is in Spain, and the majority of the characters are Spanish. Three of the characters are American—Lorenzo Alcain, Doña Miguelina, and Glen Parks, the first being a major character. He is a Spaniard who lived in Cuba for a period; the second, Doña Miguelina, is a Peruvian by birth; and the last, Glen Parks, is a North American woman of Cuban birth.
La Rubia is one of the most outstanding figures in *La flor de ayer*. She is introduced as a child of nine years whose mother and father are separated. Her father, Don Antonio, refuses to take her, even though it was her grandmother's will. So, La Rubia's aunt, Engracia, assumes the responsibility of caring for the girl and giving her an education.

Not long after being taken to Engracia's home, La Rubia is abducted by her father, accompanied by Engracia's husband, Román Zárate, from whom she is now separated. The child becomes known as Victoria García while staying with her abductors. She matures very rapidly and learns to face fear bravely. Compared with Engracia, her character is more awe-inspiring, more absolute, but she has the same courageous countenance and arrogant demeanor.

Several years elapse and Victoria is now staying at a boarding school where she is visited one day by a young doctor named Lorenzo Alcain, who had previously met her at a hotel in Torremar before embarking for Cuba and had promised that one day he would return to rescue her from her enemies. Victoria has acquired still another name while at the college, that of Mirasol. She is now fifteen years of age, and the precocity of her maturing years has resulted in her becoming a strikingly beautiful young lady.

Through her studies at the college, Mirasol begins to form new opinions and attitudes toward life with a sagacious,
inquisitive mind. She is especially interested in social and political problems. She is another of Concha Espina's modern maidens, an exponent of the author's doctrine of modern ideas in society, government, and religion. She voices Espina's teachings against aristocracy as an antiquated system. In short, she has a strong desire to be modern, believing this to be the best way to achieve happiness.

In spite of her guardian's determined effort to link her name to that of her elder son, Esteban, Victoria makes it quite clear that she has become a complicated, ambitious woman, wise in coquetry, enhanced by grace and charm along with a lively wit. She has decided for herself that it is the young doctor, Lorenzo Alcaín, whom she wishes for her sweetheart. His advanced, somewhat socialistic ideas, are largely responsible for her attraction to him, as they follow her idea of modernism.

Mirasol is again abducted, this time from the college by her father. Although her aunt goes to her, entreating her to return by telling her that Esteban is in love with her, the girl refuses on the basis that her father is a very sick man and needs her aid. But what Enragia does not know is that she is trying to exert a spirit of independence developing out of an individual personality just taking shape.

The political upheaval which occurred in Spain after the birth of the new Republic is alluded to by the author
in outcries of protest voiced by the heroine. Victoria's great concern over such pressing problems as communal division of the land, social questions, political disturbances, distribution of goods, despoilation, and surplus, coincide with Espina's ideal of the modern maiden who keeps abreast of the time, not being content to sit at home occupying herself solely with the traditional feminine duties of the household. Our heroine, saturated with a fraternal sentiment, is desirous of an escape for her equals and freedom for them to work their land in peace.

One may see an identification of Concha Espina with Victoria, as with so many of her other character creations, in the way in which the protagonist analyses people, and also in her great passion for nature, especially for the mountain regions.

When Alcaín will not consent to matrimony, telling her that one must suffer before he can learn to live, and that the virtues of Engracia must serve as a mirror for her, Victoria's girlish optimism is shaken. She cannot understand why she should not be happy and enjoy life. Her faith in the soundness of earthly pleasures is quite comparable to that of Regina de Alcántara in Agua de nieve. However, she still has some hope in the belief that her feminine attractions are powerful enough to overcome his resistance. By reason and deduction she is sorely tempted to conform to an alien theory, that if a love is true, it is legitimate, no
matter how it is manifested. In short, she is thinking of trying to become Lorenzo's mistress. More than ever she is determined to be happy: "Quería ser moderna, despreocupada, sin misterio, dentro del decoro."\(^8\)

However the heroine is soon to lose all her illusions about happiness when she discovers that her lover is a married man with a child. Victoria is so shocked and wounded by the knowledge of Alcaín's family that she is inconsolable.

Declaring herself free and independent more emphatically than ever, Victoria wishes to avoid any more suffering. But she soon tastes real bitterness for the first time.

Now Concha Espina's religious philosophy enters the picture. In Victoria's search to find the real nature of happiness, she begins to wonder if true love does not flourish only in eternity: "Puede ser que la planta del verdadero amor fructifique sólo en la eternidad."\(^9\) She is now beginning to understand Life, as conceived by the author:

\[\ldots\text{estas pasiones invencibles que desdeña al "nuevo amor", a base de su teoría material son las que producen ejemplos fecundos de la virtud desde los principios cardinales del corazón y transmigran más allá de la muerte para no acabarse nunca; las que hacen aquí abajo unas hazañas sublimes, precedente de lo eterno... De modo que son, en realidad, la Vida, la mejor vida de todos los mundos: la obra emperatriz de Dios.}\(^10\)

She resolves herself to emulate, if possible, the life of

\(^8\)Concha Espina, \textit{La flor de ayer}, p. 237.

