

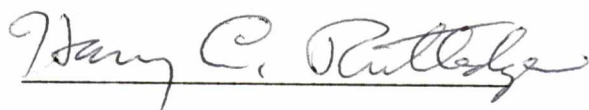
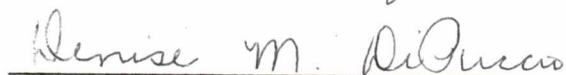
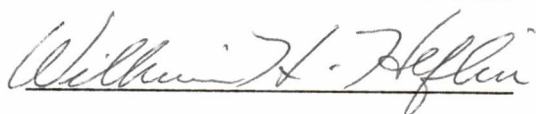
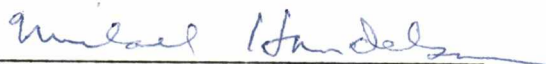
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Dorothy Reimer Winkles entitled "Galician Aspects in Four Novels by Elena Quiroga." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Spanish.



Carl W. Cobb, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:



Accepted for the Council:



Vice Chancellor
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Thesis

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GALICIAN ASPECTS IN FOUR NOVELS

BY ELENA QUIROGA

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

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Dorothy Reimer Winkles

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ABSTRACT

Elena Quiroga was awarded the Premio Nadal in 1950 for her novel Viento del norte which, with its description of the environment and people of her native Galicia, established her as a regionalist writer. Her portrayal of the Galicians continued to dominate four of her early novels. Since in her later novels Quiroga moved consciously beyond regionalism, we have chosen to study the regionalism evident in four of her early novels, the only ones up to the present time in which regionalism is really significant. They are Viento del norte (1951), La sangre (1952), La enferma (1955) and Plácida, la joven (1956). We have also touched upon the Celtic ancestry of the Galician people, and we have looked at the writings of two other Galicians, Pardo Bazán and Valle Inclán.

We have focused on various regional traits that are prominent in the four novels studied. Through her description of the Galician land and people, Quiroga emphasizes the strong ties that the Galicians have with their environment. Their character takes on the qualities of the atmosphere that surrounds them and this union with nature affects their ability to communicate effectively with others. The Spaniards' desire to emigrate to other countries to seek opportunity is particularly noticeable in Galicia. The accepted Galician tradition of emigrating to Madrid and the New World affects almost every Galician family. In the absence of her husband or son, the Galician woman assumes responsibility for maintaining the unity of her family. She works in the fields or on

the sea shore in addition to managing her home and children. Quiroga's complete portrayal of the Galicians includes their festivals and celebrations as well as their preoccupation with superstitions and death. The settings of the stories and the perspectives from which they are told are particularly suited to the plot of each novel.

Quiroga's regionalism is developed within the atmosphere of the trend back to realism that was in vogue in the 1950s. Quiroga's accurate presentation of the Galicians and their environment reveals the characteristics of the remote region of Galicia which continues to reflect its Celtic heritage.

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INTRODUCTION

Elena Quiroga has been classified as a regional writer by critics of her early novels. Phyllis Zatlin-Boring, author of the Twayne volume Elena Quiroga, states that Quiroga was classified as a regionalist because of the Galician setting of her novel Viento del norte, published in 1951.¹ Zatlin-Boring further states that although Quiroga's style changed somewhat after Viento del norte, regionalism was still prevalent in her works. "Although the works in which she deals with Galicia vary considerably in structure and narrative techniques, Quiroga's regionalism manifests itself in similar ways throughout her novels."² We are indebted to Zatlin-Boring for much of the specific biographical information on Quiroga, especially that relative to her Galician background. Moreover, her interviews in 1975 and 1976 with Quiroga are invaluable for obtaining a broad perspective of the life and works of the novelist. Ronald Schwartz, in his book Spain's New Wave Novelists: 1950-1974: Studies in Spanish Realism, classifies Quiroga as "one of the leading novelists of modern Spain today."³ José Luís Cano praises Quiroga for being able to produce a realistic account of the environment in which her characters live. She is able to transport the reader to

¹Phyllis Zatlin-Boring, Elena Quiroga (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977), p. 116.

²Zatlin-Boring, Elena Quiroga, p. 117.

³Ronald Schwartz, Spain's New Wave Novelists: 1950-1974: Studies in Spanish Realism (Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1976), p. 72.

Galicia, the region with which she is so familiar: "su creación no es en ningún momento falsa, sabe dar esa impresión de realidad y de vida palpitante."⁴ Joaquín de Entrambasaguas commends Quiroga for her astute portrayal of the Galicians in the coastal town of Rianjo on the Ría de Arosa in her book La enferma.⁵

There have been numerous critical reviews and articles written about Quiroga, but there has not been sufficient development of the regional aspects of Galicia that are evident in her early novels. The critical studies written since 1949, the date of her first novel, Soledad sonora, are important to the overall analysis of Quiroga's work. In his article, "The Novels of Elena Quiroga," Albert Brent notes the Galician setting in Viento del norte, La sangre (1952), and La enferma (1955), and points out the comprehensive way in which Quiroga deals with her characters and their problems.⁶ Lucile K. Delano discusses the Galician aspects of some of Quiroga's books in her article, "Sensory Images in the Galician Novels of Elena Quiroga." Delano states that the land and people of the Galician region provide Quiroga with images used to enhance her novels.⁷ Pilar Merrill limits the number of novels

⁴ José Luís Cano, "Elena Quiroga: Viento del norte," Insula 66 (15 junio 1951), 4.

⁵ Joaquín de Entrambasaguas, Review of La enferma, by Elena Quiroga, Revista de literatura VII, 13-14 (enero-junio de 1955), 255.

⁶ Albert Brent, "The Novels of Elena Quiroga," Hispania 42 (1959), 210-13.

⁷ Lucile K. Delano, "Sensory Images in the Galician Novels of Elena Quiroga," Kentucky Foreign Language Quarterly 10 (1963), 59-68.

analyzed in her dissertation, "Tres motivos telúricos en la novelística de Elena Quiroga." Using four of Quiroga's early novels, she discusses Quiroga's development of the influence of nature in and on the lives of her characters.⁸ Martha Alford Marks's dissertation, "Themes and Techniques of Elena Quiroga," deals with Quiroga's style throughout all of her novels.⁹ These dissertations and articles, in addition to others, deal with diverse aspects of Quiroga's work. Additional research is needed, however, to explain the complex attitudes and life of the Galician people seen in Quiroga's work.

This study will analyze the regional characteristics in four early novels that are set in Galicia and which deal prominently with Galician themes. This introduction gives a general view of the Galician and his environment. The regionalism of the Galicians Pardo Bazán and Valle Inclán will be touched upon as their work relates to that of Quiroga. Quiroga's regionalism will be viewed as an outgrowth of the literary theories and intellectual philosophies in vogue up to the twentieth century and, in particular, we will focus on nineteenth-century realism. Chapter I studies Quiroga's first regional work, Viento del norte. La sangre, La enferma, and Plácida, la joven, will follow in Chapters II, III, and IV. The four novels vary in technique but all have as their

⁸ Pilar Merrill, "Tres motivos telúricos en la novelística de Elena Quiroga," DAI, Vol. 36, No. 5 (1975), 2811A (University of Virginia).

⁹ Martha Alford Marks, "Themes and Techniques of Elena Quiroga," DAI, Vol. 39, No. 8 (1978), 4972A (Northwestern University).

basis the Galician environment and people around which a story is developed. Viento del norte (1951) brought recognition to Quiroga by being awarded the Premio Nadal. It is set in rural Galicia and deals with the problems arising from the love of don Alvaro, a landowner, for Marcela, a housemaid. La sangre (1952) traces the lives of four generations of a Galician family. La enferma (1955) takes place in a Galician fishing village and tells the story of Liberata, who became mentally unstable after her fiance left her to marry another woman. Plácida, la joven (1956) relates the events surrounding the life of a young Galician peasant girl who dies giving birth while her husband is at sea. In the conclusion of this study we will compare and contrast the characteristics of these four novels and touch upon Quiroga's position in modern Spanish literature in relation to the novels we have analyzed.

Given Elena Quiroga's background we can readily see how Galicia became an important part of her novelistic world. The experiences that she had in her early years in Galicia and her continuous association with her region are reflected in the early novels that deal with the northwestern area of Spain. She was born in the province of Santander on October 26, 1921. Her parents, José Quiroga Velarde and Isabel Abarca Fornes, had a large family of seventeen children. Her mother died when Elena was almost two years old and not long after the birth of her last child, a daughter. After her mother's death, she spent nine years living with her family in Villoria in the Galician province of Orense. Her formal education was obtained largely in boarding schools:

one in Bilbao which she first attended when she was nine years old, and another in Rome where she studied for about two years. Because of her family's financial situation, she was not able to continue her studies at the university, but this did not prevent her from educating herself by reading extensively from the library in her father's home in Villoria. She was in Spain during the latter part of the Civil War in 1938 after returning from Rome and in 1942 she moved from Villoria with her father to La Coruña. Quiroga married the Galician Dalmiro de la Válgoma, permanent librarian and secretary of the Royal Academy of History, in 1950, and they established themselves in Madrid. Although now residing in Madrid in the building housing the Royal Academy of History, Quiroga continues to stay in touch with the Galician region in which she spent twenty years of her youth. She and her husband frequently visit his home in Nigrán in the province of Pontevedra.

Quiroga's portrayal of the Galician region and its inhabitants enhances our understanding of this unique culture, but we can obtain additional insight into the remote area by first examining its people from a historical viewpoint. The Celt, from whom the Galician descended, was thought to have existed as early as 1500 B.C. in what is now southwest Germany.¹⁰ Around seventh-century B.C. he began to travel through France and by the fifth century he was settled in

¹⁰For a more complete account of Celtic beginnings, see Myles Dillon and Nora Chadwick, The Celtic Realms (New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1967), p. 1 and "Celt" Larousse Illustrated International Encyclopedia and Dictionary, 1972 ed., p. 81.

Spain.¹¹ The Celt undoubtedly shared customs with the African Iberians who were discovered by the Greeks and Romans. This group was referred to as iberos by the Greeks who had named the country Iberia from the Iberian root word ib meaning río or river.¹² In earlier times, the Celt was considered to belong to a nomadic group and, having no fear of engaging in battle, he frequently resettled if he thought better fortune could be made elsewhere.¹³ The Celt had a loosely structured society in that he resisted having one organized governmental body and tended to band with others in small communities and be more individualistic rather than group oriented. The traditions and customs, however, kept the group from being completely divided.¹⁴ The Celt belonged to one of the most influential cultures that occupied Northern Spain before the Romans conquered Numancia in 133 B.C. The Romans ruled the Peninsula until the Visigoths invaded it in the year 409. At the same time, in the year 409, the German tribe, the suevos, settled in Galicia and stayed for about one hundred fifty years before being conquered by the Visigoths.¹⁵ Aubrey Bell in his book Spanish Galicia states that the

¹¹ Proinsias MacCana, Celtic Mythology (New York: The Hamlyn Publishing Group Limited, 1970), p. 11.

¹² Francisco Ugarte, Panorama de la civilización española (New York: The Odyssey Press, Inc., 1963), p. 15.

¹³ Gerhard Herm, The Celts: The People Who Came Out of the Darkness (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), p. 69 and MacCana, Celtic Mythology, p. 11.

¹⁴ MacCana, Celtic Mythology, pp. 11, 19.

¹⁵ Ugarte, Panorama, pp. 26, 43.

Galician is a mixture of these different cultures found in Spain prior to the Moorish invasion in the year 711.¹⁶ He attributes the Galician trait of being stable, determined and steadfast to the German or Roman influence. He suggests that the early Phoenicians, Greeks and Carthaginians contributed to the Galician interest in trade and daring escapades.¹⁷

Walter Pattison, in his book Emilia Pardo Bazán, states that the region of Galicia has not been treated with much respect by most Spaniards.¹⁸ Rosalía de Castro was distressed that Galicia was regarded as an insignificant part of Spanish culture and she condemned the disdain heaped upon it by other Spaniards. In addition to feeling rejected by his own countrymen, the Galician developed a sense of inferiority because the Castilians continuously ridiculed him for being just a farm laborer.¹⁹ The isolated location of the Galician accounts for one reason why he is neglected and misunderstood. He does, however, lend himself somewhat to criticism because of his attitude toward others. His lack of interest in being sociable is likely due to his characteristic solitude and affection for nature instead of man. The

¹⁶ Aubrey F. G. Bell, Spanish Galicia (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head Ltd., 1922), pp. 6-8.

¹⁷ Bell, Galicia, pp. 4-9.

¹⁸ Walter T. Pattison, Emilia Pardo Bazán (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1971), p. 21.

¹⁹ Nidia A. Díaz, La protesta social en la obra de Rosalía de Castro (Vigo: Editorial Galaxia, 1976), p. 28.

Galician's true feelings are hidden as he copes with life by observing both nature and man rather than participating and communicating with his fellow man. Bell points out that the abuse the Galician has endured over the years by unjust criticism and unfair treatment has perhaps changed an otherwise confident extrovert into a quiet and cautious individual. Now the Galician is much more wary of outsiders and much more a private person. Compared to the open and personable Castilian, the Galician is more reserved, tends to his own affairs and is outwardly indifferent to criticism. He reacts and conforms to different situations by going from one personality extreme to the other, thus confusing the observer trying to understand him.²⁰ Quiroga's characters reflect the reserve and withdrawn personality of the Galician as described by Bell.

The Galician traits described by Bell reflect earlier characteristics found in the Celtic culture. In The Celtic Realms, Dillon and Chadwick describe the Celt as being proud and courageous. He worshipped different gods and goddesses as he practiced his religion in woods close to nature where he was able to combine myth and the supernatural.²¹ In describing the French writer Chateaubriand, Francis Grierson, in his essay "The Celtic Temperament," states that the Galician possesses the admirable qualities of perception and good judgement which come from his Celtic background. In accordance with

²⁰ Bell, Galicia, pp. 7-9.

²¹ Dillon and Chadwick, Celtic, pp. 7, 13, 14, 17, 134, 137.

Bell's analysis, Grierson states that the Celt's emotions are so diverse that he appears to be several people at the same time.²² Grierson adds that the different moods of the Celt can be compared to the changes in nature with which the Celt so closely associated: "The moods of this temperament are akin to the changes and fluctuations of nature, because [they are] so intimately related to the physical elements seen and felt in daily life. . . ."²³ The Celt's emotions change just as the landscape does and this emphasizes the link between nature and man. The reality of nature is combined with the imagination of man, as Grierson states:

sudden showers on fine summer days, which impress the mind with the close relationship between physical law and spiritual life, between the joys of living and the burden of thinking, between illusion and reality, and the vast, mysterious realm bounded on one side by the sensuous and the real, while on the other there is no limit to the mystic and the imaginative.²⁴

Nature, therefore, represents the reality upon which imagination can be based. Nature can change yet must stay within its limits; imagination is also varied yet has no limits. Realism surrounding man is used to create a story that is enhanced by imagination but still remains realistic or regionalistic. The Celt and the Galician are bound by the same culture but they all develop their own individual style. Grierson says:

²² Francis Grierson, The Celtic Temperament and Other Essays (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1914), pp. 36, 38.

²³ Grierson, Temperament, p. 40.

²⁴ Grierson, Temperament, pp. 40-41.

In literature, the Celtic temperament is characterised by imagination, sentiment, and an indefinable sense of poetic mystery; but the style produced by these qualities is marked by intense personality--a style which, like all passionate and poetic art, is individual and spontaneous, because melancholy and passion create their own figures and symbols, and refuse to be confined within the limits of imitation.²⁵

Grierson, in addition to the Galician writers Ramón Piñeiro, Vicente Risco, and Anxel Fole, recognized that nature was held in high esteem by the Celt and later the Galician. Grierson points out that while "to the ordinary mind the four seasons mean nothing more than change in health or variation in the conditions of bodily comfort; to the Celtic mind every day, every month, every season has its soul as well as its visible atmosphere."²⁶ The Celt identifies with nature and describes it from within. He is no longer a spectator observing nature but rather is an integral part of it which is something other than just environment: it becomes part of a person's character and affects his personality. The person begins to resemble very closely the various aspects of nature that surround him. The closeness that a writer feels to the land is reflected by his treatment of such an environment in his works and he is able to present this kinship with nature through his characters. Grierson quotes the Swiss philosopher as he states: "'A landscape represents a state of the soul,' says Amiel; but it requires a writer with a soul to say so."²⁷

²⁵Grierson, Temperament, p. 41.

²⁶Grierson, Temperament, p. 44.

²⁷Grierson, Temperament, p. 41.

Just as the Celt looked for better lands in which to settle, the Galician of today also continues to travel or emigrate in search of a better home or in search of money with which to buy land. As Bell points out, "Emigration itself is not merely a necessity, it is a tradition," and perhaps some of the loyalty customarily associated with the Galician and his land is being lost due to the pursuit of material well-being in other countries.²⁸ José María Castroviejo, in his illustrated travelogue Galicia: Guía espiritual de una tierra, states that emigration has been going on for centuries and that one common port of departure is Vigo: "esa triste secuela de siempre en Galicia, ese escape a chorro de nuestras mocedades que, hoy, tremendamente incrementada, arrastra consigo a familias enteras . . . con el pañuelo de las despedidas, las lágrimas y las ilusiones, a una inevitable morriña."²⁹ The Galician considers it his obligation to travel wherever necessary in order to support his family. Some travel alone with the intention of returning or sending financial aid to their families; some take their families with them.

Elvira Martín, a Galician who wrote about Galician women in her book Tres mujeres gallegas del siglo XIX, focuses in a special way upon the effects of emigration on the Galician. While living in Buenos Aires she became aware of the changes that some of the Galician emigrants

²⁸ Bell, Galicia, p. 10.

²⁹ José María Castroviejo, Galicia: Guía espiritual de una tierra (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1960), p. 273.

would undergo in another country. The children of the emigrant reject and scorn their parents and their ancestors as they become immersed in their new country, which they consider to be far more advanced and modern than their native one. The parents themselves become bitter at not being properly recognized and understood and, in addition, they feel morriña for Galicia. The sons think they are better culturally and economically compared to their family, and they cannot and do not want to relate to their family or learn about the culture their father left so that he could better their situation. The father is unable to instill in the son the heritage that he has since the son disdains his native country as being uncultured and backward. He becomes a student or learns a trade and considers himself culturally aware and superior. The father speaks of his love for Galicia while the son declares himself to be a native of the country in which he now lives and rejects any association with Galicia. The father considers himself a failure even though he has improved his family's financial situation. According to Martín, those who are forced to live in other countries do not have the same attitude as the emigrants who leave Galicia voluntarily. They have retained a deep respect and love for their native culture. They are confident among others because they realize the value of this culture. Even though these displaced families are usually not as economically well established as are immigrant families, they are better off in regard to their mental attitude toward themselves and their

heritage.³⁰ The following comments by Martín illustrate both the pride and disdain that the Galician immigrant feels toward his native country:

estas dolorosas situaciones no se dan entre los hijos de los exilados, aunque sus condiciones económicas suelen ser muy inferiores a las de las familias de emigrantes establecidas en el país desde muchos años atrás. Y es que éstos, además de la instrucción que reciben en las aulas nacionales, poseen un lastre de cultura familiar que les ofrece motivos para enorgullecerse de la patria de sus padres y no se desprenden con facilidad de sus raíces telúricas. Conocen los hechos y la cultura del país que quedó atrás y no se sienten desarmados frente a los compañeros, hijos de otras razas y otros ambientes porque saben que la suya tiene títulos tan buenos como las mejores, en el acervo de la cultura universal.³¹

Emigration is not the only factor involved in the loss of cultural tradition. Walter Pattison points out that in the nineteenth century there were mainly two classes of people: the upper class who owned the land and rented it out to the peasants, and the lower class. The middle class was virtually nonexistent. The Galician worked hard to obtain the money to buy even the smallest parcel of land. The large ancestral estates, or pazos, complete with farmhands, maids, and servants, symbolized the continuation of family tradition and represented the wealth obtained by managing the household and working the land. Now, however, of the few pazos that remain in Galicia the majority are in disrepair. Most landowners have returned to the city and abandoned their rural life for a more urban setting. The tradition and loyalty

³⁰ Elvira Martín, Tres mujeres gallegas del siglo XIX (Barcelona: Editorial Aedos, 1962), pp. 221-22.

³¹ Martín, Tres mujeres, p. 222.

once associated with the land is not as prevalent now as in years past.³² In Quiroga's Viento del norte and La sangre the varying appreciation of the value of the pazos figures prominently in the narratives.

One of the many traits that the Galician inherited from the Celt is his preoccupation with death and superstition. Castroviejo explains that the souls of the dead continuously monitor the actions of the Galician just as they did his ancestors:

En nuestro Finisterre, como en Gales, en Irlanda o en la Armórica, la sombra de la muerte se siente, extendida como un palpito, casi como un pneuma, sobre el campo, sobre el mar y sobre las almas. Son ante todo los pueblos de raíz celta, los países de la muerte. Los difuntos perviven--valga la paradoja--como entremezclados a los vivos. Las ánimas, que tantas preocupaciones traen a éstos, heredan bienes . . . Las almas andan, en el sentido popular, errantes durante la noche por los senderos aldeanos y por los grandes caminos.³³

The Galician believes that the environment in which he lives reveals many signs of impending death. Castroviejo comments on the Galician's belief that he is always forewarned about death:

para el gallego, lo mismo que para el irlandés o el armoricano, el mundo de la muerte penetra por todas partes la vida real. De aquí el sentido profundo y sobrenatural otorgado a los hechos al parecer más insignificantes: ruidos, luces, el sonido de una voz rara, el roce durante la noche del ala de un pájaro contra una ventana, adquieren ante sus ojos proporciones extrañas, acentos solemnes, signos premonitorios o de advertencia. Nadie muere sin haber sido prevenido, dicen. Todo consiste en haber sabido "ver" el aviso.³⁴

³²Pattison, Emilia, pp. 11, 12, 16, 17.

³³Castroviejo, Guía espiritual, p. 10.

³⁴Castroviejo, Guía espiritual, pp. 11, 12.

The Galician does not lament death as much as he is grateful for the other lives that will continue: "Pero en la muerte se alza fresco el racimo; el instinto creador de la vida. Lo que debemos legar a nuestros hijos con la cabeza alta, si es que no hay gozo sin dolor."³⁵ The Galician's preoccupation with superstition is particularly evident in Viento del norte.

The woman's role in rural Galician life has changed little throughout the centuries. Nidia A. Díaz, in her book La protesta social en la obra de Rosalía de Castro, states that Castro stressed that it is the Galician woman who works the land when the man goes off to make his fortune. She has been forced to assume the responsibilities of both man and woman: "La miseria es la que, en nuestro país, sobre todo, obliga a la niña a hacer la labor de una mujer, y a la mujer, las labores del hombre."³⁶ Díaz cites the critic Rof Carballo to elaborate on the dual role of the woman:

De acuerdo con Rof Carballo, en Galicia, debido a las circunstancias sociales de la emigración la mujer gallega se entrega con viril vigor a las labores del campo, y a la no menos difícil y ardua de gobernar y dirigir la familia. Ello explica que la mujer sufra menos tensiones y se sienta obligada a reprimir una inconsciente masculinidad. Lo que no impide que a la vez sea muy femenina y llena de ternura.³⁷

³⁵Castroviejo, Guía espiritual, p. 15.

³⁶Díaz, La protesta social, p. 58. The passage quoted is noted by Díaz as coming from El primer loco in the Obras completas. The complete reference is Rosalía de Castro, Obras completas (Madrid: Aguilar, 1972), p. 1417.

³⁷Díaz, La protesta social, p. 58. The reference for Carballo's work is Rof Carballo Calero et al., Siete ensayos sobre Rosalía de Castro (Vigo: Galaxia, 1952), p. 119 ("Rosalía, ánima galaica").

Castroviejo praises the Galician woman for her fortitude and family loyalty which sustain the people of Galicia:

Una Galicia apretada--irónica, riente o triste--, pero
acogedora siempre en su intimidad y nobleza, que la mujer
gallega--mártir de la abnegación y el duro trabajo de todos
los días en caminos y campos--enaltece con su limpio amor al
hijo, al que dedica su vida entera.³⁸

Bell emphasizes the woman's responsibility when he states that Galicia is "the land of widows, widows of the living, widows of the dead."³⁹ In her volume of poetry Follas Novas, Rosalía de Castro was compassionate toward the hard working Galician woman as noted by the selection of poems entitled As viudas d'os vivos e as viudas d'os mortos in which Castro describes the difficult life endured by the women. In the poem, "Pra a Habana!," we recognize that the land of Galicia, in the absence of the man, is maintained by the woman:

Este vaise y aquél vaise,
e todos, todos se van;
Galicia, sin homes quedas
que te poidan traballar.
Tês, en cambio, orfos e orfas
e campos de soledad,
e nais que non teñen fillos
e fillos que no tén pais.
E tês corazóns que sufren
longas ausencias mortás,
viudas de vivos e mortos
que ninguén consolará.⁴⁰

³⁸Castroviejo, Guía espiritual, p. 593.

³⁹Bell, Galicia, p. 10.

⁴⁰Rosalía de Castro, Obras completas (Madrid: Aguilar, 1960), p. 529.

Bell's description of the physical characteristics of the Galician woman together with his outline of her specific tasks give us a detailed picture of the woman:

It is the women who practically rule in Galicia These splendid women toil from a very early age to the day of their death without interruption. They dig and plough and sow, trudge for miles to market bearing great burdens, and find time to knit and spin, bake bread, bring up their children, and for all the multifarious tasks connected with the flax, maize, chestnuts and vines. They are usually strong and well-developed, a contrast to their weaker, watery-eyed husbands, whom, however, they rule and, keeping control of the purse-strings, grant but a meagre allowance for effectual tavern-haunting.⁴¹

Pattison substantiates Bell's observation by describing the Galician woman as being a large, sturdy, healthy person who has always been the force behind the well-being of the family: "The country woman is a slave not only of her parents and later of her husband and children, but even of the domestic animals. She does all the housework and joins her man in cultivating the fields."⁴² Edgar T. A. Wigram, in his book Northern Spain, describes the fisherwoman as very capable in her work and the peasant girl as "well-built, strong and active; a healthy-looking, open-air race."⁴³ Both Bell and Wigram describe the woman as wearing brightly colored kerchiefs and Wigram notes that most of the peasant women do not wear shoes.⁴⁴ The comments of Bell, Wigram

⁴¹ Bell, Galicia, pp. 9-10.

