AN ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTERS IN THE NOVELS OF JULIO ARDILES GRAY

A Thesis

Presented to the Department of

Foreign Languages and Graduate Council of the Kansas

State Teachers College of Emporia

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

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by

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August 1967

Approved for the Major Department

Approved for the Graduate Council

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Although a thesis is the direct responsibility of one person, appreciation should be shown toward those who are indirectly involved but who nevertheless exert a powerful influence on the success of such work. I am indebted to the patience and consideration shown me by Dr. David Travis, who always found time to answer my questions. I am grateful to my four-year-old daughter Lyla Jean, for not invading her father's study during the preparation of this paper. Beyond words is my appreciation for the understanding support shown to me by my wife Marcia, "a quien debo cuanto soy."

D.E.B.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Julio Ardiles Gray is a contemporary Argentine writer and journalist who is relatively unknown even in his own country. He has written only twelve works: five novels, five plays, one book of short stories, and one of poetry. He is known to have published only eight of these works, including everything but four of the plays; he published one of the novels with his own resources. His latest book was published in 1964, and although an introduction stated that another would be published soon, none has appeared as of the date of this investigation.

The only available biographical information on Gray is that supplied by his friend, Carlos Prelooker, who wrote the following sketch as part of an introduction to one of Gray's novels:

> Nació en Monteros (Tucumán) en 1922. Desde 1940 es profesor secundario habiendo dictado cátedras de Literatura Española, Argentina y Americana. Fué también maestro rural en ingenios y orfelinatos. En 1943 fué uno de los fundadores del movimiento de La Carpa de tanta trascendencia en el desenvolvimiento cultural argentino. Desde hace muchos años ejerce el periodismo en La Gaceta de Tucumán y colabora en diarios y revistas de todo el país![1]

In 1964, during the months of June, July, and August, the writer of this study lived in the northern Argentine city of San Miguel de Tucumán,[2] as a participant in a National Defense Education Act Language

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[1]Carlos Prelooker, on flyleaf of Los médanos ciegos (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Doble P, 1957).

[2]Generally referred to simply as Tucumán.

Institute. During that time he took part in investigations requisite to the work as a participant, among which was the visitation of the offices of La Gaceta, the newspaper at which Gray is employed as a columnist. The participants became acquainted with Gray when he served as host and guide through the building. Gray was later requested to address the participants concerning journalism in Argentina, and at that time presented to each of the participants a copy of one of his novels, personally autographed.

Later phases of the Institute afforded further opportunity to converse with Gray. This social contact combined with the reading of the novel he had graciously given as a momento of Tucumán stimulated an interest in the man and his works.

Several motives are responsible for Gray's having been chosen for this study. Primarily, the author was interesting because he was still developing his talents, and had not yet evolved so far from his first attempts as to make the journey from neophyte to accomplished author untraceable. An aspiration to write professionally made the study of this author still in a nascent stage attractive; the beginner is always seeking from the established artist an answer to the question, "How did you get started?"

A second reason for having chosen the works of Gray is that the author has set all of his novels in or around his native province of Tucumán. As this area has been visited by the writer of this study, and the native country of Gray, Argentina, has been the subject of study, both from a literary and historical viewpoint, further acquaintance with

a region and the literature pertaining to it through the study of a native, contemporary author seemed meaningful.

A third reason lies in the fact that the very paucity and limited circulation of Gray's works which diminish his importance as an author make these works admirably suited to an investigation of this scope, and permit a unique opportunity for originality. Gray, whatever his aspirations, is primarily a journalist. His first book, Cánticos terrenales, was a collection of poetry published in 1950, when the author was twenty-eight years old. His only book to win a prize, Los amigos lejanos, won primer premio in 1948 from the Sociedad Argentina de Autores, but he was unable to find a publisher for it until 1956. Further publication is a matter of speculation. His existing works, however, are felt to be adequate to yield all the important elements of Gray's style and the majority of his ideas.

What is believed to be a complete collection of Gray's novels, Los amigos lejanos, La grieta, Elegía, Los médanos ciegos, and El inocente, plus one book of short stories, Cuentos amables, nobles y memorables, and one play, Egloga, farsa y misterio, were obtained for this investigation, chiefly by borrowing from other former Institute participants. Unfortunately, consultation of other sources has been fruitless. Library research did not reveal any criticism of the author, and personal letters to him in Tucumán were not answered. Both the assets of having most of Gray's works and the liability of lacking other material for supplementary purposes shaped the course the investigation followed.

Careful reading of the available works of Julio Ardiles Gray has

revealed him to be a writer of fiction, in which the characters are well-developed psychologically, but lack almost totally any physical description or biographical information. What mattered most to Gray was the inner development of his characters, and to this end he subordinated all other elements.

An analysis of the principal characters from the five novels of Gray comprises the majority of the study, to illustrate this chief characteristic of Gray's works. Eighteen characters are considered to be the most important and are discussed individually. The minor characters are classified and discussed collectively.

Plot and setting, being subordinated to character development, were considered outside the scope of this investigation. Some significant patterns which emerged from the close examination of the characters are included because of the additional information that can be gained concerning the characters, or because these patterns involve the relationships among the characters.

Relevant to evaluating the accuracy of this investigation is some knowledge as to how the investigation was conducted. First, a careful reading of all seven works obtained for the study revealed that only the novels could be employed. The play and the collection of short stories contain elements thought to be experimental or imitative in nature, and would contribute details more confusing than characteristic.

The novels were each read twice more. Copious notes were taken; the first reading yielded notes of a general nature, and the second, transcription of any detail revealing physical, biographical, or

psychological development of a character. Following organization of material, the study was written from the notes.

CHAPTER II

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

What types of people was Julio Ardiles Gray most interested in recording? How did he develop these people as characters in his novels? This chapter is devoted to answering these questions through an individual examination of the principal characters selected from the novels of the author.

From a total of 191 characters, 121 male and 70 female, 18 characters are considered to be principal, 15 male and 3 female. The characters Santiago and Werner each appear in two novels, where each is counted as a different character rather than one character with two appearances. Organizational reasons and differences between each appearance make this treatment the more practical.

I. CRITERIA IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MAIN CHARACTERS

Limitations of space forbid that all 191 characters be discussed individually. The most careful examination, if a reduction of numbers is necessary, should be of those whose selection will also reveal those in whom Gray devoted the most interest: his main characters. Some criteria were therefore established and those characters felt to be of greatest importance were selected.

As selected by the criteria, the main characters from the novels of Julio Ardiles Gray are Silvestre, Páez, Juárez, Gabriela,

and Santiago from Los amigos lejanos; Santiago, Lucas, and Werner from La grieta; María and Daniel from Elegía; El Riojano, a priest (unnamed), Cristóbal, and González from Los médanos ciegos; and Camilo, Werner, Inspector Vásquez, and La Mecha from El inocente. There are twelve men, one woman, three boys, and two girls, including among the adults five peasants of varying degrees of intelligence and honesty, two college students, two journalists, one priest, and one prostitute. Of the five children, three are orphans.

Characters from Los amigos lejanos

In general, it is not difficult to identify the main characters in Gray's novels. Silvestre is obviously a main character in Los amigos lejanos because three of the eleven chapters are related from his point of view. Santiago and the two "friends" of Silvestre, Páez and Juárez, are also main characters since they are Silvestre's most common companions. The girl Gabriela is a principal character because, in the eight chapters seen from Santiago's perspective, she is always with him. All the other characters in Los amigos lejanos are considered minor. Silvestre's wife exerts a powerful negative influence on him, causing his withdrawal, but she disappears, screaming of his madness, on page thirty-four, and never reappears. Appearance of extremely limited duration is also a characteristic of the relatives of Gabriela and Santiago.

Characters from La grieta

La grieta has two principal characters, Santiago, who is, with the exception of Part II, the narrator, and Lucas, whom Santiago describes.

These two intense young men dominate the book completely, and the dominant characteristic of the novel is the presence of long, philosophical arguments between them, such as were held on the top of a mountain, in the twelfth and thirteenth chapters. All other characters in the main plot are minor, chiefly because of their limited influence or appearance. A subplot, which is all but divorced from the main plot, has for its protagonist the journalist Werner, who is considered an important figure because of his importance to the subplot, and in the nature of the theme he develops, that of the conflict of interest that exists between the world of the newspaper and that of the police. The subplot, however, is of no small importance to the novel, occupying four central chapters and providing the only means by which several parts of the plot are related.

Characters from Elegía

María is a principal character in Elegía, being the narrator. The elegy she is purportedly writing in her old notebook is in memory of Daniel, immediately following his funeral. Daniel is the most important figure in Elegía because he is involved in or initiates all the action in the story, with the exception of the last incident following his disappearance, in which María and her grandfather are searching for him. His description and development are María's principal objective during her narration. All other characters are considered minor. El Gran Ofir, the magician who promised Daniel eternal youth, is nearly important enough to be classified as a principal character because it is around his

"experiment" that most of the important action revolves, but his actual presence is restricted to two pages and he has no psychological development at all. Two other characters are considered minor, as a result of their limited influence on plot or other characters. María's grandfather and the maid Emilia serve merely as examples by Daniel to show María the depravity of adult life.

Characters from Los médanos ciegos

The most important parts of Los médanos ciegos are told from the point of view of El Riojano, a petty criminal first seen as a very minor character in Los amigos lejanos, and here as the most important character. Of the ten chapters in the novel, three are related from his viewpoint, including the climactic ninth chapter in which he and González kill each other.

Next in importance is the priest, who is the main character in five chapters and who initiates the conflict between the church and the cult formed around Cristóbal and the voice in the orange tree. The priest is also the principal influence on two minor characters, the sexton and the constable. He coerces them with threats of Divine wrath to act as extensions of his control over his congregation. The only other characters considered to be important are the boy Cristóbal, since his ability to hear the voice in the tree is the heart of the plot, and González, because of his appearance throughout the book, his influence on Cristóbal and El Riojano, and the effect that his peculiar mental aberration, in which he believes himself to be the savior of the people, has

on the outcome of the story.

Characters from El inocente

Camilo, the young santiagueño of El inocente, is a principal character because thirty-three chapters are devoted to the story from his point of view. Werner, the newspaper editor, is also a principal character because, although he is involved only in a subplot occupying six chapters, he is the central figure there and is indirectly responsible for the death of Camilo. When Camilo is caught in the trap laid for Werner's fictitious bandit with a similarity to Robin Hood, because of his unknowing involvement in a payroll robbery, he is killed by police bullets. Inspector Vásquez, acting as an official agent of society and protector of law and order, becomes an important figure when he orders Camilo's death to still the unrest caused by Werner. La Mecha is considered important because she is responsible for Camilo's fatal involvement in crime, figuring as a principal character with Camilo in twelve chapters and the conclusion. Mariño, the leader of the huelgistas; Justino, an old soldier who is killed by soldiers and martyred by the strikers; El Gallego Ambulante, a Spaniard who travels with the family of Méndez to Simoca; and even Méndez and his family are considered minor characters. They make very brief appearances, they do not influence the plot, or they are merely colorful but transient historical figures.

Summary

Obviously, the difference between a major and a minor character is complicated, because importance is a matter of many degrees of im-

portance, and not merely two. Placing a character in one classification or another is often apparently arbitrary. However, absolute scientific accuracy is not critical here; such procedure might produce a list of principal characters with one or two additions and as many deletions. The classifications presented here are felt to entirely satisfy two goals: a means of selecting a more manageable number of typical characters with which to work, and a presentation of Gray's characters which will both identify the people about whom Gray was most prone to write, and illustrate the manner in which he usually did it.

II. EXAMINATION OF THE EIGHTEEN PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

Organization of the examination of each principal character is designed to show the relative importance of physical description, biographical detail, and psychological development. To illustrate that the most prominent characteristic in the delineation of a character is the sometimes minute psychological development combined with the nearly total dearth of physical or biographical description, scattered sparsely and whimsically throughout the entire novel, each analysis is divided into these three parts.

Characters from Los amigos lejanos

Silvestre. Silvestre is a central figure in Los amigos lejanos; the amigos which give the novel its title are products of his own mind.

Physically, as is in the case of many of Gray's characters, very

little is known. His wife reminds him that he is sixty,[3] and thus his age is known. Silvestre wears "alpargatas tizadas" (page 16), and "pantalón gris con dos remiendos cerca de las rodillas" (page 148). He is physically much larger than his wife (page 28).

Although Silvestre "camina encorvado" (page 148), he is apparently quite strong physically, as shown by his acting as a hunting guide and doing strenuous exercise without any sign of fatigue (page 59), and as he suffers a serious injury falling from a horse (page 77), lies in a ditch of water, helpless, for two hours as a result of this accident (page 87), and yet is seen energetically chopping wood just a week later (page 98).

The cáscara in which he believes he and his two "friends" are living is an area roughly including his chest and stomach (page 34).

From a biographical point of view, Silvestre's last name is Paredes (page 148), he is from Santa Lucía (page 103), and he earns his living in various ways, including cleaning cow pens (page 35), working at a bakery (page 28), acting as a guide for hunters (page 59), chopping wood (page 98), or taking horses to be shod (page 87). At one time he was in the military service, the branch of which he refers to as "el 12 de línea"(page 64).

Silvestre has been married approximately thirty years (page 24). During that time he has raised three foundlings (page 29), but has had

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[3]Julio Ardiles Gray, Los amigos lejanos (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Doble P, 1956), p. 14. Subsequent references to this work will be found in the text.

no children of his own, a situation which he explains as "haber estado pescando en un río sin pescados" (page 30).

Directions to his shack are contrastingly specific: "En el callejón municipal, pasando el arroyo. A dos cuadros del almacén de José Gutiérrez" (page 103). He had lived there a month when Santiago befriended him (page 103), chopping wood for a week at the house of the boy's grandfather (page 100).

