

DELIBES: TWENTIETH CENTURY SPANISH AUTHOR

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by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II. LIFE OF MIGUEL DELIBES . . . . .	3
III. RECURRING THEMES AND STYLE OF MIGUEL DELIBES . . . . .	5
IV. PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVELS . . . . .	17
V. ANECDOTAL NOVELS . . . . .	26
VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	46
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	49

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to make a study of the life of the contemporary Spanish novelist, Miguel Delibes, and his novels. In 1947, he received the Nadal prize in literature for his novel La sombra del ciprés es alargada. It was Delibes' first novel, and it has been followed by seven more to date (1965). He is now a well-known author from whom the Spanish literary world has come to expect great things.

Delibes has used the people and problems of modern-day Spain as subject matter for his novels. Three of them deal with city life, and the other five with country life. He wrote two major types of novels. The first type he created was a novel of deep psychological introspection with very little physical action but a great amount of mental action. The reader comes to know the main characters very well, mainly because he is reading their very thoughts and innermost wishes. The second type is that of the anecdotal novel, whereby scenes are not so much contemplated by the reader but merely pass by the mind's eye. By using little vignettes, Delibes has created novels which exhibit a tendency toward costumbrismo or, a sketch of life. Delibes' style and main themes are vastly different in the two types of novels, but within each type the style and main theme vary little.

Delibes made the following statement concerning his novels:

En realidad no creo que en mis novelas existan dos vertientes. Considero que desde 1953 he depurado mi manera de novelar y he encontrado una fórmula más sintética y directa. Quiero decirle

que en "La sombra" y en "Sisí" quizá yo sermoneaba demasiado. En el resto de mis novelas, el lector debe extraer las conclusiones por su cuenta.<sup>1</sup>

Although he does not actually believe that he has written two types of novels, Señor Delibes does think that his work has gone through an evolution and that after La sombra del ciprés es alargada and Mi idolatrado hijo Sisí he refined his manner of writing and found a more direct method of voicing his opinions. He says that, perhaps he did preach too much in the two above-mentioned novels but that in the rest of his works the reader should be able to draw his own conclusions.

Delibes' style, themes and other aspects of his works will be discussed and running summaries of the novels will be used to give the reader a clear picture of Miguel Delibes' work viewed from all angles.

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<sup>1</sup>Letter from Miguel Delibes to Carman Davis, April 17, 1965.

## CHAPTER II

### LIFE OF MIGUEL DELIBES

Miguel Delibes was born in 1920 in Valladolid, Spain. He studied law and business simultaneously and is, at present, a professor of mercantile law at a business college in his native city. He has combined this career with journalism and is now editor of the newspaper, El norte de castilla. Delibes is married and has at least one son.<sup>1</sup>

Juan Luis Alborg, in his book, Hora actual de la novela española, has this to say of Delibes:

Recogido habitualmente en su ciudad, ausente del avispero de las tertulias madrileñas, sin alborotos publicitarios ni golpes de efecto, honesta y llanamente, Delibes ha conquistado merecida fama de hombre entero y ponderado y hecho ver--con la piedra de toque de sus libros posteriores--la honestidad de una vocación que había nacido sin ruido y se acredita sin alharacas.<sup>2</sup>

Up to the present time, Miguel Delibes has published eight novels, a travelogue, and many short stories. Listed in the order of their publication dates, they are: La sombra del ciprés es alargada (1947), for which he received the Premio Eugenio Nadal; Ann es de día (1949); El idolatrado hijo Sisi (1953); El camino (1950); Diario de un cazador (1955), for which he received the Premio Nacional de Literatura; Siestas con viento sur (1957), a book of short stories for which he received the

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<sup>1</sup>Biographical information on Delibes is very sketchy, since he is still living.

<sup>2</sup>Juan Luis Alborg, Hora actual de la novela española (Madrid: Taurus, 1958), p. 153.

Premio Fastenrath de la Real Academia Española; La hoja roja (1959), which merited the Premio de la Fundación March; Diario de un emigrante (1958); Por esos mundos (1961), a travelogue; and Las ratas (1962). Many of his short stories appear in textbooks and are read by college students throughout the United States. The latter are not a part of this study.

## CHAPTER III

### RECURRING THEMES AND STYLE OF MIGUEL DELIBES

There are certain themes which occur and recur in Delibes' philosophical novels. There is a deep feeling of pessimism in La sombra del ciprés es alargada. This feeling of pessimism is assimilated by Pedro through his teacher, Señor Lesmes; and, but for a brief period when Pedro is within the all-encompassing power of Jane's love, his feelings toward the world are dark and gloomy.

Contrasted with this feeling of pessimism, optimism is the prevailing theme in Aun es de día. Sebastián, the ugly hunchback, in the midst of cruel jokes about himself and the miseries of his life, discovers the existence of his spirit and the possibility of earning for it the beauty which has been denied his body.

Materialism and spiritualism are contrasted in two of the novels. Cecilio Rubes in Mi idolatrado hijo Sigi is a good example of how materialism can eventually destroy a man. Cecilio goes to church regularly but his real interests lie in his business and not in his spiritual well-being. Because his life centers around his wealth and the pleasures which he derives from it, he is not able to cope with the great problems that arise with the death of his son, and he kills himself.

Materialism is contrasted with spiritualism in Aun es de día. The reader sees the greedy actions of Señor Sixto and the greediness which leads Aurelia to betray her son. Contrasted to this is Sebastián who, greatly moved by the words of the priest in the monastery, sets out to



better his own life and the lives of those around him by the doing of honest and thoughtful deeds.

Sensualism is another theme which occurs frequently. In Aun es de día, Sebastián listens to the other clerks in the fabric shop tell of their immoral, amorous adventures and observes Hugo who likes to make ungentlemanly advances to all the young ladies on whom he waits. Also, there are the young men who write lewd notes in the hallways in his apartment building, requesting the services of Pepita, the prostitute, who lives upstairs. There is his own abnormal and clandestine affair with the mannequin in the storeroom of the fabric shop. Cecilio Rubes in Mi idolatrado hijo Sisi preoccupies himself with satisfying his sexual appetites, and his thoughts never stray too far from this subject.

Untimely deaths occur in two of these philosophical novels. In La sombra del ciprés es alargada, Jane, Pedro's wife of just a few days, is killed in a dock accident. It is tragic because she is the only one who could have helped to lift Pedro from the intense sea of pessimism with which he had surrounded himself. In Mi idolatrado hijo Sisi, two very untimely deaths occur. Sisi is killed by a bomb during the Spanish Civil War. As a result of his death, his father, Cecilio, in a moment of insanity, throws himself from a balcony and is also killed.

There are two themes in the anecdotal novels upon which Delibes has not dwelt in his other works: a return to nature and provincialism. Delibes does not become involved in long discussions of the themes which he has mentioned before such as materialism, spiritualism, sensualism, pessimism, and optimism. This does not mean that these themes are not

mentioned, for they appear often. But they are not psychologically analyzed; they are treated as aspects of life. However, there is one obvious reference to materialism, as contrasted to spiritualism, in El camino, the first of the anecdotal-type novels. Don José, the priest, in his sermon on the Día de la Virgen says that God has shown a road for everyone to follow and that straying from this road to look for riches and fame can lead to much unhappiness. A beggar with nothing can be happier than a man in a sumptuous palace with many servants.

Delibes injects something in all of the novels which has been missing formerly--humor. It is not a boisterous or slapstick type of humor, but very dry and witty.