⁴² Pattison, Emilia, p. 14.

⁴³ Edgar T. A. Wigram, Northern Spain (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1906), pp. 98-99.

⁴⁴ Bell, Galicia, pp. 52, 131; Wigram, Spain, p. 109.

and Pattison regarding the Galician woman's physical characteristics, which may of course be applicable to other women in some parts of the world, are particularly descriptive of Quiroga's Galician woman. Just as the Celt did before her, the Galician woman does the work of both man and woman without complaining. She does not shirk her responsibilities or ask for sympathy. She carries on as best she can and only thinks about her own dreams that will probably never materialize.

Quiroga's stories depict the sacrifices made by the hard working peasant woman and the loneliness which many of the characters experience. The isolation felt by various characters relates to the modern theme of alienation which, as Margaret E. W. Jones points out, is evident in most contemporary novels: "Whether a universally modern current, or the result of the impact of the Civil War, the characters are often out of step with society, misunderstood by family and friends, and unable to communicate with others."⁴⁵ Quiroga's depiction of the Galician woman in a rural setting indicates her desire to focus on the traditions and customs that continue to exist in the remote areas of Galicia. While it is not Quiroga's intention to make a feminist statement, feminist concerns can be found in her works due to the fact that she is writing about women. Zatlin-Boring points out that "Quiroga does not consider herself a feminist and does not set out deliberately to depict the status of women in Spanish society, although, to the extent that her works are sociologically accurate such background

⁴⁵Margaret E. W. Jones, Dolores Medio (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1974), p. 19.

information is implicit in the novels."⁴⁶ Jones, in a discussion of four contemporary women novelists in her article, "Spanish Women Novelists and the Problem of Contemporary Reality," cites the following traits found in a work by each novelist:

The techniques and ideas put forth in these novels offer an interesting commentary on the contemporary Spanish woman. The limited possibilities in the role models, the dissatisfaction with both internal and external realities as seen in the descriptive techniques and the sense of estrangement transmitted through images of exile are all negative commentaries on woman's position today.⁴⁷

Although Quiroga was not included among the four novelists discussed, these traits are present in her works. In Quiroga's early novels we do not view these characteristics as being negative as strongly as we recognize them to be a reflection of the Galician way of life as it evolved through the years.

Schwartz suggests that Quiroga was instrumental in opening the door for women and, in addition, she injected a subjective tone into her writing because of her feminine traits:

Elena Quiroga . . . advanced the New Wave and the genre on several fronts. First, she paved the way for recognition of female novelists and with this accomplishment, increased our knowledge of feminine psychology. Secondly, she added to our notion of Realism a poetic lyricism in her prose and a feminine delicatesse as she also deals with contemporary problems of Spanish women ⁴⁸

⁴⁶Zatlin-Boring, Quiroga, p. 120.

⁴⁷Margaret E. W. Jones, "Spanish Women Novelists and the Problem of Contemporary Reality," a paper read at the November 1975 SAMLA meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, p. 11.

⁴⁸Schwartz, New Wave, p. 291.

Quiroga's subjective tone, rather than being a result of her feminism, is likely due to the close association she has with Galicia and her ability to identify with the region and fully understand its people about whom she writes. This gives her writing a sensitive and perceptive quality.

Quiroga, whose regionalistic depiction of the Galician and the environment occurs in her early novels, wrote during the period when contemporary writers were frustrated because of their political and social situation which had steadily worsened since the eighteenth century and culminated in the Spanish Civil War. Quiroga began writing in the late 1940s when the atmosphere of postwar Spain dictated a return to literary realism so as to expose the unjust political climate and social unrest to which the people were subjected. The contemporary Spaniard's desire to return to realistic techniques in his writing is better understood if we examine the literary and political trends from which realism developed. From 1700 to 1833 Spain suffered from various chaotic, unstable governments managed by kings who could not organize a successful form of rule. In 1833 King Fernando VII of Spain died and since his daughter, Isabel II, was too young to rule the country, Fernando's widow, María Cristina, assumed control of the government. The liberal María Cristina and her conservative brother-in-law, Carlos, could not establish common political goals and the result of their opposing viewpoints was the first Carlist War which ended in 1837. The Spanish government was unstable throughout the reign of Isabel II and the situation did not improve in the 1870s when the newly formed First

Republic failed in 1874 and the second Carlist War ended in 1876. King Alfonso XII was succeeded by Alfonso XIII, who was in power until 1931 when he was forced out of Spain. During the rule of these last two Spanish kings, Spain did not prosper economically or politically. The Second Republic, established in 1931, was soon abolished and political turmoil resulted in the Civil War lasting from 1936-1939. Spain, therefore, was subjected to a period of political turbulence and economic instability which began in the eighteenth century.⁴⁹

The political unrest which the Spaniards have endured for centuries is reflected in the literature. Beginning with the picaresque novel in the latter part of the sixteenth century the Spanish novelist has used literature as a medium to criticize injustices of his society. This continued in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and later in the nineteenth century in the artículos de costumbres which are short exposés dealing with a particular region or a prominent social condition. The nineteenth-century writer recorded the current social conditions in Spain by relating his protests against the evils of society in his novels. The writer associated with the Generation of 1898 sought to revive the spirit of Spain by exposing and condemning society's shortcomings and exalting the underlying pride that he claimed all Spaniards possessed. The contemporary novelist wanted to project his dissatisfaction with Spanish society in the aftermath of the

⁴⁹ Historical data taken from Nicholson B. Adams and John E. Keller, Breve panorama de la literatura española, trans. Antonio Llorente Maldonado de Guevara (Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 1964).

Civil War. The war prompted the writer to portray the tragic events that occurred during and after the three years of turmoil which had a profound effect on the Spaniards. Thus, the analysis of Spanish society begun in the sixteenth-century picaresque novel has continued to the present day.

Ronald Schwartz, in discussing the contemporary Spanish literary scene in his book Spain's New Wave Novelists, explains that the modern novelist has reverted to the characteristics of the realism of the past century:

a new generation of young writers in the early 1940's, concerned with the traumatic effects of the war and living under Franco's Nationalist regime, engendered the true resurgence of the Spanish novel. Many of these younger writers remember the war and some participated in it. Reviving the Realist tradition of nineteenth-century novelists, their novels dealt with social themes of contemporary Spanish society and the Civil War.⁵⁰

Margaret E. W. Jones, in her book Dolores Medio, recognizes the presence of realism in modern novels. She states that these works "have as common themes the interaction of the individual with the society in which he lives, and often depict the social or political pressures of historical events which shape the destiny of the protagonists."⁵¹

In the nineteenth century, the emergence of realism brought about different reactions from various critics. Some thought that this category of literature should consist only of works that depicted a

⁵⁰ Schwartz, New Wave, p. 1.

⁵¹ Jones, Dolores Medio, pp. 13, 14.

truly objective reflection of society and that the author should not insert his personal opinion or comment. The critic Emilio González López states that the realist should record everything without altering any part of what he sees. He compares the writer to a microscope: "un microscopio que capta en todos sus detalles la realidad exterior sin cambiarla en lo más mínimo."⁵² Ricardo Gullón and George Schade, in their book Literatura española contemporánea, agree with González López's assessment of the writer's obligation to depict reality. They state that realism should refer to an exact reflection of society: "la reproducción de la realidad según la vemos sin deformarla caricaturesca o románticamente."⁵³ They point out, however, that it is difficult to be strictly objective when describing life as one sees it. Some writers thought that a realistic view of society should include the author's personal opinion. Literature should not substitute for a newspaper account of a particular happening. The writer must be allowed to inject his comments. Although William Dean Howells is a nineteenth-century American critic, his comments about realism are pertinent to our study. Howells explains that this subjective approach to realism discourages the realist from attempting to write objectively. He is ridiculed for presenting his characters as he observes them in their environment and

⁵² Emilio González López, Emilia Pardo Bazán: novelista de Galicia (New York: Hispanic Institute, 1944), p. 12.

⁵³ Ricardo Gullón and George D. Schade, Literatura española contemporánea: antología, introducción, y notas (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), pp. xxv-xxvi.

is "made to feel guilty of something low and unworthy . . . instructed to idealize his personages, that is, to take the life-likeness out of them, and put the book-likeness into them."⁵⁴

In the nineteenth century, as González López points out, the Spaniard was not concerned with trying to separate the subjective from the objective. Traits of romanticism and realism were combined to produce a realistic setting in which to express characters' emotions: "Lo romántico y lo realista son los dos rasgos más peculiares del caracter español; rasgos que no aparecen separados sino hermanados en una artística unidad en las grandes obras de la literatura española."⁵⁵ Thus, the Spanish writer could not cast aside his personal and emotional qualities which strengthened his individualism. He continued to express his feelings as he wrote: "El realismo español, fiel al caracter nacional, no puede despersonalizarse en un objetivismo abstracto que anule toda visión individual. . . ."⁵⁶

These different interpretations of nineteenth-century realism furnished the writer a broad area within which to work, and the

⁵⁴William Dean Howells, "Realism versus Romanticism," in A Grammar of Literary Criticism: Essays in Definition of Vocabulary, Concepts, and Aims, ed. Lawrence Sargent Hall (Canada: The Macmillan Company, 1965), p. 262.

⁵⁵González López, Emilia, p. 16.

⁵⁶González López, Emilia, p. 17.

contemporary novelists in the period during which Quiroga wrote utilize these variations in addition to other theories of realism. Schwartz states that the critic Juan Ignacio Ferreras in his book Tendencias de la novela española actual (1931-1969), gives us his analysis of post World War II novels which adhered to the realism of the nineteenth century. Ferreras divides these novels into three classifications: "traditional realism restored," "traditional realism 'transformed' (or renovated)," and "'innovative' realism." He places Quiroga within the "'transformed realism'" classification which Schwartz summarizes:

Those novelists who use this style employ "traditional" realism as their inspiration; however through greater narrative skill and new experimental writing techniques, they explore the problems of modern Spain, bringing their readers up to the absolute present moment, no matter what theme they care to dissect.⁵⁷

Within the "'transformed' realism" there are three subcategories, one being "'social critical' realism," which Ferreras designates as the basis for all aspects of realism. He places Quiroga in this subdivision since he believes that she and the other authors in the group "take a critical position against the Spanish middle class, defending their own 'bourgeois' position at the same time."⁵⁸

Nineteenth-century realism was responsible for the emergence of naturalism which placed emphasis on a part of society controlled and

⁵⁷ Schwartz, New Wave, p. 16. The complete reference for Ferreras's book is Juan Ignacio Ferreras, Tendencias de la novela española actual (1931-1969). Paris: Ed. Hispanoamericanas, 1970.

⁵⁸ Schwartz, New Wave, p. 16.

dominated by the environment. The individual depicted, usually from the lower class, was so overwhelmed by his living conditions and habits that he did not, and could not, overcome them. The naturalist writer exploited this type of individual in his literary works. The American writer Malcolm Cowley in his essay "A Natural History of American Naturalism," furnishes us with his ideas about naturalism which pertain to our discussion of Spanish naturalism:

They were writers who believed . . . that they could go about collecting characters as a biologist collected specimens It was largely this faith in objectivity that led them to write about penniless people in the slums, whom they regarded as "outside" or alien subjects for observation.⁵⁹

The naturalistic author creates the characters and their atmosphere and they must deal with it within the strict limits that the environment imposes. In his essay "The Experimental Novel," Emile Zola states: "Literature . . . does not depend merely upon the author; it is influenced by the nature it depicts and by the man whom it studies."⁶⁰ Thus, after the author creates the total picture, the characters are controlled by their situation or surroundings without intervention from the author. Cowley reflects that "the effect of naturalism as a doctrine is to subtract from literature the whole notion of human responsibility."⁶¹

⁵⁹Malcolm Cowley, "A Natural History of American Naturalism," in A Grammar of Literary Criticism, ed. Hall, p. 291.

⁶⁰Emile Zola, "The Experimental Novel," in A Grammar of Literary Criticism, ed. Hall, p. 284.

⁶¹Cowley, "American Naturalism," p. 288.

The Spanish naturalist writer received influence from French naturalism but did not strictly adhere to French guidelines. González López quotes Valera as he defines the two different schools of thought. The Spaniard's view of society is somewhat more hopeful than that of the French: "'el naturalismo francés es casi siempre materialista y pesimista; el español es naturalista, creyente y optimista'"⁶² Although the Spaniard borrowed sufficient technique from the French to cultivate naturalism, he still had difficulty in disarding his emotions and adhering to the insensitive recording of facts that French naturalists advocated. The Spaniard objected primarily to the level of degradation to which the naturalists reduced society: "no podían resignarse a ver en el hombre una 'bestia humana', un animal movido por los más bajos instintos; ni jamás descendieron a hacer de su arte una grosera pintura de la sociedad."⁶³ Although there were exceptions, Spaniards generally subscribed to a milder form of naturalism which was actually just an extension of realism.

The Galician novelist from La Coruña, Emilia Pardo Bazán, who died the year Quiroga was born, in 1921, is the representative naturalist writer for Spain in the nineteenth century. Her well-known naturalistic novel, Los pazos de Ulloa, was published in 1886. Pardo Bazán actually considered herself to be more of a realist than a naturalist and consequently, her novels espouse one or both of the literary trends. In

⁶² González López, Emilia, p. 19.

⁶³ González López, Emilia, p. 23.

her study of Spanish naturalism, La cuestión palpitante, Pardo Bazán states that "si es real cuanto tiene existencia verdadera y efectiva, el realismo en el arte nos ofrece una teoría más ancha, completa y perfecta que el naturalismo."⁶⁴ Her naturalism is based on French theories but her Catholicism prevented her from advocating the determinist aspect championed by Zola. The stories in Los pazos de Ulloa and its sequel La madre naturaleza, concentrate on the compelling, confining and restraining effect that the environment has on the characters. The decayed and disreputable estate in Los pazos de Ulloa with its untilled land is a reflection of the people who inhabit it. In La madre naturaleza the incestuous love affair between Manuela and Perucho is based upon their affection for nature which stimulates their passion. Most of Pardo Bazán's novels take place in her native region of Galicia and her regionalism focuses on the peasant living in rural areas. Many of her countrymen thought Pardo Bazán was not a loyal Galician since she rejected the notion that the Galician language be revived in literature and denounced the idea that the Galician establish a government separate from that of the rest of Spain. She has fond memories of the region, however, and her novels record the customs and traditions of the area with which she was intimately acquainted. Throughout her stories she writes about many regional traits: the Galician's desire to own land, his tendency to emigrate, the hard work endured by the women, the

⁶⁴ Emilia Pardo Bazán, La cuestión palpitante (Madrid: n.p., 1891), p. 67.

Galician's attitude toward death and superstition, and the festivities surrounding the crop harvests, weddings, and funerals. She recognizes that the rest of Spain believes that Galicia is able to add very little to the country in the way of culture and achievement. She was a feminist who wanted the same opportunities men received in recognition of literary excellence and intellectual achievement.⁶⁵

Quiroga's techniques in her early novels were associated by critics with the structure and content of Pardo Bazán's work. According to Zatlin-Boring, Quiroga felt that the critics who linked her too closely with Pardo Bazán did so because they were both Galician women novelists. In addition, Pardo Bazán was married to José Quiroga and some tried to establish a connection between the two families.⁶⁶ Joaquín de Entrambasaguas denies that there was ever any valid similarity between Quiroga and Pardo Bazán. After his review of Quiroga's Viento del norte, he explains that the only link between the two authors is their native Galicia:

la supuesta imitación . . . de la Pardo Bazán, es casi pueril refutarla. Con sólo valorar y discriminar el ambiente realista en que se mueven, respectivamente, las obras de ambas escritoras sería imposible mantener la menor referencia paralelística. El realismo de la Pardo Bazán, convencional, le sirve de apoyo a su imaginación; en Elena Quiroga es esta imaginación, la suya personalísima, la que arrastra a una creación novelística, cuya expresión ha de buscar en la vida cotidiana para que llegue hasta nosotros. Otras circunstancias: el ambiente gallego, tan característico, lo mismo en el paisaje que en las palabras, no podrá eludirse nunca, en sus

⁶⁵ General survey based on Pattison's book, Emilia Pardo Bazán.

⁶⁶ Zatlin-Boring, Elena Quiroga, p. 23.

permanentes manifestaciones, de una novela, sea cualquiera su autor, que transcurra allí. Los caracteres psicológicos, en cambio, ¡qué diferencia entre los de una y otra novelista!⁶⁷

As Entrambasaguas points out, Pardo Bazán's works demonstrate her ability to record realistic events accurately but without the sensitivity and imagination that form the basis for Quiroga's realism. The Galician traditions and customs, by virtue of their actual existence, cannot be altered and, therefore, will naturally be similar in any novel dealing with Galicia such as those by Quiroga and Pardo Bazán. In addition, Entrambasaguas declares that the development and treatment of the characters of the two authors vary considerably.

In regard to character development José Luís Cano states that in Viento del norte, as Quiroga tells the story of the landowner's love for the peasant girl, she describes the characters with such perceptivity that otherwise common and refined situations are transformed into sensitive depictions of human suffering. Quiroga combines her imagination with her ability to create a realistic setting that particularly suits her characters and the atmosphere in which they live. While she reiterates the Galician descriptions of Pardo Bazán, Quiroga creates her own stories revolving around "esta Galicia de los pazos, los viejos hidalgos, los fantasmas, las supersticiones y los 'meigas'"⁶⁸ Quiroga believes that the subject matter, not the author,

⁶⁷ Joaquín de Entrambasaguas, Las mejores novelas contemporaneas (Barcelona: Planeta, 1971) Vol. XII, (1950-1954), p. 1287.

⁶⁸ José Luís Cano, "Elena Quiroga: Viento del norte," Insula 66 (15 junio 1951), 4.

determines the form of a novel which results in the story's structure being controlled by its content. In addition, she states that a character's personality is not constant: allowance should be made for different moods and ideas in novels just as in real life. Quiroga allows her characters to control their own destiny more than does Pardo Bazán, who restricts and confines her characters to their environment.⁶⁹

The authentic depiction of Galicia by Quiroga and Pardo Bazán establishes them as regionalists within the broad category of realism. They give descriptions of their native land and use it as the setting for their stories. The many regions of Spain make the style especially appropriate for the Spanish realist: "El realismo, por lo mismo que se asienta sobre el medio ambiente, tiene propensión, y mucho más en países como en España de profundas diferencias regionales, a hacerse local, a regionalizarse."⁷⁰

During the first part of the twentieth century regionalism continued to figure prominently in Spanish literature through the writing of the Galician Ramón del Valle Inclán. Due to the volume of Valle Inclán's work and the vast amount of critical study already available on him, we will focus only on the Galician aspect of his work, and, in particular, the Galician characteristics that are similar to those to be studied in Quiroga's work. We will see why Zatlin-Boring

⁶⁹Zatlin-Boring, Elena Quiroga, pp. 23-24, 35.

⁷⁰González López, Emilia, p. 25.

states that "The writer with whom Quiroga acknowledges greater kinship than with either Pardo Bazán or Faulkner is Valle-Inclán, whose works she admires as much today as in her childhood."⁷¹ Zatlin-Boring specifically describes some of the similarities and differences seen between Quiroga and Valle Inclán:

Like Valle-Inclán, Quiroga evokes legendary aspects of Galicia, recounting superstitions of the peasants. Similarly she emphasizes the poetic beauty of the landscape--the trees, the mountains and the shore of the rías where the rivers meet the sea--and of the Galician weather--the frequent rain, the storms, the wind or tumbaloureiro. Some of her secondary characters bear a resemblance to certain types that Valle-Inclán described in the early twentieth century In Quiroga's work, however, there is no hint of Valle-Inclán's esperpento, no tendency to deliberately deform and satirize one's own characters.⁷²

By studying Valle Inclán's treatment of Galicia in his writing, we understand why Quiroga, who had such close ties with the region, could relate to his work and enjoy reading him as a child. Valle Inclán was born in Villanueva de Arosa in the Galician province of Pontevedra. The extent to which Valle Inclán considered himself to reflect Celtic and Galician attributes is explained by the comments of Celestino F. de la Vega in his article "Perfil gallego de Valle-Inclán." De la Vega first refers to the sarcastic wit which Valle Inclán used to respond to questions whose answers he considered too obvious to deserve proper recognition: "A veces le preguntan cosas necias, cosas obvias, cuya respuesta normal y seria implicaría una complicidad en la estulticia del

⁷¹Zatlin-Boring, Elena Quiroga, p. 24.

⁷²Zatlin-Boring, Elena Quiroga, p. 36.

preguntante. Es preciso, pues, eludir la necesidad de las preguntas mediante la ironía de las respuestas."⁷³ De la Vega then quotes such a question and answer exchange which, in addition to demonstrating Valle Inclán's irony, gives us his view about his heritage:

Por eso cuando a Valle-Inclán, gallego indudable y manifiesto, le preguntaban: 'Usted es celta, verdad?', don Ramón respondía: 'No; yo soy árabe . . . Descendiente de Altadil.' Ya en posesión del alfabeto irónico de don Ramón sabemos que eso quiere decir: mi galleguidad es tan evidente que es necio cuestionarla.⁷⁴

In addition to describing the Galician atmosphere in his works, Valle Inclán also used his regionalism as a basis for reflecting universal trends and attitudes. De la Vega explains that Valle Inclán used the aspects of Galicia that he needed to enhance the universality that he desired.

Acerca de su propia obra, Valle Inclán ha hecho dos afirmaciones aparentemente contradictorias: "Yo no he querido ser un escritor regional" y "Yo he dado a Galicia una categoría estética--la máxima--." La contradicción es, efectivamente, sólo en apariencia: la literatura de Valle es gallega del mismo modo que la música de Falla es andaluza. No es literatura regional en la acepción minúscula de la palabra: es lo regional universalizado, es la anécdota--el pintoresquismo--redimida, elevada a "categoría estética." "Andaluz Universal" se llamó a sí mismo Juan Ramón. Valle Inclán, con eminente derecho, puede y debe ser llamado "el gallego universal."⁷⁵

The Galician's preoccupation with death and superstition, which we mentioned previously, and will see in Quiroga's novels, is also present

⁷³Celestino F. de la Vega, "Perfil gallego de Valle Inclán," Insula 152-53 (julio-agosto 1961), 4.

⁷⁴De la Vega, "Perfil gallego," p. 4.

⁷⁵De la Vega, "Perfil gallego," p. 4.

in Valle Inclán's work. De la Vega comments on this as he quotes from Azorín:

"Azorín," escribe: "La originalidad . . . de Valle Inclán consiste en haber traído al arte esta sensación de la Galicia triste y trágica, este "algo que vive y que no se ve," esta difusa aprensión por la muerte, este siniestro presentir de la tragedia que se avecina, esta vaguedad, este misterio de los palacios centenarios y de las abruptas soledades."⁷⁶

In our study of Quiroga's novels we are aware that her characters are apprehensive about the inexplicable deeds of witches and the mysterious presence of souls that continuously surround them. These attitudes, which were inherited from the Celts, are also seen in Valle Inclán's stories, as De la Vega points out:

Ciertas extrañas presencias de los galaicos "relatos de lareira," ciertas mágicas elocuciones del alma celta palpitan en la obra de Valle Inclán: embrujos, espeluznos, presencias del lobo, crujir de maderas, gritos de animales, agüeros y presagios.⁷⁷

Quiroga limits her use of the Galician language to the dialogue of the Galician peasant, and even then uses it sparingly, usually in stressful situations, while Valle Inclán uses Galician more extensively in his characters' conversation and in his own comments and interpretations. De la Vega states that Valle Inclán's use of Galician enhances his adherence to modernism and demonstrates his intimate relationship with Galicia:

La prosa de Valle es, sin duda, la más sonora y rítmica del 98 y delata, al mismo tiempo que la fidelidad a la estética modernista, la destreza y la finura de un oído tempranamente

⁷⁶De la Vega, "Perfil gallego," p. 4.

⁷⁷De la Vega, "Perfil gallego," p. 4.

ejercitado en la musicalidad del idioma nativo. El léxico valleinclanesco está salpicado de galaicismos que refuerzan el carácter arcaizante e introducen "el sentido labriego del gallego" en el castellano de don Ramón.⁷⁸

J. Amor y Vázquez explains that Valle Inclán uses Galician in a variety of ways to create the appropriate atmosphere for his stories. He concludes that the manner in which Valle Inclán uses Galician further demonstrates his bond with the region: "Son . . . una muestra más de la íntima compenetración del escritor con su región En su Pontevedra natal tuvo oportunidad Valle-Inclán de escuchar estas palabras de boca de otros y de pronunciarlas él mismo" ⁷⁹

In addition to Valle Inclán's use of Galician to describe effectively the region, he also uses the environment itself to describe the inhabitants of Galicia. In this respect we see once again a similarity to Quiroga, who consistently describes the physical and mental state of her characters in terms of the atmosphere in which they live. Manuel D. Ramírez writes that Valle Inclán is "an endowed artist whose keen sense of observation and masterful facility to elevate and ornament the commonplace have made it possible for him to produce work pictures of inimitable beauty."⁸⁰ In his article "Valle-Inclán's Use of Imagery and Figurative Vocabulary," Ramírez discusses the different ways that Valle Inclán uses the sights and sounds of Galicia to enhance

⁷⁸De la Vega, "Perfil gallego," p. 4.

⁷⁹J. Amor y Vázquez, "Los galaicismos en la estética valleinclanesca," Revista Hispánica Moderna (enero 1958), 3-6, 10.