Psychologically, Silvestre is best developed in his relationship with his "friends." He is emotional toward them, running through the woods, shouting, when he discovers the presence of the first "friend," Páez, in the cáscara (page 37). He is sensitive and a daydreamer with them, woolgathering about the "good old days" (page 26) and about a school where he enjoys vicariously the life of a successful student (page 16). Difficulty in communicating with his wife, as shown by their arguments (page 34), and his tendency to withdraw: "Silvestre sintió como si fuera un quirquincho. Le pareció que en cuanto se atrevía a asomar su cabeza, le toreaban muchos perros" (page 18), combined with a recognized need for companionship and understanding, as shown by his gratitude for that which is shown to him by his "friends" when they develop (page 94), lead to the eventual dream world in which he lives with increasing detachment. He takes the existence of his cáscara so seriously that he does not recognize the jest intended when a woodsman asks him mockingly about his "friends" (page 60), and actually believes others can hear the voices, too, as when Santiago lays his head on Silvestre's chest for that purpose (page 146).

His world of the cáscara is satisfying to him, and he makes no friends or acquaintances during the month he lives in a shack near Santiago, shown by the fact that nobody knows him (page 97). He even ignores the friendly overtures of Santiago (page 97), despite the fact that he likes children so well that at one point he invents an imaginary son who writes affectionate letters to him (page 111). He also is friendly and considerate toward Santiago and Gabriela after they have become friends, as shown by his concern that they not get their clothes dirty when they come to visit him (page 110).

Toward his "friends" he is very companionable, and their relationship is a close one in which he gains the understanding he is denied elsewhere. "Nosotros no somos los otros," his "friends" tell him (page 35). In return for their friendship, he acts as peacemaker between them when they quarrel, making them "shake hands" (page 98). He displays diplomacy as he refuses to choose which "friend" he likes better (page 124), and devotion by trying to win acceptance for them (page 112).

Until the close of the novel, he displays supreme confidence in the reality of his "friends," which is unshaken even when his wife becomes hysterical at his conversations with them (page 35). His casual allusions to his "friends" bewilder a stranger he is serving as guide (page 60). But at the last, Silvestre is tragically afflicted by doubt, asking his "friends" if they are still in the cáscara at the demands of Santiago (page 114), questioning them further as to how they got in there (page 118), and wondering partly to himself why, if they were as good as he believed, they had not ascended to heaven (page 130). To none of his

questions does he ever receive an answer. The last time he is forced to question his "friends" about their existence, he nearly weeps, mumbles that his "friends" don't remember (page 130), and then makes it clear that they have abandoned him by expressing his fear that they are gone forever (page 131).

Silvestre dies shortly afterward, and Santiago finds his body. The boy suggests to Gabriela that the old man has rejoined his "friends" because he had died with a smile on his lips (page 150).

Other characteristics of Silvestre are developed psychologically. He is superstitious, as shown by his belief that legal adoption imparts some strange "fuerza de la ley" which is necessary to cause the foundling he has adopted to show affection toward him (page 23), by his belief that giving a child an ugly name will make the child ugly (page 15), and by his belief that poverty has a distinct, indelible odor: "Un poco a perro enfermo. Otro poco a rata vieja. Más que nada a cama de trapos" (page 21).

The total picture of Santiago is one of a simple, uneducated peasant whose mind invents some companions for him when his real life becomes impossible for him to cope with. He is then happy and content, until he is forced by the questions of a small boy to examine his dream world, and thus causes it to desappear. After that, there is nothing left for him to live for.

Antonio Páez. Antonio Páez, the earlier of Silvestre's "friends," has no physical description. Silvestre does assure a woodcutter who has

asked that Páez's health is quite good (page 60).

Biographically, Páez has known Silvestre for fifty-two years (page 19), and served with Silvestre in "el 12 de línea," where he was unjustly imprisoned for a week when Silvestre gave Páez's name instead of his own to escape punishment for not saluting a superior (page 65). Once Páez had spent some time working in the woods, where he was injured by a hook (page 61). He was killed when he was run over by the wheels of a press (page 27).

From a psychological viewpoint, Páez is a mild, childlike person, who never becomes angry, judging from what Silvestre tells Gabriela: "Antonio Páez siempre fué muy bueno. Casi un niño. Jamás se enojaba" (page 123).

Páez is patient, even recommending patience to Silvestre (page 24), and good-natured, being able to laugh at the week he spent in jail (page 65). He is timid in expressing his own ideas, such as those concerning the nature of friendship (page 84).

Páez shows sensitivity by not allowing Silvestre to wake Juárez in order to ask a question (page 95), by insisting that Silvestre protect the animals he is supposed to be hunting (page 67), and by acting as a peacemaker between Silvestre and Juárez when they quarrel (page 94). He offers understanding to Silvestre when he needs it (page 34), and is greatly concerned for Silvestre's injury after being thrown from a horse (page 86).

Páez has a sense of humor, somewhat dry. When El Riojano steals a plaster saint to use in a scheme to swindle money, Páez defends the action

with the tongue-in-cheek remark, "Hace bien. Para eso están los santos, para ayudar a las gentes" (page 93).

At times, Páez is philosophical. He explains that the reason that men and women quarrel over drinking is that their perspective is different. For women, "el mundo terminaba dentro de la casa" (page 83). But a man might be justified in his use of alcohol, as a necesity that women, with their limited viewpoint, don't understand:

> El vino tiene su utilidad ... la amistad de los amigos necesita del vino. ... Así como el sol en el verano levanta el tufo sofocante de las lagunas, el vino hace crecer los recuerdos alrededor de las mesas ... no habría amistad sin recuerdos. ... Para que haya una amistad fuerte, se necesita tener recuerdos (page 84).

But as peaceful as he has been represented, it is Páez who urges Silvestre to abandon his home for the woods and the idyllic life he had lived years before, revealing a rebelliousness not seen elsewhere (page 35).

Páez is thus seen to be, if only a construction of the mind of Silvestre, that part of Silvestre's mind which was peaceful, childlike, and shy. Filled with nostalgia, Páez embodies Silvestre's urge to abandon his monotonous life with his shrewish wife and return to an earlier, more simple existence.

Esteban Juárez. Esteban Juárez, the other of Silvestre's "friends," also lacks any physical description. As in the case of Páez, the only physical description is in the passage in which Silvestre describes the health of both his "friends." While Páez is healthy, Silvestre worries a little about the health of Juárez. "Juárez es tan delicado" that

Silvestre fears at times that he might lose him (page 60).

Other description defines characteristics common to both "friends." They can be heard, but never seen (page 31), they share Silvestre's food and drink (Juárez likes the rolls Silvestre eats, but doesn't like the wine) (page 32). They both have perceptive powers demonstrated when Juárez can smell wine (page 82), taste dirt (page 81), and perceive darkness (page 90). They both sleep. Juárez is the only one actually described as sleeping, such as when his health is inquired about (page 60), or when Páez will not allow Silvestre to awaken him (page 95), but Páez's voice is described as "llena de sueño" (page 93).

Judging from Páez's weak voice and his notation that Silvestre's fall was a severe blow, the welfare of the "friends" depends upon that of Silvestre (page 77).

Biographical information concerning Juárez is scarce. At one time he worked on a cabría (page 18). He has a sister named Tránsito (page 128), who survived him when he was killed by a centrifuge, twenty years before his appearance in the cáscara (page 33).

Juárez is developed psychologically as being frequently antagonistic to Silvestre. He blames him for failure to register the name of the maid's abandoned child with the judge (page 26), and loses his temper at Silvestre's worry about losing his horse after it throws him: "¡Qué te importa el caballo ahora!" (page 86). Sometimes he doesn't even monitor Silvestre, shown when Páez tells Silvestre that he will have to relay a question to Juárez that Silvestre has asked them (page 116).

Juárez is occasionally a discordant note in the peaceful relation-

ship of the three "friends!" He laughs maliciously at the fight between a drunk and his wife, a contrasting reaction to that of the philosophical Páez (page 83). His attitude is sacreligious, mocking the plaster saint stolen by El Riojano (page 93), and callous, laughing at the plight of the poor old woman from whom it was stolen (page 94).

Juárez is cynical. Both Páez and Silvestre defend El Riojano, making the excuse for him that the plaster saint is only borrowed, and will be returned. "Lástima que el hombre sea de mala memoria," mutters Juárez (page 94).

Somehow, Juárez continues to drink excessively, even in the cáscara, which gives him a tendency toward quarrelsomeness and violence. According to Silvestre, it is an incident in which Juárez "tomó de más y quiso pelear con los otros hachadores" that caused the three "friends" to move from the woods to the city where Santiago lived (page 113).

Fortunately for Juárez, he has some redeeming virtues, or he would have no legitimate reason for remaining within the cáscara. When Silvestre and his wife quarrel, Juárez lends his moral support and later offers consolation when she leaves. "¡Qué bueno! Ya no nos molestará más," he tells Silvestre (page 34).

He exerts a calming influence on both Silvestre and Páez when Silvestre regains consciousness following his accident, by minimizing the seriousness of it (page 77).

Finally, although he is outspoken, he expresses remorse at having reminded Silvestre of unpleasant memories, revealing a personality more sensitive to the feelings of others than his wilder actions imply (page 84).

Juárez is a complement to the mildness of Páez, reflecting the more violent and restless elements in the mind of Silvestre. From a literary point of view, Juárez can be seen as a useful source of conflict and a necessary contrast against which the figures of Silvestre and Páez can be observed more clearly.

Gabriela. Gabriela, the only important female figure in Los amigos lejanos, is twelve years old (page 137), and wears shoes with buckles, learned from a passage in which she stops briefly to refasten one (page 135). Only two other fragments of physical description exist. Her eyes are described as shining with knowledge (page 119). Her hands, in the other descriptive passage, smell of fresh fish and herbs, noticed by Santiago as the two children return home from a fishing trip (page 136).

Biographically, she reveals that she is an orphan by wondering where her parents have gone and why she is never told what has happened to them (page 50).

Gabriela has better psychological development. She is inclined to be boisterous, shown as her grandfather warns her to change or he will trade her dress for a pair of trousers (page 138).

Her curiosity is very strong; she is willing to promise any kind of secrecy in order to find out from Santiago the contents of the forbidden book he read (page 47). Her curiosity grew until it "se abrió como una flor de grandes petales dorados"(page 48).

Her principal psychological development is in the area of her religious beliefs and the changes that occur, principally with the coming of

doubt. Although she has her share of childish superstitions, such as the fear that stepping on a crack brings bad luck (page 42), she is secure enough in her religious training to dismiss the contents of the mysterious book as foolishness. "¿Sabes lo que es eso?" she asks Santiago. "Cuentos para los grandes" (page 49).

Soon doubt appears, as Santiago's doubt spreads to her. She doubts the word of adults, saying that "nada de lo que nos cuentan es cierto" (page 50). She wonders for the first time if what Santiago had told her about God being dead is true (page 50).

Following this is a long search for a reliable source of truth. She doesn't trust her guardians, largely because they have given her the story of the Nativity but ignored her sex education, leaving her to wonder as she witnesses the birth of a kid in the stable (page 52). She will not seek out the priest, because she feels him to be in league with her guardians and would not be truthful (page 54).

The longer the search endures, the greater her doubt grows, attaching itself to her "como una piel suave y fina" (page 54). She no longer attends church, fearful of finding that what Santiago has told her is true (page 54).

Gabriela tries to restore her faith by clutching at whatever evidence she can find. Her aunt is filled with religious doubt, revealed to Gabriela in an overheard conversation. Nonetheless, Gabriela reasons, her aunt's doubt could be very minor, because she heard her pray at night "como si supiera en verdad que hay Dios" (page 74).

Late in the novel, she is still full of doubt, but confident that

eventually she will find an escape from it. "Preguntaremos a otras personas," she tells Santiago. "Ya saldremos de la duda" (page 135). But in the same paragraph she confesses to a tiny fear that what Santiago and she have been searching for is unattainable (page 135).

Gabriela is not very well developed as an individual, since the reader is never given a close enough view of her. She is always in the shadow of Santiago, and what little of her that appears is so generally described as to belong to any girl approximately her age.

Santiago. If one character were to be selected as the protagonist of Los amigos lejanos, it would be Santiago, since he appears as early as the second chapter and is still present at the close of the novel, following Silvestre's death. Closer examination of the chapters he shares with Gabriela reveals him to be from whose point of view the chapters in which he appears are written, starting with the second chapter as he is stealthily entering a room for the purpose of reading a forbidden book, and terminating as he is telling Gabriela that he has started hearing an inner voice as had Silvestre (page 151). The only exceptions are the second chapter, which is largely from Gabriela's point of view, and the fourth, in which the point of view is divided between Santiago and his aunt.

Santiago initiates all the important action in the chapters in which he appears, first gaining access to the information that caused the religious doubt in the minds of the children (page 39), spreading the doubt to Gabriela in his desire to share his secret with her (page 49), forcing the girl to accompany him to church by use of threats in order to ask God personally for information (page 55), pretending to have been

struck in the eye by a chip from the axe of Silvestre in order to become acquainted with the old man (page 100), and virtually destroying Silvestre's dream world with his questioning and analytical reasoning which forces Silvestre to doubt and question (pages 117-129).

Physically, Santiago and Gabriela are the youngest, but the age of Santiago is never directly stated. Reason would put his age slightly prior to puberty. His actions are those of a child as he steals the keys to a box containing a forbidden book (page 39). He is a child as he pretends to have been struck in the eye by a chip (page 100). He is referred to pronominally as a niño in the passage in which his nervousness is interpreted by his grandmother to be illness (page 44). There also, he reacts as a small boy, denying that he is ill even before he is asked, and is treated as a child by being sent to bed as a means of curing him.

His diminutive size implies his young age when Silvestre cautions him to employ Gabriela's help to pull a bucket of dirt from a well he is assisting Silvestre to dig. "Le podrá ayudar a subir el tacho con la tierra. Solo no va a poder," Silvestre tells him (page 108).