\(^9\)\textit{Ibid.}, p. 254.

\(^10\)\textit{Ibid.}, p. 279.
Engracia, a life of sacrifice and martyrdom, a determination to resist earthly pleasure and ephemeral love and await that of the eternal.

Invited to go to Mexico as secretary to doña Miguelina, the girl accepts, giving her farewell to all those dear to her, to Lorenzo Alcaín last of all. He promises her that he will rejoin her in America, never to be parted from her again.

The second major character in *La flor de ayer* to be considered is Engracia. She does not lack any of the Christian virtues which Espina deems so important. Her charitable and compassionate spirit is openly manifested when she offers to take her little niece under her care when she is unwanted by a selfish and hateful father. Engracia's strong character is put to a test during a heated dispute between her and her brother, whom she reprimands for refusing to care for his child in fulfillment of their mother's will. He tells her of some old letters found on the body of Armando Lecuna, who had died mysteriously, a pronounced suicide, with whom malicious scandal had connected Engracia's name. Actually it had amounted to no more than a mild affair involving some rather ardent love letters. She endures her brother's insults and slanderous remarks with a majestic passivity, and defends herself graciously when he tells her that there is enough evidence in those letters to incriminate her.
Engracia's profound mother instinct cannot be overlooked, a faithful attribute of all Espina's model mother types, as her sacrifice for, and diligent care of the abandoned girl, as well as of her own two children, testify.

Engracia does not have to learn how to suffer as do many of Espina's less experienced heroines. She has had more than her share of tragedy and ill-fortune, carrying forever the scars of an ungrateful love. She is separated from her worthless husband after having suffered great cruelty at his hands, being left with two sons to support. So, after having experienced such bitter ordeals, she has sufficient faith and courage to withstand the outrageous treatment of her brother.

In spite of the fact that Engracia took her brother's child, legally acknowledging his rights over her and giving the girl her name, he takes the child away from her. When interrogated by the angry grandfather of La Rubia as to why she allowed the child to be taken, her reason was that it was necessary to make such a great sacrifice not only because the girl's abductor was her brother, but also through fear for the good name of her own children.

Each one of Concha Espina's prominent women characters has her own concept of what constitutes happiness, of what it means to her, and what her goal in life is to be. But the mind behind these philosophies of life always makes them congruent and in harmony with one another, and keeps
them within the limits of her own consistent philosophy by employing certain elements which make them basically the same—to derive a spiritual joy from their sacrifices. Engracia is no exception: "Y el único gozo mío consiste en no sentir, como antes, la inquietud de lo que deseo, porque he hallado el quehacer de mi vida." 11

The "quehacer" of which she speaks is that of going to get La Rubia and living for her, for the memory of her martyrdom. In her new-born spirit of sacrifice she feels that she has to direct and save the beings which fate has put in her life; she must make an art of her sorrow and of her broken life a chain of strong youths.

In contrast to the excessive romanticism characteristic of many of Espina's other women personages, we find in Engracia a remarkable freedom from useless, impractical idealism:

No es una romántica inútil que hace sus peregrinaciones estériles y sin rumbo, deshojando pálidas margaritas. Es una mujer sólida y aguileña que oculta el resquicio vivo de su corazón, atesorando para fuego y luz de muchos quehaceres saludables. 12

The protagonist's resignation to a life of sacrifice prevents her from ever falling in love again after having once suffered a broken marriage. When Lorenzo Alcain, with whom La Rubia is in love, declares his love for the beautiful, but lonely woman, she tells him that she is bound forever—to a memory. She surrenders a chance to gain personal

11 Ibid., p. 91. 12 Ibid., pp. 93-94
happiness for the sake of La Rubia, exacting her suitor's promise to save the little girl with his affection—and name, if necessary. This is the protagonist's supreme sacrifice in the performance of her noble task.

Engracia completes her great mission, after many vain attempts to persuade her niece to leave her father and return home with her, when the girl reaches a deeper understanding of life, determined to pattern her own life after that of the great lady who has been her guardian.

The third and last major character, Lorenzo Alcain, the young doctor, is important because he is the medium through which Concha Espina expresses some of her most fundamental philosophy, though the extent of his belief in what he preaches is somewhat dubious.

Lorenzo's physical appearance is very striking. He is an arrogant, courtly young man with a swarthy complexion, dark, unruly hair, passionate features, and an ingenuous expression. Having completed his medical studies, he sails for Cuba to rejoin his father, an engineer from Córdoba who is employed by an American enterprise in that country. His mother being from Bilbao, the doctor is a happy mixture of Basque and Andalusian. However, the most remarkable thing about Lorenzo, which either repels or excites envy in those with whom he associates, is his liberal ideas, classified as communistic at a period when it was less fearful and no sin to practice liberalism.
The unscrupulous tactics used by Lorenzo in his amorous conquests do not exclude using an innocent, gullible young girl as a means to reach Engracia, the lady with whom he has fallen passionately in love. Suffering disillusionment and boredom from a need for the most select pleasures, unsatisfied with the commonplace, he regards Engracia as the classic Castillian lady guided like Dante by a unique and eternal love.