⁸⁰Manuel D. Ramírez, "Valle-Inclán's Use of Imagery and Figurative Vocabulary," Hispania 44 (1961), 265.

his descriptions of his characters. One of his first comments is to point out the emphasis that Valle Inclán places on the relationship between individuals and the flowers and trees that surround them:

The frequency of comparisons between the human body and flora suggests that Valle-Inclán must have had a certain fascination for this metaphoric relationship. The majority of these analogies served to adorn his word portraits with an incomparable charm for there is a touch of preciousness about these images.⁸¹

Ramírez also discusses the analogies of "a natural phenomenon with a part of the body . . ."; "human beings with natural phenomena . . ."; and "inanimate objects with human beings or functions of the body. . . ." He further states that "Nature sounds are numerous and varied . . . [and there is] an outstanding repertoire of analogies based on color, [which] are used almost exclusively to denote and emphasize the color of some part of the human body."⁸²

Valle Inclán's Galician background and his incorporation of the region into his writing is evident throughout his works, which many critics divide into two periods: modernismo and esperpento. Verity Smith in her Twayne book Ramón del Valle-Inclán states that in both periods of Valle Inclán's work there is evidence of his affiliation with the Carlists, who wanted to preserve the traditional structure of government in which the landowners would retain their power over the lower class and their high social standing in the community. Smith

⁸¹Ramírez, "Imagery," p. 261.

⁸²Ramírez, "Imagery," pp. 261-63.

explains that Valle Inclán's Carlist ideas are introduced in a negative manner throughout his stories:

in the earlier works Valle wilfully turns his back on the Spanish society of his period so as to create a Carlist utopia in which the plebs gladly accept a subservient position. In the later novels he takes stock of Spanish society, but only to satirize, vilify and reject it, clinging to the Carlist values he holds dear, although he is aware that the times are out of joint for such a retrogressive system of government to be acceptable.⁸³

Valle Inclán was deeply concerned about the loss of tradition that would result from the decline of the prestige enjoyed by those inhabiting the ancestral estates. Smith explains the extent to which Valle Inclán was affected by the situation: "He considered himself a spiritual descendant of this very section of the population menaced by decay and possible extinction, stripped of their former status and left to molder in provincial backwaters."⁸⁴

In view of Valle Inclán's treatment of Galicia, we recognize why Quiroga identified with the region as he described it. Her descriptions of the pazos and their location in Viento del norte and La sangre coincide with Valle Inclán's view of the once grand and prestigious estates. In addition, Quiroga's desire to present a realistic account of the traditions of the Galician corresponds to Valle Inclán's interest in the customs of the past and present. By briefly touching upon Pardo Bazán and Valle Inclán's approach to Galicia we see the region from

⁸³Verity Smith, Ramón del Valle-Inclán (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1973), p. 9.

⁸⁴Smith, Valle-Inclán, p. 18.

varying perspectives and by concentrating on Quiroga's Galicia we obtain a sensitive and introspective picture of Galicia's land and people.

In this Introduction we have touched upon various regional characteristics of Galicia which will be studied in detail in the following chapters. The Galician's desire to continue the traditions of the Celt is demonstrated by his strong attachment to the land which affects his association with his countrymen and is reflected in his lack of effective communication which hinders his ability to establish personal relationships. The custom of emigration has added to the stress and suffering of the Galician woman who must work long and hard to support her family. The Galician festivals and, in contrast, the preoccupation with death and superstition, further demonstrate the unique traits of the Galician. In studying these diverse characteristics we will see how they are the parts that form the total character of the Galician, as portrayed by Quiroga, as he strives to exist in his environment.

CHAPTER I

VIENTO DEL NORTE

Quiroga's first regional novel, Viento del norte, was awarded the Premio Nadal in 1950 and Quiroga was soon classified as a regionalist because of her depiction of the people and land of her native Galicia. The title of the novel refers to the tumbaloureiro, or strong wind common to the Galician region. The delicate manner in which Quiroga reveals the lives of the northwestern country people demonstrates the broad understanding she has of her own region remote from the capital in Madrid. Quiroga's compassion and concern for the Galician people, as well as her appreciation for the beauty of the land, gradually emerge in this story which revolves around a landowner and one of his peasant farmhands. The complications that result from their relationship affect all the inhabitants of the landowner's pazo in addition to the neighbors and villagers of the surrounding township.

Quiroga's story deals with the inhabitants of two pazos, La Sagreira and Cora, which were owned by don Alvaro and his uncle Enrique, respectively. Alvaro was born on La Sagreira and raised by the faithful servant, Ermitas, since his mother died when he was a child. Ermitas remained loyal to Alvaro as she saw him gain respect throughout the area. He was a good, honest, and fair owner who managed his farm well and was successful with his land. He was known as a quiet, soft-spoken man who enjoyed literature in addition to the outdoors. Alvaro's love

for Galicia prompted him to work on outlining and compiling the different routes of the pilgrims in their travels to Santiago de Compostela. He was also interested in the legends and miracles that were associated with these journeys. His admiration of and concern for his region led him to honor it with such a literary tribute. He would also later want his son to have the work as a remembrance of his father and his respect for the area. Throughout his many years on the pazo, Alvaro depended on Ermitas to manage the house and the servants and maids who were hard-working although uneducated. The elderly Pablo and his young son Daniel, along with the arrogant Juan, were more than capable in the fields and in managing the horses. Matuxa, Dolores and Rosalía were the women peasants who helped in the kitchen and with the housework in addition to working out of doors.

Marcela, a young, peasant girl, who was born on the estate, is of particular interest to us since she eventually became Alvaro's wife. Matuxa gave birth to Marcela and then left the baby behind as she fled the pazo. Marcela was alone without anyone to care for her, since the identity of her father was unknown. Alvaro permitted the eager and grateful Ermitas to take charge of raising the deserted child. By the time she was in her teens, Marcela had developed an unrefined, natural attractiveness accompanied by a primitive, free spirit characterized in part by her love for all elements of nature. She was a quiet young woman who kept to herself or stayed close by Ermitas. Although uneducated and somewhat naive, she was not as crude and coarse as the other peasant women with whom she worked. She became friends with

Lucía, the daughter of Alvaro's uncle and aunt, Enrique and doña Lucía, who owned the nearby Cora plantation. When Lucía became ill and needed to go to a different locale where she might rest and recuperate, Marcela went along as her companion. They lived for two years at Las Prendas, which was a farm owned by Enrique and rented out to tenants, who readily welcomed the two boarders.

After Marcela returned to La Sagriera, Alvaro began to be attracted to her rustic beauty and innocent, though provocative, manner. He became obsessed with the idea of being near her and was frustrated at not being able to control his growing desire for her. He decided a change of environment would help put his feelings into perspective and let him regain control of his emotions. Enrique and doña Lucía welcomed him at Cora where he renewed his interest in the land, and his attraction for Marcela became secondary and virtually nonexistent. When one of Enrique's five daughters married at Cora, Ermitas and Marcela, along with all those from La Sagriera, were invited to Dorila and Angel's wedding. During the festivities following the ceremony, Alvaro danced with Marcela as the servants commented that Marcela had finally received the attention that she desired from Alvaro. Alvaro could no longer suppress his feelings for Marcela and confessed his love for her to Enrique, who informed him of the current peasant talk. It was decided that Marcela be sent to a convent where she could be refined and educated. During her stay there she should decide whether or not she wanted to marry Alvaro. Alvaro did not discuss his feelings with Marcela but rather had Ermitas and doña Lucía talk to her about their

possible marriage. Later, however, Alvaro personally asked Marcela to marry him. After Marcela returned from the convent she consented to the marriage, seemingly out of obedience to the landowner. They were married and later had a son, Alvariño, who developed a close relationship with his father.

Throughout their marriage Marcela and Alvaro did not communicate well. This was due in part to Marcela's continuous unnerving silence and Alvaro's inability to establish a bond of confidence between himself and his wife. After an argument which left both of them feeling insulted and degraded, Alvaro rode off on his horse and was subsequently thrown. The accident left him paralyzed from the waist down and confined to a wheelchair. His friends came often to his home and Marcela became accustomed to going to Cora to chat with Lucía when Alvaro welcomed his visitors. One of Alvaro's acquaintances, Francisco, a judge, was attracted to Marcela and one afternoon when they both happened to be at Lucía's, he kissed and embraced her. Marcela then hurried back to the security of Alvaro as she finally realized the love and respect she felt towards him. Her enlightenment had come too late, however, as she found her husband dead from an apparent heart attack he had suffered after Marcela left that day for her visit with Lucía. Alvaro's book was gone too as it fell off the table into the fireplace when Alvaro tried for the last time to rise from his chair.

Like the Celts before him, Alvaro respected and loved the Galician countryside. His book was meant to reflect the intimacy he had with the land. He wanted his son to enjoy the same communication with the land

that he had experienced. Alvaro considered the country to be a companion: peaceful or warlike. It could be friendly or harsh just as his countrymen could be. He could not imagine being separated from the nature that he cherished. He regretted being away from his land for even a short trip: "Alvaro amaba a su tierra. Siempre que la abandonó, en cortos viajes . . . al retorno le jadeaba el alma con el ávido anhelo de llegar pronto saludaba enternecido a su ría, sus montes y sus árboles" ¹ As we see in the following statement by Alvaro, he felt so close to nature that he considered the rivers capable of reflecting his very thoughts: "Para él, la ría era un espejo de la vida. La miraba, y como si el agua aquella entrara por sus venas, cogía la pluma, y con tinta del alma iba escribiendo la historia de las rutas jacobeanas" (p. 17). This close communication with nature gave Alvaro an inner strength respected by the Galicians: "era un hombre de bien a quien el íntimo y contínuo contacto con la tierra y los árboles, y la umbría paz de los ríos habíale revestido el alma de secreta fuerza . . ." (p. 17).

Alvaro's relationship with nature characterizes the effect of the land on the Galician. The tranquility and adversity of the countryside are as much a part of the Galician as are his own personal qualities. The terrain has molded his personality and united him with nature. His respect for the land has made him accept both the good and the bad it

¹Elena Quiroga, Viento del norte (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1951), pp. 17-18. Subsequent references to Viento del norte will be noted in the text with the page number in parentheses.

offers. He realized that the calm could quickly be replaced by the storm: "la misma ría que un leve soplo del viento rizaba, y que el huracán levantaba en removidas olas, negras como la tinta, para volver a su anterior quietud" (p. 17). Aubrey Bell's description of two areas in the region of Pontevedra concurs with the tranquil aspects depicted in Quiroga's coastal scene:

At the white little town of Sanxenjo one arrives at the very edge of the ría, indescribably beautiful in its light blues and greys, delicate outlines of mountains, dark pines and calm crystal water from Marín to Bueu . . . there are heavenly bays of white sand and transparent water The water of the silver and sapphire bay laps and washes round the rocks or sleeps on the sand with an occasional long-drawn sigh the horizon is faintly golden between softly outlined mountains.²

José María Castroviejo points out that Galicia, and in particular the Galician coast, has both a restful and a turbulent quality. The traveler has an opportunity to experience and feel a part of the diverse environment. The Atlantic Coast changes a peaceful bay into a stormy sea: "le diría la voz desde la ola--; . . . No te engañe la serenidad y dulzura que laten en el paisaje; las aguas que ahora son alfombra plácida para la blancura de la arena pueden trocarse mañana en rompientes inmisericordes" ³

Quiroga's treatment of her Galician characters emphasizes the fact that not only is the Galician naturally affected by the land, but he also wants to have the characteristics of his land. He looks for

² Bell, Galicia, pp. 109, 113-14.

³ Castroviejo, Guía espiritual, p. 148.

qualities that he can use to better his own existence. He wants to be as strong as the wind and as rough as the sea but he also wants the sensitivity of the flowers and the soft breezes. The Galician on Alvaro's land enjoys the security the pazo gives, yet is aware that the elements challenge his fortitude when they abruptly change the environment. He trusts nature to provide him with the means for existence while realizing he can be disappointed when the varied climate takes away his livelihood. The Galician is proud to be linked so closely to an environment of such diverse qualities.

The Galician writer Ramón Piñeiro contends that Galicia suffers from being recognized only for its countryside which viewed by itself cannot be fully appreciated. In order to understand the total Galicia one has to realize that it is the Galician's literature that projects the people and the language as well as the countryside. The literature reflects in its lyricism the true spirit of the Galician who is more comfortable communicating with nature than with man. The lyrical quality of the literature develops from this intimacy that the Galician experiences with nature. Galicia's lyricism also draws on the inner monologue resulting from one's solitary reflection on the environment.⁴ The tranquil quality of the countryside described by Bell is that with which most non-Galicians are familiar. According to Piñeiro, that is only a part of the true Galicia since nature cannot be

⁴Ramón Piñeiro, "Factores esenciales de la literatura gallega," Insula 152-53 (julio-agosto 1959), 13.

separated from the people: "El contraste entre esta manera de ver y la nuestra podría resumirse así: para los ajenos, el paisaje gallego es naturaleza--naturaleza hermosa, dulce, suave, femenina--; para nosotros es naturaleza y cultura."⁵ Instead of classifying the countryside as feminine, Piñeiro states that the diverse aspects of the land come together to give the countryside a lyrical quality: "Más que un paisaje femenino, para nosotros es un paisaje musical. Por lo tanto, un paisaje con intimidad, un paisaje, si se quiere, lírico."⁶ As Piñeiro points out, countryside is synonymous with people. Man is virtually alone interacting individually with nature. The countryside takes on human qualities as man becomes united with it:

Nuestro paisaje es naturaleza humanizada, naturaleza hecha cultura. En su formación intervino el trabajo la energía, la esperanza y el sufrimiento de los hombres, que no sólo la empaparon mil veces con su sudor sino que le infundieron la huella de su espíritu. Por eso podemos dialogar con el paisaje, comunicarnos con él, porque todo él está animado con nuestro propio espíritu.⁷

The Galician of Alvaro's pazo and the surrounding area feels a kinship with the land that was cultivated by his ancestors. He now desires the qualities that this land has to offer him. Nature has influenced the spiritual and physical qualities of the Galician. Quiroga's Galician is compared to the environment that he respects and loves. He is so like the land that communication and kinship come easily.

⁵ Piñeiro, "Factores esenciales," p. 13.

⁶ Piñeiro, "Factores esenciales," p. 13.

⁷ Piñeiro, "Factores esenciales," p. 13.

Alvaro's affection for Galicia made him want to write about the pilgrim who traveled the countryside on his way to Santiago even though his uncle Enrique contended that there was no need to write about the countryside since it was there for all to see. He thought it impossible to assume the task that nature itself did so well. In addition, he believed it futile to try and explain all of the secrets that the land possessed: "--¿Ves, sobrino? La historia no pienses que la puedes hacer tú. Estos la escriben, los árboles, los valles, las montañas. ¿Cuántas cosas podría contar el castillo? Si el río dijese cuánto ha visto, corriendo, siglos y siglos . . . Pero lo callan" (p. 36). In addition to believing that the study of history was a useless task, Enrique was reluctant to have his sons, Miguel and Jorge, formally educated for fear they would grow away from working the land.

Alvaro loved all aspects of his country and especially the storms that could transform the peaceful landscape into a turbulent upheaval. He preferred to be as close to the storm as possible and not just view it from inside the security of his house: "Alvaro siente un sabor amargo en la saliva. Si no estuviera don Antonio, abriría la ventana, para embriagarse con el ventarrón sobre su rostro, despojándole de blanduras el cuerpo. Así, a través de los cristales, aquel espectáculo grandioso y salvaje excita sus nervios" (p. 291). During one particular storm when the wind, or tumbaloureiro, was at its strongest, Marcela found Alvaro standing before an open window watching and, at the same time, fully experiencing the fierce weather. She compared him to a strong tree that could withstand whatever elements nature presented.

Alvaro respected these fierce storms that changed the landscape so radically:

Alvaro admiraba el grandioso espectáculo: a lo lejos la ría, embravecida y fiera, parecía querer desbordarse por las riberas, ser montaña. Sus olas crecían, se enarcaban, gigantescas . . . los cipreses del jardín se curvaban, dejando silbar el viento entre sus hojas . . . los pinos y los laureles semejaban demonios retorcidos, que crujían, sacudiendo sus ramas, fantásticos monstruos de cien brazos. (p. 78)

Marcela, however, preferred the landscape during its quieter moments:

"Marcela contemplaba, desde las ventanas, el vasto y bellísimo paisaje ante sus ojos; sin razonarlo, comprendía su excepcional encanto. A veces, la ría, tan quieta, tan bruñida, dulce y lánquida, la atraía; impetuosamente deseaba correr hasta ella, hundiendo sus manos en el agua calma" (p. 77). Marcela, although not as perceptive as Alvaro, did not need to be educated to appreciate the beauty of nature or its importance to the Galician. She, as well as Alvaro, could understand the relationship of people to their surroundings as she did when referring to Alvaro as a tree withstanding the storm.

The effect of storms on trees and their link to people, however, was viewed in more depth by Alvaro. A storm could represent the beauty of a person. Alvaro told Dorila, of the neighboring pazo, that she symbolized the strength of a raging storm. Dorila's sister Lucía related the conversation to another sister: "El otro día dijo: 'Dorila, ayer estuve mirando la tormenta y me acordé de ti.' 'Jesús, contestó nuestra hermana, ¿tan fiera soy?' 'Sí, y tan hermosa,' dijo él" (p. 82). Before the accident that left him paralyzed, Alvaro

compared the tentativeness of his life to that of a tree that could be felled by a storm at any time: "La vida, a última hora, segaba orgullos, nivelaba distancias, cercenaba poderes, como el tumbaloureiro a los árboles que crecían espontáneamente en las corredeiras y congostras. Pasaba el viento y abatía la altiva gracia del laurel, desparrando, sacudiendo las hojas fragantes" (pp. 316-17). As he reflected back on his accident, Alvaro thought that perhaps he had not tried hard enough to stay on the horse that threw him. Maybe he should have been able sufficiently to control that instant in his life just as a tree should stand throughout a strong wind: "Tampoco los árboles, cuando los derriba el tumbaloureiro, saben si ellos se ofrecieron para que las abatiera, si no opusieron suficiente resistencia, si se emborracharon con el ímpetu del vendaval" (p. 351).

When Enrique was near death, Alvaro realized the extent to which his uncle had influenced him and how much he had cherished his companionship and friendship. As he contemplated their relationship, we are aware of the grief that Alvaro was to endure: "Toda una etapa de su vida está acabando allí, con aquel viejo de barbas encrespadas y agudos ojillos penetrantes. Se siente unido a él, rama de un mismo tronco" (p. 277). After the death of one of his daughters, Enrique related the tragic incident to the time that he and his sons had planted another tree where one was felled by lightning. The new tree grew up in the spot where the old one had been: "Y vi como en su sitio pusieron otro, que mete sus raíces allí mismo" (p. 173). As Enrique lay on his deathbed, Alvaro now perceived him as a fallen tree. Other trees that

Enrique had loved would continue to live and relate their history as Enrique thought they should: "En la cama, el cuerpo de aquel hombretón, semeja un árbol abatido. Alvaro piensa en los altos eucaliptus que dominan el río; los eucaliptus que tío Enrique amó tanto, y que le sobreviven" (p. 281).

Alvaro's reference to trees represented only a part of his total recognition of nature. He wanted to absorb as much of the landscape as he could. The countryside was a source of energy to him that kept him alert and active, yet, at the same time, pensive. He wanted to explore all of the mysteries and secrets that were hidden in the land. He thought not only of the total beauty of nature but also of the different aspects that it comprised:

Se asomaba a la ventana; el aire era fresquísimo, vivido. Se le abrían las carnes en el deseo de sorberse aquel aire. Hasta ahora había percibido la Naturaleza en masa; ahora, sorprendido, avizoraba las nervuras de las hojas verdes, el gracioso balanceo de las ramas cuando soplaba un viento suave, y aquel olor fragante y húmedo, que se le metía por el olfato en los huesos y en la sangre. (pp. 122-23)

Alvaro saw the changing of seasons by means of nature itself, not by the sequence of time:

Poco faltaba para el verano. Lo anunciaba ya el pájaro gracioso que cada mañana gorjeaba frente a su ventana Una mañana comprendió que el verano había llegado ya. No contaba la fecha que el calendario marcara; contaba aquel subido de oro en el aire, y aquel olor de la tierra, densa en la obscuridad, y con un vaho de calor en cuanto el sol la miraba. (p. 124)

Just as the smells and sounds of nature announced the coming of summer, the fog covering the water would announce the coming of autumn: "En el

atardecer, la bruma bajaba pronto, densa y quieta sobre el río. 'Es el otoño,' decía la bruma" (p. 167).

Alvaro's relationship with the peasant girl Marcela, who became his wife, was viewed by Alvaro in terms of her similarity to the land. As a child she was described in terms of the land on which she lived:

"Siendo pelirroja, no tenía pecas en el rostro, ni era blanca de cutis, sino del color moreno de la tierra cuando la abren para arrojar la semilla en el surco" (p. 53). Alvaro saw Marcela as he saw most of the people he knew, in respect to nature: "Comprobaba serenamente la íntima relación entre personas y paisajes, cosas y seres vivos. . . . Marcela era bravía, y amasada con la tierra roja de su Galicia la recia carne: olía a frío, a lluvia en invierno, y en verano a manzanas, y a sol" (pp. 172-73). The frustration Alvaro felt regarding his attraction to Marcela is evident as he compares her to the trees around him:

"Imprecisas imágenes le perseguían; fingíanse, a sus ojos, las ramas brazos. Brazos torneados y suaves, que se le tendían, que le rodeaban. Alvaro, en su delirio, llegó a acercarse a la ventana, y apretar fuertemente una quina del árbol; duro, resistente, igual que el brazo de una muchacha joven y robusta" (p. 126).

Recognizing that Marcela worked for him as a housemaid and was also thirty years younger, Alvaro was disturbed by the social class and age difference between him and Marcela; yet, he could not suppress his desire for her. He was confused about whether he was channeling his emotion in the right direction or if his feelings were out of control. We are aware of his quandary as his thoughts again turn to the

environment: "Se veía a sí mismo igual que a las hojas con el vendaval: arrastrado, indefenso, arollado. Al final no se sabía si era la hoja la que arremolinaba, o el viento el que la impelía" (p. 127). Alvaro decided that in order to forget about Marcela he should leave his pazo, La Sagreira, and stay at Cora with his uncle and cousins for a while. His thoughts were still with Marcela, however, and his closest companion, nature, recalled her memory: "A veces, durante el día, un rayo de sol filtrándose entre los árboles o el volver la vista al río, manso y bruñido, o simplemente aspirar la fragancia de la tierra, le traía por un momento la imagen de que huía" (p. 164). He could not escape from Marcela and seemed destined to return to her. For a while, however, during his stay at Cora, the countryside was more powerful than the peasant girl and soon Alvaro began to enjoy the beauties of nature without the memories he had experienced earlier: "Volvió a ver las nervuras en la hoja, ahora rugosas, como manos de viejo, y contempló, sin adulteraciones de su imaginación, el río y los campos" (p. 168).

Alvaro was still attracted to Marcela, however, and this became evident when his cousin Dorila was to be married and all the owners and workers of neighboring pazos were invited to Cora. Marcela was included in the invitation and upon seeing her again, and dancing with her, Alvaro's desire grew even stronger. We are aware of his deep feelings for her as he compares her to the other women in addition to the land: "Sé que tú, al lado de las otras mujeres, eres como la tierra al lado de la flor. Yo prefiero la tierra. Desde niño me gustó jugar con la tierra, y mi juego tenía mucho de amor y de oración" (p. 186). By

marrying Marcela he would be uniting his beloved countryside with the woman he loved: "Supo que estaba desposándose con cuanto amaba, y con fervor comulgó hembra, tierra y lluvia" (p. 226). After the birth of their son, Alvaro retreated to the solitude of the woods where he could reflect on the continuance of life among the trees and the rain, which, to him, would always sustain the life of the forest: "Alvaro se aleja, y refugia aquella dolorosa felicidad, aquella extraña sensación de juventud y vigor, en el bosque en sombras. . . . Tac, tac, tac . . . Como si el gran corazón de la Naturaleza palpitase" (pp. 254-55).

Alvaro was attracted to Marcela in part because of the mysterious and secretive personality she had. He had noted before that the ría resisted the uncovering of its secrets: "A lo lejos, la ría luchaba por conservar el velo de bruma que la vestía de misterio" (p. 122). He surmised that he loved Marcela because of a similar mystery that surrounded her and could not be penetrated. He felt that he had always loved her since he loved the aspects of nature that she represented. We are aware of his thoughts as he contemplated her physical features:

Marcela tenía algo de aquel remoto misterio en su rostro quieto, insondable. Quizá la había amado por ello, porque sin darse cuenta era prolongación de cuantas cosas le rodeaban, siendo su cuerpo como un joven pino, como las lomas que divisaba en lontananza sus pechos, como las uvas antes de madurar sus ojos. De las uvas se hacía el vino, y también embriagaban los ojos de Marcela. . . . Tenía la voz de Marcela un sonido cálido, grave; así sonaba el viento entre las hojas de los árboles. Cuando contestaba brusca, le recordaba el batir de las olas en días de tronada contra las rocas de la isla de San Vicente. . . . Supo que había amado a Marcela antes de que naciera. (p. 259)

The relationship that Alvaro wanted to have with Marcela was prevented by a lack of communication which is evident throughout the entire novel, and is not restricted to just Alvaro and Marcela, but, rather, extends to the other characters as well. As we have said, the countryside was an integral part of the Galician's life and he was more comfortable communicating with the land than he was with establishing dialogue with people. He was a private, introspective and pensive person who would have to work hard to develop a lasting friendship. This characteristic solitude naturally limited his openness with others as we see in the interaction of the characters. Miguel, Enrique's son, could not talk to his father about his lover Saruca, who was of a different social class than Enrique's family. Marcela and Ermitas also had difficulty expressing their thoughts. Marcela found it impossible to discuss her feelings with Lucía, her best friend. Ermitas had cared for Marcela since she was a baby; yet they did not truly understand each other. Ermitas, as well as the others in the pazo, blamed Marcela for Alvaro's accident. They thought that if she had not argued with him, he would not have left the house and been thrown by the horse. Consequently, after Alvaro's accident, Marcela began losing contact with all of those around her and, in particular, Ermitas: "El silencio entre ellas ha ido enfriándose; no es aluvión de agua ya: es hielo, sólido e infranqueable muro de hielo que ningún sol licuefacerá" (p. 313). Marcela felt like she was isolated from everyone as she had to deal with her anxieties by herself: "el mundo se ha partido en dos: en uno viven

las demás gentes, e incluso Alvaro, su marido. En el otro . . . vive ella sola, aislada de todo contacto humano" (p. 312).