His choice of companions in Gabriela, who is known to be twelve (page 137), his domination of her by implied threats (page 45), and the fact that Silvestre always employs formal verb forms in addressing him, as in the remark at the well cited above, suggest that Santiago is the same age as, or slightly older than, Gabriela, possibly thirteen or fourteen.

Biographically, because his parents are never mentioned until a later novel, and because his grandparents administer discipline (page 137), it can be assumed that he is living in a house of which his grand-

father is the head. He has an aunt who visits every year (page 69), but no other relatives are in evidence except Gabriela, whose relationship to him is not revealed until his reappearance in La grieta. She is then identified as his cousin, in the same passage containing the first mention of his having parents.[4]

Santiago is developed psychologically as inquisitive, as shown by his desire to read a book forbidden to him (page 39); daring, as shown by his willingness to steal keys to the box in which the book is kept (page 39); and courageous, illustrated as he reminds Gabriela that he had once rescued her from under the hooves of an angry cow (page 50).

Chiefly, however, Santiago is developed as a person infected by doubt of a religious nature, who seeks solutions and finally arrives at what is to him the possibility of hope.

The forbidden book is the instrument by which he is infected with doubt. The seed of doubt falls on fertile soil; the book apparently has been on his mind for some time, since his plans for reading it secretly are well developed. His assumption that the book has been denied the children because it contains truth the adults do not want the children to have implies that he has not always accepted blindly what he has been told prior to this (page 41). He also mentions, in later talks with Gabriela, that he has known for a long time that information has been frequently withheld from them (page 50).

After the original exposure to doubt, Santiago's mental anguish

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[4]Julio Ardiles Gray, La grieta (San Miguel de Tucumán: Julio Ardiles Gray, 1952), p. 13.

grows. He feels a need to share his secret with Gabriela, but her immediate rejection of the book does not console him (page 50). He insists that the book was hidden only because it contains truth too terrible to be revealed, and continues his argument until he has spread his doubt to her.

His aunt, afflicted to a lesser degree with religious doubt, is overheard by the children to say "si es verdad que hay un Dios," and uses her word "if" to reinforce his own feeling of doubt (page 73).

With Gabriela, Santiago searches for reassurance against doubt. Silvestre promises to be a source of information, but Santiago doesn't trust him completely following an innocent joke played on him by the old man, who tells him that eating dirt gives strength (page 115).

Santiago reveals an unusual ability to reason analytically as he dismembers Silvestre's simple religious training with questions. Silvestre insists that both his "friends" are good, despite having told Santiago that all those who are good go to Heaven after death. The boy's reaction to these contradictory statements is immediate: "Santiago no se conformó. Un ratón de dientes muy finos lo roía." He asks Silvestre, "¿Cómo es que han ido a parar a la cáscara? Si no pudieron entrar, ¿es que no fueron buenos? ¿Por qué se quedaron afuera? Pregúnteles ... " (page 117).

Silvestre does question his friends, who know no more than he, and Santiago remains frustrated, deep in thought, so preoccupied with his doubts that he is unable to fish (page 132).

Santiago continues silent and moody on the way home from Silvestre's shack. He is uncommunicative, rejecting Gabriela's attempts at conversation (page 136). At the climax of his mental anguish, he is tormented

by his thoughts as soon as he is left alone: "Los pensamientos volvieron con sus voces punzantes como las semillas de los cardos. En alguna parte le dolía algo, una llaga, una herida" (page 143).

Then Santiago finds, if not peace, at least consolation. Excitedly he tells Gabriela that he has solved the mystery of the cáscara, that it is a sort of interior world possessed by everyone, and that he too hears an inner voice. He describes it:

> Me acaban de brotar voces, como dijo el viejo que a él le brotaron. De pronto ... sin que me diera cuenta, me han brotado. El viejo dijo que eran como las semillas del alpiste en el agua. ... Bueno. ... Así es. ... Las palabras no tienen sonidos. Pero las oigo. ... Ahora crecen como una planta maravillosa (page 151).

Santiago denies that the voice is that of anyone familiar. He concludes the novel, trying to repeat to Gabriela what the voice is telling him:

> Espera ... dice ... dice ... ¿Has visto? Yo tampoco sé nada. ... Yo tampoco sé nada. ... Pero no hay que tener miedo. ... Hay que seguir buscando. ... Hay que seguir buscando. ... Algún día lo sabremos todo. ... (page 152).

Santiago represents the tracing of the path from innocence to knowledge, through a period of intense doubt. To continue the characterization of transition farther, Gray placed Santiago, now nineteen years old, in an urban environment, as the narrator and a major character in his second novel, La grieta.

Characters from La grieta

La grieta, the second of Gray's novels, takes the character of Santiago from the prize-winning Los amigos lejanos and uses him as the narrator who describes in this novel "sus años de adolescencia, una

adolescencia llena de angustias y de conflictos dramáticos causados por la elección de una vocación y la incertidumbre de poseer las fuerzas necesarias, para poder cumplirla."[5]

The principal characters, Santiago, Lucas, and Werner, are ranked for convenience and comparison rather than by order of importance.

Santiago. The Santiago of La grieta bears little resemblance to the character of the same name in Los amigos lejanos. They both have cousins named Gabriela, and they both exhibit considerable mental and verbal agility, but beyond these superficial characteristics they show little similarity, being different in age, surroundings, associates, and pursuits. The younger Santiago is a pre-adolescent, comes from a small town or rural community (page 13), and is observed associating with his immediate family and an old man. The older Santiago is eighteen years old (page 18), lives in an urban environment (page 13), and associates primarily with his classmate and friend, Lucas.

As was the case in Los amigos lejanos, physical description is almost entirely lacking. Only once is an actual glimpse of Santiago offered, occurring during Part II, in the passage describing the arrest of Santiago by the police. Officers arrive and pound on Santiago's door. "Luego de un rato, ésta se abrió y asomó la cabeza un adolescente alto, cargado de hombros. Encandilado, hacía esfuerzos por defender los ojos de la luz del sol" (page 70).

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[5]Julio Ardiles Gray, La grieta (San Miguel de Tucumán: Julio Ardiles Gray, 1952), flyleaf. Subsequent references to this work will be found in the text.

Santiago's last name is Renn (page 70). He is pursuing a humanistic course at a university (page 77). He was born in a small town, but lives at the time of the story in the city, returning to the scene of his childhood during the summer (page 13).

His parents are apparently of modest means, since his house is described as far from the center of town, close to the slums (page 23).

Psychologically, Santiago is complicated. His principal characteristic is an intense introspective urge, an attempt to identify his own sources of artistic inspiration (page 98).

A first indication of Santiago's preoccupation with himself is his feeling that he is being watched. He observes this first during a walk in the country while on one of his summer vacations. He states, after communing with nature, "Me sentí vigilado por alguien más inmenso que yo, más poderoso, más infinito" (page 13). "El desconocido," he continues, "siempre estaba a mis espaldas, vigilándome" (page 14).

That this sense of being watched is closely related to his desire to be a writer can be inferred from the nearly simultaneous occurence of the two sensations. He first feels the urge to write upon his return from his vacation, and almost immediately receives the impression that he is watched (page 13). Later, as he continues his writing, he observes that upon entering his room at night to record the experiences of the day, he again notices the presence of his "interlocutor invisible" (page 34). The feeling is quite strong. "Sentía su presencia en mi cuarto. Sabía que me espiaba por algún resquicio. Por un momento llegué a creer que podía escuchar los latidos de su corazón y que cálido y lleno de ternura respiraba

a mi lado" (page 34).

Santiago denies that his unseen watcher is anything like the "friends" of Silvestre. "Su vida, nada tenía que ver con "los amigos" que el viejo Silvestre decía llevar siempre consigo. El no estaba en mi interior, sino que le sentía fuera de mí, oculto pero vigilante" (page 34).

The purpose of his unseen watcher is the same as the amigos of Silvestre, however. Santiago reveals a need for acceptance, which he apparently does not get from his associates, and which his watcher can supply: "Muchas veces he deseado ver el color de sus ojos. Los sabía húmedos, bondadosos. No eran duros, ni trataban de violar conciencias, hasta lograr la vergüenza y el temor, como los otros" (page 34).

He reaches a point of awareness which causes him to stop writing and look over his shoulder, but always in vain. He finally concludes that the being is intangible and invisible, "nada más que soplo y mirada" (page 34).

Later, after some association with Lucas, this invisible watcher loses some of its friendly qualities, replacing them with a colder, more critical aspect and the features of his friend. Soon after, he begins to believe that all his literary efforts are directed to this being who resembles his friend, and subsequently there is a direct transfer, after which he feels he is dedicating himself to Lucas, that Lucas is assimilating him (page 34).

Associated with the sense of being watched is the idea that Santiago has of being chosen. Following the walk during which Santiago acquires his unseen watcher, he observes the sunset and is strongly affected by it.

He feels that something of great magnitude is imminent, and that he will be the only witness (page 14). His discussion of his theory of the "palabra vigilante," a motivating force possessed by creative writers, implies by its tone of discovery and attitude of disbelief in the possiblity of communicating his idea that his is the only awareness. "Sentía necesidad de contar cuanto me ocurría. Estaba seguro; nadie iba a comprenderme, y, sin embargo, seguía escribiendo" (page 34).

Santiago is a very sensitive young man. He appears to have a closer relationship with his mother than with his father, since it is she who expresses concern for his lack of appetite and who admonishes him to come in early (page 23). But he never discusses his father, and the only reference concerning him is an oblique reference using the collective word padres (page 108).

It is this sensitivity, which Santiago describes as an aversion to both physical and mental violence, and which he attributes to having been rather weak since he was a boy, which causes Santiago to reject the companionship of his boisterous schoolmates, who, he asserts, "practicaban un culto desaforado a la violencia" (page 21).

Santiago is equally backward in his relationship with women. Part of this attitude is a result of his early sex education. "El sexo me espantaba," he confesses. "La moral en que había educado, asociaba siempre la idea de pecado al sexo" (page 21). Isolation from his peer group in an attempt to avoid violence had never threatened this concept. His resulting inhibitions, combined with a totally unrealistic knowledge of women vicariously acquired through reading (page 22), leave him ill-prepared for

the experience to which the novel is dedicated: his abrasive association with Lucas.

The effect of this association with Lucas is essentially a maturing process. At first, it consists of an initiation into a quasi-adult status, a sexual one, as he accepts a challenge of Lucas: "Apuesto a que no conoces lo que es una mujer" (page 22). To win his bet, he is required to visit the brothel of a prostitute named Elisa, in the slums near his home. His reaction to the experience is one of feeling indelibly dirty, so that he is afraid to be seen in the light (page 26). He runs from the room where Lucas has been waiting for him, so that Lucas cannot see his tears of remorse (page 26), and does not return to school for three days, partly because of the continued feeling of nakedness and filth, and partly because of fear of ridicule from his classmates (page 27).

Santiago's chief source of conflict comes from Lucas's having very positive ideas and from his being much more aggressive in expressing them. Santiago notes that in their encounters it was he "quien salía destrozado por el encuentro. Era el satélite de un planeta desbocado a cuya ley no podía escapar" (page 26). Concerning the nature of their friendship, Santiago describes it further: "Y nuestra amistad, fué eso siempre: un asalto y un resistir" (page 20). The sensitive Santiago nearly always yields to the will of Lucas.

The effect of Lucas on Santiago is a long period of doubt, during which Santiago is unable to write, his chief ambition (page 37). But the disappearance of Lucas, caused by his father's suicide, gives Santiago time to think and to evolve a more indestructable philosophy (page 47).

After an interval of six months, Santiago renews his friendship with Lucas. Santiago notes a vast change in Lucas (page 78), but the real change is a noticable maturation in Santiago. Although he had previously explained to Lucas that compared with him, Santiago felt like a new-born creature exploring the boundaries of his world (page 28), he now sees their relationship in a much different light: "Me dí cuenta que ahora sentía piedad por Lucas. Yo había crecido de golpe y él continuaba siendo un adolescente adolorido y desamparado" (page 78). Santiago no longer takes Lucas as seriously, assuming a mock-serious attitude in their conversations (page 97), and worrying because Lucas has such mistaken ideas (page 91).

The conflict between the virile personality of Lucas and the sensitive one of Santiago is intensified toward the close of the novel, shortly before Lucas suddenly disappears. That Santiago is assailed by doubt more from the force of Lucas's smile than by his words implies that the greater strength of Lucas's personality is now the cause of Santiago's uncertainty (page 94).

Any accurate evaluation of Santiago's personality necessarily involves a similar evaluation of Lucas; it is in the personality of the one that the contrasting personality of the other can best be seen. For that reason the final evaluation of Santiago will appear following the analysis of the personality of Lucas, combined with the summary of the examination of Lucas.

Lucas. The personality of Lucas is not as complicated as that of Santiago. Lucas can be seen as having one chief motivation, one chief

reaction to the ideas of Santiago, and one principal goal in life. His chief motivation, as Santiago sees it, is a sort of agressive curiosity, which violates and often destroys in an effort to know; it is a manifestation of a "rabioso impulso de violar todo lo que fuese secreto, misterio y aun pudor" (page 21). His reaction to the ideas of Santiago is to systematically destroy them as soon as they are presented. Describing conversations between the two, Santiago says:

> Me permitía hablar hasta que agotaba mis ideas y cuando estaba convencido que no guardaba reserva alguna, se lanzaba al ataque, partiendo de una paradoja. Analizaba luego las razones habidas y por haber, y, por último destruía pacientemente lo que había dicho yo (page 29).

Lucas's principal goal in life is to ascertain whether he is an elegido. According to his theory, one had to be visited by a spirit in order to be a creative artist, a writer, or a poet, and one's life was meaningless unless he could know whether "visitations," made only to elegidos, were forthcoming (page 41).