A theme mentioned time and again in the anecdotal novels is the beauty of nature. Daniel and his friends in El camino frequently talk of the loveliness of the small valley where they live. Lorenzo, in Diario de un cazador, extols the beauty of the countryside when he is hunting. In Diario de un emigrante, Lorenzo refers oftentimes to the magnificent view of the mountains which he has from the apartment window. Nini, in Las ratas, loves the outdoors and spends the majority of his time there. Many people speak of the plain where Nini and the villagers live as being desolate, but Nini knows better and is well-acquainted with all the small animals and fowl that live nearby: the rabbits, the foxes, the partridges, and the quail.

Delibes' love for the outdoors has prompted him to mention in two of his works a problem dealing with conservation, that problem being the importance of planting trees. For hundreds of years men have been

cutting down Spain's trees, both for lumber and firewood, without making any arrangements for replanting them. This has left Spain with depleted topsoil and with flooding problems. The Spanish government, realizing this, started a program for planting trees. Eloy, in La hoja roja, in his dreams of his youth, remembers how he and other children used to celebrate certain holidays by planting trees. Every child planted a tree and cared for it. In Las ratas, the villagers make fun of the extremefios, young men who volunteer themselves for several months of each year for the planting of trees in arid plains. All too often the trees die from lack of moisture, making the efforts seem useless.

The lack of personal freedom and the lack of freedom of choice are themes upon which Delibes dwells. In El camino, Daniel is given no choice as to what his life's work is to be. He realizes in his heart that he would be happier if he could remain in the valley all his life and learn his father's trade. But his father believes that he will be much happier if he is sent away to school to prepare for a professional career. In Las ratas, Tío Ratero is not given a choice of whether or not he wishes to move from the cave; he is simply told to move.

Delibes sprinkles hunting scenes liberally throughout his anecdotal novels. Being an experienced hunter himself, he naturally describes the scenes vividly. In El camino, Daniel's uncle sends him a large owl, a Gran Duque, a bird belonging to the hawk family, which was used as bait to attract kites and other types of birds. Daniel and his father go hunting, and the following scene takes place:

Ahora descendía el grande, con las alas distendidas, destacándose en el cielo azul.... En ese instante sonó el disparo, cuyas resonancias se multiplicaron en el valle. El pájaro dejó flotando en el aire una estela de plumas y sus enormes alas bracearon frenéticas, impotentes, en un desesperado esfuerzo por alejarse de la zona de peligro.... Mas, entonces, el quesero disparó de nuevo y el milapo se desplomó, graznando lúgubramente, en un revoloteo de plumas.<sup>3</sup>

In Diario de un cazador Lorenzo related in his diary how he had shot a fox:

De repente apareció el zorro como a unos treinta pies y pensé que era el perro de un pastor. Él se volvió de lado y entonces le vi la cola: "Me cago en su padre", me dije y me cubrí bien con los enebres. El indio estaba quedo, con unos ojos muy despiertos, escuchando las voces de Zacarías y el Pepe que traían la mano. Dudé si cambiar el cartucho porque tenía séptima, pero me dije que en la operación iba a armar ruido y le iba a espantar. Luego, cuando me eché la escopeta y le apunté a la paletilla a ciencia y paciencia, me oía el corazón con tanta claridad como cuando de chaves me ponía don Florián, el cura, el reloj en la oreja para que cantara los segundos. Iba a apretar el gatillo cuando el tío marrajo se arrancó.... Entonces me dió la duda de si tirarle de morros o sacudirle de culo. Aún me dió tiempo de pensar que si le tiraba de culo podría machucarle el rabo y sin vacilar mas, disparé. Dió un brinco como un títere, el condenado, pero siguió corriendo y creí que se me iba. Entonces tiré el segundo y le quedé.<sup>4</sup>

Delibes is basically a realist, but he uses touches of naturalism to make his style more effective. He creates atmosphere by emphasizing colors, odors, and sounds through a rich idiomatic language and subtle humor and by the use of structural techniques such as the diary form.

Mi idolatrado hijo Sisí contains fragments of newspaper comment, political

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<sup>3</sup>Miguel Delibes, El camino (segunda edición; Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, diciembre 1955), p. 123.

<sup>4</sup>Miguel Delibes, Diario de un cazador (segunda edición; (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, marzo 1956), p. 40.

news, and economic data before each chapter. This adds greatly to the story by making the reader feel as though he too is a part of the years 1917-1938. Juan Luis Alborg says this of Delibes' inserts:

...El lector no necesita más. Aquel pequeño y bien escogido esquema despierta en su memoria todo un mundo pretérito que acude presurosa y puntualmente a su imaginación para situar la acción en el instante que se desea, con una eficacia que no produciría la descripción más detallada.<sup>5</sup>

His characters are all realistic personalities, given to psychological introspection in the closely woven narrative works. They are objectively human in the looser anecdotal novels. Symbols are significant in the earlier novels, La sombra del ciprés es alargada and Aun es de día, and vividly create images which represent or clarify a theme.

The theme of abstention from life is elaborated upon by Sr. Lesmes, Pedro's teacher in La sombra del ciprés es alargada. When Fany, the family's beloved pet dog, is left with a crippled paw as a result of an accident, Sr. Lesmes treats the whole affair in a very matter-of fact way and never lets his emotions show. Death is symbolized by the cypress tree, and Pedro, living beneath the long and black shadow of the cypress, is obsessed with the thought of death.

The sea, at first, represents peace: "Encontraba por contra que el océano traía consigo la paz de los espíritus. Una paz sedante y fácil...."<sup>6</sup> It is for this reason that Pedro chooses to be a sailor, but in the war, the

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<sup>5</sup>Alborg. op. cit., p. 159.

<sup>6</sup>Miguel Delibes, La sombra del ciprés es alargada (quinta edición; Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1959), p. 143.

sea comes to represent death. The sea is where Pedro and Jane meet and is also the scene of Jane's death.

A small boat enclosed in a bottle becomes a symbol of the feeling of pessimism and the fear of death. After Pedro falls in love with Jane and the two decide to marry, Pedro experiences a lifting of the sea of pessimism which has always engulfed him. To signal this change in his life, he throws the bottle containing the boat overboard into the sea.

The horror of war is shown when Pedro's crew comes across the body of a man whose boat has been destroyed by a submarine. Delibes vividly describes the body left naked by the ravages of the sea, with ears and lips missing, skin hanging, and stomach torn open by sea gulls. The uselessness of war is likened to two great mountains of men shooting at each other. After a length of time, all of the men in one mountain are dead, and there are only a very few left on the opposite mountain. Those few who are left claim a great victory for themselves, but Delibes wants to know what has really been won.

Symbols in Aun es de día concern spiritualism and materialism. White bread is a symbol in contrast to a white, or pure, soul. White bread bitterly symbolizes the material things for which man strives. Honor and dignity, which are disappearing from the world, are compared to water escaping from a colander, and the mission of spiritual people is to stop up the holes left open by others. The deceit of life is symbolized in the scene of a country maid being seduced by a soldier who leaves her with child.

With the introduction of El camino and the anecdotal novel comes a new element, humor. The psychological novels, devoted to very serious themes, remain serious throughout; but humor, as it occurs in common situations in everyday life, is a definite factor in the anecdotal novels.

Delibes shows himself a master in another aspect of writing, and that is of slight, ever so slight, suggestions, of revealing intricate complexities with a slight insinuation.