Even before the accident, Marcela had difficulty in communicating with those around her. As a child, she thought she would prefer to be one of the pazo's animals, a dog or a horse, because they were liked and treated well by everyone. When she was staying at a convent she was comforted by nature rather than people. She sat by a fountain whose water she considered to be her friend. Alvaro did not help Marcela to express herself as we see by his own actions. Before asking Marcela to marry him, Alvaro confided in Enrique and his wife, doña Lucía, and asked for their advice as to what to do about his love for Marcela. They both decided that she should be sent to a convent so that talk among the servants about her and Alvaro would stop and also, at the convent, she could decide whether or not to marry Alvaro. Alvaro did not discuss this decision with Marcela but rather had doña Lucía and Ermitas talk to her. Marcela realized that no matter what she did she would always be a peasant girl who belonged to the pazo and its landowner, Alvaro. She did not think that she had a choice when she was asked to marry Alvaro since she assumed that she must obey. After their marriage, the lack of communication continued and conversation between Alvaro and Marcela was almost nonexistent. Marcela could not get used to Alvaro as a husband instead of an overseer and she continued to refer to him as usted instead of tú. She felt closer to the servants with whom she once worked and still considered herself to be a maid but with the title of wife now. Marcela's friend Lucía noticed the silence

between Alvaro and her and, while not understanding it, contended that Marcela loved and respected Alvaro.

Alvaro tried to rationalize Marcela's silence by attributing it to the fact that she was just a simple country girl who did not have much to say, but he was not entirely successful in justifying her apparent insensitivity towards him. He wanted to tell her how much he loved her and accepted her for the simple peasant girl she was, but the day she wore a peasant dress to the mass for Enrique and afterwards let their son play outside without shoes, Alvaro could not contain his anger. He chastised her for not appreciating what he had done for her and said he would get someone else to care for the boy if she could not. In a rare display of emotion, Marcela called him an old man; he left and was thrown from the horse. Later Marcela understood Alvaro's disgust and wished she had not spoken so harshly in such a degrading manner. She thought that even if Alvaro was old in years, his spirit was young. The damage had been done, however, and they were farther apart now than ever before. Alvaro forgot about, rather than excused, the ugly scene and he now believed that Marcela did not love him and she never had. He had realized from the beginning that something was missing from their relationship, but not knowing how to approach the subject with Marcela, he withdrew more and more from her. He realized he should have helped her adjust more to their marriage but his love and compassion were not sufficient to penetrate the hard shell put up by Marcela: "La ternura y la pasión habían llegado a ella como el agua del mar: rompiéronse al

alcanzarla. Las rocas se horadan con más facilidad que su impávido mutismo" (p. 220).

There were times when Alvaro and Marcela were on the verge of communicating but their awkwardness prevented them from doing so. After Ermitas told Alvaro that Marcela was pregnant, he went to Marcela, who confirmed the news, and the two felt a bond between them never before experienced. They were at last drawn together with the closeness of husband and wife, not landowner and maid. Marcela wished it could last forever:

Marcela siente ganas de llorar, y una extraña blandura que la envuelve. Desearía que el amo, en vez del amo, fuese sólo su marido, tal cual ahora es, y que siguiese pasando así su mano, lenta y ardorosamente por su pelo, y sentir siempre el peso de su cuerpo, tan cerca, que piensa que nada malo puede sucederle. (p. 244)

But just as they were beginning to feel close to each other, nausea overcame Marcela and Alvaro misinterpreted her sickness as repulsion and rejection:

Alvaro, sin querer, cancela el minuto que no volverá. Ve el gesto de náusea en los labios de ella . . . y no adivina cuánto Marcela le necesita hoy. . . . Despacio, se aparta de ella. . . . Marcela . . . adivina el cambio. . . . "Marcela, cuando puedas, baja a nuestro cuarto. Y haré que pongan otra cama." Ella está quieta, quieta sobre la almohada. . . . Rompe a llorar desgarradoramente. (p. 245)

Alvaro was best at communicating through his writing and had never been able to verbalize his thoughts effectively. Marcela considered his silence to represent disappointment in and dislike for her and did not realize that he would have traded all of his research and hard work for kindness and understanding. Alvaro would liked to have told Marcela

that he did not blame her for his accident; that she was not responsible. But he did not do this and she did not discuss the incident either. Even though Alvaro and Marcela did not communicate well with each other and their marriage was not a peaceful one, Alvaro did not doubt that Marcela would always be faithful to him. He was to her a symbol of permanence and stability just as was the land on which she was raised. She would not leave the land nor would she leave him: "Marcela no sería desleal a su tierra ni a sus árboles. El es tierra y árbol, para Marcela" (p. 356). Marcela realized too late that her place was not only on the pazo with her son but also with her husband. Alvaro wanted to call out to Marcela the day of his death and tell her not to go visiting that day but he did not speak soon enough. Their realization that they had grown to love and respect each other came too late because of their lack of communication throughout their relationship. Quiroga's description of the Galician's inability to communicate effectively corresponds to his inherited Celtic quality of preference for solitude and nature, which we have previously discussed, and is one of several traits depicted by Quiroga in her early novels.

Quiroga also develops the theme of the Galician who has traditionally emigrated to other countries in order to break away from the poverty of his region and to explore other lands. This custom is followed by various characters in Quiroga's story. Some of the villagers were not content to stay on the land where they were raised but left to seek their fortune elsewhere. Rosalía, one of the kitchen maids at La Sagreira, was a strong, aggressive woman who married a

Galician who, after six months, left for Argentina to make a better living. Rosalía, believing he would return, had given him all the money she had saved and had left the pazo when she married and found other employment. She waited and hoped for a letter which never came; then she eventually went back to work at La Sagreira. Rosalía was bitter and felt betrayed but had to continue to work. Her husband was never heard from again. Margarida, a healthy-looking, plump woman, who rented a small farm from Enrique, had to look after her numerous children while her husband worked as a waiter on a boat, but, contrary to Rosalía, she did receive her husband's aid in maintaining their home. Dorila, one of Enrique's daughters, married a merchant whose father, an indiano, had left Galicia to make money in America. Dorila and Angel left for Cuba, following the trade of Angel's father, and Enrique and doña Lucía did not have much contact with them except through letters and pictures. Since Viento del norte deals with the families of the two large estates, there is not as much tendency among the characters to emigrate as there would be among those who are less fortunate and do not possess such a quantity of land. Alvaro and Enrique, the two landowners, were raised to respect the land and continue the tradition started for them by their ancestors.

Two different classes of the Galician woman were evident in Viento del norte: the peasant woman and the woman who was a descendant of the estate family. Ermitas was the strong, dominant woman among the peasants and doña Lucía and her daughter, Lucía, were the most aggressive of the estate women. Ermitas represented the hardworking

woman who was entirely devoted to her family, which, for Ermitas, was Alvaro and Marcela. In addition to seeing to their needs, Ermitas was also in charge of supervising the other maids so that they would do their work correctly and efficiently to the satisfaction of Alvaro.

Doña Lucía was able to manage her family of seven children in addition to serving the needs of her husband and his estate. She was in control of those around her and provided a good balance of strength and understanding. Lucía, one of the five daughters, had her mother's fortitude and was a confident, pleasant, and outgoing young woman who was sensitive and kind in her friendship with Marcela.

Although doña Lucía, her daughter, and Ermitas represented different social classes, each similarly completed her respective duties, in accordance with Galician tradition, without lamenting or regretting her particular situation. She would have reacted to her life in this manner even if her work had been unappreciated, given the character of the Galician woman. This trait of loyalty to the family, which, at times, seems misguided and unjustified, is demonstrated by the story that Pablo, one of the farmhands, told Alvaro concerning a village woman who looked much older than she actually was. Pablo explained that the woman had six children that she provided for by working in the fields, and, later, was reduced to begging when she could no longer endure the strenuous work. Her husband was unfaithful to her and left her for long periods of time after which, however, when he decided to return, his wife willingly accepted him. Alvaro did not approve of such abuse and disrespect, as his thoughts indicate:

Se admiró, muchas veces, del trato que daban a sus hembras; ellas sachaban y conducían los bueyes al arado, curvadas de sol a sol sobre la tierra, o requemadas por el lar, y cuando la noche llegaba, pobres fardos humanos, aún tenían voluntad para reír al hombre que volvía, la mayor parte de las veces, de gastarse los cuartos en la taberna. Envejecían antes de tiempo, se agostaban pronto. (p. 274)

Alvaro concluded that he was not the kind of person who could treat his wife in such a manner: "Ese trato está bien para las campesinas y de sus hombres, pero no de él a su mujer" (p. 276).

Alvaro was not superstitious like the Galician villager in Viento del norte who, suspicious and wary of those who were thought to practice witchcraft, suspected that two inhabitants of the area, Yago and Merla, had supernatural powers. Yago, who was given his name because, "'Parecía talmente nuestro Señor Santiago'" (p. 26), was an old man who lived in the mountains where he collected wood and branches to sell for firewood. He conversed often with Ermitas who, as we see in her description, respected him, yet was afraid of his powers: "Observaba Ermitas a Yago con supersticioso temor: había oído contar muchas veces que el viejo era brujo, que sabía de extrañas plantas, por el monte o en la isla de San Vicente, que curaban muchos males . . ." (p. 26). Yago was responsible for Ermitas's decision to name Marcela after his daughter, Marcelina, who became ill and died after Yago had attacked and beaten the man with whom he found her one day on the mountain. Even though Yago was thought to possess certain powers, he was not considered to be an evil person like Merla, who had a reputation for frightening the villagers with predictions of the harm that would come to them if they did not do as she wished. When Marcela was born, she had a large,

black mole on her neck similar to the one that Merla had, and, therefore, Juan, one of the farmhands, convinced the other servants that she must also be a witch. Juan and the servants were afraid to be around Marcela, and, consequently scorned and tormented her until Alvaro came to her defense and said that those who were fearful of her could leave the pazo. They were still suspicious of her, however, and when her son, Alvariño, was born, the maids placed a wolf's tooth, wrapped in a marigold leaf, in his crib to ward off any evil spirits aroused by Marcela.

José Corrales Egea praises Quiroga for her attention to regional detail which gives the reader an accurate account of Galician life:

La obra . . . está escrita con arte, y ciertos recursos--como la utilización del gallego para dar empaste y color--están empleados con tino y oportunidad. . . . lo que más nos interesa y nos sorprende en ella es su innegable vigencia; el hecho de que, al escribirse en nuestros días, no se ha incurrido en ningún anacronismo, sino que se ha dado un ⁸ testimonio vivo, valedero, y de ningún modo periclitado.

Quitoga's depiction of the events surrounding the Galician pazo and its inhabitants give us an insight into the people of this remote region and a better understanding of their unique way of life inherited from the Celts. Even though Quiroga is a contemporary novelist, her intimate knowledge of Galicia, combined with her imagination and creativity, transport the reader to an isolated area in the past which is still relevant to our understanding of the present-day Galician.

⁸ José Corrales Egea, Review of Viento del norte, by Elena Quiroga, Insula 79 (julio 1952), 5.

CHAPTER II

LA SANGRE

La sangre (1952), Quiroga's second regional novel, describes Galicia and its people in a story that spans four generations extending from the mid-1880s to 1933. Contrary to Viento del norte, which focuses mainly on the conflicts that arise between the protagonists Alvaro and Marcela, La sangre deals with the problems experienced by four Galician families and their servants. Each family is influenced by its ancestors and relatives to the extent that the family members find it difficult to escape from the culture into which they were born. The characters incorrectly assume, however, that a murder occurred within the family, which leads them to believe that their lineage has more influence on them than it actually does. Even though some of the characters travel and live outside the immediate community area, they are not able to rid themselves of the basic attitudes and ideas that tie them to their native environment. This environment, together with the people who inhabit it, sustain the story of the families of the Castelo pazo.

Quiroga's inclusion of trees and their relation to the Galician character, which is evident in Viento del norte, is emphasized strikingly in La sangre, as Quiroga continues to rely on the endurance of the trees by choosing a chestnut to be the narrator of La sangre. In Viento del norte, Alvaro's uncle Enrique said that the countryside, the trees and rivers, know more about the history of an area than man could ever write. The secrets the land has in regard to those who inhabit it

remain forever with nature that observes the passing of time. Alvaro not only wanted to write about his land, he wanted to have its qualities, its strength and durability. Marcela compared Alvaro to a strong tree withstanding a storm and he considered himself to be an extension of his uncle's life, similar to a branch that sustains itself by the sap of its tree. For Marcela, Enrique, and Alvaro, the pazo's trees took on admirable qualities: they possessed the wisdom of the ages and a fortitude unlike that of many humans. Quiroga's choice of a tree narrator, therefore, and in particular a chestnut, is appropriate for the Galician area in which La sangre takes place. Although now suffering from having been cut down and not replaced, the chestnut groves of the past were a beautiful addition to the countryside. Bell notes their color in the fall when the chestnuts were harvested and Castroviejo elaborates on the chestnuts' place within the total grandeur of the landscape: "los castaños umbrosos con sus copas llenas de paz y de armonía, conjugando con las nubes y el agua la venusiva redondez de las lomas insinuantes, o cobijando como abuelos bondadosos el techo aldeano de grises pizarras."¹ Castroviejo's description together with the personality exhibited by Quiroga's chestnut give the reader a vivid picture of the tree that relates the events of four generations of a Galician family. The tree, which grew in front of the tall towers which fronted the main house of the estate, is a capable replacement for a human narrator to tell the story of the Galician people and country.

¹Castroviejo, Guía espiritual, p. 398.

The manner in which Quiroga presents the tree to us indicates that it possesses the masculine gender. The tree observes the families and comments on their activities the same way a human narrator would and, in addition, the chestnut is attracted to other aspects of nature with a desire that is similar to man's attraction to the opposite sex. Therefore, although it may sound strange at times, we will refer to the tree in the masculine gender throughout the study of La sangre. The tree tells the family history to the reader as well as to the younger trees that will remain after the chestnut is cut down due to old age. The sap that flows through the tree gives life to its trunk, branches and leaves in the same way that blood sustains man's body. The tree reflects that man's life, not unlike the tree's, is terminal and therefore, he is able to extend his life only by supplying the initial blood necessary to maintain family tradition. The same blood is transferred from generation to generation, thus creating people who prolong man's initial life.

The first generation in the story was started by Amador, who was the first owner of Castelo whom the tree knew and observed. In Oviedo Amador met María Fernanda, who was encouraged by her parents to marry the wealthy landowner. Shortly after their marriage, Amador attacked María and slashed her throat in a rage of anger which he later attributed to a hereditary trait of his ancestors. María, who did not mention the attack to anyone, recovered, and, although still wary of his actions, she appeared to accept Amador once again. The couple did not have a fair chance to resolve their differences, however, since Amador

could not stay confined to the land when he felt the urge to go to sea. They were together a total of about five months when Amador was not at sea with his servant, Roque, who accompanied Amador on these expeditions which appeared to be more for pleasure and excitement rather than for work. María gave birth to their only child, Amalia, while Amador was away, and when he did come home, he remarked that when they had a son he would encourage him to till the land rather than sail the seas. Amalia rarely saw her father, who neglected her even on his infrequent visits to Castelo. Amador was also at sea when María died. After he returned and visited her grave, which was in one of the towers attached to the house, he attempted to kill himself by cutting his throat. He could not go through with it, however, and chastised himself for being a coward. Amador left the estate and eventually died and was buried at sea.

The second generation to inhabit Castelo began with Amador and María's daughter, Amalia. Since María had died and Amador was constantly away at sea, Amalia was raised by Claudia, María's maid, who accomplished her task with difficulty, since the child was extremely temperamental and prone to fits of anger. María's sister arranged for Amalia to marry when she was fifteen years old. The maids and servants thought this age preferable to twenty, which was María's age when she married. They agreed that María had married too late and was not able to produce sufficient children needed to maintain the pazo. Amalia's husband, Efrén, had been told either to marry into a good family or to become a priest. Thus, the marriage was arranged between two incompatible people who argued constantly. The servants thought Efrén

was a weak man and did not respect his control or follow his orders, preferring, instead, to be managed by Amalia. Amalia and Efrén fought both verbally and physically: Amalia accused Efrén of not being the man her father was and Efrén countered by claiming that Amalia's father had killed her mother.

In spite of their turbulent relationship, Amalia and Efrén had three children: Gertrudis, Jacoba, and Xavier. Amalia's father, Amador, returned for a visit after the birth of the son, who was given only Amalia's family name at Amador's insistence. Amador later burned the ancestral papers to protect his descendants from documents he thought would prove the family to be cursed. After Amador's death, Efrén became more aggressive and authoritative. He wanted to refine Amalia and associate with high society to impress his brother and sister-in-law, Ruy and Leonor. He insisted that their children be educated and that the lifestyle of the pazo be upgraded to the high level which he presumed Amalia's grandparents had enjoyed. Consequently, more farmhands were brought in to help with the estate and Gertrudis was sent to live with Efrén's mother in the city where she met and married Trinidad. The family left every winter for the city and returned to the pazo in the spring. Xavier distrusted and disliked Gertrudis and his father and did not care about inheriting the estate. His main concern was for the welfare of his mother and Jacoba. When Efrén died after twenty-three years of marriage to Amalia, he left all his wealth to his daughters, Gertrudis and Jacoba, while Xavier was to receive his mother's share of the estate. Xavier's concern for Jacoba forced him to

kill her intended husband, Donato, Ruy and Leonor's son, who was suspected of having homosexual tendencies. As a result, Jacoba was sent to a convent and Xavier stayed close by the pazo so as not to arouse the suspicions of the authorities.

The third generation of the pazo started with Xavier, who married Dolores, the sister of Donato, the man Xavier had killed, and they had one son, Pastor. Before marrying Dolores, however, Xavier and Justina, one of the maids on the pazo, had a son, Vicente, for whom Xavier obtained money by selling some of the land, since the illegitimate boy would not legally inherit any part of Xavier's estate. Amalia was apprehensive about the marriage between her son and Dolores and before she died, she warned Xavier to be especially careful of the malicious Dolores. Both Dolores and Xavier, however, contributed to the mistrust and turmoil in their marriage. After Xavier shot Donato, he imagined that he was being pursued by evil spirits and this preoccupation increased after his mother died. He developed an unnerving habit of checking the grounds every night to forestall any demons from descending upon him. Vicente, who was never directly told by Xavier that he was his father, often accompanied him during his nightly rounds and the two became close friends. Xavier told Dolores the erroneous fact, related to him by Amalia, that his grandfather had killed his grandmother. After Xavier killed Donato, he talked briefly about committing suicide which upset his mother and prompted her to tell him about his grandparents, emphasizing that he was not to blame for his actions, since he had inherited his characteristics from her father. In

addition, she also said that although her father was a murderer, he was strong enough not to kill himself after killing her mother. Xavier's actions and his obsession concerning the family curse that he thought possessed him contributed to Dolores's suspicion of him. She wanted to leave Xavier and take Pastor with her but Xavier would not let her go. She realized that Amalia distrusted her and, therefore, she feigned affection toward the elderly woman so Xavier would not realize her dislike for his mother. She was naturally disturbed by Xavier's fathering a son by one of the pazo's maids, which was revealed to her after their marriage. Dolores became more determined to rid herself of Xavier and after experimenting successfully with a poison she gave to Cándida, one of the maids, she tried to kill Xavier by putting the potion in his milk. She was caught by Vicente, who forced her to drink the poison which resulted in her death.

Pastor, Xavier's legitimate son, who headed the fourth generation, only approached his father for money and did not worry over his illness and subsequent death. Vicente took care of Xavier whose will instructed Pastor to employ him permanently on the estate and, in addition, award him some land. Pastor was not interested in preserving the estate and he willingly let Vicente assume the responsibility of maintaining the pazo. Pastor married a former actress, Angeles, who was attracted to Pastor's apparent liberal views concerning a disregard for class distinction. Pastor was also emotionally involved with an organization promoting revolutions against the government. The group attempted to deceive him into selling some of the land to help support the rebellion.

Angeles lost respect for Pastor since he was continuously unfaithful to her and also abused her physically, verbally, and sexually. In spite of their decaying marriage, they had a son, Lorenzo, a sensitive, quiet child, who could have perhaps restored family tradition on the estate. He was killed, however, when the chestnut tree crushed him as it fell after being cut down to prevent its roots from extending further under the foundation of the house. The fate of Castelo remained in the hands of Pastor and Angeles.

Through the use of her unusual narrator, Quiroga has accentuated the interaction that is present in Galicia between nature and man. Her characteristic creativity and imagination combined with her intimate knowledge of Galicia allow the reader to experience the total atmosphere of the region. Entrambasaguas states that Quiroga's imagination is responsible for her realistic portrayal of the Galician area: "en Elena Quiroga es esta imaginación, la suya personalísima, la que arrastra a una creación novelística, cuya expresión ha de buscar en la vida cotidiana para que llegue hasta nosotros."² Quiroga's chestnut tree possesses the varied traits of all of her Galicians and, in addition, like the Galician, is capable of experiencing various emotions and of expressing his attitudes concerning friendship, love, and death. The chestnut also has a strong desire to be useful and valuable to others. He values his heritage, thus contributing to his belief that it is important to be strongly attached to someone or something, which results

²Entrambasaguas, Las mejores novelas, p. 1287.

in the security and confidence necessary to lead a satisfying life. By giving such importance to a tree, a representative part of nature, Quiroga reiterates in La sangre what she emphasized in Viento del norte: the land is a vital part of the Galician's life. Without his attachment to the country, the Galician would be lost and alone and, therefore, he needs the bond that links him to the stable and everlasting land of his region. The chestnut has assumed the qualities of man just as the Galician has taken on aspects of the land.

The tree begins his story by reflecting back on his youth and describing the different aspects of nature that surround him, thus introducing the reader to the environment. From his tall vantage point the tree could see the water with whom he thought he was in love. The tree realized that it was not exactly love he felt for the water but rather some stronger emotion that trees felt for other parts of nature when they became so fond of their company that they imagined themselves linked together, inseparable. What the tree felt might not have been love, but whatever it was called, he noticed the lack of it. The tree explained his feelings:

La palabra que se usa para indicar lo que por ella sentí es tan fuerte que ni quiero decíroslo. La empleamos los árboles cuando nos acostumbramos tanto a cualquier hembra . . . que vivimos enroscados, en continuo contacto inacabable. Hay veces que no se sabe si es o no amor: sí, es necesidad de aquello, y ahogarte si te falta.³

³Elena Quiroga, La sangre (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1952), pp. 7-8. Subsequent references to La sangre will be noted in the text with the page number in parentheses.

Man, who needs the water, also loves it in spite of its constant variation. The tree concluded that the water must be dealt with delicately. As the tree grew, he was conscious only of his own development: "todo había sido crecer, y dormir, y renovarme, y escuchar los consejos de los árboles viejos que me rodeaban, y, en el fondo estar atento a mi propio desarrollo" (p. 8). When he approached maturity, however, the chestnut felt and noticed the presence of the female trees. He was aware that his sap varied in respect to the different seasons:

qué dulce se me tornaba la savia cuando se acercaba el otoño. Era como si pronto . . . mi savia tomase cuerpo, se hiciese densa y fluyera más lenta. . . . aquella misma savia había corrido meses antes, en la primavera, con un calor mayor que el que da el fuego que los hombres hacen corría más de prisa que el riachuelo por la huerta del Castillo, y más impetuosa que esa misma agua cuando cae, tras saltar por la rueda del lavadero. (p. 7)

As the tree continued to grow and experience the different aspects of nature surrounding him, something stirred within him as he felt more alert and more animated and vivacious. Later, he realized what had caused this sudden change of character: "Fué el primer síntoma de la hembra. Más tarde supe que aquel dulce olor que me enajenaba, aquella inaferrable caricia, era su aliento y la llamaban 'brisa'" (p. 9).

The tree continues his monologue by revealing the manner in which he and the other parts of nature are able to serve man. He told himself he would be the strongest and tallest tree of all and would, in addition, bear fruit. He thought that man must be envious of the chestnut in this respect: "¿Qué no daría el hombre por dar fruto? Ser tú mismo semilla y fecundar. Y notar cómo en ti brotan esos hijos redondos que esconden otro árbol, o sirven de alimento al hombre o a las

bestias" (p. 8). The tree, unlike man, had always remained close to his mother, the earth, by the roots that sustained him: "Yo notaba las entrañas ardidas, como la tierra, mi madre, que me está siempre besando. Porque la tierra, bien lo sabéis, no rompe su cordón cuando nos pare: quedamos allí, chupando por muchos cordoncillos--que los llaman raíces --la vida de ella" (p. 8). The earth, to which the tree was attached, had a full, deep, resonant voice: "La voz de la Tierra es sonora como el trueno, y caliente como una entraña" (p. 9). The earth served man, in one of many ways, by providing a place for the dead. The tree regretted the passing of life but was also proud that after dying, man took on the qualities of the tree: "queda rígido como un leño, y la piel va tomando calidad de corteza" (p. 9). In addition, trees could continue to serve man even after they were chopped down: "llegué a la conclusión de que a sus muertos se los llevan en caja y me enorgullece nuestro destino, porque después de desenraizarnos servimos para algo, continuamos con un remedo de vida, no nos convertimos en carroña" (p. 14).

When Amador traveled at sea, he bought various plants and trees, such as hemlocks and yuccas, which he later planted on the pazo. The hemlock did not fit in well with the oak and the chestnut. The chestnut's description along with the oak's attitude toward the hemlock are like the reaction of man when confronted with a stranger whose ways are not understood:

El abeto del Norte . . . estaba siempre recogido, centrado en sí. . . . nunca lo comprendí del todo. El roble viejo solía decir que era extranjero a nosotros, extraño. Mas luego añadía: "Somos árboles todos," y aquel ser árboles nos unía al abeto, aunque no le comprendiésemos bien. (pp. 78-79)

The hemlock was not native to the area and neither was the yucca, which was planted later. The trees were intrigued by the yucca's unconventional trunk and branches. As it grew they realized that it looked more like a plant rather than a tree. The chestnut reveals their physical attraction to this welcome addition to their environment:

tenía más de flor gigante que de árbol. Sus ramas eran como lenguas verdes, duras, llenas de pinchos. Y en lugar de ocultarse entre ellas, enseñaba la entraña misma: una entraña redonda, abierta, pidiendo calor. Los árboles estallaban. Casi todos la amaron. (p. 79)

In addition to the trees' fondness for the yucca, they also envied its durability throughout the seasons: "A todos admiraba su verde color inalterable . . . y al llegar el otoño comprobaron que no tomaba el color dorado que el aire lleva, ni se marchitaba jamás" (p. 79). As the yucca grew older, however, its greenness faded and it took on a dull, brown color which was unlike the brown and gold shades of the pretty fall leaves. The once vibrant green leaves now appeared old and withered. The other trees regretted the aging process they witnessed and realized that the yucca should be cut down. It was raining lightly as Efrén and his son, Xavier, dug up the roots and pulled the yucca away from the earth. The chestnut describes the trees' final look at the yucca as it lay discarded on the ground. Through his vivid description we are able to visualize the natural beauty of nature and, in addition, his concluding remarks are similar to those that man would make in regard to one who had died:

Por esas veleidades de la Naturaleza, que tanto la aproximan a la hembra, entre la neblina apareció el sol. Un sol pálido y dorado brilló mientras llovía, y la yuca tuvo su última vanidad: allí, tirada sobre la hierba del campo, salpicada de gotas menudas, pareció lavada y más fresca.