Physical description of Lucas is scant. A few details exist of his clothing. When Lucas dares Santiago to accompany him to a prostíbulo, Santiago is embarrased, so that he lowers his head. His attention is attracted to some of the lower details of Lucas's clothing. "Vi sus zapatos machados, los cordones de sus zapatos llenos de nudos, el dobladillo raído de su pantalón" (page 22). Judging from this description, the rest of Lucas's clothing is shabby if it is at all consistent with that portion described.

A passage in Part III describes Lucas following a serious illness, looking thin and pale (page 77). He wears a mourning band on his arm

following the death of his father (page 83).

His eyes are alluded to, to describe a variety of expressions. Santiago's attenion is drawn to them when he visits Lucas at the offices of El Imparcial: "La luz le dió en los ojos. Eran acerados, hermosos" (page 85). These eyes show "un destello de goce, agudo, mordaz," when Lucas first speaks with Santiago (page 22). They are "apagados" as he walks from the bedroom at the prostíbulo (page 25). They show "un destello ... de malicia o alegría" after winning an argument with Santiago (page 37). After his illness, they are at first "cargados de tristeza" (page 78), then "cargados de odio o coraje" as he contemplates an uncertain future (page 79). Shortly before his final disappearance, his eyes are "nerviosos" and "suplicantes" as he is questioned by Santiago (page 92), becoming "velados y lejanos" under pressure of some unpleasant memory he refuses to divulge (page 92).

Lucas's smile is frequently described, expressing different moods. After intercourse, it is "melancólica" (page 25). It becomes a smile "de complicidad" as Lucas accepts Santiago (page 27), although immediately after seeing Santiago's reaction at the prostíbulo, he displays a smile "con malicia" (page 25). But when Santiago smiles at Lucas, to express happiness at being accepted, Lucas smiles again, this time with a smile "llena de tristeza" (page 27).

Often cruelly critical of Santiago's poetry, he reacts to a poem that Santiago has written "con una sonrisa fina de flor y acero que tenía para su crueldad" (page 35). Another poem causes a smile "con malicia," this time with a show of dimples which give Lucas the appearance of "viejo

socarrón y niño al mismo tiempo" (page 40). He confesses the authorship of one of his own poems, however, with a "sonrisa dolorosa," feeling it inferior to one of Santiago's (page 42).

Part III, which records a Lucas who is recovering from a serious illness, notes his reaction to Santiago's poetry with a smile containing less triumph and more bitterness (page 78). Santiago also notes a smile of compassion, "la sonrisa de quien ya sabe algo que va a ocurrir y que sólo puede sentir compasión por el asombro del ingenuo que por primera vez vive ese momento" (page 78).

Three more smiles are recorded, all occuring during an argument with Santiago. Having provoked the argument, he tries hard to hide a "sonrisa de malicia" (page 91). After allowing Santiago to state his views, "la vieja sonrisa burlona" illuminates Lucas's face. At the conclusion of the argument, feeling he has won, Lucas exhibits a smile which has now changed to one which is "una mezcla de ironía y dolor" (page 93).

The quantity of biographical information is limited. Lucas's family name is Carrer (page 71). He is a classmate of Santiago who lives in a modest house with his parents until the suicide of his father, an unsuccessful composer (page 47). Then, forced by economic conditions, he drops out of school to seek employment while his mother sells their house and rents an even smaller one (page 47). Lucas first finds employment at the Gutemburg bookstore (page 90), work which he exchanges for a job as reporter (page 55) at a newspaper named <u>El Imparcial</u> (page 87).

Santiago is the primary source of information concerning Lucas. His psychological development begins with Santiago's description of him:

> Agresivo con todo, parecía que el universo entero hubiese sido construído para que él lo destrozase.
>
> Era incapaz de orden. Ni su vida, ni sus ideas fueron jamás coherentes. Pensaba a impulsos, a golpes, a medida que iba viviendo, y luego caía en largas agonías provocadas por la duda (page 20).

Lucas is further developed as egotistical, analytical, talkative, and in arguments with Santiago, "implacable, mordaz, obsesivo" (page 21).

The three strongest psychological characteristics are aggressiveness, curiosity, and doubt. The first quality is described as "esa alegre y salvaje agresividad que parecía irradiar" (page 78). He demonstrates this in his relationship with Santiago, causing him to describe the friendship as "un asalto y un resistir" (page 20). Two other examples exist of his aggressiveness. The first is displayed as he forces his way into the prostíbulo (page 24), and the second, also a forcible entry, appears as he gains entrance to a railway station (page 87). Only one detail diminishes this picture, Lucas's timidity upon entering the offices of El Imparcial for the first time (page 55). A possible explanation of this apparent anomaly is that the deception which brings Lucas to the offices also denies him his usual brash courage.

Lucas's curiosity is described as "esa pasión de lanzarse para conocer haciéndose parte de las cosas, identificándose con ellas" (page 20), or "su rabioso impulso de violar todo que fuese secreto. ... Era una terrible obsesión de la claridad" (page 21).

Santiago even doubts Lucas's friendship, because of his curiosity. He states:

> Lo miro más bien como a un enemigo, pero un enemigo muy particular,

> en el cual el odio no existía. La curiosidad, una curiosidad malsana y terrible reemplazaba al odio. Curiosidad por saber cómo era posible una vida distinta a la suya. Curiosidad por lograr mi personal manera de ver las cosas. ¿Para destruirla? No lo sé (page 29).

Love is to Lucas only another form of curiosity. Concerning Lucas's affair with a woman, Santiago is skeptical. "En lugar de amor, había descubierto una nueva fuente de misterio y llevado por su pasión, estaba lanzado en el afán de violarla para conocer" (page 42).

Doubt is a controlling factor in Lucas's life. At first it is only "un pasatiempo con cierta elegancia cínica" (page 107). But the importance of doubt grows. Later, he describes doubt as "el estado de mayor dignidad. La fe ... inmovilizaba el hombre; es un especie de "obesidad mental." Por la duda era posible la acción. Quien pierde un asidero se lanza en busca de otro" (page 107). Shortly before his disappearance, Santiago observes a complete change, after which Lucas's life is dominated by a search for freedom from doubt (page 79).

It can be observed at this point that the two characters, Lucas and Santiago, are nearly inseparable; each is best developed as a contrast to the other. Santiago's chief development is as an influence of Lucas. Lucas's development is as a reaction to Santiago. The importance of both lies in the relationship between them, in the pairing of a strong character with a weaker, and the implantation of doubt from the stronger to the weaker. A further discussion of this type of relationship, which is a recurring pattern in the works of Gray, will be found in Chapter Three.

Werner. Werner is one of the more interesting of Gray's characters, mainly because he doesn't seem to fit into any of the situations common

to Gray's novels and has to exist in his own special environment in the form of subplots involving the world of the journalist.

The character of Werner will be examined as two separate characters for three reasons. The first is simply a matter of organization, locating that part of the analysis of Werner pertaining to a certain novel with the rest of the characters from that novel. The second reason is that Werner has different characteristics in the two novels in which he appears, being in one a much younger man. The third reason is related to the second. It is logical to assume that the Werner of La grieta is the same man as the Werner of El inocente, seen at a much later period; they share similar occupations and a common last name. However, the possibility that no congruity exists must be recognized.

Organization of this study by date of publication will cause an anachronistic analysis of the character. Reversal of this order would have done violence to the organization as a whole, and for that reason was not changed.

Werner, in the two paragraphs dealing with his physical description, is seen in the first as "un hombre entrado en años, de pelo pajizo y sobretodo gris"(page 84). In the second, Werner's friend Miguel observes that when Werner does not get his way, the expression on his face is that of a petulant child (page 61).

Werner's given name is Juan (page 62), he is an editor for El Imparcial, and his nickname is El Suizo (page 59). His chief vice appears to be an immoderate use of alcoholic beverages on paydays (page 85). No other biographical information can be found.

Werner is developed psychologically as a frustrated man, convinced of his own failure because of circumstances. He usually blames his job at the newspaper for his lack of success. Anger and frustration arise when he is vexed by an insolent apprentice, at whom he hurls a lead paperweight (page 59) and insulting epithets (page 60), until he becomes so angry that he is inarticulate (page 60). Another source of annoyance is the apparent indifference shown by the management toward the employees, symbolized by the worn-out typewriter Werner is first seen futilely attempting to repair (page 59).

Werner expresses his anger and frustration in his rebellious attitude toward the owner of the newspaper, Bard (page 60), in his description of the newspaper as a place for failures (page 62), and in his drunken warning to Santiago, whom he mistakes for an employee, to flee before it is too late (page 85).

Werner is disillusioned and cynical. He parodies his own obituary as it might appear in the paper following his death, as representing all he will ever receive for his many years of faithful service (page 62), responds to an admonition that he is shouting by remarking with an air of disillusion, "Gritar es lo único que nos queda" (page 61), and asserts that for a newspaper man the only means of preserving one's sanity is self-deception: "Por piedad nos mentimos" (page 62).

Gray's theme of one character spreading doubt and disillusion to another is involved in Werner's influence on Andrés, a fellow worker who somehow kept his ambition to be a creative writer alive through twenty years at the newspaper. Werner tries to convince Andrés to recognize that

he will never succeed, and that he is still trying to live in the past, when he had the necessary youth and strength. Later, Werner tries to explain to Miguel that his motivation was an altruistic attempt to save Andrés from ridicule (page 63).

Werner is occasionally philosophical. One of his theories, Lucas explains to Santiago, involves man's relationship with things:

> Cree que las cosas son algo así como depósitos de nuestro afecto, del afecto que sentimos por ellas. El afecto, para él, es una baba invisible, una resina, que termina por atraparnos. El afecto que dejamos detrás de nosotros, lo recogen las cosas y a veces, nos lo devuelven en la forma de un eco. Este eco casi siempre es mortal (page 86).

What specifically concerns Werner is that he hates the newspaper but cannot break away from his work as a journalist because of his attraction to it. The part of his theory concerning the echo is clarified when a machine in the plant, operated by a man who personified it and treated it with affection, snapped a connecting rod and impaled him with half of it. Miguel, voicing Werner's theory, explains the fatality to the typographer. "Es el eco. Es a causa del eco. ... Las cosas tienen ..."(page 69).

Werner's importance in La grieta is considerably less than that of either Lucas or Santiago, because he only appears in the subplot involving work in a newspaper. His inclusion as a major character is due to two factors. First, he is the only other character besides Lucas and Santiago to be developed psychologically, and second, his individuality and apparent incongruity suggest that his appearance represents an effort on the part of the author to employ a character and ideas important to him despite questionable relevance to the novel.

Characters from Elegía

Elegía, the third of Gray's novels, represents a sharp reduction in length from his second novel, from 34,500 words to 11,500.[6] The novel appears to be an attempt to refine the theme of La grieta, the dramatic conflict that occurs between a strong character full of doubt, and a more passive character, full of innocence.

To sharpen the contrast between the characters, Gray has made the weaker figure feminine, as the eleven-year-old María. He has given the stronger figure a more obvious reason to be aggressive by providing the character, a thirteen-year-old orphan named Daniel, with a history of mistreatment in an orphanage, and by placing him in a private home filled with adults who coldly ignored him. Finally, Gray simplified the source of conflict. Instead of two contrasting theories of creative ability, both esoteric, he contrasts the viewpoint of a family's youngest and most protected member, an innocent girl who can sense only the warmth and affection surrounding her, with that of a cynical, negative boy who has witnessed the seamier side of an adult world, and has rejected all adults, including the one he would have been and all the adult members of María's family, who are to him only hostile strangers.

María. María is the narrator of Elegía, just as Santiago is the narrator of La grieta. Her principal function is twofold. First, she describes Daniel. Second, she develops as she reacts to him. Her role is largely passive, and her development as a character is mostly subor-

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[6] Word count based on average of words in five random pages with compensation for pages with obvious differences, such as chapter endings.

dinated to his.

The only physical description of María is that she is eleven years old.[7] Her strenuous experience with Daniel as she hides aboard a train for a ride into the city (page 71), ending with a hard fall as she jumps while the train is nearing a station (page 77), leaves her with no more injury than a pair of sore feet (page 79), which could have resulted from spending the day walking through the city (page 81). Her stamina during this situation implies robust health.

Biographically, she appears to be an orphan, on the basis of the fact that her parents are never mentioned, and that she is living in a house normally occupied only by her, her grandparents, her aunt Francisca Villalba (page 13), and a servant named Emilia. The house is probably in a very small town at least several hours' travel from a city, since María has never seen buildings of more than one story before she and Daniel go to visit El Gran Ofir. She is bewildered upon her arrival in the city by the automobiles in the streets (page 81).

Psychologically, the development of María is the tracing of the pathway from innocence and trust to one of disillusionment and doubt.

María begins her story at the conclusion of Daniel's funeral, and narrates the story as a flashback. Because of this order it is difficult to distinguish between the innocent María as she was before the coming of Daniel, and the altered María, who has been influenced by Daniel. Two ideas that are a result of Daniel's influence are a rejection of an adult

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[7] Julio Ardiles Gray, Elegía (Tucumán: Ediciones Jano, 1952), p. 23. Subsequent references to this work will be found in the text.

world and a desire to never grow up, both of which she mentions at the beginning (page 11). But the first idea must have already occurred to her, because she tries to impress upon Daniel that she isn't like the adults, who have been ignoring the boy, nor does she want to be like them (page 22). She does defend her immediate family from Daniel's charge that all adults are wicked, but on the grounds that they have been good to her (page 24).

At this point Daniel begins to destroy her illusions, trying to discredit the very adults in whom she has the most faith.

María first loses her trust of Emilia when Daniel forces her to witness a clandestine meeting between Emilia and her lover in the stable (page 33). Her rejection of Emilia is obvious as she avoids her caressing hand the next morning because "era la misma mano que había visto caída sobre el fardo de alfalfa," glimpsed during the moonlit love scene (page 40).