The author's admiration for one who dares maintain and courageously defend his political ideas, though they be progressive, is indicated in the sympathetic treatment which she gives the intrepid young doctor. She defends his advanced ideas by giving an intimate insight into his religious thought. As she explains, Lorenzo does not exercise his religion with great ritual, but he professes it within deep-rooted conviction which has always demanded of him an honorable conduct. His concept of duty in relation to morality is very strict and elevated. Much of his religious philosophy may be recognized as being that of the author: "Le parece que el sufrimiento cristiano, como álgida servidumbre de amores y caridades, es una cima de belleza inmortal, la superación de todas las virtudes que desde lo transitorio nos llevan a lo infinito."\(^{13}\)

After his love for Engracia is thwarted, Lorenzo gives her his promise that he will go to the aid of the unfortunate

\(^{13}\text{Ibid.}, \text{ p. 154.}\)
girl who is in love with him. It is the doctor who gives Victoria her first lessons on life, which are to give her a completely new perspective. He is another of the few men in Concha Espina's novels who voices her concepts on the subjects of sorrow and happiness. To begin with, he tells La Rubia that one's sorrow is not strictly personal, but that one must share that of all humanity: "Bien está . . . que el dolor propio sea un eco de todos los dolores humanos; hay que padecer con el que padece y procurar ser su alivio." Again he tells her: "La mitad de la sabiduría se reduce a saber sufrir." He shows her the close relationship between life and sorrow, whereby we may gain an insight into Espina's firm conviction of the inseparableness of the two, life being manifested by sorrow, analogous to faith manifested by works: "Hay que llegar a sufrir a causa de la misma alegría, porque la Vida se manifiesta en el Dolor." Lorenzo points out an example of one who is truly living by the law of suffering in the person of Engracia, after whom La Rubia should model her own life: "Es vivir porque es levantar los dolores morales en un dechado terreno afirmativo, glorioso, constructor sobre las raíces del Bien."

15 Ibid., p. 203.  
16 Ibid., p. 206.  
17 Ibid., p. 212.
CHAPTER IV
CHARACTERS IN ESPINA'S SHORT STORIES

This chapter is devoted to a study of the principal characters in Concha Espina's short stories and novelettes. A total of five volumes are included, but only the most outstanding story or representative group of stories from each volume will be discussed at any length. These volumes include *El principe del cantar*, *Tierras del aquilón*, *Ruecas de marfil*, *Llama de cera*, and *Candelabro*.

The first volume, *El principe del cantar*, contains seventeen short stories. The one which will be discussed is the initial and title story of the volume, *El principe del cantar*. The theme of the entire series of stories is expressed by the author in the foreword. It is taken from the concluding remarks in an article which our author wrote for *Lecturas* (Barcelona) concerning her life, confirming her sincerity as a writer who reveals herself most intimately in the pages of her works: "Lo más íntimo de un escritor sincero, lo más suyo y autobiográfico está en las páginas de sus libros, donde seguramente pretendió hurtarse a la voracidad de los lectores..."\(^1\)

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\(^1\)Concha Espina, *El principe del cantar*, p. 35.
The heroine of the story, Inés, is a beautiful but solitary lady who is suffering from tuberculosis. She is introduced to us on the beach of a seashore where she is sunbathing in a futile attempt to regain her rapidly-vanishing health.

Much is intimated concerning Inés' history, although little of it is related directly. We do know that she is a seamstress from Bilbao, of unknown parents, lacking a surname, and that she has passed a very solitary existence without ever having known love, and therefore, she has never known life as Concha Espina conceives it. Now with the prospect of approaching death, she is more determined than ever not to die without ever having lived.

Concha Espina's natural element is quite apparent in this work, as in many others. She seems to identify herself with the heroine of this story inasmuch as Inés receives considerable consolation from the tempestuous sea, the invigorating winds, the undulating sands, the majestic mountains of the Cantabrian landscape, all of which make her aware of the life in everything surrounding her, and her urge to live all the stronger.

Into the void of Inés' heart comes a young novelist, Ramiro Falcón. After having known him only a very short time, she finds herself making almost a general confession of her desires and her aspirations. She meets someone at last who appreciates her, who encourages her in the face
of death, and who gives her a brief taste of happiness, of something she has been seeking so long—to live. When the young novelist tells her of his wish to use her as the protagonist in the novel he is to write, Inés sees a means of perpetuating the life which she is about to lose. She realizes that if the book were immortal she would be as eternally alive as the sands and shells of the beach, the water of the sea, and the sun in the skies.