El sol se reflejó en cada una de las gotitas: como si la yuca se hubiese engalanado para morir. Una hermosa muerte, cierto. Y nos aliviaria recordarla así, procurando apartar la imagen marchita de aquellos tiempos últimos. (p. 97)

The chestnut tells the younger trees that they have to serve the family the way he does. He wants them to know and understand the people that they are supposed to supply with strength and fortitude since man cannot survive without help from the land. The trees, upon realizing man's need for the land, should comfort him as best they can: "Y al conocerlos no resistiréis a entregaros al hombre, sino que os ofreceréis con piedad, porque los humanos son incompletos y necesitan de cuanto vive sobre la tierra para poder vivir. Y esta debilidad suya debe suscitar nuestra ternura, os digo" (p. 267). The chestnut gave man the pleasure of his shade due to his heavy branches with thick foilage that provided more comfort than the straight and narrow cypress or the sparsely leafed fruit trees. The trees could also be useful to man by providing the wood for tools and houses. The chestnut describes the family home which resembled the trees and other forms of nature: "Igual que un seto de mirto, alto y compacto, el Castelo tiene en el centro un cuerpo de piedra, con ventanas. Y a los lados las torres, como el tronco cortado de dos árboles grandes que no fueran redondos. Las almenas parecen pequeños palomares. Es muy bello el árbol de los hombres" (p. 9). The chestnut explains man's constant need of nature and, in particular, the trees, by concluding that man wanted to attach himself permanently to the trees so that he would be safe and secure on earth: "quisiera agarrarse a nosotros, para sentir sus raíces en tierra" (p. 42).

In addition to his obvious need for the tree, the chestnut observed that man also cut down trees, plants, and vines in a seemingly needless fashion because they were indirectly the cause of some problem man could not otherwise resolve. When the tree was young he witnessed a large, strong, oak chopped down because a fox repeatedly made her nest in an opening at its base. The chestnut describes the act, which was worsened by the fact that the men used a tool with an oak handle: "me dolía que fuera un roble muerto el que ayudase a la faena, que el mal viniendo de los propios hermanos más lástima" (p. 42). The other trees were silent throughout the ordeal and the chestnut controlled his branches so as not to attract the attention of the busy workers. The tree's death was not entirely in vain, however, since the men left it where it fell to serve as a bench. A clinging vine was of no apparent use to man and by describing its death, the chestnut recalls man's desire to be buried on the land where he lived: "La hiedra se agarra y no quiere soltarse: donde prende quiere morir. En eso se parece a los humanos que viven en el Castelo" (p. 41).

The chestnut not only acquaints the reader with the environment, he also uses his descriptions as a basis for making general statements about the behavior of the human species and, in addition, its reaction to nature. We are able to compare the tree's experience with a rose to that of man's desire for a woman's companionship. In the spring the chestnut realized that a vine that had been attached to him was actually a small, fragile, wild red rose whose fragrance and beauty captivated him. He felt sorry for the rose as it clung to him seeking his

attention and love. The chestnut did not reject the rose since he was aware of its vulnerability to all of nature's elements and, in addition, he needed a lover during the spring of the year. Even though the tree knew that his attraction for the rose was based more on pity than love, he was upset when the rose started to die in the fall. He thought she should be more subtle about growing old and said that the female limits her appeal by being candid and direct: "Me resultaba enojosa su proximidad y me irritaba aquella falta de secreto con que envejecía. Aprendí que el hechizo de la hembra reside en ser secreta, no importa en qué sentido" (pp. 106-07).

The tree describes his first encounter with snow in terms that any human would use. He had never before been so cold and was awed by the manner in which the white flakes transformed the land:

Antes de que llegara fue tan intenso el frío que me encogí, con aquel soplo helado que me hendía el tronco, bajándome hasta la raíz. La tierra se enfrió también. Parecía más dura. La luz se hizo clara, de una claridad incandescente. Y comenzó a nevar. Primero fueron ligeros copos, apenas gotas de agua blanquecinas; después la nieve cerró, y cayó, y cayó blanca, tan luminosa que nunca vi blancura igual. Era una blancura que cegaba. (p. 118).

The chestnut's description of snow depicts his ability to see nature from two viewpoints: that of nature observing other forms of nature and that of man observing nature.

In addition to his overall observations of man and his relation to the land, the chestnut notes specific similarities that the characters have in relation to the different aspects of nature. Jacoba's bright face reminded him of the dawn and her agility resembled that of a bird: "Todo su rostro era claridad, lo mismo que el amanecer en el día. Tenía

las piernas largas y delgadas, de ave, y las manos le aleteaban como aletean algunos pajarillos posados sobre mí. Siempre, al verla, sentía el deseo de tenderle una rama mía para que se posara" (p. 15). Angela's laughter was similar to the sound of splashing water: "loca como el agua que salta por la rueda del molino . . ." (p. 10). After Maria's death, the tears of the chaplain, on the verge of being blind, were reminiscent of a light rain falling on the leaves of the trees: "de sus ojos cegados las lágrimas saltaban lo mismo que la lluvia menuda corre por las nervuras de las hojas" (p. 38). The beauty of Amalia bathed in tears was described in relation to nature's appearance during a rain: "la hermosura de Amalia brilló ante nosotros, entre sus lágrimas, como es bella la naturaleza a través de la lluvia" (p. 164). A muffled conversation also reflected characteristics produced by the rain: "oí murmullo de voces que me llegaba como el ruido de la lluvia en la floresta más lejana . . ." (p. 62). Amalia's voice had opposing qualities of harshness and gentleness: "Amalia tenía una voz material, una voz de tronco, dura por fuera y blanda por dentro" (p. 17). Roque, Amador's servant, who accompanied him at sea, remarked that the women on the pazo smelled like the sea and the trees. The chestnut agreed that the women recalled the odors of the various trees:

Amalia, y después Gertrudis y Jacoba, la pequeña, olieron como el limón, agudo y ácido. Amalia por ese tiempo se casó. Y a las pocas fechas exhaló su piel el aroma de los manzanos María Fernanda . . . olía como las magnolias si Roque hubiese conocido a Angeles cuando llegó al Castelo . . . hubiese hallado en ella el cálido y pastoso olor de la datura. (pp. 76-77)

The chestnut's specific similarities between man and nature not only relate to man's outward physical appearance but also to his psychological characteristics. The chestnut compares the physical and mental traits of man to the composition of the apple. Like the apple that conceals a worm, man hides his frustrations and worries from others until, at times, his hidden fears and anxiety consume and control him. The chestnut elaborates on the similarity he observes:

la carne de manzana tiene algo de pulpa humana, y su piel tersa, arrebolada a veces, recuerda a los muchachos o a la mujer Una larva pequeña . . . vivía en la manzana aquella, tan tersa y olorosa, sin delatar en su fragancia externa su interna podredumbre. También en esto se parecen los humanos a las manzanas, y en que a veces dan la sensación de que el gusanillo les habita por dentro y no pueden parar. (p. 145)

Another example of the relation between nature and man's inner turmoil is observed when the chestnut compares Amalia's emotions to the fierce and unpredictable storms that invade the land. At times her anger appeared uncontrollable, when, suddenly, she would become calm and tranquil. The chestnut describes a rainstorm and relates it to Amalia's varied disposition:

la nube llega sobre el Castelo, y vierte allí su agua flagelante, dura y rápida. Como vino se va. La tierra en que me asiento es arenosa, y pronto seca; uno se pregunta si momentos antes la viera embebida, y el aire salpicado de gotas gordas, casi sólidas.

Estos súbitos chaparrones son como el dolor o la cólera de Amalia. Violento y fuerte. Un viento los barre. (p. 84)

Through the chestnut's depiction of the countryside and the Galician, we observe that the bond that exists between nature and the Galician is reminiscent of the strong tie that the Celt had with his environment. Although the Galician reacts according to the situation

which confronts him, he has retained the basic qualities that he inherited from the Celt, which we discussed in the Introduction of this study. Born of the same lineage and drawing from the same bloodline generation after generation, the Galician has changed little in regard to his character and aspirations. The chestnut, referring specifically to the inhabitants of Castelo, says that the children will resemble their ancestors: "Así como el rosal si es blanco sólo da rosas blancas, y si plantas un castaño en la tierra sólo un castaño sale, la familia que vive en la torre y que planta hijos en la vida, los planta como ella" (p. 18). The chestnut also observes that even though each man has different characteristics, he still reflects his basic heritage: "De todos modos, con pequeñas variantes, como nunca es una naranja igual a otra naranja, y una es más pequeña o más jugosa, y otra más encarnada, los humanos se suceden como frutos de un mismo árbol" (p. 347).

Although the basic traits of the Galician in Quiroga's story do not change, the individual characters undergo changes due to the situations in which they find themselves. The chestnut observes that in this sense the people are different from the sky and the land. Even though the elements invade and temporarily change nature at times, the sky and land remain basically unaltered. People, on the contrary, cannot avoid being affected by events:

No he visto entre ellos nadie que presentara siempre el mismo rostro. . . .

En esto se diferencian: tras la nube o la lluvia, tras el viento o el sol, el cielo siempre es igual, e igual la tierra, y en cambio el dolor y la risa o el placer marcan al hombre, y van dejando huellas imprecisas, al principio impalpables, que van singlando el rostro de secretos caminos. (p. 200)

When man reacts to different situations, his personality is altered since it corresponds to the mood of the individual. The chestnut realizes that man's temperament is not always constant:

Así aprendí que ningún ser humano es del todo podrido, como siempre se libra pulpa de la manzana de la gusanera, y que en todos ellos existe algo húmedo o cálido que palpita fuertemente o suave, o alocadamente. Así aprendí, a la par, que en eso estriba lo que diferencia a los seres humanos de los lobos: no son enteramente sanguinarios, ni enteramente crueles, ni enteramente rapaces. (p. 201)

Even though man experiences various emotions depending on diverse situations, the chestnut is aware that the people he observes all pertain to the same heritage:

Quizá lo que quede sea la sangre que los formó, que de un hombre nacen muchos hombres sucesivos, distanciados en el tiempo, y de diversas madres o padres, pero todos parten de un tronco común que va alimentándoles, y dándoles savia constantemente.

Sí. Esto es lo que queda del hombre quieto que busca, agotado al fin, la tierra donde descansar . . . : la sangre.

No. No puede decirse que el hombre muera del todo.
(p. 37)

The chestnut's observation of the general characteristics of man reflects Quiroga's desire to allow her characters the freedom to regulate their own lives. The characters are able to react and develop while controlling and governing their own actions. They are not regulated by a force outside their control. Zatlin-Boring states that Quiroga, in one of her interviews, remarked that one of the differences between her and Pardo Bazán is their treatment of characters:

She feels that Pardo Bazán manipulates her characters to meet the needs of her plot and that the author's hand is always visible. Moreover, she finds these characters to be unrealistically monolithic: "I believe that no one is so one-sided, all good or all bad. We do not always react the

same way; it depends on the day, the circumstances, who is with us."⁴

Zatlin-Boring points out an inconsistency in Quiroga's thoughts about determinism, however, when she refers to the prologue Quiroga wrote for her husband's book on Pardo Bazán in which Quiroga indicates that people are influenced by their ancestry. In the prologue, Quiroga explains the relation between man and his ancestors:

Porque nadie nace sin una pre-personalidad. . . .
Normalmente, ¿no suele hallarse en una criatura el genio vivo del padre, o un gesto habitual en su madre y sus abuelos, aun cuando no los hubiere conocido, descartando así un posible mimetismo? . . .

Resultaría interesante, además de curioso, conseguir la genealogía exacta de nuestras grandes figuras, y comprobaríamos cómo, pese a ellos mismos, respondieron a la sangre que les animó, al ambiente e incluso al paisaje que les rodeaba. Muchas obras, muchos personajes, muchas reacciones se nos explicarían entonces. Porque nada bajo el cielo se produce espontáneamente, y todos somos el resultando de sumas anteriores.⁵

In La sangre, however, as Zatlin-Boring points out, the characters at times do not fully understand their actions and they attribute them, incorrectly, to the influence of their ancestors.⁶ This dispels the theory that they are in fact controlled by their ancestors. In addition, we believe that Quiroga, in her prologue, was referring to the inherited characteristics of a person that will never change, such as the Galician's continuous association with the land resulting from

⁴Zatlin-Boring, Elena Quiroga, p. 23.

⁵Elena Quiroga, Prólogo, La Condesa de Pardo-Bazán y sus linajes by Dalmiro do la Válgoma y Díaz-Varela, n.p., 1952, p. 8.

⁶Zatlin-Boring, Elena Quiroga, pp. 39-40.

Celtic influence, and not the person's actions that are determined by his individual reactions to diverse situations. The characters in La sangre are the ones who determine the story and they react independent of their environment. Entrambasaguas states that it is difficult to anticipate the narrative since it is developed by the characters as they create the atmosphere in which they live:

En la sangre es difícil hallar los trazos argumentales preconcebidos. Quizá radica en ello su mayor éxito creador. Lo que sucede, el asunto, nunca se dilata o desvía más allá de lo que corresponde a los seres que la pueblan: hace vivir a sus personajes, y su vivir va trenzando la novela.⁷

The tree observes that the Galicians are as different as the land around them. As Entrambasaguas points out, each generation is replaced with a similar one but the characters in each one have their distinct personalities: "Cuatro generaciones que se repiten, pero no los seres que las integran, distintos, inconfundibles, hasta el punto de que, sin equivocarnos, podemos percibirlos a través de la voz del árbol."⁸ The Chestnut distinguished the people on the pazo by the sensations he felt as they touched his bark. He compared the difference between Amador and his daughter, Amalia: "La mano de Amador, la mañana en que se fué y la posó en mi tronco, era una mano ardiente y desolada, y la sangre era espesa a través de ella. En cambio, la de su hija Amalia parecía vegetal . . ." (p. 104). The hand of Vicente, Xavier's illegitimate son, reminded the tree of the apprehensive and sorrowful touch of

⁷ Entrambasaguas, Las mejores novelas, p. 1289.

⁸ Entrambasaguas, Las mejores novelas, p. 1289.

Amador, Xavier's grandfather: "sólo la mano Vicente me recordó a Amador, aquella mano recia y dolorida, conteniendo una temida sangre" (p. 104). The coarse, unrefined sensation given by Pastor's touch made the tree wary of the relationship between Pastor and his wife, Angeles: "Supe que Angeles no era para Pastor al sentir sus dos manos, porque la de Pastor es ruda--garra o pezuña--y temo por la mujer y el hijo, de ellas" (p. 104). Except for the touch of Lorenzo, Efrén, and Angeles, the tree sensed an aggressive, forceful trait in the inhabitants of the pazo, some of whom appeared to seek comfort from the tree's stability while others were less casual about the tree's existence. Lorenzo, Angeles and Pastor's son, was perceived to be sensitive and thoughtful: "Su generosidad no nace de carne ni de piel: le brota desde dentro, desde la cálida raíz que él llama 'el alma'" (p. 104). Entrambasaguas states that even though the characters of all the generations are different, they are linked by the bond that exists from generation to generation: "En La sangre, el invisible y vario fluido que une a tantos seres diversos, como la savia del árbol a éste con el Castelo, es la razón de cuanto sucede: unas veces por ella y otras en contra suya; es como el ánima secreta de tanto vivir, que sin ella se dispersaría."⁹

Through the chestnut's description of the characters and his observation of their interaction with each other, we understand the characters and their inability to express their feelings. Pastor, after having been away from the pazo for a time, returned, and looked

⁹ Entrambasaguas, Las mejores novelas, p. 1290.

anxiously about for Vicente, who had been eagerly awaiting his arrival.

Their emotions were hidden as they greeted each other:

--Bien llegado, señor.

--Hola, Vicente.

Esto es todo. Y el secreto y el amor duermen en tan simples palabras. Porque nosotros tenemos el sonido que Jehová nos dió para expresarnos y holgarnos, pero los hombres lo tienen para disimularse. (p. 13)

All of the inhabitants of the pazo had difficulty establishing solid relationships since they could not effectively express their feelings. Amador was at sea frequently and, therefore, he and María did not have an opportunity to adequately resolve their differences. Their daughter, Amalia, was too temperamental and aggressive for her husband, Efrén, who could not gain the respect he desired from his wife or the servants. Xavier, their son, and his sister, Gertrudis, never outgrew their sibling rivalry which became more damaging and destructive as they grew older. Xavier's love for his other sister, Jacoba, caused her to be sent to a convent since he killed her fiancé. The bitterness between Xavier and his wife, Dolores, resulted in her death before she could carry out her plot to poison Xavier. Their son, Pastor, was too concerned with his monetary situation to establish a harmonious home life. Amalia and Efrén, Xavier and Dolores, and Pastor and Angeles all suffered from the noncommunicative traits of Amador and María. They were not willing to give enough of themselves in order to understand each other. Each was unable to control his own shortcomings in order to aid the other. If they had not been so absorbed with themselves, their relationships would have been successful.

Through Quiroga's different techniques of presenting her stories in Viento del norte and La sangre, we are able to view Galicia from two perspectives which broaden our knowledge of its inhabitants, customs, and environment. The third person omniscient narrator in Viento del norte allows us to focus more on the frustrations of the characters, in particular, Marcela and Alvaro, as they attempt to deal with the pain and sorrow of establishing a relationship. Because of the captivating descriptions and dialogue we feel as if the characters themselves are telling us their story, rather than a narrator. In La sangre we perceive the environment through the eyes of the chestnut, who also describes the characters to us in detail. We appreciate and understand the depiction of nature and its inhabitants but we do not feel as if we have struggled and suffered along with the characters as we do with those in Viento del norte. Although the different aspects of nature are emphasized in both stories, the relationship of the land to the characters is more subtle in Viento del norte as we see the characters interact with the environment and take on its qualities. In La sangre the inhabitants are affected by nature but, since the narrator is a tree, he is more explicit and direct in his comparison of the countryside to man. The two stories demonstrate the importance of nature to the Galician people and reveal the manner in which they incorporate its characteristics in their lives.

CHAPTER III

LA ENFERMA

La enferma (1955) depicts the lives of the inhabitants of Rianjo, a small Galician fishing village in the province of Pontevedra. Zatlin-Boring tells us that Quiroga stayed in Rianjo while working on her third novel, La sangre, and the characters are based on the villagers whom she had met in this coastal town. As Zatlin-Boring points out, many critics have questioned the believability of the characters and the action centered around them, but Quiroga's confirmation of their verisimilitude refutes these conclusions. In addition, Zatlin-Boring refers to Julio Sigüenza's article in which he states that he actually knew one of the persons portrayed in Quiroga's story. Quiroga told Zatlin-Boring that the idea for the story came from the experiences that Liberata, in whose house Quiroga stayed while in Rianjo, endured concerning her relationship with Telmo, one of the villagers.¹ The novel is divided into two parts which interrelate to describe the result of Telmo and Liberata's attraction for each other. In addition, we see how the events surrounding the couple affected the other inhabitants of the village. The first part of the novel deals with the narrator's trip to Rianjo and her introduction to the characters and the village. In addition to

¹Zatlin-Boring, Elena Quiroga, pp. 64-65. The documentation of Sigüenza's article is on p. 136 of Zatlin-Boring's book. Julio Sigüenza, "Elena Quiroga: 'La enferma' (Novela)," Faro de Vigo, August 26, 1955.

becoming familiar with the area and seeing a plot of land she is to sell, the narrator also reflects upon her relationship with her husband. In the second part, with the exception of the last two chapters, the villagers give the narrator their opinion of Telmo and Liberata. The last two chapters deal with the narrator's departure from the village and her arrival in Madrid.

The narrator, whose name we are never told, describes her visit to the small Galician fishing village where she went for the purpose of seeing a tract of land her husband, Víctor, bought years ago. Víctor, an architect in Madrid, and his friend, Higinio, spent a summer in their youth on the beach near Rianjo where Víctor purchased a shore lot from a widow. The widow desperately needed the money because the proximity of the land to the water rendered it useless for growing grain as she had intended. The narrator had never seen the land and when Higinio suggested to Víctor that he sell it to a prospective buyer, the narrator decided, with Víctor's persuasion, to go to the village and negotiate the sale. Higinio had arranged for the narrator to stay in the home of his cousin, Liberata, who was cared for by an older couple, Alida and Dámaso.

Alida had served Liberata's family for many years taking care of her and her two brothers, Eugenio and Natalio. Liberata had been lying in bed facing the wall without talking or giving much appearance of hearing for twenty years after her boyfriend, Telmo, left her and married another woman. Natalio, like his father, who is only mentioned, and, we assume, dead, preferred to drink and talk with his friends

rather than stay at home with the family. He eventually went to Argentina to work for a rich uncle and then to Santiago, Chile, where he managed his father-in-law's antique shop. Eugenio, more family oriented than Natalio and very close to his mother and sister, was constantly reading and studying. He was not content to stay in the village isolated from the rest of the world; therefore, like Natalio, he left and became a Spanish teacher in the United States.

Eugenio and Telmo, who came from the two wealthiest and most educated families in the town, were good friends in their younger days, much to the delight of Liberata, who enjoyed being with Telmo. Telmo was not as studious as Eugenio but he did have literary interests and began writing verses at an early age. His father was amused by his son's writing and did not take him seriously. Telmo's mother and his sister, Angustias, however, thought he had great potential and encouraged his interest in the hope that some day he would become a famous poet. Telmo and Eugenio went to school together, played on the beach, and went sailing. They preferred to be by themselves but Liberata, Eugenio's sister, participated in their activities whenever they would let her. She was attracted to Telmo and soon became very possessive of him and jealous of his association with others. Telmo liked her attention in the beginning, but, over the years, her constant, relentless companionship began to annoy him. Angustias, Telmo's sister, did not like the way Liberata treated her brother since her unremitting desire for him interfered with his writing. Telmo left the village and when he returned, he brought his wife, Flora, with him. The sight of

the couple descending together from the boat sent Liberata into an uncontrollable fit, after which she went to bed and never spoke to anyone again.

The narrator arrived in the village twenty years after Liberata first became mentally unstable. Naturally intrigued by the events surrounding Liberata's retirement from society, she willingly listened as the village people shared the story with her. Alida and Dámaso blamed Telmo entirely for the incident and they no longer associated with Angustias and her mother. They were alone in their defense of Telmo since the whole village felt deeply sorry for Liberata. Lucía, the daughter of Alida's sister, served as a maid to Alida and Dámaso, and talked about Liberata but was more concerned about her own love for the young fisherman, Sotero, and with how she was treated in the house. Don Simón, the priest, regretted the events, especially when he remembered the younger days of all the people involved. Justa, the telephone operator, said that her father, who used to be the village teacher, thought that Liberata had always been psychologically abnormal, and her relationship with Telmo was the culminating event to an inevitable end for her. During her stay, the narrator listened to these different versions of the story, completed the sale of the land, and returned to Madrid.