María loses her trust of her grandfather next, when Daniel reveals to her that he is a usurero, a word she doesn't completely understand but recognizes by context as something very unpleasant (page 53). Mistrust of her grandfather represents a more serious disillusion than that of the maid, because he is an important member of the family, and one who she had hoped was above reproach (page 44). Evidence of her first real doubt of the adult world is shown by her feeling it necessary to have his goodness proved (page 49).

The results of his being proved are predictable, as is her total rejection of him for being human and fallible. Her rejection of him is

evidenced in her refusal to play the accustomed childish games with him (page 47), and in her reluctance at being kissed by him (page 72).

María's reaction to Daniel varies. She hates him for revealing the truth about Emilia and about her grandfather, but after his death, she finds that she loves him intensely and will miss him greatly (page 12).

Her reaction to what Daniel revealed to her is one of sadness: "El conocer una nueva verdad me producía una sensación de vacío, una tristeza y tenía ganas de morirme ..."(page 43).

María is a figure changed by doubt. She finds no peace by the end of the novel. Her basic conclusion is to reject the adult world as had Daniel and to desire to share her secret with non-adult readers, a secret which she says, "Me roe el pecho como una rata maligna" (page 127).

Daniel. Daniel is a sort of young Lucas, and could have been Lucas had he not died at a younger age than that at which Lucas appeared in La grieta. Aggressiveness and curiosity are dominant characteristics of both. Daniel's influence on María is similar to Lucas's on Santiago, with the spreading of his doubt and negativism to her. His exit from the novel is analogous, being a departure surrounded by mystery following the climax of some supreme test, which is left to the reader to decide whether he has passed.

In contrast with most of Gray's characters, Daniel is described quite clearly at his first appearance:

> Estaba vestido con un traje color pizarra, calzaba unos botines nuevos y unas medias largas y oscuras. En una mano tenía una gorra; en la otra una valija de cuero. Un mechón de cabellos negros y revueltos le caían sobre la frente (page 13).

Reminiscent of Lucas is the expression on his face, "una mezcla de desprecio y de curiosidad agresiva" (page 16). When he smiles, his teeth show "menudos, afilados, duros" (page 23). His voice is described, expressing hate (page 22), sounding "imperativa y dura" (page 29), being filled with anguish (page 63), showing a tremble of emotion (page 94), exhibiting "un acento de odio y asco"(page 65), and choking with emotion (page 90). Either these are the principal attributes of his voice, or the only ones worthy of note, as no other descriptions of his voice appear.

Biographically, Daniel is an orphan who has been sent with a letter of introduction addressed to María's aunt, to live with María's family, approximately a year or less from the time of his death. María, writing on the night of his funeral, describes his coming as occurring some time the previous spring (page 13).

Daniel is thirteen years old, since he is two years older than María (page 61), who is eleven (page 23).

At one time Daniel has escaped from the orphanage to find employment as an assistant to a magician named El Gran Ofir. It is because of María's aunt that he is a member of the household, seen when the grandfather blames the aunt for Daniel's mischief (page 107). The relationship between the aunt and Daniel is unclear, but apparently emotional in nature, as the aunt expresses the greatest sorrow at Daniel's funeral (page 125). It is also a relationship that the aunt is ashamed of, as she rarely demonstrates any affection toward Daniel before his death (page 125).

Psychologically, the clearest development of Daniel is in his influence on others, nearly all bad, according to María:

> ¡Cuánto daño nos hizo a todos Daniel! ... se ha roto un algo invisible que nos unía a los de la casa. Era más que cariño. Era una especie de confianza ciega que hacía posible el cariño. Ahora ha sido reemplazado por un desasosiego. Ha entrado en la casa un vaho malsano y sé que no habrá jamás ni la paz, ni la tranquilidad, ni el amor de antes (pages 17-18).

The adults react to Daniel strongly. They ignore him as if he doesn't exist, they refuse to talk around him, and the grandmother, accustomed to singing the children to sleep or to amusing them with stories, stops abruptly at his arrival (page 19). Both grandparents regard him with a mixture of fear and pity (page 20).

Daniel seems at first to be an unlikely object of fear. He is silent and withdrawn, leaving the presence of adults to retire to his room as soon as he can be excused from the table (page 21). He is accustomed to sit in the shadows on the stairs, not even seeking the company of the only other child in the house, María (page 22).

It is obvious that his background has contributed to his defensive behavior. His running off to join El Gran Ofir is the result of mistreatment at the orphanage (page 67). His violent reaction to the unexpected appearance of María is to throw his body so that his back is to the wall, in a reflexive movement of defense against bodily harm that implies experience with a harsh environment (page 22).

María describes his special faculty as "un extraño poder, una manera especial de saber las cosas" (page 12). Indeed it is. The information he accumulates, such as pertaining to the location of the grandfather's money plus the knowledge as to how and from whom it has been acquired, an accurate time schedule of the illicit love affair of the maid, despite his largely

being ignored by the adults, speaks eloquently that he not only possessed this power, but exercised it assiduously as well.

The only individual Daniel ever shows a need for is María. He seeks her out to satisfy some need by destroying an illusion or presenting a new truth (page 61). It is the same sort of need Lucas expresses for Santiago, in which he can only be an effective force when he is a force expressed (La grieta, page 21).

Toward all others, Daniel expresses contempt, as toward the druggist, by spitting on the floor (page 54), or cruelty, as toward Emilia, by pretending to pick alfalfa from her hair and smiling maliciously (page 41).

Daniel's chief motivation is to secure the results of El Gran Ofir's "experiment," a potion which would secure eternal youth. María shows recognition of the extent of this orientation when she notes that all the "truths" he has revealed to her have been nothing but preparation for a final "truth," the existence of this potion with which he hopes to remain forever young (page 61).

Lucas can thus be seen as a hardened young man, with an obsession toward an impossible goal, whose actions and personality have an important and lasting effect on the people around him.

Characters from Los médanos ciegos

El Riojano. El Riojano is the most prominant figure in Los médanos ciegos. Much of the action is seen from his point of view. González, with the exception of one short passage at the close of the novel, is seen

entirely from El Riojano's eyes. But El Riojano has little to identify him as an individual, because his motives are common, petty, and selfish.

Physical details are limited to a mustache[8] and straight and bristly hair falling over his forehead (page 9).

Biographically, El Riojano is almost equally barren. He and González have been in the carpenter's house for three weeks. His normal activities revolve simply around his friends, sex, and robbery (page 10). He is, at the time of the novel, a fugitive in hiding to escape the penalty of some serious crime, probably murder (page 11). He has a partner whose name is Santiago González, whom he dominates (page 11), but depends on because of the latter's verbal proficiency (page 13).

Psychologically, El Riojano is a paradox. He is helpful and considerate towards Silvestre in Los amigos lejanos. In Los médanos ciegos, he inspires enough confidence and friendship that the carpenter trusts his son to his care (page 45), and collects and gives him money (page 58). Others hide him from the priest and provide him with food (chapter 7). Yet he steals a plaster saint from an old woman and exploits it shamelessly, cares so little for González that he does not plan to wait for him to return to the shack before leaving for the frontier (page 68), and later, plans to kill him in cold blood (page 70). He is planning to exploit the boy Cristóbal and then abandon him (page 68). He even dislikes the people of the village who are gullible enough to believe Gonzalez's stories (page

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[8]Julio Ardiles Gray, Los médanos ciegos (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Doble P, 1957), p. 45. Subsequent references to this work will be found in the text.

14).

El Riojano has some of the dominance of Lucas and Daniel. He exhibits this will to dominate in his manipulation of González, capitalizing on an otherwise innocent "gift of gab," and in experiencing the desire to dominate as overpowering:

> Sabía muy bien que no podría vivir sin el aire de los caminos, que no podría vivir sin ejercitar su poder de despertar el miedo amodorrado en el fondo de todo hombre, ser dueño, por ese medio de sus libertades, así como era dueño de la suya. La posesion de "eso", así, en esa forma, lo llenaba de un vértigo, de una embriaguez de la cual vivía y de la cual sacaba siempre sus fuerzas para seguir viviendo, como una planta (pages 71-72).

The other characteristics pertaining to El Riojano result from his being a fugitive. At night he will walk only in the shadows, because he feels as if the moonlight will reveal his true nature to any spectator (page 12). He feels a sense of fear without any concrete reason, and is quite suspicious of people (page 15). Although he is seen smoking quietly, in a satisfied manner, while González is telling one of his stories (page 34), he is growing very tired of inactivity (page 13).

El Riojano can be viewed as a minor character, who, when given the more important role as a major character, reveals the same common, unredeeming traits, only more visibly.

The Priest. The priest is the only religious figure of any consequence in the works of Gray. Because this priest might be seen as representative of any priest viewed through the eyes of the author, his inclusion as a major character allows the examination of a significant character.

Physically, the priest is old and tired (page 19), wears a starched

collar that is too tight for him (page 36), and shows a set of fine teeth when he smiles (page 25). His hands are wrinkled (page 20).

Biographically, he customarily rides a mule, takes evening walks through the streets reading his breviary aloud (page 27), and collects rocks for a hobby (page 21).

The principal psychological characteristics of the priest's personality are authoritativeness, a tendency to be overbearing, fanaticism, and arrogance. He struggles against frustration, doubt, and discouragement, and usually prevails.

The priest is authoritative as he reprimands the sexton severely for interrupting him (page 23), and again as he intentionally embarrasses him (page 25). He is overbearing and arrogant as he demands action from the commissioner, emphasizing his demands by slamming the door (page 36) after waving his finger in the commissioner's face (page 35). He is fanatical as he sets up the sexton as a spy to find out the whereabouts of El Riojano (page 53), and as he threatens the commissioner with denunciation as a sinner for his lack of cooperation in the elimination of what the priest sees as heresy (page 57). The priest becomes arrogant after he thinks the commissioner has been intimidated, shown in his attitude of artificial condescension (page 35).

The priest doubts the efficacy of his work, comparing his duties to the polishing of a silver candelabrum, on which each day new spots appear (page 19). But he never wavers in his faith, even though he remarks ruefully, "Acaso el único cristiano de todo el valle sea yo" (page 19). When the people abandon the church, he continues to hold services in the

empty sanctuary and to announce these services by ringing the church bells (page 49). He strongly feels the isolation when the people turn from him to their cult in the patio of the carpenter (page 49), but he continues to struggle against what he firmly brands as heresy (page 50).

In summary, the priest is developed as a hard-working, religious man who has grown old and tired in his charge, and who is attempting to counteract the apparent religious superficiality of his congregation with stern measures bordering on fanaticism.

González. Santiago González barely qualifies as a principal character. His inclusion is due to his delusion of being a savior of the people at the conclusion of the novel. The effect of Gonzalez's believing his own lie is to produce a complete change in the direction of the novel, away from the sordid plans of El Riojano to extract as much money from a difficult situation as possible and then escape, to an ending somehow more balanced, providing a suitable ending by death for the two villains, rescuing the innocent boy Cristóbal, and even including the hint of rain for the parched natives. Had it not been for his abrupt, violent, deluded action, the feeling of dramatic conflict would have been left unresolved, or an ending of equal magnitude would have had to be constructed.

Paradoxically, González is developed more as an individual than El Riojano. While a physical description of González is totally absent, and his biographical information limited to the presence of his given name, Santiago (page 13), he is developed psychologically in three separate ways.

The first aspect of González is as a minor reflection of El Riojano, best seen in Los amigos lejanos as González joins El Riojano in helping

Silvestre and shares with him in laughter at the old woman from whom the plaster saint had been stolen (Los amigos lejanos, page 91).

The second aspect is described in El Riojano's mental soliloquy or is seen shortly afterward, and is the first indication that González has individuality. From El Riojano it is learned that González is unable to keep secrets even when they involve his own welfare (page 10), that he has the ability to convince people with the power of his speech (pages 11-12), that he is a dreamer and not a doer (page 11), that he is able to use this power of speech to extricate himself from difficult situations (page 13), and that he is able to create remarkable opportunities for himself, but is unable to capitalize on any of them without the assistance of El Riojano (page 11). Later, González is seen to be somewhat childlike, inventing the fantastic story of the voice in the tree trunk and convincing the superstitious peasants of the validity of the voice through his manipulation of Cristóbal, without considering the possible repercussions (page 15). Apparently unconcerned that trouble is brewing, he passes the time by playing all day with the boy (page 56). In this respect, González resembles Páez, the "friend" of Silvestre.

The third aspect is radically different from the other two. Near the conclusion of the novel, it becomes apparent that González has so come to believe his own stories that he has grown to believe in his prophetic power. He has totally forgotten his fugitive status; he wants to stay and be the hope of the people, and refuses to flee across the border as El Riojano insists they must (page 69). Secure in his delusion, he interprets his feeling of mission to El Riojano, that it is his duty to stay and main-

tain hope: "La gente tiene que creer en algo para poder aguantar," he tells El Riojano (page 71).

He further reveals himself as essentially the type of person who is dependent upon someone else for his sense of identity. El Riojano notes that, just prior to the climactic fight in which they both die, González has lost his dependence on him, and has now attached himself to the boy (page 72). It is on the strength of this new relationship that he shows hostility toward El Riojano.

The basic difference between the development of the characters El Riojano and González is not in the quantity of detail as much as it is in the clarity. The development of González is focused quite clearly, reflecting the personality of El Riojano, possessing a loquacity which he can neither control nor exploit, and finally succumbing to the fatal delusion that he, through Cristóbal, is both a prophet and a savior of the people.

Cristóbal. Cristóbal, the only other character considered to be major, is the least important of the four so considered. He is chiefly an agent through which the ideas of González are expressed.

His physical description is much larger in proportion to his psychological development than most of Gray's characters. His age is never expressed, but his shyly hiding behind his mother's skirts (page 12)gives some indication of both his age and size. El Riojano sees him as having the face of an "animal cuevero" (page 11). His long hair contrasts with the pillow on which he rests his head as he sleeps (page 67).

Facial expressions involving his eyes and mouth are described as

he listens to the voice in the tree trunk. In anticipation, his eyes are brilliant (page 31). As he listens, they are illuminated (page 32), but as the noise of the surrounding people drown out the voice, his eyes lose their luster (page 33).