Paradoxically, Inés declares to the writer that she knows nothing but Life when he asks her if she wants to live forever in the pages of his book and tells her that Life never ends but is only transformed. She tells him that she wishes to remain just as she is until she has known Love. She confesses to him that she has never had a sweetheart, being afraid of loving and then dying. After Ramiro declares his love for her, the sick girl is converted into a happy and beautiful creature through the three summer months. When the writer has finished his work, he tells her that he has been called away. Although Inés knows he is lying, she has no regrets, realizing that she can now die with the consolation of having experienced love, and that she will live in literature: "Ya puedo morirme; conozco al Amor y voy a quedar viva en el Arte."  

Inés may very well personify Concha Espina’s own desire to live infinitely within the realms of her literary works.

2Ibid., p. 50.
Ramiro Falcón, the young novelist from Salamanca, is described as being muscular, blond, elegant, and healthy. He comes to Cerredo, the most secluded and rugged spot on the Spanish coast, to write a book. He is quite astonished when he discovers a young woman on the beach, dressed in a bathing suit. He soon learns that she is a victim of tuberculosis, with small hope of living long.

Espina's compassionate, immolating spirit is exemplified in the person of Ramiro. After learning of the unfortunate girl's unhappy background, he offers her his love and devotion, although feeling the necessity of fleeing from her:

... padecía y trabajaba junto a la enferma dejándola creer en la dicha y esperar en la gloria. Así, abrazando el dolor de aquella mujer y haciéndolo suyo, lo convertía en gozo y hermosura.3

Although none of the young writer's acts are without self-interest, as he wishes to use Inés as the protagonist of his novel, he nevertheless demonstrates a sense of charity in offering the desperate, disconsolate girl immortality in his work of love and literature, transforming her sordid life into one of happiness, even though it lasts but a few brief moments.

Concha Espina seems to attribute to Falcón many of her own qualities as a writer. Ramiro is willing to sacrifice greatly for the sake of his art, with roots of fecund affection in order to live in the future, which is the ultimate

3 Ibid., p. 47.
fatherland of poets. Giving himself over to piety and tenderness, he out-does himself in creative possibilities. When Ramiro's book is completed, however, he refuses to remain and see Inés die. He resolves to give her his farewell, telling her he has been called away by a Madrid paper.

The second volume of short stories, *Tierras del Aquilón*, has a German setting. It is divided into four sections: "Las pasiones," "La ciudad," "Al paso," and "Al vuelo." Each of these sections describes particular aspects of the German scene as the author views them. The first section, "Las pasiones," is divided into five short stories, "Aves de paso," "Rosa de carne," "Erika," "El dólar" and "Pan negro," the first three of which will be discussed in detail. Each of these stories represents Concha Espina's characterization of typical German citizens. The second section, "La ciudad," gives Espina's impressions of various aspects of the city of Berlin, of its landscape, of a Catholic temple, and of the degeneration of some of the inhabitants as a result of wars. "Al paso," the third section, treats miscellaneous subjects--festivals and folkways, the noble and heroic status of the German canine, and a boat trip. In the final section, "Al vuelo," Espina expresses her confidence in German ingenuity to become a
leader in aviation, as well as her enthusiasm for travel by air.

"Aves de paso" is the story of a German youth by the name of Röger, a student in a German college. The son of a wealthy bourgeois, he is handsome, proud, fun-loving, inflated with a superficial, shallow wisdom, and possessing an infantile spirit which is somewhat savage. Being a fervent disciple of the Kaiser, maintainer of nationalism and tradition, he belongs to secret societies which are unconditionally allied to the military.

Under the foregoing conditions Röger was called away to war. But while at the school, two young girls, Agata, a seamstress, and Dora, a store-keeper, had both fallen in love with the young man. He finds Agata more interesting than her friend, but after returning from the war he has to consider his future security, and since Dora has a prosperous trade with no family to support, as Agata has, Röger is on the verge of marrying her. However, he assures Agata that he does not love Dora. He feels confident that she will be satisfied just to have a husband, and that she will not interfere with his other friendships and pleasures.

Röger, eager to make his own fortune without the humiliation of his family's pensioning him, becomes an office worker. But still attracted by the practicality of marriage in order to assure his rent and pleasures, he has almost decided to marry Dora when he meets Helena, one of
Agata's sisters. He falls in love with her and decides to forget Agata completely and take Helena for his wife.

The second story, "Rosa de carne," is the story of Anuchen, the "ramilletera." Possessing a physical sensuality and savage, animal-like instinct, reminiscent of Casilda Rubio in El metal de los muertos, she represents another of Espina's women types who inevitably meets her own destruction. She is wholly lacking in the serious, redeeming qualities which the author renders essential to give life meaning.

Pertenecen Anuchen al número de animales hermosos que la humanidad necesita para divertirse. Está educada sólo para complacer. Su espíritu salvaje y rudimentario vive en las penumbras, a costa de una belleza material, sutilmente explotada. Su gracia física difunde un halo de arte, fatal como un instinto. Es armoniosa, elástica, flexible: servirla admirablemente para danzarina o para actriz.4

Her lover is a handsome, jealous Armenian named Auscar. She had met him while rambling through the cheap cabarets of the city. She had preferred him to her other lovers and had sworn to be faithful to him. She had maintained her constancy several months, until Kurfürsten-Damm, the merchant, selected her from among many other beauties to advertise his merchandise. Being greatly praised by the public and exposed to the admiration of the people, her ambitions increase. She is awakened to the art of seduction.