As the narrator relates the story of Liberata, the primitive, natural beauty of isolated areas of Galicia described in Viento del norte and La sangre is reflected in La enferma with descriptions of the tranquil and turbulent seas and the quiet, remote beaches. Rianjo is on

the northern shoreline of the Ría de Arosa which is north of the port of Vigo. From Madrid, the town can be reached by land and also by sea, if one travels to the port of Villagarcía and crosses the ría by way of the island of Cortegada at the mouth of the Ulla river. On her trip to the village of Rianjo, the narrator went by boat from the port of Villagarcía, but on her return to Madrid she took the bus to Santiago and flew from there to the capital. As the ferry left the port and entered the open sea, the narrator told how the atmosphere of the area affected her as the boat took them into darkness: "hundí mis ojos en aquella sombra que venía de la mar hacia nosotros, que nos iba poseyendo lenta, gradualmente, con una ancha, sobrehumana paz. Me hallé en paz, no sé cómo, y con una sensación de ave ligera sobre el pecho."² The narrator, therefore, felt as if she were being drawn into and consumed by the peacefulness of the scene which divested her of all her worries and problems. She said that the wind cleansed her of previous thoughts and would give her the opportunity to view life from a different perspective: "El viento se lo llevaba todo, me vaciaba, me hacía sentirme nueva, y la oquedad del pecho. Ahora sabía que había una cavidad dentro, llena de impurezas de ciudad que el viento marino desplazaba . . ." (p. 30). The narrator felt safe on the boat and was refreshed by the smell of the sea:

El barco navegaba seguro y ligero como si no abriese aguas sino rasgase sedas. Habían abierto ventanillas, y sobre el

²Elena Quiroga, La enferma (Barcelona: Editorial Noguer, 1955), p. 28. Subsequent references to La enferma will be noted in the text with the page number in parentheses.

aceite pesado y la brea y los refajos y las botas de agua y las cestas vacías, nevadas de escamas, se imponía el hálito fresco y potente de la mar que todo lo absorbía, lo anulaba, moviéndose entre nosotros que la bogábamos. (p. 28)

As the boat continued through the sea, the narrator realized that she was experiencing the true beauty of nature for the first time. The city, so stark and impersonal, seemed unimportant and inferior as compared to the atmosphere of the sea:

No habían transcurrido tantas horas desde que llegamos de la ciudad y la sentía lejana y anacrónica, aunque todavía la asociaba a mis pensamientos. "Todas las noches habrá alguien que venga en el vaporcito, con las olas salpicándole de frío, y esta luz mágica encendiéndose el contacto. Todas las noches del año, mientras yo me bajo de un taxi o del autobús, y ni siquiera miro hacia el cielo, como si no existiese." (p. 32)

The comparison between the sea and the city that the narrator makes emphasizes the isolated area in which she is traveling and into which she is going. She marveled at the fact that the sky is the same everywhere but it looks different to different people depending on where and how they see it. The city people do not notice the elements for what they are but rather how they influence and affect their lives. The narrator continues:

Y he tenido que venir aquí para descubrir las estrellas y el frío y la humedad aunque ya estaban antes que yo, y era yo la que andaba con prisas para guarecerme en el ascensor de casa. Y no se me ocurría levantar la cabeza al cielo antes de entrar. Víctor decía: "Qué noche tan despejada. --De prisa, de prisa . . . ¡Que hace frío!" Y ahora sé que hay un mismo telón de altura para el pueblo y para la ciudad, y para los mares del norte o los mares del sur. (p. 32)

As the boat approached the shore, the narrator could see the lantern which was leading them to the nearby wharf of Rianjo. When they were closing in on their destination, the boat captain took out the sea

shell he used as a horn, and announced their arrival. This act, although common to the captain and virtually unnoticed by the other passengers on board, intrigued the narrator. She described it in detail recognizing the significance of man's usage of an instrument of the sea:

Llevaba en la mano un caracol grande, en espiral, y agudo (por arriba como una oreja, con el lóbulo rosado), de las que entre ellos llaman "buxía" o bocina, porque las usan para llamar. Alzó la cabeza curtida hacia el faro, y llamó. La luz, al abrirse, iluminó un instante sólo la caracola y el rostro del hombre tendido hacia sus propios labios, y pude ver que el vientre de la caracola era rosado, húmedo y transparente y la boca del marinero pálida y agrietada. Así escuché por vez primera la voz de la ría y del hombre, una voz poderosa y patética que daba escalofríos y zumbaba. (p. 33)

The narrator's description of the ría and village corresponds to that given by Castroviejo. The peaceful feeling that invaded the narrator when she first experienced the closeness of the sea is described by Castroviejo as a natural reaction of those who view the ría:

comenzaron a encenderse, pitagóricas y exactas, las estrellas, sobre la noche que subía. Con las sombras se exaltaban todas las cosas en un vaho de paz, que llenaba el corazón hasta los bordes. Olía a hierba, a algas, a pinocha y a mujer. El pasajero, inmóvil, meditaba ³

We are able to preview the narrator's impression of the village and surrounding area by reading Castroviejo's description of the land encompassed by the ría:

Aunque callado, tras los laureles que bajan a las playas de finísima arena humilde para mojarse helénicamente en las ondas, el Atlántico, avisa toda su fuerza contenida, como

³ Castroviejo, Guía espiritual, p. 149.

atleta tímido que entrase en un salón. Bajo las gaviotas indolentes, colgadas de perezosas hamacas allá en la altura, curzan desafiantes, en vuelo a vela, las valientes dornas que se internan hasta el límite. A través de las aldeas blancas, sumergidas entre la oscura mancha de los pinares, la voz onusta de la mar comienza a percibirse más alta.⁴

The sensations of the sea and the beaches were apparent throughout the village and reached into the houses. The narrator looked out an open window and could feel the air engulf her again. She describes the feeling as she is overwhelmed and captured by the aroma:

Levantó un cristal, que eran de guillotina. El aire marino entró, nos empujó, despeinándonos. No se veía ninguna luz, pero había una seducción profunda en aquella oscuridad moviente, el aire vivo, como un pulpo de largos tentáculos que se aferrase a nosotros, sofocándonos, el ruido igual de las aguas rompiendo contra el muelle, el chapoteo de algún remo. Y a lo lejos, al faro, el conocido. (p. 40)

When the narrator went to the beach where their land was, she experienced the same solitude and peace, now symbolized by the seagulls, that she had felt on the boat. She describes the beach with the seagulls at the end of the day:

Al fondo, detrás de mí, las gaviotas, posadas sobre la arena, numerosas. La playa es de ellas, la soledad es de ellas. El sol está bajando. Graznan, se agitan, hacen ruido, planean. Es lo mismo. Sirven de medida para apreciar aquel silencio purísimo, absoluto. (p. 108)

At the end of the novel we realize that the narrator was familiar with the southern part of Galicia. As the plane passed over the river Sil in Orense, she was reminded of her youth when she played on its shores. She left the peace and tranquility of the village and returned to the busy, populated city.

⁴Castroviejo, Guía espiritual, p. 147.

The narrator's description of the sea and her impression of the village emphasize the strong connection between the elements of nature and their influence on man. The narrator is aware of the smells and sounds of the primitive environment in her first relatively brief encounter with such an atmosphere. These sensations almost immediately cause her to experience a peacefulness and a renewal of life that she had not felt previously. The extent to which she is affected demonstrates the overwhelming power of the environment around her. Even though she is from the city, she begins to feel drawn into and immersed in the totality of her new surroundings. The people of the village had been born into such an environment. In view of the newcomer's sense of a bond between herself and nature, the natives' attachment to the area becomes that much more understandable, vivid, and realistic. The narrator recognizes the difficulty of detaching herself from the city's influence just as the villagers would find it difficult to erase the link between themselves and the sea.

The village people, although not altering the seafaring traditions of their ancestors, nor the tranquility of the town, were not conscious of preserving their past unless it suited them to do so. Justa, the telephone operator, said that her learned father, the village teacher, would be horrified and dismayed if he could see the historical parts of the town that had been destroyed. The people removed the old stones covering one of the streets and replaced them with asphalt. They used the historic stones of the ancient castle to build the foundation for the wharf. Many of the coats of arms had been turned upside down and

used for repairing and paving the sidewalks. The villagers' ignorance of, or unconcern for, the value of a material remembrance of their heritage was overshadowed by their need to carry out their daily activities. After they had repaired and improved the old washing place for the women, however, the women continued to do their washing in the river.

The changes the villagers made, however, did not destroy the personality of the fishing village. The narrator thought that all the different aspects of the town came together to give it the unique quality of a picturesque village that sustained itself by the sea. She cites the following as some of the characteristics that form the whole: "la dulzura bruñida de las aguas--al fondo playas blanquecinas, arboledas, montes pelados, orográficos--. . . el zumbido cálido y triste, de las buxías húmedas y rosadas . . . las voces cantando en la iglesia de Santa Columba . . ." (p. 104). The church itself is the focal point from which the town extends its three main streets, ". . . la da Abajo . . . la del Media . . . la de Arriba . . ." (p. 103). The narrator described the church as resembling a sea bird with the tower being the body from which everything else extends:

El pueblo se agrupa, blanco y humilde, a los lados de la iglesia en piedra gris, con su fina, airosa torre, que viene a ser la quilla de un ave marinera que extendiera sus alas a derecha e izquierda, hincando la menuda cabeza y el pico romo duro--el muelle--en las aguas transparentes, delgadísimas, de la Ría de Arosa. (p. 103)

Castroviejo states that the church in Rianjo is pretty, and that the town, which surrounds it, had the honor of having poems written by its townspeople like Manuel Antonio, who died in 1929:

Na xerfa esbara o sol
 tras d'os ausentes oleaxes.
 As velas frouxas.
 Póstumo rompeolas d'os chubascos
 cosen os farrapos con fío de sol morno.

(Resbala sobre el agua el sol
 detrás de los ausentes oleajes.
 Lánguidas las velas.
 Póstumo rompeolas de los aguaceros
 cosen los harapos con hilos de sol tibio.)
De Catro a Catro, Antonio⁵

The calm that Manuel Antonio describes is offset by the unpredictable and inevitable storms:

¿Quén chegou avisándo-nos
 d'esa cita nocturna que temos
 c'o vento do N. E.
 n'a encrucillada d'as estrelas apagadas?

(¿Quién ha venido a avisarnos
 de esa cita nocturna que tenemos
 con el viento del N. E.
 en la encrucijada de las estrellas apagadas?)
De Catro a Catro, Antonio⁶

The calm waters of the ría are the ones that attracted the narrator. In this description she describes in detail the tranquil scene of the shoreline to which Manuel Antonio alluded:

Las barcas están quietas--apenas se mecen levemente--flotando sobre el agua, con los remos atados, y las gaviotas se han instalado allí, quietas, posadas sobre las bordas, sobre los escuetos bancos. La ría es acerada y transparente. El sol comienza a caminar su órbita y las aguas parecen cabrillear, dorándose, pero es el sol quien cabrillea y dora. (El agua allí, donde espejea, ha debido de hacerse templada y suave.) Pero se desplaza el sol y vemos las aguas permanecer bruñidas, lisas. (p. 48)

⁵Castroviejo, Guía espiritual, p. 155.

⁶Castroviejo, Guía espiritual, p. 156.

The village people are sustained by the sea, without which they would have no reason to continue their existence. The waters supply them with their jobs and, in turn, their sustenance. Most of the families know of no other life and, in addition, they are not looking for a different life style. Their ancestors loved the sea when it was good to them and respected it when it was not. The villagers continue in this tradition. The men do their fishing at night and bring home their catch in the morning, at which time the women take over and begin selling their husbands' share of the night's work. They work in two shifts with one group sleeping while the other works, and vice versa. The narrator describes the scene that takes place each day:

salir a los hombres a la mar . . . con ese aspecto lejano, antiguo; verles tirar de las redes hacia la playa, ver las barcas flotando, solas, en la divina paz de la mañana, o anegadas las nuevas, para que la madera fresca hinche, con su ramita tierna de laurel . . . las prudentes, que se levantan cuando es de noche aún, y corren, rompiendo el viento muelle adelante, y recogen peces azules, grises, tornasolados--criaturas de sol--, carmesíes u oscuros.
(p. 104)

The fishermen are considered strong, capable, and not very talkative due to the customary silence observed when they are fishing. When the weather prohibits their sailing, they make their own boats, finishing them off with the traditional laurel wreath for good luck when they are ready to sail; repair their nets; or drink in the tavern. Justa complains that some of the fishermen drink too much and leave their wives and children to provide for themselves, which is difficult in such a village. She remarked one day that her young nephew acted just like a fisherman's son and should be ashamed. He, not having a

father, did not understand why this should be something to regret, since the fishermen were brave, strong, good men.

Dámaso, Alida's husband, is representative of the fishermen in the village. He dresses as they all do with the traditional gorra and the high rubber boots with the pants inside to keep them dry. The narrator vividly compares him to the boats that he sails, and notes that the many hours at sea have altered his appearance:

Dámaso es como un viejo velero de altos mástiles, con la madera trabajada. Un velero sólido, capaz de resistir travesías y embites que anegarían a un barquito joven y recién calafateado. Yo no he visto jamás pies y manos tan grandes como los de Dámaso, ni tan gran osamenta. Los ojos son pequeños o quizá los ha vuelto pequeños a fuerza de achicarlos, y la piel sin color está salpicada de manchas pardas, estigmatizada por el sol en la mar. No tiene casi dientes en la boca, y los labios pálidos. No es sólo porque sea viejo--no sé hasta qué punto es viejo Dámaso. Un hombre de ciudad no lo sería a los años de él--. He visto que también los más jóvenes pescadores tienen los labios blancos, agrietados, y he pensado en sus noches de mar que les devuelve al alba, exangües. (p. 47)

The narrator's impression of Dámaso demonstrates how closely he is linked to the sea. The narrator describes the dreams that Dámaso and the fishermen must have: dreams about the fierce sea and its feminine, human attraction. Her observation emphasizes the relation of nature to the human species:

El hombre sueña con el aliento poderoso de la mar, fresco y amargo, parecía librarle de suciedad y de impurezas. . . .

--Qué guapa estás, cochina . . .

Lo ha dicho un viejo y nadie vuelve la cabeza. Saben que allí está sólo la mar negra, la fatal, la tenebrosa. La mar no es verde para ellos, ni gris plata ni azul. Es morena, apretada y endrina. Oscura. Pasan los bancos de sardinas y el agua fosforece. (p. 61)

The fisherwomen are a vital part of the village life since they not only manage their homes but also help with the daily catch of fish. The

narrator wakes up at five o'clock each morning to the sound of the women auctioning off their fish:

Volcaron el contenido de sus cestas en la ribera, sobre la misma tierra, y así los peces plateados, o tornasolados, o pardos parecen deslucidos, polvorientos y sucios. Primero hubo más de un corro, cada una en círculo en torno a su montón. . . . (p. 50)

They are a loud, boisterous group in comparison to the silent, weary men who surrender their catch:

Tienen las voces desgarradas. Hablan a gritos. No hay un hombre entre ellas. Quizá las oyen desde donde duermen y los desvelan porque gritan tanto, o quizá, acostumbrados a los fieros golpes de mar y al viento airado, aquellas voces les ayuden a dormir. Una de aquellas mujeres va destripando a los peces con una navaja, cogiéndolos bajo las agallas, y vuelve a un lado las entrañas negras. (p. 50)

The narrator describes the fisherwomen's dress as she observes them collecting, counting, cleaning and selling the fish: "Van vestidas de percal negro, verdeante por la humedad, todas viudas de un posible hombre que la mar se ha llevado. Recogen el pelo en una trenza corta sobre la nuca que a unas les asoma bajo el pañuelo, y otras lo llevan al aire" (p. 49). The women generally do not wear shoes since the salt air and water would ruin them. The narrator notices that their bare feet blend with the sand and fish and lose their human quality: "Debajo de mí, veo los pies posados sobre aquella tierra en que se mezclan barro y residuos de peces muertos, y sus pies ya no tienen calidad humana" (pp. 49-50).

Lucía explained to the narrator that only the wives of the fishermen go to meet the boats and collect the fish. Alida does not go, however, since she must stay with Liberata, and, therefore, she pays one

of the other women to take care of Dámaso's fish. The other fisherwomen are envious, yet respectful, of Alida since she is able to meet her husband at home and spend the remainder of the night with him instead of working with the fish. We observe the women's dedication to their job as the narrator describes their feelings when their husbands retire after a night's work:

Dámaso está viejo, pero hasta las jóvenes envidian a Alida que se acuesta a diario junto a su hombre. Ellas han dejado las cestas en el depósito y los miran marchar, flotilla humana a la deriva, calleja arriba. Han dejado en casa, sobre el fogón, un vaso de vino a mano, y se vuelven lentamente a llenar sus cestas para dar comienzo al extraño rito que sólo a ellas compete. Salen a la ribera--aún no ha apuntado el alba--y arrojan el pescado al suelo, con rencor o con triunfo, o simplemente ya sin darse cuenta. . . .
(p. 61)

Lucía is looking forward to the day when she and Sotero are married and she will have the opportunity to join the other women on the shore and participate in an important part of her husband's work.

The narrator does not judge the characters as they describe the events of the past and relate them to the present. Quiroga's creative structure presents the reader with the facts as the characters see them. Entrambasaguas praises Quiroga for organizing her characters and developing her story in a clear, concise manner. His admiration is emphasized as he says:

tal vez ninguna novela contemporánea ha conseguido una tónica tan perfecta y una factura tan apretada. . . . Para producirnos esta intensa emoción, Elena Quiroga no ha tenido que recurrir al tremendismo en uso, ni dar tensión y realidad a su novela a fuerza de manchar sus páginas con porquerías, como algunos suelen, por error.⁷

⁷ Entrambasaguas, review of La enferma, p. 254.

Quiroga's characters tell their story free of her comment or interpretation. Each character has his own version of the story of Liberata and Telmo, and the opinions are related by their similarities and contrasts.

Through each character's account of the events that took place, we are able to perceive the difficulty Liberata and Telmo had in relating to each other, just like the individuals in Viento del norte and La sangre. In addition, we are able to observe how the lives of the villagers were altered as a result of their involvement with Liberata and Telmo. The opinion of Alida, who now takes care of Liberata, is a bitter and hateful commentary on the situation. She blames Telmo entirely for Liberata's condition and defends Liberata by saying she was a shy, pretty girl who had difficulty making friends. She did not relate well to others since her timid and reserve manner prevented her from being open and expressing her feelings. She wanted to be like the other girls but her beauty and high social standing in the community set her apart and usually excluded her from the activities of others. The town likes Liberata more now than before since they realize how cruel and inconsiderate Telmo was with her. Alida contends that Telmo wanted to show Liberata that he could stand on his own and that he did not need her. He carried his actions too far, though, since Liberata refused to challenge his marriage and left him in misery with his wife that he did not really love. Alida is glad that Telmo died alone and poor so he could feel some of the suffering he created for Liberata.

Angustias defends Telmo, her brother, and refuses to sympathize with Liberata and those who support her. She can never forgive Liberata

for having destroyed her brother by being too possessive and jealous of him. Liberata prevented Telmo from continuing his writing and forced him to leave the village and marry Flora who did not understand him. Angustias claims that Liberata planned the destruction of Telmo's life on purpose. Liberata thought she controlled Telmo to the extent that if she were destroyed, then, he would be also. She knew him so well she was able to predict his reaction to her refusal to talk again. Angustias also claims that Liberata was insane long before Telmo returned with his wife and he should not be responsible for what happened.

Don Simón and Justa and her father give the narrator a more objective observation of what happened between Telmo and Liberata. Don Simón agrees with Alida that Liberata was shy but he adds that the fact that she was so afraid of people meant she had a psychological problem that made her mentally unstable. He thinks that Telmo was a weak and imaginative person who was attracted by the mysterious personality that Liberata had. He also enjoyed the attention showered on him by Liberata but soon realized that he had other friends and did not need her constant companionship. The same qualities that had attracted him to Liberata now repelled him. Don Simón concludes that Telmo did treat Liberata cruelly in the end but he was too weak to do otherwise. Justa considers Liberata's condition to be worse than death. She says that Angustias and Liberata were attractive when they were young but Angustias did not know how to deal with people. She claims that Angustias is basically a good person but has difficulty letting

others see this. Justa's father said that, after studying about illnesses similar to Liberata's, he concluded that she was actually a weak person who could not deal with life and hid from it so she would not suffer its disappointments and sorrow. He says that Telmo is not solely to blame since their relationship was only the final blow in Liberata's demise.

As we observe the Galician's inability to communicate effectively, which affected Telmo and Liberata, we see that the personalities of the other characters were also altered by the events of the past. Alida was respected and admired by the villagers for accepting the responsibility of Liberata but the incidents made her bitter and unable to forget the past and improve the present. Her husband, Dámaso, allowed Alida to control their home life while he concerned himself with being in charge of the fishing. Angustias was constantly trying to defend the actions of her brother and could never live in the present. Angustias and Telmo's mother felt more regret for Telmo than Liberata after hearing of her collapse. Don Simón felt he was never able to achieve his purpose in the village and he only succeeded in performing his obligations. Lucía was more concerned with her treatment by Alida as it related to the past situation. Justa did not judge Liberata and Telmo the way her father did, but, rather, was still trying to understand the events. Eugenio felt deceived by Telmo but found happiness in the United States as Natalio did in Argentina and Chile. Their mother died being disillusioned by the lack of companionship she had hoped to have with her family.

Knowing the events surrounding Liberata's and Telmo's relationship, we are able to judge for ourselves the extent to which their inability to understand each other affected their lives. In analyzing the Galician couple's lack of communication, we must rely only on the information given to us by the characters. We are not influenced, as we were in La sangre, by the comments of the narrator. Based on the information given, we can conclude that Liberata was a beautiful, quiet, and shy young girl who needed someone to whom she could relate and with whom she felt comfortable and secure. Her appearance and the family's wealth made her seem aloof and unfriendly to the other village girls, which was just the opposite of the impression she wanted to give. Her mother thought that sending her away to school would help her social adjustment but removal from a secure home life increased her anxiety. Natalio did not interact with the family, and her other brother, Eugenio, was busy with his own friends, including Telmo. Liberata was virtually alone. Her inability to communicate as a child did not improve as she arrived at her teen years and her need for a companion thrust her toward Telmo whom she saw as a vulnerable boy she could control and manage and keep all to herself. She needed to show, not only herself, but also others, that she was capable of having someone care about her.

Liberata was not familiar with establishing relationships, however, and she became overly possessive of Telmo and eventually frightened him away as she had consistently done with other people. Telmo was attracted to Liberata in the beginning but not because he knew and

understood her. His imagination turned her into a mysterious, captivating woman, and he was fascinated by the attention only he received from her. As she became more domineering, however, he realized he never had understood her, and the same qualities that attracted him, now made him afraid of further involvement. Neither Telmo nor Liberata were able to express their true feelings to each other. They never matured sufficiently to realize that they were no longer children who could tease and torment each other one day and forget about it the next. Liberata and Telmo and their families did not realize that Liberata's shyness developed into a more serious psychological problem which, after Telmo's rejection, as Justa's father pointed out, caused her to denounce life, which to her consisted of pain and suffering only. She destroyed herself as well as Telmo.

The characters' analysis of the past and present situation give the narrator an insight into her own personality and the relationship she has with her husband. She came to know that she, like the other Galicians, had difficulty expressing her emotions. When Víctor first told the narrator about the land, he described it in such a loving way that he thought she was jealous of the time he spent there and was curious about who might have been with him. He did not understand, and the narrator did not tell him, that she was not jealous of another woman but of the good time he seemed to have had without needing anyone else: "No podía decirle que no de una mujer, sino de aquella ancha gloriosa libertad en que no había lugar para mujer alguna. Aquella libertad en que se refugiaba, a veces, aunque estuviese conmigo" (25). Víctor told

the narrator that at one time he would have enjoyed living on the beach without any interference from anyone or anything:

Puse amor en aquel sitio. Lo acertaste. Te diste cuenta de que había pasión en mí cuando hablaba de la arena y de la ría y de aquellas noches de extraña fluorescencia. Alguna vez pensé: "Aquí me gustaría vivir. Solo. Sin vínculos ni obligaciones. Sin dañar a nadie." (p. 25)

When they first married Víctor said that in order to find true happiness one had to live each moment to its fullest:

Habría que enseñar a la gente que vivir cada minuto, simplemente vivir, es la clave de todo. Que es maravilloso despertarse por las mañanas, y que el día empiece. Toda la belleza del mundo está ahí, en el aire, en la luz, al alcance de nuestros ojos. (p. 23)

While the narrator was in the village, she remembered what Víctor had said, especially his remarks about feeling free when he was alone and isolated. The narrator had the same feeling on the boat and the beach. Like Liberata, neither she nor Víctor wanted to face the pain of human relationships. As a child, the narrator had either been ordered around or neglected by her brothers. She needed someone, just as Liberata did, to consider her very own. She thought she had found this person in Víctor, but the marriage did not work out like she had planned. She was unable to influence Víctor and control him like she wanted to do. He became discouraged with his work and his goals and ambition were lowered. The narrator became disillusioned when they failed to communicate as she imagined that they would. She had expected too much from life and when she did not get it, she felt betrayed, more unsure of herself, and more noncommunicative. The fisherwomen in the village, however, did not anticipate a better or different life in the

future. They were resigned to live each day as it came, which is what Víctor thought was the solution to achieving happiness. In view of her contact with the village people, the narrator thought the solution to her anxiety about the future would be to concentrate on the present and leave the future to itself. She wanted to adopt this philosophy because she saw how it worked for the fishermen and women. She would have to be more independent and not be so concerned with others. When the narrator returned to Madrid, however, and was with her friends and in the city environment, she realized that this philosophy would not work for her. She wanted more out of life than day to day existence. She could not feel secure this way and she needed Víctor to help her just as Liberata had needed Telmo.

The narrator was able to perceive the feelings of the characters and come to an independent conclusion regarding their situation just as we were able to do without interference from the narrator. Quiroga's skillful handling of the story made it possible to do so, as Entrambasaguas points out:

Le ha bastado su arte, su estudio demorado de la psicología de los personajes, la observación del ambiente y, sobre todo, su imaginación portentosa . . . para adentrarnos en la narración hasta identificarnos con aquellos seres . . . y sentir . . . todo el intenso dramatismo de lo acaecido, viviéndolo, como ella, con toda su fuerza humana, en cada una de las páginas de La enferma.⁸

Quiroga's treatment of the Galician village by the sea and its inhabitants with their customs and character combine to give the reader a better understanding of the individuals of Galicia.

⁸ Entrambasaguas, review of La enferma, p. 254.

CHAPTER IV

PLÁCIDA, LA JOVEN

Plácida, la joven (1956), one of Quiroga's short novels, was published in a volume called Plácida, la joven y otras narraciones, which contains two other short novels first published in 1953. Plácida, la joven, which we will study in detail, takes place in Galicia. The other two, Trayecto uno and La otra ciudad, are set in Madrid. Plácida, la joven takes place in the province of Pontevedra in a small village near the town of Nigrán, which is between Vigo and Bayona and off the coast of the Ría de Vigo. Quiroga's husband is from Nigrán and Zatlin-Boring explains that the story is based on a true account of the life of one of the inhabitants in the area.¹ The story, which is told through a narrator, is about a young Galician peasant, Plácida, who died giving birth to a daughter while her husband, Salvador, was away at sea. The narrator tells us Plácida's story through a letter she is writing to her husband who left her in the village to finish her vacation. He had been in the town with her previously and the letter relates what happened after he went back home. Since the letter continues throughout the entire novel, the narrator's writing is similar to a journal or diary. Even though her husband is familiar with the area, the narrator describes different parts of the town. The narrator was visiting her half-sister, Eduarda, who lived in the fishing village where the

¹ Zatlin-Boring, Elena Quiroga, p. 54.

narrator and her husband arrived in early summer in 1955. The narrator prolonged her visit since she always wanted to stay as long as she could with Eduarda, knowing that her half-sister spent the long, cold winters alone. She sensed that Eduarda did not want to leave the village for fear of not being able to cope with unfamiliar people and a different environment. In her youth, Eduarda had a close friend who was two years older than she was; when her friend became ill and needed a quiet place to recuperate, Eduarda invited her to come live with her and her father, a widower. Eduarda's father, who was fifty-four years old at the time, fell in love with his daughter's friend and, disregarding their age differences, the two were married. Their child, the narrator, became Eduarda's half-sister. The narrator's mother subsequently died and Eduarda raised the narrator as if she were her own daughter rather than her sister. The narrator spent most of her childhood with Eduarda although she was away in the winters at school. Since she was quite familiar with village life she enjoyed returning with her husband for their annual visit.