The author also carries the characters from one book to another as background material. In La hoja roja, Desi and a friend are eating doughnuts in a small café when both notice a cinnamon-colored hunting dog, named Dolly, and some hunters sitting across the room. One of the hunters is discussing game birds in Chile. These are, undoubtedly, Lorenzo and his friends. Melecio, Lorenzo's best friend, has a cinnamon-colored hunting dog named Doly, and they all appear in Diario de un cazador. Much of the information which Delibes gathered on his trip to the Western Hemisphere when he visited Brazil, Argentina, and Chile in 1955 appears in a travelogue called Por esos mundos and, subsequently, in Diario de un emigrante.

Delibes' vocabulary is extensive, and his manipulation of the language adds greatly to the realistic atmosphere of his novels. The narrative in the philosophical novels is carefully plotted; but the anecdotal novels, as the name implies, are a series of anecdotes dealing with one person and then another.

The characters in Delibes' novels, ranging from children to old people in all walks of life, are of particular importance in his works

and are representative of both ideal and real personalities. In the anecdotal novels especially, the characters are extremely colorful. In La hoja roja, Eloy, the old man, stands out in respect to his strange eating and digestive habits. In El camino, there is Sara, with her superstitions and mysterious incantations and La Guindilla Mayor, the village busybody who decides to save the village teenagers from their own sin and self-destruction by searching them out Sunday evenings by lantern light in the nearby woods and pleading for them to mend their ways. In Las ratas, Nini's grandfather, Román, bathes only once a year, in January, and shaves every May. Due to the analysis by Delibes, the characters of the earlier novels become thoroughly familiar to the reader, but the characters of the anecdotal novels move as part of a scene, objectively passing before the mind's eye.

There are great differences among the priests in the novels. The priest in Aun es de día is portrayed as a vague, idealized symbol of Christian doctrine. Don José, the village priest in El camino, has human weaknesses in spite of his calling. People of the village accuse him of trying to be "más papista que el Papa" and place bets on the number of times he will repeat "en realidad" in his sermons. Don Florián, the priest in Diario de un cazador, is fond of hunting and hunts often with Lorenzo's father. When Pepe, a hunting companion of Lorenzo's, is wounded seriously in the shoulder and lies dying, he realizes, as most dying men do, that his life has been filled with many mistakes; and Don Florián, in order to comfort him, tells Pepe what life will be like in Heaven:

Tu, cada mañana, al despertar, acudes junto al Señor y vas y le dices: "Señor, si no os molesta, hoy quisiera cazar a toro



suelto, o bien con galgos, o bien en mano, o bien de ojeo".... Y el Señor le dirá a San Miguel: "Miguel, di al coro número cinco, entonces, que ojeen unas perdices al Pepe"....Y San Miguel marchará a avisar, y el Señor aún le gritará: "Digo que le metan también unos faisanes. ¿Te gusta tirar los faisanes, hijo?" Y tu, Pepe, vas y le dices: "¿Faisanes? Nunca tuve esa oportunidad, Señor." El Señor insistirá: "Sí, sí, que le metan también unos faisanes."<sup>7</sup>

The priest tells Pepe that for a hunter, Heaven means a great abundance of game birds and that the Lord is sympathetic to hunters and likes to help them whenever possible.

In La hoja roja, Desi's remembrances of Don Jerónimo, the parish priest in her native village, are of a very idealistic man, whose high ambitions for his parishioners were constantly thwarted by more worldly men. The two priests in Las ratas are two entirely different types of people. Don Zósimo, the older priest, is well over six feet tall and weighs nearly two hundred-fifty pounds. He is dark and speaks in a thunderous voice. When he prays for rain, the very hills seem to reverberate. Don Ciro, the newer priest, is the very opposite of Don Zósimo; he is very young, timid, and weak. When he prays for the much needed rain, many villagers secretly wonder how his feeble efforts could ever be heard by the Lord. Their sermons are described thus:

Don Zósimo, el Curón, cada vez que subía al púlpito era para hablarles de la fornicación y del fuego del infierno. Y peroraba con voz de ultratumba y, al concluir el último sermón, los hombres y mujeres abandonaban la parroquia empapados en sudor, lo mismo que si hubieran compartido con los réprobos durante unos días las penas del infierno. Por contra, Don Ciro hablaba

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<sup>7</sup>Miguel Delibes, Diario de un cazador (segunda edición; Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, marzo 1956), pp. 120-121.

dulcemente, con una reflexiva, cálida ternera, de un Dios próximo y misericordioso, y de la justicia social y de la justicia distributiva y de la justicia conmutativa pero ellos apenas entienden nada de esto....<sup>8</sup>

Don Zósimo preaches about the sins of the body and about hellfire after which his parishioners leave the church soaked in sweat, while Don Ciró preaches about social, distributive, and commutative justice, subjects which his parishioners can not understand.

Although his novels can be grouped into two different classes, Delibes still shows an awareness of the problems of man and his adjustment to life. His attitude toward these problems is spiritual, sympathetic, and understanding. His personal approach to life is optimistic as a whole, although the problems which he poses, whether they are physical, mental, or emotional, caused by environmental circumstances, heredity, or God's will, have many bitter and ironic facets.

His early novels give the reader a basic insight into Delibes' spiritually oriented philosophy, and the more recent novels seem to be a manifestation of this, a turning away from a materialistically-minded society to a simple, domestic society placed in a natural setting. He may be generally characterized, not by religious fervor, but by a wealth of human understanding, kindness, and sympathy, accompanied by a facility for sharp observation of human life.

The anecdotal-type novels seem to represent a new trend in Delibes' thought as well as his style. One might even believe that he

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<sup>8</sup>Miguel Delibes, Las ratas (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1962), p. 100.

has found the problems posed in his earlier novels too deep, too burdensome and exhausting and that he has been entangled in them too long. They may be taken as a sort of negation of modern life. They seem to be expositions of what he considers the satisfying life; they are set in natural surroundings; they do not become involved in material or metaphysical problems of society, and they exemplify a return to the delights of nature and the humble way of life. These books are charming and readable; they describe human activity in a tender human style, but they do not contain the same intense impact of the novelistic works which are concerned with the problems of life in a modern technical and troubled society.

## CHAPTER IV

### PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVELS

La sombra del ciprés es alargada, the first of Delibes' books, is the story of Pedro, his schooling and later life. One reads his innermost thoughts and quickly realizes how greatly his environment affected his life. Pedro was born in Ávila, a medieval walled city. The gloominess of the city sets the mood for the entire book. The following is an example:

Yo nací en Ávila, la vieja ciudad de las murallas, y creo que el silencio y el recogimiento casi místico de esta ciudad se me metieron en el alma nada más nacer. No dudo de que, aparte otras varias circunstancias, fue el clima pausado y retraído de esta ciudad el que determinó, en gran parte, la formación de mi carácter.<sup>9</sup>

Pedro's parents die early in his life; and when he is ten years old, his guardian uncle, most eager to get the youngster away from his home, takes him to a certain Señor Lesmes, a teacher, with whom Pedro spends the next seven years of his life. Señor Lesmes forms Pedro's personality after his own. He imbues in him a bitter concept of existence. The very atmosphere of their house is boring, wearisome, and gloomy. Pedro becomes a deep thinker and an introvert. "Me sentía capaz de sopesar, ponderar y decidir; en una palabra, de valerme por mí mismo. Y todo ello lo debía a la fría exposición de don Mateo."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Delibes, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

Another boy comes to live with Señor Lesmes and his family.