As he listens, a smile of joy, accompanied by trembling lips and perspiration, appears (page 31). His voice, as he describes his experience, "se deslizaba ahora suavemente, llena de murmullos secretos, con una frescura y una cadencia que amodorraba" (page 32).

The only biographical information concerns Cristóbal's parents and his daily routine. Cristóbal's father, Joseph, is a carpenter; his mother's name is Mary. At home, Cristóbal's routine consisted of entertaining himself by caring for the plants in the patio and playing with the parrot (page 13). At the shack where he was taken by El Riojano, he spent the day playing with González (page 56).

Cristóbal is psychologically developed as shy, gullible, and imaginative. His shyness is shown by his hiding in his mother's skirts (page 12); his naïveté is shown by his readily believing González's fantastic story (page 15); his imagination is shown by his vivid description of the "mother of water" to which he has been listening:

> El agua, el agua ... está hecha con racimos que se deshacen como las uvas. Tiene la carne blanca, por eso no se la escucha cuando corre por la greda. Debajo de la tierra tiene una casa verde ... inmensa ... llena de arcos de mimbres, ramas de sauces y hojas frescas. ... Allí fabrica el verde para las ranas y las lagartijas, ... el barro para las anguilas ... y la sombra para que puedan respirar las iguanas ... (page 32).

Cristóbal is simple; he offers no complications to the plot. He can be viewed as yet another example of childish innocence threatened and

manipulated by less innocent, more aggressive forces.

Characters from El inocente

Camilo. Camilo appears to be the most important of the four main characters in El inocente, because he alone is included as a principal figure in the plot and the two subplots.

Physical description is totally lacking. That he is late in his adolescence or early in his adulthood can be deduced from the fact that he is traveling for the first time to Tucumán to work in the sugar harvest,[9] and that he is unworldly, evidenced in his shyness with women (page 35), his lesser ability to control the effects of inebriation as compared with Méndez (page 28), and his childlike dependence on and faith in his madrina (pages 19-20).

Biographical information is scarce. Camilo is believed to be an orphan, since he is being reared by an old woman thought to be a witch (page 22). His childhood has been lonely; he often spent weeks without speaking with anyone (page 22). He is a native of the province of Santiago del Estero, as is Méndez, revealed as the two men bid their homeland farewell on the way to Tucumán (page 22).

Camilo's principal psychological trait is innocence. He recalls with longing his early childhood, when he played nearly nude around the door of his rancho (page 21). He is very homesick on his first trip away

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[9] Julio Ardiles Gray, El inocente (Buenos Aires: Editorial Goyanarte, 1964), p. 34. Subsequent references to this work will be found in the text.

from his madrina (page 33), in whom he places complete faith to protect him from evil, expressing repeatedly, "No me puede pasar nada" (page 80).

The crime in which he involves himself does not corrupt, or even awaken him to the evils of the world; he doesn't seem to understand it. He can't understand why La Mecha does not want him to leave the building and return to his friend (page 111). He takes from the vast quantity of money in the valise for only two purposes: to buy his train ticket to Tucumán (page 74), and, in a show of gallantry, to buy a present for La Mecha (page 110). He rejects La Mecha's explanation as to why he must stay in hiding, insisting that the police would have no interest in him since he is only keeping a promise to a dead man (page 99).

His innocence is childlike even in his relationship with La Mecha. He shows no shyness toward her as he gives her the valise (page 98), his attitude contrasting sharply with the reticence he showed toward the country girl who rode with him in the wagon as far as Simoca (page 35). But he is very modest with La Mecha in private, jerking his hand back when she tries to kiss it out of gratitude (page 99), and offering only platonic sympathy to her when she stumbles into his bed, in a drunken stupor and completely nude, thinking he is her lover, somehow returned from the dead and come to take her with him to Rosario:

> Camilo la abrazó tiernamente y la puso en su regazo. Sintió en sus manos los senos ateridos de la Mecha. Ella comenzó a cantar muy bajito, con voz ronca, algo que no se entendía, y al mismo tiempo trataba de balancearse como si quisiera que la mecieran.
>
> —¿A Rosario? ... Sí, a Rosario—dijo con un poco de miedo, con un poco de ternura, pero sin entender todavía nada de lo que estaba ocurriendo (page 111).

Camilo's thoughts are never of escape from the police. He returns

to his shack only at the insistence of La Mecha, and his last thoughts are of his *madrina* and of the burned tree that had contained his "soul" (page 116).

Camilo is the personification of innocence. To emphasize this quality, he is involved in two situations in which all other characters notably lack it. First is his involvement in a robbery and a murder because of an innocuous superstition that a promise given to a dying man is sacred and therefore must be kept at all costs (page 73). His second involvement occurs when the robber he is mistaken for is depicted by Werner's newspaper as a modern Robin Hood, and the police inspector decrees Camilo's death as an expediency to restore law and order by thus stilling the unrest caused by Werner's imaginary character.

Werner. Only two more details can be added to the description of Werner, beyond that found in his earlier appearance in *La grieta*. He is younger and more spirited in *El inocente*. When the invention of the mythological bandit Santos Pereyra occurs to him, his amusement is emphasized by his "ojitos de bicho travieso" (page 76). Later, when his plan is the indirect cause of the death of La Mecha, with whom he has some emotional involvement, he tries to hide "los gruesos lagrimones que le corrían por su cara rosada y pecosa" (page 115).

His romantic attachment to La Mecha is the only additional biographical element found in the novel. That his attachment is not reciprocal is shown by La Mecha's cold rejection of him after he tries to prevent her from making a spectacle of herself by dancing nude in the patio of the *prostíbulo* (page 106).

Werner is developed in El inocente as he was in La grieta. He shows his strongest feelings in relationship to his work. In El inocente, however, he is more sure of himself, taking the initiative with the owner of the newspaper where he is employed by inventing a sensational story without prior approval (page 69), and treating the hostile reception of his story by the police as a sort of very interesting game, making humorous allusions to his relationship with the police even while under arrest (page 85).

From a psychological point of view, the only important development of Werner is his relationship with La Mecha. The exact extent of this relationship is never clarified, but his attitude toward her is. The first time they are observed together, is as he drags her from the patio at the prostíbulo, where she has been dancing wildly while under the influence of drugs, completely nude. He carries her from the patio against her will, in a demonstration both forceful and protective (page 106).

In the room where he has taken her, however, a heated argument reveals a stronger Mecha and a weaker Werner. "¿Estás loca?" asks Werner as he slams the door and drops La Mecha on the bed. Her only response is, "¿Y a vos, qué te importa?" at which he retreats, defeated (page 107).

When he reprimands her for using drugs, her reply is a scornful, "Soy bastante grande y sé lo que hago." Then she tells him that she is leaving Tucumán permanently, for Rosario (page 108).

Werner offers to follow her; half enthusiastic and half pleading, he tells her, "En Rosario tengo amigos. ... Puedo trabajar en "La Capital."

... Allí me conocen. ...." Again her answer is firm and decisive: "No, Werner. No quiero que me sigas. ¿Para qué te vas a mezclar en mi vida?" (page 108).

Werner has no alternative but to acquiesce; he stands up and prepares to leave. "Hacé lo que querás," he tells her in parting. "Vos ya sos grande ... " (page 109).

The affair is shown to be even more obviously one-sided when, after his departure, she continues her debauchery until dawn, and then falls into bed with Camilo, her thoughts on her dead lover, Soria Pelayo. Werner, on the other hand, shows an extreme reaction of dismay and shock when he hears of her impending death as a police expedient. The following description well illustrates the intensity of his emotion: "Werner estaba pálido, tembloroso y se aferraba a los bordes del escritorio. No sabía si para contenerse o para evitar una caída" (page 114). Later, he is unable to control his weeping (page 117).

Vásquez. Inspector Vásquez is not as clearly defined as an individual as he is as the embodiment of law and order. He has only a few identifying characteristics.

His physical description is seen most clearly as he stands over the bodies of La Mecha and Camilo. There he is described as "alto y moreno, ... llevaba una bufanda marrón al cuello" (page 117). He wears "un bigote recortado y pulido" (page 102), and glasses (page 102).

Biographical details include his previous accomplishments, such as ending the strike of the sugar workers, and getting rid of the representatives of the abortive labor movement by forcibly putting them aboard

the first train out of town (page 83).

Psychological development shows Vásquez to be proud, tough, and dedicated. He is proud of his efficiency, boasting of his ability at maintaining peace (page 83). He shows toughness in his interrogation of Méndez, as he seeks information concerning the bandit. "Lo siento," he tells him, just before one of his men delivers a blow to Méndez's kidneys, "pero vamos a tener que maltratarte." It isn't long before Méndez agrees to cooperate (page 112). Vásques's conduct in his office is that of a professional. He questions Werner first with patience and humor, until he finds that Werner is not responding to this kind of treatment. He then employs a clever tactic, by refusing either to arrest or to release Werner, thus placing him in a more manageable position (page 83). Vásquez doggedly pursues the truth, as he sees it, and shows frank cynicism of Werner's proffered claims of accuracy in the stories he has been printing (page 101).

Vásquez is not a complicated man. Little or none of his non-professional side shows. Practically all his development reveals him to be a tough, shrewd, and decisive officer, with more concern for expediency than for absolute justice in the performance of his duties, and with little room in his personality for compassion or remorse.

La Mecha. La Mecha is the only young, adult, female character in the novels of Gray who is important enough to be a major character. The only other character with whom she can be compared is the wife of Méndez. There, however, the points of comparison are casual, merely gender and approximate age. The wife of Méndez lacks any psychological development,

and is only a minor background family member.

La Mecha's individuality appears even more unusual when she is compared to the other principal female characters. There are only two of them: María, from Elegía, and Gabriela, from Los amigos lejanos. Neither of them is well developed biographically, both lack anything but a vestige of physical description, and both are innocent, pre-adolescent girls. La Mecha is literally in a class by herself.

Direct physical description of La Mecha is limited. Inspector Vásquez describes her as he turns her corpse over with his foot, but all that he says is, "Era linda hembra" (page 117).

Narrative description is fragmentary but vivid. Under the influence of drugs, she begins to dance in the patio of the prostíbulo, and the following description of that dance gives one of the most lucid pictures found of any of Gray's characters:

> Comenzó a saltar, primero. Luego se despeinó mientras daba pequeños gritos de animal asustado. Después se desató el cinto del quimono y comenzó a girar locamente dejando en cada vuelta el relámpago de su cuerpo blanco.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> La Mecha echó la cabeza atrás, se despojó del quino [sic], quedando totalmente desnuda, se tomó los senos con las manos y comenzó a girar más vertiginosamente aún, sin importancia ya de la música, como si tratara de alcanzar algo, de olvidar algo o de ahogar, en el remanso que formaba, algo que la estaba estrangulando lentamente (page 106).

Available biographical information is curiously specific. La Mecha is her professional name as a prostitute; her real name is Mercedes Paunero (page 73). Her address is accurate enough to insure the arrival of mail: Room 24 (page 87), Santiago 1253, Tucumán (page 72). Perusal of a city map of San Miguel de Tucumán reveals such a street; however, the street

number would place the address eight blocks from the center of town, in a large railroad yards.

La Mecha's psychological development is neither surprising nor particularly abundant. Regarding her occupation as a prostitute, La Mecha shows "cariño fingido" and "ternura profesional" toward her client, an aging senator (page 88). She shows a "sonrisa de cumplido" meant to gain his confidence as she tries to gain important political information from him (page 87), but when the senator leaves, part of her true nature shows as she climbs voluptuously back into her own bed with a "carcajada metálica y burlona"(page 91). Another bit of her true feelings is disclosed when she sadistically reminds the senador that he is growing old and fat, and then covers up her cruelty with an attitude described as "mimosa" (page 89).

Toward her fellow workers, she is aggressive and domineering, and is respected but not loved for it (page 95). But toward Camilo, she shows her only traces of kindness and humanity, as if his goodness and innocence were contagious. Even when his act of buying her a present unintentionally brings the police much closer to them, she still forgives him. "¡Si no fueras así, te rompería la cara!" she tells him (page 111).

La Mecha's only apparent emotional involvement is with her lover, Pelayo Soria, and there a mixture of both love and hate made the relationship a source of inner conflict to her. That she loves him is plain by the amount of grief she displays at the news of his death (page 97). Certainly, however, the life that she has led with him has not been too pleasant, and she admits as much to Werner: "Sí, ya me he cansado de sus mentiras ...

de la vida que lleva ... de la forma como me trata" (page 108). Perhaps the emotional strings are simply too strong to be broken. Her efforts to forget him are in vain; even when in a drugged stupor, her thoughts are still of Soria. As she stumbles into bed with Camilo, mindlessly, she utters hoarsely, "¡Pelayo? ... ¿Has vuelto? ... Mañana nos vamos a Rosario. ... Esta vez haremos las cosas de otro modo. ... Tengo miedo, Pelayo. ... Basta de fulerías ... (page 109).

One can only speculate whether Gray knew a prostitute well enough to record one accurately in a novel. Certainly, a wealth of specific details, such as La Mocha's address, or the description of her "peineta grande de carey, que tenía arenitas doradas y pedacitos de vidrios de colores," lend authenticity to her as an individual and not a stereotype (page 86). One thing is clear: if examination of this character does not reveal her to be lifelike, what will be shown is the more interesting concept of what Gray thought a prostitute should be.

CHAPTER III

MINOR CHARACTERS AND RECURRENT PATTERNS

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the background from which the eighteen principal characters were taken, and to show some of the recurrent patterns that emerge upon inspection of all the characters, major and minor.

Minor Characters

Definitions. To be included in the total of characters, each had to be physically or mentally present. Characters merely alluded to were not counted.