During her stay in the village, the narrator met several of Eduarda's friends but she did not have the opportunity to meet Plácida, whose story was related to her by Eduarda and the other villagers only after the young peasant girl's death. When Plácida was still a baby, her father was killed in a dispute with another man, and Plácida was cared for by an elderly widow, Carmela, and her grandmother, until she was six years old. At that time, the elderly women could no longer care for her, and consequently, Plácida spent the remainder of her youth living in different homes of the villagers. Each family looked forward

to sharing the responsibility since Plácida was a capable and healthy, although thin and not very pretty, young girl who worked hard with whomever she was living. Plácida socialized with the villagers as she grew older and attended the dances and festivals with the other young people. She began going out with one of the young fishermen, Salvador, more than the others. Salvador, charming and witty, was liked by the whole town. He was of average height, strong and sturdy, with saffron colored hair and skin weathered by the sea. The villagers were surprised at his attraction to Plácida, but his lively, spirited nature seemed to complement Plácida's quiet, submissive character. Before he married, Salvador lived with his mother and, although he would have preferred to travel to other seas and cities, he supported the two of them by fishing with the other men. He and Plácida did not get married for quite some time since he was neither financially stable nor able to bring Plácida to live in his mother's house because her sister-in-law and children were already staying there.

Salvador and Plácida did eventually marry when Salvador found a job he was confident would provide the necessary security for his family. He contracted for three years with a boat which sailed out of Cádiz and, even though he would be away from Plácida, he could earn enough money to support his wife and child who was conceived four months before they married. The town still considered itself responsible for Plácida, however, and some of the men, who had been building a summer chalet on the beach, received permission from the contractor to use the extra materials to construct a house for the couple in their spare time. The small house, at the base of the mountain surrounding the village,

consisted of a kitchen and bedroom and was topped off with the traditional laurel wreath for good luck. Salvador went to sea shortly after the marriage and Plácida lived alone in the house awaiting the arrival of their baby. Plácida was by herself when the birth started and called out for help only when she could no longer stifle her cries from the pain. The village women, including Rufa, the midwife, came to her aid and the baby girl was safely delivered. After the birth, Plácida became pale and trembled to the extent that the women sent a young boy by bicycle for an intern who lived nearly on the beach. The intern was not able to stop the apparent hemorrhaging; therefore, he sent for the doctor who lived six kilometers from the town. The doctor arrived by car too late to save Plácida from dying. The town was consumed with grief. The baby girl was placed under the care of Salvador's mother until her son could return from Cádiz. Consequently, the child was destined to begin life in much the same way as Plácida: in the care of others without a mother or father.

The narrator's observations of the fishing village emphasize her closeness to the land and her ability to perceive its importance in the lives of the inhabitants. As she contemplates the villagers, she gives us detailed descriptions of the land. The narrator begins the letter to her husband when she is thinking about Plácida's death. Her sorrow is reflected in the scene outside her window:

miro por esta ventana del despacho hacia el patio de entrada
con su cedro gigante, y todo lo percibo a través de esta
suerte de enristecido estar: porque el aire parece que
lleva luz distinta, y la tierra huele apagada, conteniéndose,

y en el estanque el agua de la fuente chorrea amortiguada, queda: avergonzado todo porque Plácida ha muerto.²

The narrator could not separate Plácida from the environment in which the young peasant girl had always lived. When the narrator's husband was in the village, she would go out on the balcony with him at night and watch the falling stars. The narrator is reminded of this as she continues to think about Plácida. She compares Plácida, one of many people in the village, to one of the stars that leaves the infinite number in the sky:

Y el cielo está fabulosamente estrellado y tembloroso
Y de pronto, sin ruido, como soltamos de la mano una hoja de un árbol o el pétalo de una flor, cae una estrella en rápida, silenciosa, fugaz parábola. . . . Perdida estrella de nuestro cielo de verano. . . . Y era más hondo aquel caer de Plácida, fugaz y silencioso, sin huella, que el de un astro. (p. 34)

Plácida's death was more difficult to understand than the rapid disappearance of the star. For twenty years Plácida had lived among the other villagers and had been virtually unnoticed by the narrator. Suddenly, she emerged, and then, quickly and quietly, without warning, she was gone. The day after the burial, the narrator woke up to a beautiful morning which, she thought, would help her forget momentarily the tragedy of the previous day. Her description reveals the hope she had for the new day: "mañana apacible, limpia, soleada y verde. . . . el olor fresco de la mañana, recién regada la tierra, pálido y dorado el sol, verdes y dorados los árboles" (pp. 44-45). She was disappointed and disgusted to find that Eduarda and her friend, Elisa, were still

²Elena Quiroga, Plácida la joven y otras narraciones (Barcelona: Editorial Noguer, 1970), p. 10. Subsequent references to Plácida, la joven will be noted in the text with the page number in parentheses.

recounting the previous evening's events. Instead of the peace that the sunny day could bring she was reminded on the somber quietness of the afternoon burial she had described to her husband: "En esta tarde gris, tranquila--se palpa esilencio--han llevado a la tierra a una mujer. . . ." (p. 50).

As the narrator continues her letter, we see that before she understood the villagers' attitude concerning death, she was distressed at their reaction following Plácida's burial. The day after the funeral, the narrator watched as the villagers harvested the grapes and she was surprised at their apparent lack of sorrow for Plácida. She observed them closely, however, and perceived that the comfort they needed came from their work and their close union with nature. She describes the scene and the atmosphere in detail:

Miran al sol. Es bueno tener sol mientras siga fresca la tierra allá, sol y aquel airecillo oloroso, que huele a cebada en palleiro, a maíz recogido, a hierba tierna, a la uva agria, al dulzón excremento de los bueyes, al pelo de las cabras, a una mar cercana que desde el valle no se ve. Bueno que el aire baje desde la casita con balsámico olor de árboles y cruce la aldea y brice la tierra recién apisonada ayer. Que huela el aire a leche, a niños, al sudor de ellas, y que lo lleve allí. Aquel comunicativo airecillo que al atardecer, cuando el sol se retire, será fresco, que recorre toda la aldea por igual, que unifica. (p. 62)

The narrator realized that the villagers, through their contact with the land, were still communicating with Plácida. The sun was shining on them as well as on the plot of land where Plácida was buried. The wind carried the vivid odors of the atmosphere to Plácida and then recircled the village touching the living and the dead. The narrator observed that the villagers continued their daily activities as they unconsciously received nature's subtle remembrance of Plácida.

The narrator continued to think of Plácida as she recalled what the winters were like in the village. She visualized the scene as it must have been when Salvador returned from his daily sea outings and was greeted by Plácida. Her description gives us yet another look at the environment in which the villagers were immersed:

Si la noche de enero era fría y el cielo alto. Si el campo olía a lluvia. . . . no podía ser sombra verde y fresca porque andaban los árboles descarnados. Enero es mes de lobos. . . . Se oía la mar. Suena tan cerca, en invierno, que desde casa parece que azota al pie de los balcones. Parece que nada podrá ponerte a salvo de ella. (Los veraneantes no reconocerían la mar en que se bañaron y jugaron.) . . . En enero viene el día tarde. La tierra abreva noche, la retiene, escalofriada, casi sin estrellas. . . . Una noche de enero en mar debe dejar las carnes heladas, arrecidas. (pp. 56-57)

Plácida, had she lived until the following winter, would have had her own house to comfort her in Salvador's absence. The house was small and typical of those the narrator had seen in the area. The describes it as being hardly bigger than a cabin but sufficient for the needs of Plácida and Salvador: "la casita . . . casi como las chozas que tenemos para los animales; sólo dos cuartos: cocina--y cuarto donde vivían--; alcoba: donde dormían y vivían también" (p. 21).

The narrator's descriptions, although always indirectly related to Plácida, at times focus on other characters. The narrator describes the recurring scene when she and Eduarda chat in the evening. They see and hear the closeness of nature:

perdidos los ojos en la clara noche, escuchando el rumor de la tierra, del agua, del plátano ese dorado y verde de silabantes hojas, ancho y copudo, como la madre de los árboles del jardín--¿es padre el vertical, enhiesto, definido cedro?--. . . . (p. 26)

As the narrator continues to write her letter, she recalls the evenings when she and her husband used to look out from their balcony at the view below. In her description the narrator gives us another impression of the village, and, in addition, she describes the lights of the distant village of Bayona:

Asomados al balcón de nuestro cuarto que da sobre la huerta y sobre la alta vieja palmera--llena de dignidad en su senectud--y sobre el regato que forma el agua del estanque corriendo hacia el lavadero, hemos visto caer estrellas voladoras. (p. 26)

(Al fondo, temblorosas como las luces de un gran trasatlántico, el pueblo de Bayona se estira. Luces azuladas, amarillentas. Ha desaparecido el contorno, el paisaje: sólo las luces temblando en la noche, suspendidas en lo oscuro.) (p. 34)

Quiroga dedicates her novel to Plácida, who is representative of the Galician woman who works the land. Quiroga assumes the role of the narrator as she states that she and Plácida, who died in October, had never known each other:

A una mujer--y en ella a todas las trabajadoras mujeres del campo gallego--que murió cerca de mí, en octubre pasado, sin que hubiéramos cruzado una palabra . . .

Era muy joven.

Se llamaba Plácida. (p. 7)

The narrator, through her observations of Plácida and the other women, gives us an accurate account of the importance of the Galician woman in village life. The years of hard work and suffering that the woman endures are reflected by the old woman, Carmela, who took care of the infant Plácida. The narrator's detailed description allows us to visualize the fate of the Galician woman:

una mujeruca que caminaba doblada bajo el peso de un hato de maíz--o los años, o la pena--. No se la podía ver bien.

Arrastraba los pies al andar--y su vida--. Iba sola, hablando. Decía cosas regañosas, férvidas y menudas:

--¡Ay!, Plácida, Plácida . . . ¿Quen che mandou irte?

Hablaba con ella como si Plácida caminase a su lado, arrastrando los pies también.

Era un bulto informe y entrañable, la mujer y la maíz, apenas un bulto más en la penumbra; la noche bajaba rápidamente, había tardado en acudir y allí estaba fresca, traidora noche. O el frío no lo traía el aire: era un frío de dentro. (pp. 34-35)

As she walked along the road, her body and the load on her back resembling one figure, Carmela lamented Plácida's death. Had Plácida survived her daughter's birth, she would have reflected the withered and weary image of Carmela. She was a thin yet strong and wiry young girl who had the dark coloring of a mountain girl. Her hard work and stamina overshadowed her lack of beauty and grace. Until the villagers built the small house, Plácida did not have any possessions of her own since she moved from house to house and worked for the family with whom she lived. Her daily work was the same as that of the other women except that she did not the additional responsibility of a home and children. The narrator does not remember Plácida specifically and the description she gives to her husband, as she points out, could fit any Galician woman in the village.

The narrator's detailed description of an everyday event at the shore is revealing since, in addition to giving us a good picture of the Galician woman's work and dress, the narrator also observes the environment in which she works. The narrator and her husband saw her many times as they sat on the beach enjoying the sunny days. The description the narrator furnishes us could apply to any Galician woman:

En esta aldea pequeña en que todos nos tropezamos a diario, habrá pasado a lo largo del verano tantas veces a nuestro lado, doblada bajo su carga o yendo descalza con las alpargatas liadas en el carro para recoger algas a orillas de la mar, en los días de las mareas altas . . . y tú y yo insensibles a nada que no fuera nosotros mismos y la belleza del día y el espantable, sordo y magnífico rumor de la mar, miraríamos vagamente, tumbados sobre las dunas de la playa, aquella imagen habitual de una mujer trabajadora y grávida junto al carro chirriante. Las ruedas irían marcando huellas, igual que tiras largas sobre la impronta de la pezuña grave de los bueyes, y el chirrido de los ejes como el oboe sobre el trombón del agua. (p. 11)

Through the narrator's description of the oxen and their companion we are able to visualize them against the background of the sea:

Plácida vestiría una bata de percal negro, y el aliento de la mar ceñiría el cuerpo castigado y cansado, mientras acomodaba el carro, primitivo y escueto, junto a la orilla, recortados sobre las olas los cuerpos rubios, sólidos y solemnes de los bueyes, sus cabezas de sabios con los enormes cuernos sin amenaza, la testuz mansa. (p. 11)

When she had stationed her cart and oxen, Plácida began her daily chore:

Plácida se remangaría las sayas, ajustándoselas al deformado talle, y entraría en el agua hasta las corvas con la forcada en mano, y en el instante preciso en que la ola rompe, la hundiría para sacarla verde, chorreante de algas. . . .

Un gesto rítmico que adormece mirar: de la ola a la arena húmeda, montones de algas detrás de ella, en la orilla. (pp. 11-12)

The only aspect of Plácida's tiring and seemingly endless task that differentiated it from another Galician woman's was the fact that Plácida did not receive the monetary benefit from her day's work. As the narrator points out, everything except the work itself belonged to her designated family: "no explotaba su hermoso, duro y frío trabajo en beneficio propio; el carro no era suyo, no vendería Plácida las algas: sólo el trabajo la pertenecía . . ." (p. 12).

In addition to working in the sea and tilling the land, the village woman also managed the home. The Galician woman helped with the grain and grape harvest by tying the wheat in bundles and collecting the grapes in her baskets and carts. If the woman lived alone, as Eduarda did in later years, she assumed more manual tasks which substituted for the absence of family responsibility. Eduarda owned cattle that she maintained and sold, and also harvested the wheat on her land. She was a large, tall woman who, for the narrator, was a combination of mother and father. When Eduarda cared for the narrator, she, like the other women, was responsible for raising the family, caring for the home, and working on the shore and the land. The narrator's father delegated most of the responsibility for raising her to Eduarda, and the narrator remembers her as being hardworking and demanding yet also sensitive and tender. Through her own actions, Eduarda stimulated the narrator's confidence and made her feel secure on and proud of the land. Eduarda and the other women developed, out of necessity, qualities common to both men and women since their responsibility called for them to do so.

The Galician woman worked for her family and, in particular, for the son or husband who was either in Galicia or had traveled elsewhere. The woman's strong sense of obligation and dedication encouraged her to support her family. She gave the impression of being submissive to the man but realized that she was in charge. The narrator describes Plácida's desire to please Salvador and work for him to help him accomplish his goals:

Ella iría a su lado . . . escuchando las palabras de él, las ambiciones de él, el deseo de vida--lucha y muerte--de él.

Le miraría desde aquellos ojos enormes, con las ojeras que el embarazo iba acentuando, sin contradecirle jamás, acoplando sus firmes pasos de trabajadora a la zancada decidida del hombre, como un gozquecilla trota junto al amo. (p. 58)

The woman accepted the man for what he was and did not try to change him. The village woman thought all men were basically the same and their actions need not be explained because the fact that they were men was sufficient explanation. When the narrator asked Eduarda what Salvador was like, she responded, "--Como todos." (p. 53), which to her was a clear answer. The narrator wonders what Plácida thought Salvador was doing while at sea. Whatever he was doing and why he was doing it, would be reduced to the usual expression: "'E un home . . . Bó, os homes son os homes'" (p. 15). In Salvador's absence, Plácida was comforted by her work. When she was at the shore working, she imagined herself next to Salvador, sharing his life even though he was not there: "Para Plácida, la mar . . . era algo más que cosa u horizonte, agua e inmensidad, ola o peligro. Más abajo de este océano mismo . . . estaba Salvador" (p. 12).

The Galician woman accepted without question her difficult life and the suffering that accompanied it. Her loyalty to her family compelled her to deal with the problems and tasks that confronted her. She did not ask why she had to work the land and manage the home because she knew the answer: it was the only way to survive. Plácida never had a house or a family she could call her own but she accepted that as the way life was meant to be. When she finally had her first material possession, the small house, Plácida was content with its apparent lack of conveniences. The two rooms, the bedroom where the farm tools were

kept, and the kitchen which had the wheat hanging to dry, were sufficient since Plácida did not expect anymore than life gave her. The narrator's description of Plácida's resignation to her life and work applies to each of the village women:

Plácida no necesitaba superfluos. La tierra era la tierra, y el trabajo una ley. Y el sufrir, ley también; pero una ley especial a la que no se le buscan trampas, por inútiles. Sufrir era como decir: respirar. Tan habitual que ni se daba cuenta.

Ser pobre o no tener suerte era para ella una cuestión parecida al sexo, o a la estatura, o al color oscuro de sus ojos enormes, asombrados. (p. 22)

When Plácida died, her suffering stopped and, as the villagers looked at her before the burial, she seemed prettier than she ever was since she was now free of pain and hardship. The dirt underneath her fingernails was the only remaining evidence of her manual labor.

Eduarda described her to the narrator:

de viva se la veía mustia, tan trabajadora, y ahora parece que recobró una juventud que nunca tuvo. . . . Tiene las uñas sucias, se hace raro en un muerto, sobre todo con las manos de aquel blancor, pero debía de tener la tierra metida hasta en las yemas. (p. 49)

The dirty fingernails symbolized the difficulty of Plácida's existence and by extension, that of the Galician woman and further, of humankind in general. As she observed the harvesting of the grapes, the narrator remarked that the suffering and hardship of others were represented by the woman working in the fields: "todas las pasiones, las tristezas, las miserias del mundo están en aquella anodina vulgar mujer que se enjuga la nariz con la mano. Y en ella la raíz de la tragedia humana" (p. 61).

The Galician man in Quiroga's story was not as dominant as the woman and his work was confined only to his job and did not extend to the total management of the family. He considered himself free to do as he pleased and not bound by his family. This is demonstrated by the narrator's description of the scene on Sunday afternoons in Salvador's mother's house: "Los hombres bebían y acababan por bajar a la taberna 'para más libertad', decían. Salvador preguntaba rudamente a Plácida delante de los demás: ('No se piensen que me tiene cogido.')" (p. 58). Eduarda's father gave her the responsibility of caring for the narrator, and Plácida's father, a widower, was a poor provider who was prone to drinking and boasting which in the end killed him. Although some of the men subscribed to a particular occupation, most worked at what was available regardless of whatever and wherever it was. Manuela, one of the village women, had a son in Cuba who sent her coffee which they sold. Some of the village men contracted to do construction work which involved building summer beach chalets for rental to tourists. Others, like Salvador, worked at sea bringing in the fish which gave them barely enough money to live on. Eduarda said that Salvador, who harvested her wheat one year, would have made a good farmer, but the farms in the area were not prosperous enough to hire day laborers. In the village, he sailed with others to provide fish for himself and his mother, but when he married, this would not supply sufficient income and, therefore, he contracted, as others did, with the boat in Cádiz. Even though he would be away from Plácida and their child for three years, he, and the other villagers, considered it a good decision and the only solution to their

economic problem. He and the other men expected their wives to participate in bringing income to the family and virtually ignored the suffering they endured. As we pointed out, the women themselves were not aware they were leading an unusually rigorous and strenuous life.

The narrator's lack of contact with Plácida represents the absence of communication among all of the villagers. The wall separating Plácida's house from Eduarda's was more than just a structural barrier as it emphasized the silence that existed between the narrator and Plácida. The narrator only came to know Plácida after she died, and she is remorseful because she did not ever inquire if she could help the young girl. In addition, she fears that Plácida, had she not perceived an unconcerned attitude on the part of the narrator, would have asked for assistance with the birth that she terribly feared: "o quizá --lo peor--que no haya visto en mis ojos cordialidad humana sino indiferencia, y por eso, con inconsciente altivez, no haya clamado ayuda" (pp. 12-13). The narrator's guilt is magnified when she realizes that regardless of the isolated area and its inhabitants, she, as well as all individuals, needs to be more conscious of the situation of others and not live thinking only about her own problems: "Es la falta de humana solidaridad lo que me duele. Y aquí por lo reducido del contorno, por la pretura de la gente, me he dado cuenta de nuestra monstruosa indiferencia--vivimos para nosotros mismos--" (p. 19). Plácida belonged to everyone and yet to no one. All of the villagers loved her but not one could claim her more than the other, and neither did Plácida have anyone to call her own except her husband who was at

sea and her baby who was not yet born: "(Quizá a Plácida, la joven, todos la querían, la sentían suya porque no era de nadie.)" (p. 19)

". . . Nadie la había amado totalmente. Nadie podía llamarla suya con propiedad" (p. 26).

Plácida's inability to communicate effectively was emphasized by the fact that she was not able to confess to anyone her fear of having the baby and only indirectly told Salvador when he called a week before she died. Her conversation with him, in her usual Galician language instead of Spanish, was short and incoherent since she was nervous and agitated at hearing the far away voice of her husband. She succeeded only in saying she was fine and hoped she survived the birth: "'Bó, si vivo d'aquela'" (p. 14). Salvador was to call her again in eight days but Plácida did not survive to hear his voice. When he did call none of the villagers wanted to give him the tragic news and Juana, the telephone operator, the one who was forced to tell him, did so in a cruel and insensitive manner. Elisa, Eduarda's friend, related the conversation to the narrator and Eduarda:

Dice que dijo: " Está ahí la Plácida?" Y Juana: "No. Va en tierra." Le salió así, sin más, de una vez. Y Salvador: " En qué tierra?", como asombrado, creería que marchó a otro sitio. "Enterrada, hombre, que la dieron tierra ayer." Y fíjese, se pensó que no la había oído, porque dijo: " Ula?" Y Juana volvió a decir, con paciencia, despacio, para que lo entendiese de una vez: "La dieron tierra ayer, que se murió, sabes? Pero te dejó una niña preciosísima, sabes?, y la tiene tu madre." No sabe si oyó esto, porque dice que le pareció que colgaba cuando lo de la niña. Quedaría de piedra, el hombre . . . Para sorpresa, es. (pp. 63-64)

The narrator was distraught at the lack of Juana's sensitivity and the villagers' reaction: most of them thought there was no other way for Juana to handle the situation.

The villagers' reaction to Plácida's death reveals their sorrow and, at the same time, their attitude toward irrevocable events. The announcement of Plácida's death was received with shock and dismay just as if someone had announced the end of the world:

Como si dijeran:
 --La luna . . .
 --. . . se cayó. (p. 25)

Although the villagers were quite shaken by the news, after the burial they continued with their work as if her death were truly an incident of the past. The day following the funeral they resumed their daily activities. Plácida was gone just as the seasons pass and time progresses: "Esta gente sabe que Plácida ha dejado de ser. También la primavera se va, o evoluciona hacia el verano y el invierno . . . Y los años de una . . . Hay cosas que se van. Y Plácida ya es cosa" (pp. 61-62). The narrator did not agree with the villagers' apparent apathy until she realized that they did not have time to reflect on the past like she did: "Han aceptado el tiempo mientras yo me rebelo, porque pienso. Ellas no tienen tiempo para pensar, o quizá piensen como rumian las vacas, inconscientemente, al borde de los prados" (p. 59). The harvesting and the fishing did not stop to allow for a period of grief.

In addition to the narrator's observation of the Galician village and its inhabitants, she also describes local customs and events that took place during her stay in the village. Before the harvesting of the grapes, the town held a special mass, for the purpose of blessing the harvest, in honor of Saint Felix. They carried candles to signify their desire for his blessing as they circled the church with the Saint and

then replaced him on the altar. The narrator's description allows us to visualize the celebration:

íbamos detrás del Santo, dando la vuelta a la parroquia, y hacía tanto sol y llevábamos velas encendidas--se nos pegoteaban en las manos--. San Félix, vestido de guerrero romano con corta túnica gris acero, plisada hasta las rodillas, y manto rojo, llevaba colgando de la mano frescos racimos amoratados de uva, ofrenda para que protegiese la vendimia. Ibamos todos tras él bajo aquel sol sin remedio de la media mañana, distraída yo, cansada, deseando terminar, y mirando, casi sin distinguirlas, las mujeres de la fila de enfrente. (p. 40)

Ya se veía de nuevo la torre--donde habían colocado una bandera y un chiquillo subido, agitando la campana para anunciar el júbilo de que el Patrón volvía. Había que dar la vuelta a la iglesia antes de reintegrarle a su altar. Los hombres portaban las andas; los racimos se bamboleaban. (p. 41)

The grape harvest itself was a festive occasion even though it occurred after Plácida's death. The men, women and children participated in the gathering of the grapes. The narrator relates the scene to us:

Se ha levantado el sol, estremece la piel de alegría mientras sube la humilde, colectiva, poderosa canción del campo. No brota de las gargantas la canción, no son sus lenguas inhábiles las que cantan: es el ruido de los pies, camino adelante hacia la viña propia; son las manos arrancando el racimo, el "chac" corto y expirante de la hoz sobre el sarmiento; son los chiquillos empujando las carretillas reventando las uvas.

-- Buen año!--dicen todos con los ojos llenos de lucecitas.

Gritan entre ellas, sueltan palabras chocarreras, y se ríen porque los hombres ayudan. (p. 60)

The wine they received from the grapes enlivened the young and old. The narrator describes their reaction:

--Buen vino, tú.

El hombre de ellas tendrá vino bueno, sobrante de lo que vendan. Bendito fruto . . . que calienta la entraña, que es para ellos como un abrazo ardido, adivinación de otros pecados imposibles, trasposición de la realidad de cada día.

Y para ellas, fuerza. Porque ellas beberán del vino y se secarán los labios con el revés de la mano y bajarán más ligeras al campo. Y si ella es vieja se sentirá menos vieja. (pp. 60-61)

Through Quiroga's story we are able to witness the attitudes of the villagers as they deal with everyday events in addition to the unexpected death of one of their neighbors. Their work and their reaction to the death provide us with insight into the character of the Galician, which Quiroga depicts with such realistic scenes and dialogue. As we read about the village at the bottom of the mountains and near the sea, and the harvesting of the wheat and grapes, we are reminded of Castroviejo's description of the region surrounding the village:

Dos motivos, fundamentalmente gallegos, decoran y ennoblecen las tierras de Pontevedra: La corredoira y el hórreo. La corredoira es remanso y fresca bajo el palio de la viña verde y del laurel. Por ella canta el carro, con sus vacas marelas o sus bueyes pontificales. La corredoira sume y resume el paisaje. Es la nave dionisiaca de una gran catedral campesina, y la hermana agua, filtrándose humilde entre helechos, zarzas y muros, sabe ser su fiel compañera. . . . Sobre la lujuria de los verdes o el oro verde de los maíces, es el hórreo, como un crucero, rubricando la rubia moneda de la cosecha. . . .³

Again, we see the vineyards and the oxen pulling the carts and the harvesting of the wheat. Quiroga's ability to recreate the Galician village and its inhabitants is affirmed by Eugenio Nora when he states that the novel is one of her finest: "cuenta entre las páginas más finamente elaborados y psicológicamente penetrantes de la escritora."⁴ Engrambasaguas also praises the short novel:

³ Castroviejo, Guía espiritual, pp. 144-45.