Alfredo's father has died, and his mother wants to be rid of him because her lover and the child do not get along. Pedro and Alfredo quickly become friends. They spend a year together in school and play. During the summer, the two join a group of young boys and explore the old city of Ávila, the flour mill, old districts, and the cattle market. Here, they listened enraptured as an old woman tells old Spanish legends to the accompaniment of her blind husband's guitar. The following winter Alfredo dies, and for the next five years, Pedro finds his only peace in losing himself in his studies and in occasional trips to the cemetery: "No sé si sería un bienestar morboso, pero hallaba más alivio a mi dolor entre los muertos que entre los vivos."<sup>11</sup>

When Pedro is seventeen and the time comes to choose a career, he decides to join the merchant marine: "me decidí, al fin, por una carrera que, conservándome en el mundo, me permitía al propio tiempo mantenerme apartado de él."<sup>12</sup>

On one of his trips Pedro meets and falls in love with Jane, a lovely American. But, having always believed himself a man destined to live alone and to be abnormally afraid of death, he breaks off their relationship. Subsequently, he realizes that after having met Jane, he is no longer content to live alone. He and Jane are married, and Pedro returns to Spain to prepare their home. During this time Pedro becomes

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 132.

more extroverted. His thoughts gradually turn from the gloomy to the pleasant, although he never completely draws away from his old habits. He even finds himself looking forward to events which are to take place.

On his return trip to the United States, Pedro sees Jane's car roll off the dock just as he is landing. Again, he is alone. As the book ends, he returns to his solitude.

Ann es de día is the story of Sebastián, a hunchback. The reader is introduced to Sebastián when he is in his late teens, just at the time when other young men of his age are starting to court the young girls of his neighborhood. But, Sebastián is constantly ridiculed because of his short and misshaped stature and sees no hope in ever being able to marry and raise a family.

Sebastián's father was also a hunchback and was a chiropodist or, a person who gives pedicures. He ran a flourishing business, and all went well until he married. Being deformed, he found it difficult to find a woman to marry, and so he struck up a bargain with Aurelia, Sebastián's mother. If Aurelia would marry him, he would make her very comfortable materially. Aurelia soon tired of her husband and began to nag and ridicule him; thus he became extremely nervous and one day cut off a customer's toe. This, of course, ruined his reputation, and he died soon after, leaving Aurelia with two small children. Thus, the job of supporting his mother and sister falls upon Sebastián. He works for some time at a small delicatessen for a man who continually cheats his customers. Sebastián soon tires of watching Señor Sixto growing rich at the expense of others, and he seeks employment at a large fabric shop.

Surprisingly enough, he is given the job and soon works his way up from errand boy to clerk.

About this time, Aurora, the daughter of his former employer, Señor Sixto, begins to show a romantic interest in Sebastián. They court and become engaged. Then Sebastián learns that Aurora is pregnant, and the father of her child has refused to marry her. Aurora's mother has paid a certain sum of money to Auralia, Sebastián's mother, in order to persuade Sebastián to marry Aurora. When Sebastián learns of the plot, he absolutely refuses to marry Aurora, saying that her pregnancy is her problem to solve, and he refuses to help. He believes that because he is an ugly hunchback everyone is trying to take advantage of him.

On one of his few visits to a monastery near his home, he hears a priest giving a sermon. He listens as the priest says:

Respetad esos cuerpos en cuanto son templos vivos del Espíritu Santo—decía—; pero cultivad vuestra alma, luchad por perfeccionarla; no olvidéis un instante que es ella la que redime al cuerpo y que está por encima de él. Un alma blanca es la suprema satisfacción de un cristiano.<sup>13</sup>

The priest is telling those around him to respect their bodies which are living temples to the Holy Spirit and to cultivate and fight to perfect their souls. Sebastián wants to shout to those listening that what the priest says means nothing. He wishes to open the priest's eyes to the ways of the world, to tell him what life is really like outside the monastery. All Sebastián has ever known are the illegal dealings of

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<sup>13</sup>Miguel Delibes, Aun es de día (segunda edición; Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, diciembre de 1962), p. 155.

his former employer, the sensuality of the other clerks at the fabric shop where he works, the boys who write lewd notes and draw pictures in the hallway in the building where he lives and who request the services of Pepita, their neighbor on the second floor, the man who beat their wives until they are exhausted when their favorite football team loses and they lose their bets. Sebastián feels so strongly about this that he comes back and visits the priest again and talks to him privately. The priest answers his questions by saying that, indeed, honor and dignity seem to be disappearing from the world. They can be compared to water escaping from a colander, and spiritual people are supposed to work to stop up the holes left open by others. Sebastián is so impressed by his talk with the priest that he endeavors to try to brighten his own home life through his own effort. He brings fabrics home for his mother to make some new clothes for herself and for his younger sister. His mother used to go out on Saturday nights and get drunk with a girl friend, but he begins taking all three women to the movies, something which they enjoyed very much.

One day a beautiful girl named Irene comes to the fabric shop. She is a friend of the owner and has been on a vacation for a few months. Irene is the exact opposite of Sebastián. She is beautiful, talented and very gay; Sebastián is ugly, deformed, and it is difficult for him to be happy although he makes a valiant effort. Sebastián becomes infatuated with Irene and follows her everywhere. One day he learns that she is getting married to a young dentist, and he is crushed.



The book ends rather abruptly after an episode in which Sebastián steals a glove belonging to Irene. He is eventually caught by the store manager and fired. As he runs from the store trying to flee the shouts of those with whom he used to work, a thousand thoughts cross his mind, and he runs home to the cool darkness of his room to think of Irene. He wonders whether or not Aurora will still marry him.

Mi idoletrado hijo Sisi is the story of a materialistic, sensual, and egotistical man, Cecilio Rubes. Cecilio heads a flourishing business begun by his father and enjoys a great deal of wealth. His marriage is not a happy one. At the time he married, Cecilio thought only of Adela's beauty and of his physical attraction for her. He realizes only too late that his doting mother was right when she said that Adela is too far beneath their rung on the social ladder and besides that, she is stupid and naïve. Adela believes passionate loving is only for the young. At thirty-two she becomes greatly alarmed if Cecilio shows any passion at all and tells him to stop these foolish and childish things. Cecilio, being passionate in nature, turns to a beautiful young redhead who becomes his mistress. Paulina is only in her teens, and Cecilio, thirty-seven years old, contributes to her support by paying her rent on a lovely little apartment, and he keeps her happy by bringing her presents. In return, Paulina attends to Cecilio's sexual needs and all goes well.

At the beginning of their marriage, Cecilio had told Adela that he wanted no children, but at thirty-two Adela learns that she is pregnant. After the initial shock, Cecilio seems quite happy with the

news; however, he wants a son, not to love, but for the selfish reason of carrying on the family name. During his wife's pregnancy and after the baby is born, Cecilio sees less and less of Paulina. There is now something at home on which he can focus his attention, and he spends a great deal of time with his son Sisi. On Sisi's first birthday, Cecilio tells Paulina that they will have to part because their illicit relations could perhaps hurt his son in the future. Paulina is sad, but understanding; she also wants a son some day, but first, she wants to become an actress. Cecilio gives her some excellent references and a cash present, and their relationship is ended. Cecilio's sexual interests are curbed for a short time only, however. After Sisi becomes older, Cecilio again wishes for Paulina and goes to Madrid several times to find her but is unsuccessful. Mentally, he relives again and again past sexual experiences and longs for the days when Paulina was still with him.