Characters in flashbacks were counted if the flashback was well developed. As there were few flashbacks that contained characters who did not directly appear elsewhere, this vagueness in determination is unimportant. Only one character is omitted in this manner, the boy Matías, reared by Silvestre and his wife, and compared at length to an unidentified boy crossing the road (Los amigos lejanos, page 22). Matías was not counted, since he never directly appeared, but the boy crossing the road was included in the total.

Characters in stories told by other characters were not included in the total character count, since the stories are short, less than two pages long, and bear no relationship to the plot. The chief example of one of these stories is the tale of the blind man and the twin girls who took turns being his wife, told by a girl who accompanied the family of Méndez

to Simoca (El inocente, pages 37-38).

Classification of Minor Characters. Despite the large number of characters in the works of Gray, there are only a relatively small number of different types. One very common device is to label a character pronominally as hombre, mujer, or vieja. Many of these characters appear for the sole purpose of supplying useful information, such as the vieja with whom Santiago speaks at the close of La grieta, and from whom he learns that the building in which he believes Lucas has been meeting Mariana has never been occupied (page 109). A total of seventy-eight characters are in this category, including nine boys, twenty-four men, three viejos, five girls, twenty-three women, and fourteen viejas, all identified with a single collective word pertaining to their sex and age. Only ninety-five characters have further development, seventy male, and twenty-five female.[10]

Fifty-one male characters can be further classified by occupation; twenty-eight such occupations appear. There are ten soldados, four policías, four guardias, three jefes, two chóferes, two criminales, two huelgistas, two ordenanzas, two vendedores, two amantes, and one each mozo, secretario, mecánico, enfermero, médico, inspector, portón, locomotive engineer, cadete, senador, cartero, alderete, ventanillero, cochero, jinete, sargento, sacristán, and carpintero. Others are mentioned by name, or have primary development other than occupational.

Classifying the female characters by occupation shows there to be

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[10]The eighteen main characters are disregarded in this chapter.

three maestras, two mícamas, two prostitutas, one profesora, and one curandera. Female characters, however, are better classified by relationship. There are five wives, three madres, two comadres, two abuelas, two tías, one hija, one madrina, and one viuda.

There are two prominant characteristics shown in the examination of the minor characters. One is the everyday quality of the characters; they are nearly all types that one might expect to encounter without experiencing surprise. The other characteristic is that, among the minor characters, the male figures don't vastly outnumber the female, as they do among the principal characters, but they are given more variety and more development.

Description of Minor Characters. While it has been demonstrated that even the most important character in Gray's novels frequently lacks any physical description, such as the figure of Camilo in El inocente, the converse is also true: many of the minor figures have excellent physical descriptions and little else. Possibly the best example of this is the description given of the Imelgista leader, Salustiano Mariño, from the same novel as Camilo. While he is of trifling significance as far as the structure of the novel is concerned, his physical description constitutes the majority of what is known about him and is surprisingly clear. As he appeared first, "iba montado en un caballo peruano, llevaba en la montura caronas de tigre y la silla con enchapaduras de plata. Con un barbijo negro sujetaba un gran sombrero, ovejuno bien aludo" (page 44). The second time he was seen, "vestía todo de negro: botas, bombachas, casaca, sombrero aludo y hasta el pañuelo del cuello" (page 50). A few lines later, he is described again: "El hombre del caballo peruano tenía una sonrisa dulce y

la mirada bondadosa. Era moreno, algo cargado de espaldas y montaba un poco al través, levantando el hombro izquierdo." This abundance of description is even more unusual because it is found in a novel in which the protagonist lacks one word of physical description (page 50).

Recurrent Patterns

The Dominant-recessive Relationship. A pattern often repeated in the works of Gray is the pairing of and conflict between two characters, a dominant one, whose mind has been darkened by doubt, and a recessive one, whose chief traits are faith and innocence. The result is always the same: the infection of doubt from the mind of the dominant character into the innocence and faith of the recessive one, with permanent and damaging effects. It is as if to say that a world of faith is not safe in the presence of doubt.

The first example occurs in Los amigos lejanos, as Santiago, in this novel a dominant character, becomes infected with doubt by reading a forbidden book of mythology, and comes in conflict with a recessive figure, that of Silvestre. Silvestre has been living contentedly in his dream world where his "friends" offer him all the companionship that he needs, and give him stability, peace, and security. The doubting and the questioning of Santiago slowly infect the innocence of the old man, with the result that his "friends" desert him, and he is found a few days later, dead.

In Gray's second novel, La grieta, the theme is repeated. This time the figure of Santiago is the innocent, recessive member, somehow changing

from the boy who is daring enough to steal keys and aggressive enough to dominate his cousin Gabriela, to a sickly, isolationist college student who hates violence, and spins weird theories about words and creative genius. He is placed in conflict with Lucas, the dominant, aggressive character, who dominates and destroys Santiago's inner world with his own ideas, which are permeated with doubt and expressed by Lucas's motivating force, his desire to violate and destroy in order to know.

The dominant-recessive relationship can be observed also in the third of Gray's novels, Elegía. The dominant member is the young boy, Daniel, who enters and destroys the tranquil world of love and security which surround the narrator of the story, the young girl María.

Other minor examples exist of this relationship, in the influence of Werner on Andrés in La grieta, and that of society on Camilo in El inocente.

Voices and Spirits. A second recurring pattern is the use of disembodied voices and spirits as characters. It is not known from where Gray found inspiration for this theme; it first appears in Los amigos lejanos and is repeated in later works.

The most notable of the disembodied voices are Páez and Juárez, the "friends" of Silvestre, found in Los amigos lejanos. It is the influence of these two voices in the mind of Silvestre that inspires the young Santiago to hear a voice also, at the conclusion of the novel. All the voices in the novel appear in response to a need for sympathy, understanding, or consolation.

Another occurance of a voice is the one heard by Cristóbal, coming

from the trunk of the orange tree in Los médanos ciegos. Starting as the result of a simple story, it grows through the imagination of a small boy and the effect of tense surroundings filled with superstitious natives seeking some hope of relief from the drought that is clutching the countryside.

A further example occurs in a work not examined in this paper. In one of Gray's short stories, a small boy gains inspiration to be a great pianist by playing to a voice he hears coming from a giant seashell he has found on the beach.[11]

Spirits appear three times in the works of Gray, all in the novel La grieta. Santiago observes two of them. The first is his feeling that he is being watched by an "interlocutor invisible" (page 34). The second spirit occurs in his theory of the "palabra vigilante," another watching spirit (page 37). The third type of spirit is the one which Lucas feels visits the elegidos, whose company he would like to join. His life is a wait to experience such a visit (page 41).

The Role of Women. A noteworthy pattern in Gray's choice of characters is the roles assigned to women, or the absence of women altogether. There are only three main female characters in the novels of Gray. Two are pre-adolescent girls, and the third, a prostitute. There are many minor female characters, but most are simply classified as mujer or vieja with no further development or description. With the exception of Mendes's

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[11] Julio Ardiles Gray, "Un cuento para Mingo," Cuentos amables, nobles y memorables (San Miguel de Tucumán: Ediciones del Cardón, 1964), pages 11-28.

wife in El inocente, who is still young enough to have small children, all the female characters in the novels of Gray can be classified into three groups: the pre-adolescent, such as María from Elegía or Gabriela from Los amigos lejanos; the older family member, such as an aunt or grandmother; and prostitutes.

Density of Characters. The five novels of Gray can be ranked in three different ways useful to this investigation: by length, date of writing (date of publication does not correspond precisely: Los amigos lejanos was written in 1948, but was not published until 1956), and number of characters.

Ranking by date of writing shows Los amigos lejanos to be the oldest (1948), followed respectively by La grieta (1951), Elegía (1952), Los médanos ciegos (1957), and El inocente (1964).

The order is somewhat different by length. La grieta is the longest (34,500 words), followed by Los amigos lejanos (29,500 words), El inocente (27,500 words), Elegía (11,500 words), and Los médanos ciegos (11,000 words).

Ranking by number of characters does not exactly follow the rank by length. Counting both the main characters and the minor ones, of both sexes, El inocente has by far the most (84), followed by La grieta (48), Los amigos lejanos (22), Los médanos ciegos (21), and Elegía (16).

In the density of characters, the number of characters per thousand words, a final pattern emerges. Gray's oldest, Los amigos lejanos, shows a density of approximately .7 characters per 1000 words. La grieta, his second, and Elegía, his third, both jump to a density of 1.4 characters

per 1000 words. Los médanos ciegos, chronologically his fourth novel, shows a density of 1.9 characters per 1000 words, and his latest work, El inocente, a density of 3 characters per 1000 words.

If the preceding calculations are indicative, Gray is markedly increasing the density of characters in his works. In the five novels examined, Gray has already increased the number of characters per thousand words by more than three times.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

It has been the intent of this thesis to examine the works of the contemporary Argentine author, Julio Ardiles Gray, and to illustrate, by means of an analysis of the characters from his novels, that the principal characteristic of his style is a frequently minute psychological development of his characters and a corresponding dearth of physical description or biographical information.

Characters were classified as either major or minor, and the eighteen characters chosen as major were analyzed individually, still with the purpose of demonstrating the relative quantity of physical detail as compared to psychological development.

The minor characters were classified and examined collectively, with the purpose of completing the study of characters in an economical manner consistent with clarity and balance, and to show from among what sort of minor characters the major figures were selected, and with what kinds of personalities they interacted.

Presentation of four patterns recurrent to the works of Gray completed the study: the pairing of one dominant and one recessive member in a conflict which spreads doubt from the first to the second; the use of voices and spirits in the novels, and the importance of some of the voices as characters; the singular treatment given to women, by including, with few exceptions, only three types, pre-adolescent girls, older women, and prostitutes; and a density study, to show that Gray is increasing the

number of characters in his novels per thousand words.

Much effort has been spent to be as objective as possible. As a conclusion, however, the following opinion is offered:

Reading Gray's works leads one to believe that Gray was a man in a hurry when he wrote his five novels. He felt such immediacy to express his ideas that he was a bit Procrustean in fitting them into his fiction, such as designing a subplot so that he could include details of the newspaper world that otherwise would not have served him. In his efforts to communicate his ideas, or to assure himself that they had been, he repeated them, as he did by echoing La grieta in Elegía.

Gray appears to be a man who is intensely interested in a few personal relationships, such as those described. It would seem that now, after treating of these relationships in several novels, with some variation, that now he has run full circle, and has to await fresh ideas. The collection of short stories seemed to be an attempt to branch out into something other than a further adaption of characters and situations taken from his successful Los amigos lejanos.

It is not intended that this opinion be uncomplimentary. Gray does have something to say; in many places he says it very well. It is hoped that he will continue to write, with fresh inspiration, so that further works will appear, for a wider audience.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Because the works of Julio Ardiles Gray do not have wide circulation outside his native country of Argentina, it is not assumed that all readers of this study will have either ready access to all the novels or complete familiarity with them. A précis of each of the five novels is therefore included, to provide certain details in a single accessible location what would otherwise have to be scattered throughout the investigation.

I. LOS AMIGOS LEJANOS

Los amigos lejanos is difficult to assess from the standpoint of characters, for the reader is asked to consider a man apparently mad and two completely imaginary characters who are figments of his imagination. Lucid details are given concerning the man and his two "friends," giving all three approximately equal reality.

Silvestre is an illiterate, sixty-year-old peasant. He and his two "friends" live in a cáscara, a mental shell resembling that of an armadillo, the madman Silvestre being the armadillo.

The "friends," Páez and Juárez, are disembodied voices of two old friends of Silvestre. Not completely analogous to souls, they sleep, eat, drink, and talk, and offer companionship, advice, and understanding.

What has caused Silvestre to accept or invent these "friends" is a combination of his own sensitivity and lack of communication with his wife. At first, there is only one "friend," whose name he does not know, but whose presence he accepts calmly. His shrewish wife, in the opening chapters, pettishly accuses him of laughing at her over an incident which has happened ten years before in the market, where she slipped and fell in the mud. He is, in fact, almost totally unaware of her presence, and is carrying on a semi-mute conversation with his "friend," which is highly amusing to him. When the second "friend" appears, Silvestre's wife demands an explanation for his weird behavior of muttering and laughing, and, having received it, disappears down the street, screaming that her husband has gone mad.

Silvestre's friends advise him to leave his home and seek work in the forests. They become increasingly real and increasingly important to him. As he is a strong old man, and quite harmless, his fellow woodsmen treat him with amused tolerance, and he is able to lead a simple, peaceful life in the companionship of his "friends," who reminiscence endlessly about the pleasant experiences of the past, when they were alive.

Silvestre is seen three times after that, living in complete equi-

librium. The first glimpse is as a guide in the woods, taking a stranger turkey hunting, and carefully avoiding finding any (Páez loves animals and won't let Silvestre kill any). The second time Silvestre is seen, he has been taking a horse to be shod when it is frightened by a lizard and throws him into a ditch of water, where he lies for about two hours until he is rescued, seriously injured. The third and final time he appears is as an itinerant wood chopper, working for a family in which are a young boy, Santiago, his cousin, Gabriela, and the children's grandparents. One day, as Silvestre is chopping wood, Santiago makes friends with the reticent old man by pretending to have been struck in the eye by a chip from Silvestre's axe.

Silvestre's dream world is about to be destroyed, because Santiago, a very serious young man, is interested in Silvestre as a source of information, to resolve some puzzling questions, religious in nature. Santiago's mind is in a state of doubt, caused by his stealing the keys to a locked box and reading a forbidden book which was kept inside. Certain passages spoke of a God who was dead, or had dried up, like a river. Because the book was kept from the children, Santiago assumed it was because the book was true. He shares his thoughts with his cousin and the two set out to find the truth. Unable to confide in their family, to whom the book belongs, or to the priest, whom they believe is in league with their family, they choose a total stranger, Silvestre, because they think he is impartial enough to be honest.