Upon leaving her job at the store, Anuchen returns to Auscar, still holding a little love in her heart for him.

4Concha Espina, Tierras del Aquilón, p. 55.
He has little more to offer her than a promise which she is too impatient to wait upon.

At this time, Anuchen has many rich bidders, but above all of them is Fritz Bogan, a German banker. However, the girl now makes a good salary and is not in a hurry to accept any proposals which do not satisfy her ambition. She renounces forever the idea of a noble love. "Es una criatura de fragilidad y de placer, inconsciente del mal que origina y del bien que malogra."5

Anuchen is resolved to take possession of a hotel which Bogan offers her. She thinks that she has lost her Asiatic lover, and she feels gayer and more free to divert herself. But Auscar has watched her every move and is prepared to take vengeance on her. She is pushed into an automobile which is waiting at her door and driven to a lake where Auscar is waiting for her. The car is abandoned by the chauffeur, but, still in motion, it leaps over the bank and into the dark waters.

The ultimate doom of Anuchen does not come unexpectedly. She may very well serve as a symbol of Espina's condemnation of all women who are vain and fickle, who sneer at the purity of a sincere love and seek earthly pleasures.

"Erika," the third and last story to be considered, concerns an aristocratic young Spaniard, Miguel de Quirós, who

5Ibid., p. 70.
falls desperately in love with a young German girl whom he regards as being far beneath him.

Miguel was born in Seville and studied law in Madrid. While there he met a German youth who became his closest friend. Miguel accepts an invitation from the young German to go to Germany upon completing his law studies. He leaves behind him in Spain a Sevillian beauty, Pilar Manrique, whom he idolizes.

It is in the home of his friend's family in Cassel that Miguel meets the German girl, Erika, called "flor del brezo" in Castillian. In spite of being very enamored of another woman, he cannot resist the magnetic charm of the German girl. He finds himself captured by the power of her attraction and extends his trip much longer than he had originally planned. He cannot understand how a girl without importance can preoccupy his thoughts and detain him in Cassel even after he has become a bit bored.

Through his prolonged stay at Cassel, the Spaniard sees some of the historic spots of the city, Erika acting as his guide. All the while he falls more and more under her spell. It is on one of these excursions that the girl causes Miguel to miss a train which he was to have boarded. She tells him that he will not regret having stayed, that she will go to his room that night while all are sleeping. He is deeply shocked and astonished by her words, pushes her back into the house, and leaves in the waiting automobile.
Miguel de Quirós represents the romantic young Spaniard who remains loyal to his honor and noble heritage in spite of being swayed for a few moments by the attraction of the blond beauty and vibrant personality of a girl whom he will not allow to degrade and demoralize him.

The third volume, Ruecas de marfil, is a collection of bitterly realistic stories which treat of the misfortunes and apparent injustices in life. They reaffirm Espina's most essential philosophy, which is given ample testimony in the preface. It will be noted that the preface to this volume is reminiscent of the prologue in El cáliz rojo:

¿Qué culpa tengo yo si la realidad es amarga, si hasta la imaginación, lo mismo que el sentimiento, suelen padecer melancolía?

No dicen (y dicen bien) que la vida es sueño? No son tristes todos los sueños al despertar?

Las cosas del mundo, para quien tiene piedad, son harto melancólicas. La vida para quien sabe dolor, es algo a la vez hermoso y duro, pálido y sugestente, como el marfil de las ruecas con que las hadas tejen nuestras vidas y urden, y urden, al cabo, nuestras mortajas.6

This volume contains four short novels, "Naves en el mar," dealing with an episode which occurs on board a ship destined for Chile on which Espina travels. It is interesting to note that this is Espina's only story without a national setting. It tells of a young expectant mother going to Chile to be reunited with her husband, of a great storm at sea, and the tragedy of the young woman's untimely death.

6Concha Espina, Ruecas de marfil, pp. 11-12.
"La ronda de los galanes" is another tragic love story of four young gallants who are all in love with the same girl, but she is unaware of their affection until she becomes engaged to another. After a year of marriage, she is so unhappy that she eventually perishes from grief and solitude. But the love of her "galanes" continues, being converted into a spirit of mercy and compassion.

The main characters in "El jayón" will be considered in detail. A three-act play by the same name was adapted from this story in 1918. The setting is laid in a mountainous region of northern Spain.

The action of the last novel, "Talín," unfolds in Cantabria. It is another tragic love story. Talín, the heroine, is a "montañesa" who is left crippled after an accident. She meets an intrepid young aviator with whom she falls in love. However, realizing that she can never be cured of her deformity, and likewise, the hopelessness of such a love, she takes her own life by leaping out of his airplane and into the sea when he carries her flying with him. This story was suggested by our author's airplane flight with Juan Pombo in 1911.