As Sisi grows older, he is given everything which his heart desires by his father. Adela, who would like to instill a certain amount of discipline in her son, is constantly rebuffed by Cecilio who always sides with Sisi. It is of little importance to Cecilio that Sisi deliberately tears up his toys and is mean to other children. Sisi wants a new car, a Lincoln, and Cecilio buys one. Sisi does not like to study, and he will not go to school. Cecilio does not make him go to school because it is his opinion that schooling is for the poor who need it to rise on the social ladder and as a means of support. Sisi does not need the money as his father is almost a millionaire. However,

Sisí does go to school for a short time. There he meets Ven, a fourteen-year-old whom he likes very much. The two soon become close friends. Ven's father is a traveling salesman and is out of town a great deal. His mother is dead, and his deaf grandmother cares for him as best she can, but Ven is too much for her to handle. He smokes and drinks; he throws rocks at couples seated on park benches; he rings doorbells and runs. Ven teaches Sisí all his tricks, and they have a good time. But he also teaches Sisí other things such as, babies do not come from Paris but are created by their mothers. Sisí's interest in sex is heightened after Ven and he spend much time looking at magazines meant for older men and having long discussions of sex in general. As the years progress, Sisí builds a reputation for himself equaled by none in town. Sisí is a very handsome young man and has no trouble finding willing conquests. One day Paulina comes back to town. She goes to see Cecilio at his office and, while there, meets Sisí; the two are attracted to each other immediately. Sisí takes Paulina everywhere, dancing, to the local taverns, and on long walks in the country. Cecilio is furious, but there is nothing he can do. Paulina is very abrupt and straight-to-the point when she says that their relationship had ended nineteen years ago. She realizes that she is old enough to be Sisí's mother; but she is still lovely, charming and very seductive. Sisí is captivated by her; and she, in turn, is flattered by the attention he is giving her and tells him that he should spend his time with her until he finds a young girl to marry.

Then Sisí finds a young girl who fascinates him. Elisa is the daughter of some family friends. She is not beautiful, but is still very attractive. Sisí finds that when he is with her he wants to be protective and helpful; he is not attracted to her for sexual reasons as he has been with so many other women.

As their friendship progresses, the Spanish Civil War breaks out. Sisí is sent off to fight. While away, he acquires an interest in insects and starts a collection. He gives up drinking and manages to dominate his sexual impulses, but is then killed by an enemy bomb.

After Sisí's death Cecilio goes slowly mad. All of his past twenty years had been spent indulging in the things that Sisí had wanted. He had lived for his son, and now his son is gone. He begins to believe that if he had another son, Sisí would live again. After he is convinced that Adela is not able to have any more children, he goes to see Paulina and puts his wishes in the form of a business proposition. Paulina laughs in his face and then tells him she is already expecting a child-- Sisí's. Cecilio rushes out, stunned by the news; he goes home and, raving like a madman, screams at Adela, saying that she is the cause of all his problems. He runs to the balcony and, not knowing what he was doing in his madness, throws himself over into the street and is killed.

## CHAPTER V

### ANECDOTAL NOVELS

El camino is the story of a small village and its people as seen through the eyes of a small boy. Daniel, el Mochuelo, meaning little owl, is going away to the city to school, and the night before he is to leave, he recalls life in his little village--incidences which he and his friends observed and about which they wondered. Daniel's two favorite friends are Germán, el Tifoso, and Roque, el Moñigo. Germán came from a poor family and has nine brothers and sisters. He is very skinny and not at all strong. Germán is called el Tifoso because he has large bald spots over his head which, according to his father, Andrés, el zapatero, he caught from a diseased bird. Andrés, is very fond of birds and has many in his little shoe shop. He crosses all types, and the hybrids are supposedly better song birds. Many villagers have asked Andrés how he can stand to have so many birds around when he already has so many children, and he always answers that the birds' singing prevents him from hearing the children. Germán, el Tifoso, has inherited his love of birds from his father. No one in the valley understands birds like Germán. He can easily recognize all their calls and knows their nesting places and habits. Roque, el Moñigo, is the third member of the gang and is considered a ruffian by many of the village women. Roque's mother dies while giving birth to him; and his older sister, Sara, has never quit blaming him for their mother's death. Sara is very superstitious and holds little meetings with Roque in the loft upstairs. Here, she repeats

schoolteacher, has been looking for a wife for quite some time, and so one day he receives a note:

Don Moisés, si usted necesita una mujer, yo necesito un hombre. Le espero a las siete en la puerta de mi casa. No me hable jamás de esta carta y quémela. De otro modo me moriría de vergüenza y no volvería a mirarle a usted a la cara. Tropiécese conmigo como por casualidad. Sara<sup>14</sup>

Poor Sara is scared to death when Don Moisés comes calling and begins speaking words of love. But she recovers beautifully, and thus is begun a new courtship and eventual marriage.

Since Daniel's birth, his father, el quesero, meaning the cheese-maker, has always planned on sending the boy to the city to school in order that he might be able to finish his education. Because they are a poor family, Daniel's father has had to scrimp and save for many years. Daniel has never been able to know his father very well because, during the years of doing without, el quesero had become more distant and ill-natured. But he is determined that Daniel should be liberated, although Daniel has never been able to figure out from what it is that he is to be liberated. To Daniel happiness is living in their small, isolated valley, learning his father's trade so that he might be able to continue the business when he grows older. Everyone in Daniel's family suffers because of el quesero's desire that Daniel should progress:

Lo peor es que de esto nadie sacaba provecho. Daniel, el Mochuelo, jamás lo comprendería. Su padre sufriendo, su madre sufriendo y él sufriendo, cuando el quitarle el sufrimiento a él

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<sup>14</sup>Miguel Delibes, El camino (segunda edición; Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, diciembre 1955), p. 156.

significaría el fin del sufrimiento de todos los demás. Pero esto hubiera sido truncar el camino, resignarse a que Daniel, el Mocho, desertase de progresar. Y esto no lo haría el queso; Daniel progresaría aunque fuese a costa del sacrificio de toda la familia, empezando por él mismo.<sup>15</sup>

Daniel must progress at the expense of the entire family and he himself must give the supreme sacrifice.

Quino, el Manco, who has only one hand, is the only man in the village who has had a woman commit suicide for him. Quino had fallen in love with Mariuca, who had tuberculosis. They were to be married and Josefa, another woman who also loved Quino, was distraught. She had caused an uproar in church by running up to the priest yelling "es tísica, es tísica"<sup>16</sup> the first Sunday the marriage bans had been announced. On the day of the wedding, everyone was horrified to see Josefa, stark naked, jumping off the bridge into the river.

To Mariuca and Quino is born a little girl named Mariuca-uca. Mariuca dies at childbirth, and Quino is left alone to raise their daughter. He does an admirable job, but after several years, he decides that he needs a wife. His choice is La Guindilla Mayor, who is nearly fifty and very set in her ways. She has a bad habit of interfering in nearly everyone's business and she is not at all well-liked. However, she is a good businesswoman, and her little store is profitable and well-run, while Quino's tavern is not. La Guindilla Mayor is a very pious woman and works hard at being a good Christian. La Guindilla Menor, her

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 106.

younger sister, has had a very unhappy love affair with a bank employee fifteen years her junior, who had induced her to run away with him. He was interested primarily in her money, and she returned to the little village a dishonored woman. As a result of this, she is destined to wear black and to remain at home most of her life in order that her older sister would take her back.

Daniel is secretly infatuated with Mica, the beautiful nineteen year-old daughter of Don Gerardo. Although there is a difference of ten years in their ages, Daniel nourishes their relationship and plans some day to marry Mica. One summer evening, Daniel, Roque, and Germán climb over Don Gerardo's fence and sneak into the orchard. As they are filling their arms with the delicious fruit, they are discovered by Mica. She admonishes the boys and lets them leave with two apples apiece. On several occasions, Mica and Daniel have short conversations, during which poor Daniel can hardly talk because he is so nervous around the beautiful young lady. When Mica's sweetheart from the city comes to visit on the Día de la Virgen, Daniel is so furious at the world that he climbs to the top of the cucafía, a greased pole, by himself while all the villagers stare in open-faced wonderment. Everyone raves, even Mica's sweetheart, and he is a happy boy once more.