Doubt is contagious. Silvestre's "friends," examined through the skeptical eyes of Santiago, cause the old man to question them about their existence and their reason for being in the cáscara. The last time they are questioned, they do not answer, because their existence, once questioned, was no longer possible.

A few days later, the children visit the old man's shack, to find out why he has not returned to their house to chop wood. They find his dead body.

Santiago will not let Gabriela see the corpse. He explains to her, however, that Santiago died laughing, because the smile is still on his face. He suggests that the smile means that Silvestre has rejoined his "friends."

The novel ends as Santiago explains to his cousin that he has started hearing a voice, too. The voice is not of Silvestre, he asserts, and knows nothing. But it is urging him not to stop searching for answers because eventually his doubts will be resolved.

II. LA GRIETA

La grieta is the most psychologically profound of Gray's novels.

The plot has been largely subordinated to permit long dialogues of a literary and philosophical nature between Santiago, a young college student and the narrator of the novel, and Lucas, a fellow classmate. Simply expressed, the discussions between the two involve two separate theories of creative ability. Santiago feels that he has found the secret, which involves understanding certain cosmic laws. Understanding and mastery of the fundamental patterns of nature is all that separates a genius from those less gifted. Lucas believes that only those who are elegidos will succeed and, without a visitation from the spirit of creativity which visits only the chosen ones, expression of genius is impossibe .

The approach to life as dictated by each theory is quite different. To Santiago, life is a learning process, and an attempt to grow and to understand. To Lucas, life is a testing ground, and the only valid test is one which sill determine whether he is, or is not, an elegido. Life is meaningless, without knowing.

Santiago is the analytical boy from Los amigos lejanos, now in his eighteenth year. Shy, weak, and one who hates violence, he proves attractive to Lucas, whose chief characteristics are aggressiveness and a driving curiosity to penetrate anything that withholds its secrets, including the timid personality of Santiago. His friendship with Santiago more closely resembles a desire to dominate and assimilate than amity.

Lucas attempts futilely to discover Santiago's palabra vigilante, best described as an individual personal creative characteristic, the existence of which is a germane part of Santiago's theory of creative ability, and which Santiago feels must be kept forever secret and unviolated.

The suicide of Lucas's father causes Lucas to drop out of school to find work, and the family to move to more modest quarters across town from Santiago. Approximately six months elapse before Lucas and Santiago meet again.

A subplot develops at this point, dealing with the perpetual conflict of interest between the police and the newspaper. Lucas, tired of his job at a bookstore, delivers a letter which he later confides to Santiago that he has written himself to the owner of El Imparcial, stating that a series of apparently unrelated crimes is in fact a plan of vengeance being carried out by the gang of "G. A.," a master criminal returned from exile in Brazil. The letter is purportedly written in secret by a member of the gang who is marked for extermination and who is quite naturally interested in thwarting the plan.

Letters from a secret informant are, of course, grist for the mills of daily circulation for the newspaper, which immediately enlarges the subject into the even more circulation-building subject of police laxity. While the police suspect Bard, the owner of El Imparcial, of fabricating the whole idea, the letters continue to arrive, duly "delivered" by Lucas, who

is then given a job on the staff as a reporter, the acquisition of which employment being probably his sole motivation for writing the letters.

Complicating the situation is the discovery of the body of one of the actual members of the gang, shot to death, and the appearance in Chapter One, Part II, of "G. A." and several members of his gang, in the act of finding the body. The reader is never told whether "G. A." is actually present in the novel, or is, as Lucas tells Santiago cryptically, only part of a ruse to obtain employment.

Two weeks after Lucas is given a job at El Imparcial, he abruptly disappears. The only clue the reader is given to his disappearance is that, in his perpetual search to ascertain his identity as an elegido, he is involved in some mysterious "final proof." His job at the newspaper, and a mysterious allusion to a woman named Mariana are both part of this proof, which, if he does not pass, as he tells Santiago, all will be useless. Lucas is last seen feverishly skimming the contents of a book, looking for some key passage which he feels will terminate his quest. As his eyes fall on the passage, he slowly sinks to the floor, emotionally spent and physically exhausted.

Santiago initiates a long, futile search for Lucas after being questioned by the police concerning his disappearance. In desperation, he returns to a house, to the back of which he had accompanied Lucas late one night and waited, while Lucas climbed the garden wall, disappeared, and returned fourty minutes later with an angry and frustrated look, and no explanation. In a more direct approach, Santiago approaches the front of the house, and knocks at the door of the first of two apartments. When an old woman answers, he asks for Mariana, using the only clue he has. The woman shakes her head wordlessly and shuts the door in his face.

Knocking desperately on the second door, Santiago has the presentiment that on the other side is Lucas, waiting for him. After a tense moment of waiting, the door is opened, by the same old woman. This time Santiago questions her and finds that she has lived in the building, alone, since it was built. The other apartment has never been occupied. Then the door is shut in his face again, without his having the opportunity to ask any more questions.

The novel ends on a note of dispair on the part of Santiago: "Tuve la sensación de que luchaba contra algo poderoso que se burlaba de mí. Tal era mi confusión que no podía pensar. ... Y tuve miedo que mis esfuerzos fuesen inútiles" (La grieta, page 109).

III. ELEGIA

Written to reconstruct the personality of a dead boy, and to show a

conflict between a strong and a weak personality, and between faith and doubt, Elegía is not as intricate or profound as either Los amigos lejanos or La grieta.

María, an eleven-year-old girl, is the narrator, writing her thoughts into her old notebook following the burial of Daniel, a thirteen-year-old orphan who had come to live with her and her family about a year before. Writing for non-adult readers, she is trying to achieve some sort of understanding for Daniel and for herself, which was lacking during the time he lived among indifferent or hostile adults.

María describes the changes and the damage Daniel has done to her family during his stay. Essentially negative, he destroyed most of the bonds of trust and love within the family, by exposing as human and fallible each of the family members in turn. The maid is exposed as having an illicit, nocternal love affair in the stable. The grandfather is revealed as a greedy moneylender. Each new "truth" is revealed to the innocent eyes of María, who then discovers that her feeling of love for the members thus exposed to be irreparably damaged.

Daniel's sole desire is to remain forever a boy. He plans to attain his goal with the aid of a magician named El Gran Ofir, for whom he once served as an assistant. For years the magician has been working to perfect a potion which Daniel believes will accomplish this remarkable feat.

Daniel persuades María to flee with him to a large city, where he locates El Gran Ofir and obatins the potion upon the promise of absolute secrecy as to its source. He then rents a hotel room for himself and María, paying with a bill of large denomination stolen from María's grandfather. In the privacy of the room, he gulps half the greenish contents of the bottle, but when he tries to force María to consume the other half, she drops the bottle and breaks it after drinking only a small amount. Then the children go to bed.

The next morning the children are found by the police, who have been assisted in their search for the children by the innkeeper, who saw the children's picture in the newspaper. María awakens at the inkeeper's knock, but neither she nor the police are able to awaken Daniel.

After a long illness, during which Daniel remains unconscious for two weeks, and a slow, lethargic recovery, during which he is sad and withdrawn, and will not speak to María, he disappears. María, thinking she can find him, takes her grandfather on a fruitless search for El Gran Ofir. When they return home, María finds that Daniel is dead. She is told that he has drowned trying to cross a river.

María closes her story with the hope that Daniel will not be forgotten, and that the narration will allow her to share the burden of the ponderous questions that Daniel's life, influence, and death have brought her.

IV. LOS MEDANOS CIEGOS

Gray states on the flyleaf of Los médanos ciegos that the novel is intended to be the second of the series of which Los amigos lejanos is the first. But while the novel does take two minor characters from the first, and presents them as major characters in the second, the resulting work is not a sequel, nor is there any other clear relationship.

The reader of Los amigos lejanos has already seen the humanitarian side of these two characters, El Riojano and Santiago González, as they aid the injured Silvestre. In Los médanos ciegos, however, a callous, picaresque attitude toward people and society is developed.

El Riojano and González first appear in Los médanos ciegos as fugitives from the law, hiding in a carpenter's house in a small village. The countryside is suffering the effects of severe drought; the peasants are growing frantic as huge dunes of sand are pushed across their land by an incessant, fierce wind. The rising emotional tension growing out of this impending natural disaster is the environment in which the two find themselves, and which eventually causes their downfall.

The two men have a casual partnership, in which El Riojano capitalizes on the other's amazing ability to invent and narrate stories of unusual credibility. González convinces first the carpenter's young son, Cristóbal, and then all who come to watch, that when the boy puts his ear to the trunk of an old orange tree in the patio, he will be able to hear a voice, which will tell him when it will rain.

Cristóbal, a shy, imaginative boy, is very suggestible, and soon "hears" the voice. The anxious peasants are only too willing to believe the promise of coming rain from any source; they abandon the Catholic church and flock to the carpenter's patio, where they maintain a half-prayerful, half-superstitious vigil around the boy and the tree.

The priest, who views the proceedings as heresy, attempts to force the constable to take legal action against the carpenter and his two guests. The latter procrastinates, being reluctant to arrest anyone, and El Riojano and González escape to the country with the boy, where friends provide shelter, food, and protection from the wrath of the priest.

Eventually, the priest learns where the men are hiding, and El Riojano tries to persuade González to leave at once to avoid capture, taking the boy and crossing the frontier into the mountains. But González has come to believe his own story. He sees himself as the savior of the people, whose trust he cannot forsake. He refuses to leave, lest the people lose the rain they have been praying for.

The next scene between the two is of unexpected violence. El Riojano,

unable to convince González to leave, attacks him fiercely in the midnight darkness of their shack. González, a mild, almost childlike man until now, defends himself unexpectedly well. He breaks El Riojano's neck and kills him, but is killed himself when El Riojano stabs him in the stomach with the jagged neck of a broken bottle. During the struggle, which goes on wordlessly, Cristóbal awakens on a nearby cot and begins to cry.

The next scene is the last. Cristóbal and the bodies of El Riojano and González are being returned to the village. Clouds are gathering on the horizon, and one man even thinks he has seen some lightning. The reader is left to speculate whether the boy's prognostication of approaching rain is coming true.

V. EL INOCENTE

El inocente, the third longest of Gray's novels, is his most recent, being published in 1964. This novel is different from the earlier ones in in that it includes an element of history. The time setting is the 1930's, and the geographical setting, Gray's own city of Tucumán. Gray wanted El inocente to reflect "la atmósfera de la época," but "la necesidad de la anécdota y de los personajes ha hecho que el autor variara el lugar y la forma" of the various historical events. Gray wanted the color and the interest of history without losing the flexibility of fiction (El inocente, page 7).

A description on the flyleaf of the novel states that the reader is offered "una concepción del hombre frente a las exigencias de una sociedad." The man is Camilo, a young peasant from the province of Santiago del Estero, who, with his friend Méndez and the latter's family, has left his home and is traveling in a mule-pulled carro to the province of Tucumán, to work in the coming sugar harvest.

Camilo has been living in a shack with his superstitious old madrina, who has the reputation of being a witch. She is fearful of his safety, and forces him to blow some smoke into a hole she has gouged into the trunk of a tree. She then plugs the hole and performs a ritual involving incantations. When she finishes, she assures him that nothing can harm him as long as the tree containing his injerto remains intact.

Camilo never harvests any sugar. The party is first stopped by the huelgistas, a labor movement of poorly-organized sugar workers who are hoping to win higher wages from the sugar plantations by withholding their services. Camilo and Méndez reluctantly join a concentración in Simoca, the meeting place established for the rallying of as many workers as possible for organization and protest marches, until the movement collapses.

The party arrives nearly too late to obtain employment. On the night

of their arrival, Camilo suffers an attack of chills and fever, known as chucho, and is unable to work.

An involved subplot develops at this point, in which a payroll car for a sugar plantation near the city of Tucumán leaves that city with a large amount of money in a black valise. The car is held up, and during the robbery, the lone assailant kills both the driver and the guard, and is fatally wounded by a gunshot wound in the chest. The bandit reaches a small thicket, where Camilo finds him just before he dies. With his last energy, the man forces Camilo to promise to deliver the money to his lover, a prostitute in Tucumán named La Mecha. Camilo feels obliged to go, even though he is involving himself in an inextricable web of robbery and murder, because he believes that a promise made to a dying man is sacred and must never be broken. La Mecha accepts the money, and then forces Camilo to stay with her in hiding, knowing that the police could trace the money to her through him.

A second subplot appears, this time dealing with the theme of the newspapers versus the police, first appearing in La grieta. As in the previous time, the newspaper, this time under the editorship of a much younger Werner, is sensationalizing a current news story to increase circulation and to criticise the police and established society. Werner, with the tacit permission of El Viejo, the owner of the newspaper, has created a figure in his editorials who has the characteristics of Robin Hood, and who is responsible for the payroll robbery. This fictitious bandit only uses the money to help the oppressed poor, in the form of ten-peso bills sent in plain envelopes. To reinforce the story, Werner actually sends out some of the envelopes.

The crafty Inspector Vásquez, piqued by the newspaper's innuendo of police laxity and social injustice, uncovers Werner's scheme when the bills he sends out have the wrong serial numbers to have been those stolen in the robbery. He arrests the editor, and coolly plans to murder both La Mecha and Camilo, in order to quiet the unrest caused by Werner's fictitious character. The inspector knows of Camilo's innocence, but as the official representative of law and order, he considers Camilo's death a necessary expedient.

Camilo and La Mecha, aware that the police are only minutes away, rent a car and flee to Camilo's shack in Santiago. Camilo's only interest in returning is not to escape the police, but to check on the security of the tree in which his injerto is cached.

The two fugitives arrive to find the shack deserted and the tree burned. Voices shout for them to surrender, and then police bullets cut them down. Inspector Vásquez approaches the inert figures and turns the body of La Mecha over with his foot. "Era linda hembra," he remarks. A fellow officer is regarding the body of Camilo. "Pobre infeliz," he responds casually, as he is entering the shack. "Y pensar que todas estas basuras terminan de la misma manera" (El inocente, page 117).