The principal figure in "El jayón" is Marcela. She is a beautiful and charming young woman and the mother of one child. Although she is a hard-working, devoted wife and a loving mother, she is jealous, suspicious, unforgiving, thus
being another example of that large class of misguided, prejudiced women among Concha Espina's literary personages.

Marcela's suspicion and jealousy are instantly incited when a foundling is discovered on her doorstep. She notices the close resemblance of the little boy to her own son, Serafín, and is quick to suspect it to be the child of her husband and Irene, Andrés' former sweetheart. Marcela has always been jealous of Irene, and she suspects Andrés of still being in love with her.

Marcela consents to keep "el jayón," not out of a deep sense of love, but through selfishness. She knows Andrés loves the child beyond measure, and she has a presentiment that Andrés' love for Irene is being re-lived in the child. The young wife's deception and excessive pride reach a culminating point when she thinks of substituting her own baby, which she alone knows to be weak and deformed, for the foundling, which is strong and healthy.

The protagonist is not destined to remain in the shadows forever, however, without a spark of hope to set her on the path toward Christian womanhood and redemption. The secrets which she has shared with no one, not even her husband, weigh greatly on her conscience, reminding her of her crime constantly. She feels like a thief, guilty of having deprived Irene of the man who was destined for her. She begins to feel the purging power of contrition for the first time, and a desire to repent and expiate some of the damage
she has done with the destructive forces of jealousy, pride, and vanity. She manifests a more sincere love for her own afflicted child, and toward her husband as well. The climax of her penance is reached when Jesús, the "niño expósito," dies while he, Andrés, and Serafín are lost during a snow blizzard. Her envy and resentment toward Irene is turned to love and compassion when she reveals to the unfortunate woman the truth concerning the exchange she made: that the child who died in the storm was actually Serafín, her own son, not Jesús, "el jayón." She asks Irene's forgiveness with profound remorse and piety. But her final sacrifice is yet to come, with the realization that the woman who is to carry away Jesús, the fruit of Andrés and Irene's love, will also carry away Andrés. With no more earthly ties, she is now prepared to die in peace. "Se considera ya sola en el mundo, redimida por el flagelo de la expiación, digna de unirse al hijo mártir en una gloria que no se acabe nunca." 7

Volume IV is called Llama de cera and is composed of three short novels, "Llama de cera," "Cura de amor," and "Las niñas desaparecidas," all of which are made more realistic by having been based on true life occurrences. The initial one, "Llama de cera," has for its setting the mountainous terrain of northern Spain. It is based on an episode which occurred in Portugal and which was related to

7Ibid., p. 253.
Concha Espina. The plot revolves around the two principal characters, two men who are almost the antithesis of one another. One of them is a hero who knows how to be content with his family in his simple, rustic surrounding, and how to bear the burden of a great tragedy when he loses his wife. On the other hand, the other character is a coward who deserts his best friend's family during their greatest hour of need, after having been given refuge in his friend's home. It is his destiny to pay the full penalty for his ingratitude. The second novelette, "Cura de amor," is probably the best and most representative of the three, and is to be treated with special attention. The character studies are thorough and penetrating, by which Concha Espina utilizes many of the basic principles which govern her own doctrine. The four main characters of the story, who are involved in a love quadrangle, personify the most prominent character types to be found in Espina's literary works, and serve to exemplify all of her fundamental beliefs. In the third short novel, Las niñas desparecidas, is related the story of two small orphan girls, Pilar Asenjo and Asunción Estrada, who are sent to a convent. It tells of their eventual escape from their "emprisonment" into the world outside, without any friends or refuge. "The chief merits of the story are to be found in the author's insight into the sentiments of impressionable girls and in the discreet
silence which she maintains in regard to their ultimate destiny."

One of the four outstanding characters represented in "Cura de amor" is Gerardo Escobar, an unhappy hotel keeper who is bound in a loveless marriage with Clara Escobar. He had abandoned his former sweetheart, Rosa Cortés, to marry Clara, and had grown tired of the latter only a short time after their marriage. When he meets Rosa again by chance, he realizes that he is still in love with her, and that she is the only real love that has ever existed for him, he and his wife never having been compatible. His efforts to persuade her to give him a second chance to prove his love for her are all in vain.

Gerardo is another example of the inconstant lover and erring husband for whom Espina has so often expressed her disdain. Our author never concedes a second chance, "un nuevo amor," to the man who has once spurned a genuine love in favor of a false one in order for him to make amends for the damage he has done. The permanence of the marriage vows and the irreparable bonds of an unsound matrimony are demonstrated by the hopelessness of Gerardo's love for Rosa after having once made the fatal mistake of forsaking her.

The second important character, Rosa Cortés, is vividly described as a melancholy young woman who possesses a

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8C.W. Smith, Concha Espina and her Women Characters, p. 20.
formal type of beauty, distinction, and an exquisite manner. Rosa is introduced when she is injured in an automobile accident near the home of Gerardo Escobar, her former sweetheart, who shelters her and serves as her physician while she is recovering.