When he is ten years old, Daniel experiences the sense of loss that death brings when Germán, while looking at a snake, loses his footing, slips on some rocks, and suffers a fatal concussion. His two friends are heartbroken. The day of the funeral Daniel kills a bird with his sling-shot and secretly places it in Germán's casket because he feels that Germán would want to be with one of the creatures he loved so well.



The sun is just coming up over the hill the day he is to leave for the city, and Daniel realizes that he has not slept all night. He thinks about the new life he will now be beginning and remembers a sermon preached by Don José, the priest, on the subject of one's life's work:

...un mendigo podía ser más feliz sin saber cada día si tendría algo que llevarse a la boca, que un rico en un suntuoso palacio lleno de mármoles y criados. Algunos por ambición, pierden la parte de felicidad que Dios les tenía asignada en un camino más sencillo. La felicidad no está, en realidad, en lo más alto, en lo más grande, en lo más apetitoso, en lo más excelso; está en acomodar nuestros pasos al camino que el Señor nos ha señalado en la Tierra. Aunque sea humilde.<sup>17</sup>

As Daniel dresses for his trip, a vivid sensation invades him that he is about to take a different road than that which God had marked for him. And, at last, he cries.<sup>18</sup>

Diario de un cazador is a charming account kept by Lorenzo, a beadle at a university in a small Spanish town. Lorenzo is a bachelor and lives with his widowed mother, whom he supports. He has a brother, Tino, who lives in Madrid, and a sister, La Modes, who is married to a n'er-do-well, Serafín, who drinks much too much. Serafín and La Modes have four children, and, since Serafín can not keep a job, the two frequently ask poor Lorenzo for money. Lorenzo's work at the university does not net too much, but he and his mother, by saving, manage to get along. During the last months of her fifth pregnancy, La Modes loses her child, and Lorenzo and Serafín are left to take care of the little

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 183-4.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 226.

funeral. On the way, Serafin stops at a bar to have a few drinks and ends up having a good cry over the loss of his child. Lorenzo knows that Serafin is there to stay a long time, and so, disgusted, he leaves Serafin at the bar and goes to the burial alone.

Lorenzo's mother enjoys feeding the birds outside on the roof, and every day there are many there to receive the morsels. Also, a friend, Saffora Rufina, comes to visit, and the two sit for hours on the little balcony chattering together and watching people pass.

Lorenzo's work at the university keeps him busy, but it does not pay well. Don Basilio, head of the school, tells Lorenzo that Saffor Moro, Lorenzo's neighbor and fellow worker at the university, is due to retire in a year and that after that time Lorenzo can have his job as head janitor. To supplement his meager income Lorenzo tries a few odd jobs. The first job he tries is taking care of the school's furnace. In order that the rooms be warm by the time the first classes meet, Lorenzo has to get up at five o'clock in the morning to start the furnace; he holds this job for only a short time. The second job he tries is that of ushering at the local movie theatre. He does not like this job too well as his afternoons and evenings are all taken up; and he does not have enough time to hunt, and then, too, Anita, his girl friend, does not like to stay at home; and Lorenzo does not want her to date others. However, he does have the privilege of taking whomever he wishes to see the movies free. He takes his mother quite often and Anita, too, but soon he quits in order to have more time to hunt.

Señor Moro, who works at the university with Lorenzo, and his family live in the same apartment house as Lorenzo and his mother. His daughters are very loud and obnoxious, and throughout the book there is a running battle between the two families. One day Lorenzo leaves a rabbit skin to dry on the window sill, and it disappears. He borrows a friend's hunting dog, and the two follow the scent of the rabbit skin and find it at the Moro residence. The words exchanged need not be written here, but the discourse is quite colorful.

Lorenzo's great love is hunting. Every Sunday and on all his vacations he hunts with his friends at the various game preserves located around the province. His hunting friends present a colorful picture. Pepe is continually borrowing what he never returns. He wastes his shells on wild, unimportant shots, and then he has to ask his friends for some of theirs. When all the hunters gather in a café for coffee, Pepe always manages to have one of the other men pay for his. During one of his hunting trips, Pepe is accidentally shot in the shoulder and later dies as a result of his wounds. Tomasito is an interesting person. He is not a very good shot, and every time that he goes hunting with Lorenzo, he insists that he has hit the majority of the birds. He runs up to the fallen game shouting "es mío, es mío"; needless to say, Lorenzo does not hunt often with him. Melecio is Lorenzo's dearest friend. The two have hunted together for fifteen years and have come to know each other very well. During the times when there is no hunting season, they get together and make shells for future use. Melecio has a hunting dog, named Doly, which Lorenzo and Mele, Melecio's small son, wash and brush and take to

a dog show. Doly wins first prize, much to everyone's surprise. During the hot summer, little Mele goes swimming and drowns, and Melecio nearly loses his mind because of his son's death. He stays at home, staring at the walls and never saying a word. Then Ampara, his wife, learns that she is pregnant, and Melecio believes, without a doubt, that it is little Mele returning.

Lorenzo has inherited his love of hunting from his father who had been well-known throughout the province for his excellent marksmanship. His father's hand was taken off in an accident in the printing shop where he worked, and, as a result of the accident, he could no longer hunt. In three month's time, he died from grief. Lorenzo, being an excellent marksman himself, wins a marksmanship contest and receives quite a large sum of money.

Lorenzo has a girl friend named Anita. She is a hairdresser and sometimes helps her father in his little doughnut shop. It is there that Lorenzo first sees her and strikes up an acquaintance. He has fallen in love and would like to get married, but Anita is very flighty and is not ready to settle down. Her sister, Mimas, has told her that no woman should have to start washing a man's socks at the age of nineteen. Also, there is a continuous battle between them on the matter of Lorenzo's hunting. Anita believes that he spends too much time hunting, and one day tells him that he must choose between hunting and her. Since Lorenzo's very life centers around his hunting, for he even goes so far as to keep a detailed report of how many birds and animals he shoots in a season, he naturally chooses hunting and does not see Anita for some time.

In the last pages of the diario, Lorenzo's mother falls ill. She develops a partial paralysis and is not able to do anything but lie still in bed. It is at this point that Anita returns to Lorenzo. Like so many women who fall in love, she realizes that one has to take the good and bad when one accepts another's love. And so the diary stops with the entry dated Monday, January 25, with Lorenzo's mother on her death bed and Anita and Lorenzo reunited.

Diario de un emigrante is the continuation of Lorenzo's diary.

He takes up his writing again a full year after ending Diario de un cazador. During this time, his mother has died, and he and Anita have been married. They settle in Lorenzo's apartment and start their married life there. Life does not change much for Lorenzo; he still works at the university, and he and Señor Moro's family continue to battle. Although Anita does not like it, Lorenzo continues to hunt as often as always. Lorenzo can not understand why Anita should object so to this diversion of his. His mother had always helped by keeping his clothes clean and ready to go and had always put his equipment in a special place for him, but Anita says that times have changed and, besides that, she is not his mother. Anita also is not herself because she has just become pregnant, and Lorenzo repeats time and again, like so many newly expectant fathers, that in order to have a son one certainly has to go through many hardships, but, unlike his wife, he is thinking only of the meals he misses when Anita is ill in bed and of her occasional fits of bad temper.