⁴ Eugenio G. Nora, La novela española contemporánea (1927-1960), Madrid: Editorial Gredos, v. 2, pt. 2, 1962, p. 171.

Esta breve novela, reafirma en la obra de Elena Quiroga, una perfecta unidad, no sólo de pensamiento sino de invención y expresión, que nos subyuga en todo momento. La muerte de Plácida, teniendo una hija--rodeada por la incultura rural de Galicia, donde sitúa concretamente esta vez la narración su autora--, tiene en su horror de realidad observada y de ⁵realismo inventado, una serie de matices de primer orden.

Quiroga's realistic account of the events combined with her creativity and imagination give us a valid picture of the Galician and his way of life.

⁵Entrambasaguas, Las mejores novelas, pp. 1302-03.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Our conclusion focuses on various similarities and differences present in the four novels studied. We also recapitulate in this chapter what was discussed earlier. Although all four works take place in Galicia, two have coastal village settings while the other two are situated away from the coast. The viewpoint from which each story is told is well suited to the particular narrative that is developed. Quiroga's description of her characters enhances our perception of the physical and psychological traits of the Galician man and woman. In particular, the natural environment has been a prominent influence on the development of the Galician character. The characters' beliefs in certain superstitions and their participation in traditional festivals are depicted with varying emphasis in the four novels. The discussion of these ideas will aid in the appreciation of Quiroga's effectiveness to portray the Galician people in a sensitive and revealing manner.

The novels are situated in different areas of Galicia and the characters are described in terms of the locale in which they live. Lucile K. Delano in her article, "Sensory Images in the Galician Novels of Elena Quiroga," states that Quiroga's novels dealing with the sea are well defined in terms of the environment they describe: "The sea coast of Galicia, the sea itself, the rías, persons whose lives are related to

the sea, the climate of Galicia, its scenery and the habits of the gallegos have all made a deep impression on Miss Quiroga."¹ Two of the novels in this study, La enferma and Plácida, la joven, are set in fishing villages on the coast and reflect Quiroga's interest in the area. The other two, Viento del norte and La sangre, are located away from the coast and center around a land environment. Albert Brent in his article "The Novels of Elena Quiroga," points out that the atmosphere of Viento del norte is particular to that of the region: "the first of her novels about rural Galicia in which one finds that attention to landscape and the elemental nature of life there so characteristic of the literature of the region."² As Quiroga develops her characters in their particular environment we are given detailed and accurate descriptions of the Galician man and woman and we are able to perceive their attitudes about themselves and the region in which they live. Throughout the novels we observe the customs and traditions of the Galician and are exposed to his thoughts on superstition and death. Quiroga's complete picture of the Galician region is vividly demonstrated in the four novels we have studied.

We have touched upon the locale of each novel but now we will specifically situate each of the stories in the particular area of Galicia in which each is located. In Viento del norte the action centers around two pazos, La Sagreira and Cora, which are owned by

¹Delano, "Sensory Images," p. 59.

²Brent, "The Novels," p. 210.

Alvaro and his uncle Enrique respectively. These estates are outside the town of Santa Marta which is referred to by Marcela several times: when she attends the funeral mass for Enrique; while she is staying with the recuperating Lucía on a nearby farm; and when she is at the convent in Lugo. She tells one of the sisters at the convent that she went swimming in the beach of the ría where Santa Marta is located.

Marcela's reference to Santa Marta does not tell us specifically where it is located. Alvaro and his cousin, Jorge, however, describe the surrounding area in greater detail and we are able to locate Santa Marta in northern Galicia on the Ría de Santa Marta near the town of Ortigueira in the province of La Coruña. El Barquero, where Joaquín, Lucía's husband, is a doctor is to the northeast of Ortigueira and said to be near Enrique's pazo. Jorge and Ermitas refer to the island of San Vicente where there used to be a convent. Castroviejo describes the ría and the village of Santa Marta on the River Mera: "Santa Marta de Ortigueira se acoge graciosamente en el abrigo de su ría, en la que desemboca pausado el Mera."³ Castroviejo also mentions the island of San Vicente and the convent which was once used by the Templar Knights, who belonged to a religious order sworn to protect pilgrims: "Va bien en la fuerza de este gran paisaje el recuerdo, en la isla de San Vicente, de una vieja residencia de caballeros templarios."⁴ Even though the two pazos are near the sea, the action of the novel focuses on the characters in a land environment.

³Castroviejo, p. 505.

⁴Castroviejo, p. 505.

Quiroga continues to use the setting of a large estate, Castelo, as the location for La sangre. The description of the area situates the novel in Galicia although a definite locale is not mentioned. María and her maid, Claudia, come to the pazo from Oviedo after María marries Amador, who begins the first of four generations to occupy Castelo. Their daughter, Amalia, marries Efrén, whose family is from Ribadavia on the Miño river in the province of Orense. Reference is made to political uprisings in Madrid and to the city where the family spends the winters, but the action of the story centers around the pazo.

Of the four novels we have studied, La enferma has the most clearly defined location. As we previously mentioned, Zatlin-Boring points out that Quiroga stated in an interview in 1975 that the characters are based on actual individuals that she learned about when she went to Rianjo to write. Rianjo, on the shores of the Ría de Arosa, can be reached by boat from Villagarcía which, according to the description given, is the narrator's port of departure. The boat captain points out the island of Cortegada as he steers the ferry from Villagarcía to Rianjo, and, later, Alida says that the sea shells, used as horns by the fishermen, are found on the island of Sálvora which is to the southwest of Rianjo. When the narrator leaves Rianjo by bus for Santiago, she passes through Padrón on the Ulla River, and on her flight from Santiago she sees the Ulla and Deza Rivers as they fly over Lalín and the Faro mountains, and the Miño and Sil Rivers in Orense, before landing in Madrid. Although other cities and towns are mentioned, the focal point

of the novel is the fishing village and its inhabitants who are coping with their daily activities.

The setting in Plácida, la joven is near the town of Nigrán which, according to Zatlin-Boring, is where Quiroga was told about the different individuals involved in the story. Even though the specific name of the town is not mentioned, we know that it is on the Ría de Vigo, near Bayona, as Boring points out, which the narrator describes one night as she sees the glow of Bayona's lights from her balcony. The villagers are both fishermen and women who also work the land harvesting wheat and grapes. The farms, however, are not large estates like those in Viento del norte and La sangre. Quiroga's attention to detail in her descriptions and the authenticity of the settings in the novels give us a realistic and accurate picture of the region of Galicia.

In addition to Quiroga's different locales, which are particularly suited to each of her stories, she also carefully chooses the perspective from which her stories are told, which enhances the descriptions of the environment and the characters. Viento del norte is written in the third person but the characters are so vividly defined that we are made to assume that it is the character, and not the narrator, who is describing himself and the individuals and events that surround him. The characters, especially Alvaro and Marcela, do engage in interior monologue but there are virtually no flashbacks as we see the plot development as it happens. The story begins with Marcela's birth and ends with Alvaro's death.

In La sangre a chestnut tree is the unusual narrator who relates the story of the four generations of the Castelo pazo. The tree comments on the characters' actions and relays their conversations to us in addition to describing the environment in which they live. Even though the tree gives detailed and descriptive accounts of the action, we do not feel as close to the characters in La sangre as we do in Viento del norte. We are obligated to rely on the tree for all of our information. The novel begins in the 1800s and ends in 1933. The tree, however, does not tell the story in a chronological pattern, but rather skips from one generation to another, sometimes introducing a character and then later describing his birth.

In La enferma the narrator, with the aid of the villagers, tells us the story of Liberata and Telmo. The narrator listens to the different versions of the story but she does not inject her own comments during the characters' narratives. The novel begins with the narrator's arrival in the village and ends a few days later when she departs and returns to Madrid. Liberata has been silent for twenty years when the narrator arrives but she is brought up to date on her childhood by the other characters. All of the characters have been affected by Liberata's illness including the narrator who tries to sort out and put into perspective her own feelings as she listens to the story.

The story of Plácida in Plácida, la joven is told by a narrator who is visiting her sister in the small village where Plácida's death occurs. The narrator is actually telling the story to her husband through a letter, and therefore, her own thoughts, as well as the events

that took place before and after the death, are recorded. The letter begins with a flashback to Plácida's death the previous day and, as the narrator learns more about Plácida's past, she relates the details to her husband. The narrator in Plácida, la joven, in contrast to the one in La enferma, reacts more to the events in terms of their relation to Plácida rather than the influence she receives from the situation. These stories, therefore, are told by narrators who participate in different ways in their particular situation. The tree in La sangre is compassionate towards and interested in the characters but can only observe them from a distance. In La enferma, the narrator does not judge her characters but she does attempt to put her own life in perspective as she listens to their story. In Plácida, la joven, the narrator laments Plácida's death and feels guilty about the lack of attention that she and the villagers displayed towards Plácida.

Quiroga's assessment of the Galician man and woman gives us a penetrating look into the Galician's character as it evolved from the Celts. Brent states that Quiroga successfully "provides a captivating mood or compelling atmosphere into which the reader is readily drawn" and that "she knows how to effect a proper balance between the purely psychological and external reality."⁵ Quiroga's men and women are described to the extent that they cease to become characters in a novel and begin to represent the actual, present day inhabitants of Galicia.

⁵Brent, "The Novels," p. 213.

Quiroga's description of the Galician woman corresponds to that given by Bell, Castroviejo and Wigram, thus giving us a complete physical and psychological picture. The fisherwoman dresses in dark cotton with brightly colored kerchiefs and does not wear shoes but she does have sandals that she carries so that the salt and sand will not ruin them. The woman on the pazo dresses in a similar fashion. Her appearance varies but she is generally described as a robust, sturdy, healthy woman capable of working on the land or in the sea. She is loyal to her family and works for, or in place of, her husband or son, and appears to have a stronger, more durable and less vulnerable character than the man. In each novel there is at least one woman who stands out as being dominant over the other characters. In La sangre, María, had she survived, could have maintained a strong sense of unity within the family. The servants respected her for the confidence and stability she instilled in those around her. She recognized the weakness her husband, Amador, had for the sea and did not chastise him for leaving on frequent trips. Their daughter, Amalia, much to the distress of her husband, Efrén, was the authoritative figure for the maids and servants. Amalia encouraged her son, Xavier, not to turn himself over to the police after he killed his sister's fiance, and she also had the foresight to warn him about the evil Dolores whom he eventually married. Dolores would have poisoned Xavier had Vicente not stopped her and watched while she drank the poison herself. Claudia, María's maid, who cared for Amalia in her childhood, resembles the loyal maid, Ermitas, in Viento del norte, who raised Alvaro and Marcela.

Alida, in La enferma, was possessive and protective of Liberata and was an independent, confident woman. Dámaso, her husband, recognized that she was in charge of the home while he attended to the fishing. Justa, the telephone operator in the village, was educated by her father, the village teacher, and was the only native in the village who recognized the importance of preserving its heritage. Angustias, who lived above Justa, demonstrated her strong character as she withstood the criticism she received because of the actions of her brother, Telmo, towards Liberata. In Plácida, la joven, the narrator describes Eduarda as being a competent and forthright woman. In Viento del norte, Enrique's wife, doña Lucía, was aggressive and in control of her family of seven children.

Quiroga also notes the absence of the Galician woman's effect on the characters' lives, which serves to emphasize Quiroga's desire to point out the important role assumed by the woman. Seven of the characters in the four novels were raised without a mother. Alvaro, in Viento del norte was cared for by Ermitas since his mother died when he was very young. In La sangre, Vicente was generally known to be Xavier's son but the boy's mother was not formally recognized. Amalia was raised by Claudia after María died since her father, Amador, was away at sea. In Plácida, la joven, the mothers of Eduarda and the narrator died when the girls were children. Eduarda was raised by her father, and then she later cared for the narrator. The entire village shared the responsibility for taking care of Plácida, and after her death her daughter was placed with her mother-in-law since Plácida's

husband, Salvador, was at sea. The emphasis that Quiroga places on the Galician woman indicates a desire on her part to accurately portray the woman as a vital part of Galician life. She is capable of working very hard so that her family will survive and she is able to endure hardship and make sacrifices in order to accomplish this goal.

Through her depiction of the Galician man, Quiroga relates to us three different attitudes, still prevalent in Galicia today, in regard to the Galician's homeland. In Viento del norte and in La sangre we see the Galician man who wants to preserve the traditions of the past and is willing to sacrifice and work hard to maintain the heritage that was given him by his ancestors. In Viento del norte, Alvaro, his uncle Enrique and son, Jorge, were dedicated to working the land that had become an integral part of their character. They were very close to the land and felt such a part of it that they could not imagine abandoning it. In La sangre, Vicente, Xavier's illegitimate son, and Lorenzo, Pastor and Angela's son, respected and loved the land on which they were raised. Lorenzo felt so strongly about preserving the old chestnut tree that he ran toward it as it was being chopped down, and died crushed between it and the land, thus uniting himself with nature. In La enferma, the village fishermen, especially the older ones like Dámaso, spoke of the sea in human terms and respected it for its strength. Fishing was more than a job to them: it was a way of life into which they entered with the sea as their partner.

In contrast with the man who loves the land, there is the Galician man who views the land merely as a place to live, and he observes the

nature around him with casual interest, not realizing the extent to which it influences him. Rather than preserving the land, he wants to get out of it whatever monetary gain he can. In La sangre Efrén wanted to improve the land and the house to impress his brother and sister-in-law. Xavier sold parts of the pazo and Pastor, his son, was only interested in whatever money he could extract from his father and the land. In Viento del norte, Miguel, one of Enrique's sons, lost interest in working the land because of a disagreement between him and his father over Miguel's relationship with Saruca. In La enferma, the fishermen, although dedicated to the sea, did not understand the value of preserving the historical sites of their village.

The third attitude represented by the Galician man is that of emigrating to another area of Galicia or, more frequently, to another country to make a better living while experiencing life outside the isolated region of Galicia. In Viento del norte, the husband of Rosalía, one of the maids, left her for Argentina six months after they were married and never returned. The husband of Margarida, who lived in Las Puentes, worked as a waiter on a boat. Dorila, one of Enrique's daughters, and her husband, Angel, left Castelo and went to live in Cuba. In La sangre Amador and his servant, Roque, were off at sea more often than they were on the pazo and Amador eventually died at sea. The three young men in La enferma, Telmo, Eugenio, and Natalio, left the fishing village to pursue careers in Argentina, the United States and Chile. In Plácida, la joven, Salvador sailed on a fishing boat out of Cádiz, and Manuela's son was in Cuba from where he frequently sent

coffee for her to sell. As we recognize these different Galician attitudes, we are more aware of the influence of the land on the Galician. Some are quite motivated to preserve the traditions of the past and thereby remain united with the land, while others are not concerned with ancestral heritage but nevertheless cannot bring themselves to leave the security and familiarity of their homeland. Still others entrust the upkeep of the land to their wives while they satisfy their longing to travel.

The Galician Vicente Risco studied the Galician's attraction to the land, and his theories, written in the 1920s, enlighten us in regard to the effect of the environment on the Galician. Ramón Lugris discusses Risco's opinions in his article "Risco en las letras gallegas." Lugris explains that Risco believed the Galician to be tied to the traditions and customs of his ancestors who were inspired by the natural beauty of the land around them:

Para Risco, el hombre gallego es el ejemplo vivo de la "sedentarización rural": Vive confundido con la tierra. Tal vez, alejado de los hombres, pero siempre en contacto íntimo con el suelo. El sentimiento de esta situación sería "la emoción del sedentarismo." Mas esto sólo no llega a explicar el hondo contenido del amor a la tierra en nuestro pueblo. Hay también la imposición estética de la Tierra, creando en el gallego "el sentimiento de la Naturaleza," y, aún--buscando en lo más profundo--, Risco creyó encontrar una motivación en la supervivencia de una posible emoción sufrida por nuestros más remotos antepasados al llegar a este territorio en el que enraizaron para siempre.⁶

⁶ Ramón Lugris, "Risco en las letras gallegas," Insula 152-53 (julio-agosto 1959), 8.

According to Risco, the Galician has lost his ability to relate to the land and this hinders his development. The Galician's only salvation is to return to the way of life given him by his ancestors. Risco's study indicates that the Galician's communication with the land approaches a religious communion with nature as he becomes immersed in his environment:

Sentimiento religioso, capaz de iluminar el camino de un pueblo. Esto era para Risco el sentimiento de la tierra. Más aún, el único sentimiento capaz de llevar a Galicia por caminos universales. La vuelta a la Tierra era indispensable. Galicia carece de personalidad sin ese sentimiento. Es un pecado olvidarlo, un pecado colectivo. . . . Galicia sufría el castigo por haber pecado contra sí misma: La vuelta a la Tierra sería la redención.⁷

The Galician's preoccupation with superstition and death is evident in Viento del norte and La sangre. In La sangre, after Xavier killed his sister's fiancé, he would check everywhere at night for fear someone's soul would descend upon him. He believed in the family curse that had caused Amador, his grandfather, to burn the ancestral papers so the family history would not be known. Xavier also thought he was destined to harm someone since he was told that his grandfather had killed his grandmother. In our earlier discussion of Viento del norte we touched upon some of the superstitions that affected the characters but we will extend our explanation here since the superstitions represent an integral part of the Galician's personality. In Viento del norte, Ermitas told Marcela that certain waters of the ría would help young women to meet men or help them conceive if they bathed in the waters when the moon was shining on them. Pablo told an attentive group

⁷Lugris, "Risco," p. 8.

of servants the story of the man dressed in black, a stranger to the community, who was always around when someone died, and did not leave the town until he entered the church and his spirit was chased away by the priest. Marcela was called a witch by these superstitious servants because she had a birthmark on her neck similar to the one Merla, the meiga, or, witch, had. Merla was known for causing epidemics and threatening and frightening the villagers. It was said that when her neighbor's chickens died, Merla blew on them and caused their feathers to fly off and then fly back when she blew again. She would knock on the windows of terrified villagers scaring them with threats of evil witchcraft until they gave her food or whatever she wanted. Alvaro told the servants to stop tormenting Marcela and this in itself made them think that Marcela's evil spell compelled him to chastise them. Alvaro later referred to his strong attraction to Marcela and wondered if she had indeed cast a spell on him. The village peasants would have agreed with his thoughts. The villagers also believed that the souls of the dead would return to haunt them. Don Antonio, the priest, collected considerably more offering when he dedicated it to the pacification of the souls rather than to the betterment of the church. Marcela, while attending Enrique's funeral mass, wanted Alvaro to leave so that the wind would not blow the candles' death scent on him. After he had his accident, she was certain that he received his death curse at Enrique's funeral. As is obvious, there is much and varied superstition.

The Galician customs and festivals and the use of the Galician language vary throughout the four novels. Dorila's and Angel's wedding in Viento del norte was a grand affair with guests staying over at Cora

and dancing to the music of the bagpipes. Plácida's and Salvador's wedding was on a smaller scale with a breakfast held after the mass. The births in the novels all took place in the homes without the villagers feeling a need for a doctor. In La sangre the people were buried on the pazo and in Viento del norte there was a funeral mass held in the village for Enrique. Grape harvests were held in Viento del norte and in Plácida, la joven, which also included a blessing of the grapes. Liberata in La enferma, the narrator in Plácida, la joven, and Gertrudis in La sangre studied in a school away from their villages. In Viento del norte, two of Enrique's girls lived in a convent and Marcela had studied in one in Lugo for two years. Jacoba, in La sangre, went to a convent after her brother killed her fiancé. These were priests in the four novels and in La sangre the priest lived on the pazo. The use of the Galician language is more noticeable in Plácida, la joven than in the other novels. Plácida consistently used Galician as did the villagers when they announced her death. In Viento del norte the servants used Galician when they were agitated and Marcela lapsed into Galician when she was angry with Alvaro. The peasants sang verses in Galician.

The lack of communication among the characters is evident in the four novels. In Viento del norte Alvaro and Marcela were not able to achieve a solid relationship because of their inability to convey their feelings to each other. Marcela destroyed the friendship and companionship she had with Lucía and Ermitas when she did not trust them enough to confide in them her fear of inadequacy in dealing with her marriage

to Alvaro. Miguel, Enrique's son, refused to discuss his relationship with Saruca with his father for fear of being ridiculed and misunderstood. The four generations of La sangre did not adhere to the traditions developed by their ancestors and they grew further and further apart. In La enferma, Liberata and Telmo did not understand themselves well enough to develop a relationship with each other. The narrator and her husband, Víctor, were not expressive about their desires and ambitions and this inhibited their closeness. Flora did not understand Telmo's goals and dreams which added to their problems since he did not love her when they married. Don Simón felt inadequate to relate to his congregation. Angustias was still trying to justify the past without attempting to rectify it. In Plácida, la joven, Plácida was too timid to communicate successfully with Salvador or the other villagers who, in addition, were not able to convey her death to him in a suitable manner and, therefore, Juana told him in a brusque and unsympathetic manner. The narrator felt guilty about not ever speaking to Plácida. Eduarda was afraid to leave the comfort and security of her village.

This inability to confide in others for fear of rejection or for fear of exposing innermost thoughts and personal concerns and attitudes, relates to the present day Galician which Quiroga has so astutely depicted. Because of his tendency to emigrate, the Galician has not developed a close relationship with his own countrymen and is looked upon as a vagabond and a transient by the rest of Spain. His conservative and reserved character, inherited from the Celt, who

preferred to communicate with nature rather than individuals, has limited his social contact. The isolated northern location of Galicia and the Galician's attempt to be recognized through his own language and culture have further set him apart from other Spaniards. Quiroga combines the regional aspects of Galicia in her early novels with the traits of realism in vogue in the 1950s to give the reader a specific localized view of Galicia. Her presentation of this remote society in the prewar and postwar settings of her novels allows the reader to judge for himself the frustrations of the isolated characters.

Quiroga's four novels have presented us with a variety of characters through which we are able to obtain a more precise understanding of the people who inhabit the isolated region of Galicia. Her ability to use her imagination to enhance the realistic settings of her novels has resulted in the production of solid, accurate accounts of the region. Brent states that "Notably manifest in the novels of Elena Quiroga are the qualities most essential in a writer of fiction: imagination, creative ability, and command of subject matter."⁸ He further says that Quiroga's works are "penetrating studies of human nature in which the problems and conflicts presented are of a kind to give the reader a deepened understanding of human experience and a sense of personal enrichment."⁹ In the four novels of this study, Quiroga probes into the inner soul of the Galician in addition to giving the

⁸Brent, "The Novels," p. 213.

⁹Brent, "The Novels," p. 213.

reader a detailed description of his environment. José Luís Cano, in his review of La sangre, states that, based on Viento del norte and La sangre, Quiroga can be classified as "una de las figuras más interesantes y auténticas de nuestra joven novelística actual."¹⁰ Entrambasaguas's study of Quiroga's novels has led him to proclaim that she is one of Spain's most successful novelists:

Elena Quiroga, por sí misma, a fuerza de superarse, se ha ido abriendo camino en la Literatura hasta ser hoy una de las novelistas más admiradas y populares, no sólo en España, sino en el extranjero, a lo cual sin duda, ha contribuido el sentido fundamental humano, de nuestro tiempo, en todo.¹¹

Entrambasaguas based his statement on the analysis of Quiroga's regional novels in addition to her later work.

Quiroga's sensitive treatment of her characters' frustrations and problems is manifested throughout the four novels. The story of Marcela and Alvaro in Viento del norte is told with sincere compassion as though Quiroga is deeply concerned about the fate of the troubled couple. The events in the lives of the numerous inhabitants of Castelo in La sangre are a series of misfortunes that force the characters into undesirable situations. The contrasting atmospheres of the pazos in Viento del norte and La sangre offer differing viewpoints of life on a large estate. The incredible story of Liberata in La enferma contrasts with the believable, yet pathetic, story of Plácida in Plácida, la joven. Each story is well drawn to fit the environment in which it takes place.

¹⁰ José Luís Cano, "Review of La Sangre by Elena Quiroga," Insula 89 (mayo 1953), 6.

¹¹ Entrambasaguas, Las mejores novelas, p. 1281.

With the exception of Viento del norte, the story line in the four novels is secondary to the development and analysis of the characters. In Viento del norte the characters are adequately developed but the plot itself is of greater interest. In Plácida, la joven and La enferma the narrators' expressed interest in and concern for the village inhabitants demonstrate Quiroga's desire to project fully developed and detailed personalities. In La sangre the chestnut tree's thorough analysis of the pazo's inhabitants stresses the importance Quiroga places on revealing the inner thoughts of her characters.

In addition to providing precise character delineation, Quiroga enables us accurately to visualize the settings of her stories. Her descriptions of the area surrounding the large estates and the coastal villages are so vivid they permit us to assume the position of the characters in her stories. Quiroga instills a deep appreciation for the dual existence of the beauty and harshness of the landscapes presented. Quiroga's regionalistic picture of Galicia emphasizes the fact that the Galician people are uniquely inseparable from the land.

Because of her thoroughness in developing solid regional novels, Quiroga emerges as a dedicated and sincere contemporary novelist. Her sincerity is demonstrated by her desire to have the reader understand as she has the way of life of the Galician people. Her stories, interesting as well as informative, are relevant today even though the novels describe a segment of society of the past. The four regional novels studied, without regard to Quiroga's other works, are by themselves sufficient to place her among the finer contemporary novelists.

Quiroga's depiction of the reality of her region and the suffering endured by its people parallels the contemporary picture of Spain as revealed by Juan Goytisolo and Miguel Delibes. Quiroga's penetrating look into the innermost thoughts and feelings of the Galician is similar to the character portrayals of Ana María Matute and Carmen Laforet. Thus, it is clear that Quiroga has established herself within a notable group of contemporary novelists.

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