Rosa has worked with a moving picture enterprise in Madrid, where she and her sister lived as orphans, before meeting Gerardo. After having met and fallen in love with him, he abandons her. Disillusioned and embittered, she is tempted to accept a moving picture contract when she meets a young American, Henry Dix, who does not procrastinate in asking the young lady to marry him. They are engaged when the automobile accident occurs.

Rosa does not cease to love Gerardo during their long separation, but the wound of his betrayal is too deep ever to be healed. Although sorely tempted to submit to his amorous entreaties, she exemplifies a true spirit of sacrifice when she implacably refuses to concede a second chance to the inconstant Gerardo. She gives her final farewell to him as she goes away with Henry Dix, to whom she wishes to be loyal above all else. She realizes, however, that she will never be able to forget the bitter experience of a cruel deception, always fearful of its reoccurrence.

Rosa Cortés exemplifies a genuine spirit of sacrifice, as well befits a character who is modeled after the pattern of Espina's most sacred ideas. Her serious demeanor
and her placid, melancholy disposition are qualities which the author considers essential and indispensable for her women of Christian piety and virtue, who must be strong and of sound judgment in order to pass through a world full of snares and deceptions so that they may reach an incalculably rich state of happiness.

Clara Escobar, who is Gerardo's wife, is the third major character in "Cura de amor." She is one of the vulgar, foolish girls who greatly abound in present-day society, with more needs than money and more pretentions than education. A picture of her physical characteristics and her personality may be arrived at from the following description:

Ondulante, muy cultivada la famosa "línea," que casi ha desaparecido en la extrema aquilatación, cortadísimo el pelo rubio, afeitada la nuca, escaso el traje, picaresco el mohín, se parece, de un modo atroz, a las innumerables muchachas de su clase. Es vivaz, desenvuelta, insuls a bajo el moderno barniz, ignorante y un poco tonta.  

It is safe to conclude, and quite accurately, that Clara is almost the antithesis of Rosa Cortés. We are assured, however, that in spite of her brazen manner, poor taste, and lack of education, she has her own peculiar grace.

Clara prides herself on having lured Gerardo from his former sweetheart, Rosa Cortés, but she is no longer in love with him any more than he is with her. Unsatisfied

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with having stolen only one man from her rival, however, she loses no time in detecting and seizing upon the opportunity of fleeing from her husband with the young American, Henry Dix, to whom Rosa is engaged.

Clara Escobar demonstrates Concha Espina's severe criticism of women who lack sufficient intelligence and education for a partnership in marriage. She represents the selfish and frivolous woman of the world holding few principles, shallow values, relying upon her physical attraction to attain the ephemeral, vain goals which she cunningly seeks to attain. In sum, she is wholly lacking in the profound virtues which Espina deems necessary for marital compatibility.

The fourth, and last, main character is Henry Dix, a rich, adventurous young North American who is in love with all the radical things of Spain, with the aim of carrying back to the United States a beautiful brunette, redeemed from all betrayal and anxiety.

By way of character description, the following quotation is quite adequate: "Este yanqui es un hombre sentimental como una castiza "girl", un poseso del clásico romanticismo inglés emigrado a la América del Norte, incorporado allí al buen puritanismo racial."\textsuperscript{10}

Like a dream come true, the traveler falls in love with the beautiful Rosa Cortés. Henry, who is a Catholic,

\textsuperscript{10}Ibid., p. 92.
asks for the girl's hand in matrimony. The wedding would have taken place very shortly in the Cathedral of Toledo had they not been involved in an automobile accident.

Espina is unusually sympathetic in her treatment of Henry Dix, considering that he is an American. She endows him with many of the admirable traits which she ordinarily reserves for her women protagonists. His uniqueness is to be found in his fearless, unselfish heart, which does not retreat before the absurdities and follies of a frivolous woman, and he manifests the sincerity of his love by his willingness to sacrifice much of his personal happiness in order that the one he loves may enjoy it more abundantly. To the author, his light-hearted, nonchalant air, which she attributes to his freedom from suffering, are typically American, and his youth and unspoiled candor reflect an image of the young country from which he originates. On the other hand, his virtues reach a high degree which is not unworthy of Espina's noblest Christian ideas, but which she does not ordinarily associate with Americans.

The fifth, and last, volume, Candelabro, contains a total of four short stories: "Tierra firme," "Arboladuras," "Blanca Uría," and "Alma silvestre." In the introduction, Concha Espina dedicates these "cuatro frágiles candelas de ilusión" to four other artists: a Chilean novelist, an American sculptor, a mountain painter, and an Andalusian poet. She declines to identify these varied artists.
by name: "Están mejor velados con mis velas en la intimidad del recuerdo, sin peligros de pública adulación."  