The two receive a letter from Anita's uncle, Egidio, who had migrated to Chile, inviting them to come and live with him and his wife

and begin a new life in the New World. To Lorenzo and Anita, the idea sounds wonderful, and they prepare to leave their home for new places. Egidio sends tickets for an ocean liner which will carry them to Buenos Aires, and from there they will take a train to Santiago. All their friends have a big going-away party and they laugh and sing until the wee hours and then, a few days later, they leave. Everyone gathers at the railroad station to wave goodbye, and Melecio, Lorenzo's good friend, accompanies them to Barcelona to help carry their luggage and to help them get settled on board ship.

When they arrive at the ship, they find, much to Lorenzo's dismay, that Anita is staying in a cabin with three women and Lorenzo is next door with three men. As the ship leaves the dock, Melecio waves until they are out of sight, and thus Lorenzo and Anita begin their voyage. The boat is truly a luxury liner with its gymnasium, library, swimming pool, dance floor, theatre, bar, church, stores, and bank for exchanging money. Although they are traveling third class, Lorenzo and Anita are able to take advantage of most of the conveniences. There are many nice people on board, and, coupled with the many things to do, Lorenzo and Anita have a very good time. The two quickly become friends with an Italian couple who live in Chile, and the four do many things together. Lorenzo and Anita quickly become famous aboard ship because they are both such excellent dancers, especially when doing the tango, mambo, and other Latin-type dances. Giuseppe, their Italian friend, plans an important initiation for those who have not been across the equator, and the whole affair ends with Lorenzo's being pushed into the swimming pool. One

evening there is a gigantic masquerade party. Lorenzo, Giuseppe, and the other two men in their cabin easily take first prize by dressing as Hawaiian native girls and doing the hula to Siboney. Lorenzo and Anita visit Dakar in North Africa and Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, and all too soon they arrive at Buenos Aires, and, after having spent a day touring the city, they catch the train to Santiago and arrive nearly two and a half weeks after they began their voyage.

As the two settle down to life in Chile, they realize that life there is not going to be a bed of roses as they had imagined. As everywhere, one has to work hard to earn a living. Egidio is by no means an easy man to work for. He came to Chile nearly penniless, and the many years he had spent scrimping had left their mark; he is very miserly with his money. He drives an old, old car, and his house is not very nice at all. Almost from the beginning, he and Lorenzo exchange words, and it is only for the sake of his wife and their future son that Lorenzo does not say more. Egidio does not want to pay Lorenzo enough for the work he is doing as a bookkeeper, and he criticizes him for wasting his time hunting and having an occasional drink with some new found acquaintances at a local bar.

Lorenzo is also having trouble with Egidio's wife. She begins looking at him with "ojos como las vacas." Lorenzo, being a happily married man, becomes worried and rightly so. La tía begins making passes aimed directly at him, and many times he is really put on the spot. He feels it would be rude to cast her aside indifferently, but as he has no inclination to have an extramarital affair, he is left in a quandary.

He manages to act honorably and like a gentleman on several occasions when she makes improper advances but realizes, at the same time, that he and Anita are going to have to move. And this they do.

Lorenzo finds a job as an elevator operator, and he and Anita move into a tiny apartment owned by a kindly lady. Although the two miss their old friends and home in Spain, they are doing well in Chile. Lorenzo and a friend, Efrén, decide to go into business for themselves. Lorenzo obtains backing from Don Heliodoro, a Spaniard who had become wealthy in the copper business in Northern Chile. Lorenzo and Efrén's business is a small shoeshine shop not far from the hotel where Lorenzo works. He keeps both jobs as they need the money, and the shoeshining business is just getting started. Don Heliodoro's wife helps to get Anita a job as a sort of traveling hairdresser among many of her wealthy friends. Anita does very well, and Lorenzo's affairs seem to be going along quite nicely.

In early August, Anita gives birth to a fine little son. By this time, their aunt and uncle are speaking to them again, and the four spend most of their Sunday afternoons together, however La tía is still chasing Lorenzo. In October, Lorenzo becomes sick and is in bed for about three weeks. After his illness, he finds it hard to be happy; the shoeshine business is not making the kind of profits for which he had hoped, and he had been fired from his job as elevator operator through no fault of his own. One afternoon a gentleman comes in the shoe shop and wants to buy out Lorenzo and Efrén and a deal is made. Lorenzo pays back his loan and purchases tickets on a boat going back to Spain. After buying presents



for their closest friends and relatives in Spain, they buy themselves some new clothes, so that everyone back home will believe that life really was wonderful in Chile, and then they happily leave for home.

La hoja roja is the story of Eloy, an old man who fears the approaching years and death. La hoja roja is the red leaf found in a package of cigarette papers, fifth from the last, which lets the user know that his supply of papers is nearly gone. Eloy continually likens his advancing age to the hoja roja, and he feels that death is near at all times. "...pero de todas maneras a mí me ha salido la hoja roja en el librito de papel de fumar, eso es."<sup>19</sup> Eloy also has another favorite statement concerning his advancing years: "...el retiro es la antesala del otro mundo."<sup>20</sup> The ideas of la hoja roja and el retiro fascinate Eloy, and he talks about them constantly to himself, or to others.

Eloy lives in the past, as do most elderly people. He used to be a sanitation engineer; he did a good job and loved his work. His wife, Lucita would even become angry because all he would talk about was his work, and many times she told him to stop talking about the trash business or she would go crazy. When Eloy retired, there was a big dinner in his honor, and then he was left with nothing to do. He was not welcome at the sanitation office as the new sanitation engineer was younger and, like many young people, thought that Eloy was utterly useless because of his age.

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<sup>19</sup>Miguel Delibes, La hoja roja (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1959), p. 20.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

Photography had been an absorbing and interesting hobby for Eloy. For many years, he had enjoyed his work in this field. He was a member of the local, now defunct, photography club and even gave a speech once to its members, which he often retold to himself in his daydreams. Eventually Eloy could not afford film to go in his camera, so he took pictures without film. This made the neighbors talk.

Eloy, being obsessed with old age, develops many queer habits which, he believes, make his life a little easier. After eating, he always gets down on his knees; the reasoning behind this being that the stomach remains nearer the center of the earth and, consequently, gravity pulls the food through his system more forcefully. If one observed the digestion of a child, he would readily see that children digested their food more easily and rapidly than adults. Also, Eloy climbs the stairs to his little apartment bent over at the waist at a right angle, because in this way the diaphragm supposedly shifts and he is able to climb fifty to sixty steps without tiring his lungs.

Eloy has a servant girl named Desi. She is very industrious and does her work well, although Eloy is not able to pay her as much as some of the other girls in their apartment house are paid. When Desi expresses a desire to learn how to read and write, Eloy begins to teach her. She is not really a bright girl but works hard to improve herself. Both Eloy and Desi live in the past. Eloy reviews happenings which he shared long ago with his friends in their small town, and Desi can not forget the small town where she was raised. They talk often to each other, each lost in his own dreams. One day Desi learns that her former beau,

el Picaza, is coming to settle in the small town where she now lives in order to serve his time in the army. Desi is ecstatic, and after el Picaza arrives, they spend many a happy afternoon together. However, el Picaza has a bad streak or, mala yeta, which Desi worries about. He cut off another man's ear once, during one of his bad streaks, and there is no limit to what else he could, or would, do. Desi's girl friend, Marce, does not like el Picaza at all, and she frequently taunts him. Marce's boy friend is a corporal and el Picaza, being only a private, can do nothing to offend him. That is why Desi worries so much about Marce's pointed remarks when the four are together. But el Picaza's anger in the end is vented on a stranger; he throws a rat in a young girl's face, and she calls him names. When she will not stop, el Picaza slits her throat with his knife. He is jailed, and Desi is heartbroken.