The author compares this book to a candlestick, and the four stories to candles which watch over the four artists to whom she makes her dedication. Again, the novels are compared to a fleet of small boats: "... Un solo candelabro--este libro--para que espabilen en él mis cuatro novelas de hoy, flotilla de luces y de barcos--gotas de claridad, aparejos de mareante--, que apenas hieren el licor frío de las aguas y la espesura de la sombra donde los artistas enarbolamos, temerariamente, nuestra vocación."  

The first story, "Tierra firme," is selected as the best and most representative of the four. The action occurs in Chile where the author passed three of the unhappiest years of her life as a young wife and writer. The close parallel between the events and circumstances in the life of the author and those of the protagonist in our story is remarkable. Espina seems to have identified herself with Soledad, both of whom were victims of unhappy marriages. Two outstanding women characters are presented--Soledad and her maid, Doralisa.

Soledad, a solitary young mother and typical of many of Espina's unhappy protagonists, is abandoned by an

11 Concha Espina, Candelabro, p. 11-12.

12 Ibid., p. 12.
unworthy husband and left alone at the mercy of an inhospitable world. She is a Spanish woman who has taken asylum in Chile. She embroiders for her livelihood and as a pastime. Her only treasure in the world is her little son, whom she protects with an almost animal instinct. She lives only for her child and for the day she can return to her homeland. She awaits financial aid from some distant relatives in order to make the return home.

Although Soledad's exquisite beauty has won her many admirers and suitors, she encourages none of them, ignoring the love which is the only truth in her life. The dignity with which Soledad sustains herself in her poverty is typical of her Castillian heritage. After the wedding, followed by her expatriation and abandonment, she had been left with one consolation: her love for her son. Her matchless beauty and grace are described as follows:

Su misma figura contribuye a intranquilizarla. Esbeltaísima, cenceña, los trazos finos, tiene unos ojos aterciopelos y húmedos, de sombrío color y anchas rasgaduras, dándole al semblante una claridad tibia y armoniosa, el fuego vivo que calienta sin quemar. Toda el alma se le transfiende así en la pulpa gozosa de la carne, y es imposible hallar a esta mujer sin detenerse en su contemplación.\(^{13}\)

Soledad now feels only repugnance toward matrimony and a horror of man as an individual, as a memory of criminal abuse. Her integrity is shielded in the belief that Love consists of a miserable deception of the instincts.

\(^{13}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 28.\)
Y aunque esta mujer saborea hoy el gusto de las cosas vivientes con saludable gracia, su potencia afectiva se reduce a la Caridad inspiradora de sus actos. Su vida es aguda como el grito del deber; la madre percibe distintamente las voces del mandato divino, y la tierra repercute, con eco sonoro, bajo sus pies menudos.14

Soledad's most ardent suitor is Arturo Medina, whom she grows to admire and respect considerably, especially after he chivalrously rescues her from her maid's jealous lover. She does not, however, allow their acquaintance to develop into anything greater than a distant friendship.

The critical day comes to Soledad and her household when a great quake makes the earth tremble. She leaves her home with her little boy and Doralisa, her maid, in an attempt to escape the destructive forces of nature. She becomes ill in the meantime, but she clings to her little son with great tenacity until her strength is spent, rendering her unable to resist Doralisa's jealous lover, who takes the child away from her. It is only now that Soledad's faith is shaken, and she becomes somewhat superstitious and fearful of the power of demons and witches. When her baby is at last returned to her, however, her belief in the divine mercy of Providence is completely restored.

Soledad, in whom may be recognized many similarities to the author's own life as an unfortunate young wife and

14Ibid., p. 30.
mother in Chile, has been endowed with Espina's own skepticism toward marriage for the second time, with a profound motherly instinct, and with a sincere faith in God, manifested by her works of charity.

The second characterization is of Doralisa, a Chilean Indian girl who is Soledad's faithful maidservant and companion. She is highly superstitious, a characteristic of the half-Christian, half-pagan religion of her Inca ancestors. However, through the influence of her "ama," whom she serves with great devotion and loyalty, she loses much of her primitive superstition.

Doralisa has one very persistent suitor, Julián Bermúdez, who is fanatically jealous of her, but whom the native girl dislikes. She diligently tries to avoid his amorous entreaties, especially after becoming Soledad's maid, but he obstinately refuses to permit that his determined purposes be distracted.

Doralisa not only demonstrates her love and devotion to her "ama," but she is made the heroine of the story when she attentively watches over and cares for Soledad and her son during the former's illness, and rescues the little boy from her envious lover, who steals him from Soledad. She proves the triumph of her faith in Christianity, which is raised to a level with that of Concha Espina's protagonists, when she discovers her great duty in life:

Esta por encima del mundo. Su alma briosa, su audacia mental, se encrespan a un tiempo con orgullo
No longer a lost animal in the chaos of the earthquake, and her fear of both the dead and the living having been conquered, Doralisa sacrifices herself in order to get her mistress' son back. Having fulfilled her mission, she has proved her triumph over superstition and fear, and has passed the supreme test of her Christian faith.

15_Ibid., p. 45._
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