Eloy has a son living in Madrid, who is a successful notary. Eloy constantly praises the success of León. Every day when he arises, the first question he asks of Desi is "¿Llamó el cartero?", and every day Desi has to say "No." Eloy is grossly ignored by his son. At Christmas time, he receives a card signed "León," but not a note or letter, and Sucesa, his daughter-in-law, does not even bother to sign her name. One day Eloy decides to journey to Madrid to visit León and Sucesa. There, he is treated very rudely. He is given no love or affection, and one evening when they are expecting guests for a party he is told to please stay in his room. León and Sucesa are very materialistically-minded, and their interests lie in their material wealth, in being seen with the right people and rising on the social ladder. Eloy readily sees

that there is no room in their home, or hearts, for him. Thus, he returns to his own village, and he and Desi continue their simple, but satisfying, life, drawn closer because there are no others to whom they can turn in their loneliness and sorrow.

Las ratas, the most recent novel by Miguel Delibes, is a work which vividly portrays the difficult and arduous life of the small farmers in Spain. Tío Ratero, which means old ratcatcher, and his son live in a cave above a small village. They are the last of many who have lived in caves in this particular Spanish province. Because living in a cave seems so primitive, there are certain among the local politicians who would like to move the two to a small house for little more than personal reasons, the main one being promotions to higher jobs. But Tío Ratero stands firm in the wake of progress and refuses to move, always giving the same answer: "La cueva es mía."

The inhabitants of this particular valley have the unusual habit of eating rats, and they are considered a delicacy. Tío Ratero is the official ratcatcher, and this is how he makes his living. Nini and their faithful dog, Fa, help him.

Nini, the protagonist, is a delightful ten-year-old boy. His family tree is something of a potpourri. He had two grandfathers, who were brothers, and both lived with the same woman. Abundio, one of his grandfathers, was a neat man who was an expert in the vineyards. He was called on to keep the vines pruned and to help in other aspects of their growth. Abundio taught Nini all he knew about plants. Román, his other grandfather, was the antithesis of Abundio. He was a hunter and very careless

in his appearance; he bathed and shaved only once a year. He took his bath in January and shaved on the eve of Saint Rita, usually the twenty-first of May. When Nini reached the age of four, Román took him hunting and began to teach him how to track and kill. Román was an expert in this field of endeavor and could kill a hare with one clean blow of his staff.

Once Román shaved on Saint Scholástica day and became ill.

Iluminada, the grandmother, watched over him carefully day and night, and one morning they found her dead, still sitting on her little stool. When the coffin was brought, they found that Román had also died. After the funeral, Nini and Tío Ratero returned to find that Abundio had gone away, and he was never heard of again.

From the union of the three grandparents were born two children, Tío Ratero and Marcela. These were Nini's parents, and both showed signs of being mentally deficient. Marcela was finally taken away to an insane asylum, and Tío Ratero, as his mental deficiencies were not so pronounced as those of Marcela, was left to care for Nini.

Nini is found to be a near-genius. At the age of ten, he already possesses an extra sense that all the other villagers lack, and when problems about the crops, the weather, the raising of domestic animals or butchering arise, Nini is called upon to help. He is able to do the butchering that his grandmother had always done for everyone. One of the farmer's wives repeatedly likens Nini to Jesus among the scholars at the temple when she sees him conversing with the men of the village. Several of the village women would like for Nini to go to school, but

Nini and Tío Ratero believe this to be an absurd idea. Doña Resu often says that if Nini went to school he would be able to get a job and then become rich like Don Antoño, but Nini does not wish to be rich and says so. Tío Ratero thinks the village women are trying to take Nini away, just like the others want to take away his cave, and he refuses to listen to their pleading. Besides, he often says that Nini is already the smartest person in the village.

Whenever someone in the village treats Nini unfairly, he has his way of getting revenge. Once, Columba, wife of the mayor, slapped him. Late that night Nini poured some gasoline into their well, and the next day the rumor was around that there was oil in the vicinity. Columba was ecstatic because she had always wanted to leave the village and live in the city, but, when the hoax was discovered, she was crushed as were the other villagers who had dreams of becoming rich overnight.

Matías Celestín is the type of person who kills for the joy of killing. Nini hates to see animals die in such a way, since his grandfather, Román, had always taught him to kill only when there was a definite need. Matías sleeps during the day and comes out at night to do his evil deeds, and Nini often steals out at night and imitates the call of the hare, and all the animals come to him so that Matías can not find any to shoot. At other times, Nini chases Matías' bloodhound away from the game he is tracking and further complicates his hunting efforts.

The year had been a bad one for Nini, Tío Ratero, and the other villagers. The weather had not been good, and the crops are failing. The weather had also affected the amount of rats in the vicinity, as

the foliage and underbrush are not nearly so thick as in years past. There are few rats to be caught, and Tío Ratero becomes more quiet with each day and begins to keep to himself. The men in the village, particularly Malvino, the tavern keeper, insist that Luis, the ratcatcher from Torrecillorigo, has been taking rats rightfully belonging to Tío Ratero. This, of course, is not true; the weather and climatic conditions are to blame for the scarcity of rats. But, filling Tío Ratero's head full of nonsense seemed to be a past time enjoyed by Malvino, who is called Tío Ratero's "Angel Malo". Tío Ratero becomes so incensed at the thought of Luis stealing rats from him that he vows to kill Luis when he sees him, and this he does. After leaving Luis in the woods with the body of his dog, Nini and Tío Ratero slowly make their way back to their cave. Nini sadly tells his father that now they will have to leave the cave because of what had happened. Poor Tío Ratero can only repeat: "La cueva es mía."

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Miguel Delibes has successfully dealt with many problems of modern man and has shown, through his works, that he believes answers to these problems lie in a return to a simple, unaffected life.

The three psychological novels, La sombra del ciprés es alargada, Aun es de día, and Mi idolatrado hijo Sisi, hint at the wisdom of a return to nature, and all three contain occasional pointed references which convey to the reader Delibes' sympathy for the natural way of life. Pedro, in La sombra del ciprés es alargada, after having spent seventeen years of his life in the city of Ávila, decides on a career at sea in order that he might find peace and solitude, and during one of his trips in Spain, he is a guest at the country home of Luis Bolea, his pilot aboard ship. Here, at rest, in the country, Pedro finds tranquility and regains his health after a long illness. These references are borne out and expanded into a novel, El camino, lacking in plot action and moralistic interpretations, but exemplifying in anecdotal style what the life of the country means to Delibes. El camino, the two Diarios, La hoja roja, and Las ratas follow an anecdotal type trend which lacks a detailed plot and which exhibits a tendency toward costumbrismo or a sketch of life. In the anecdotal novels, Delibes turns from the subjective world of inner experiences to the natural world, a more objective, healthful, and peaceful place.



Delibes' work shows a movement from more profound subject matter and complicated plot to the lighter, less analytical novel. His early novels give the reader a basic insight into his spiritually oriented philosophy, and the more recent novels seem to be a manifestation of this. His earlier works, published through 1953, with the exception of El camino, are carefully plotted, have a realistic, naturalistic setting, show a definite character evolution, and are novels with a definite moral theme and contain significant symbols. Themes that Delibes center on in the philosophical novels are materialism, spiritualism, sensualism, pessimism, and optimism. The earlier novels contain many significant symbols such as: the cypress tree which represents death, the sea, which represents both peace and war, the uselessness of war, which is symbolized by two mountains of men shooting at each other until only a few remain, and the horror of war which is exemplified by the decaying body of a man whose ship is sunk by a submarine. Pessimism is symbolized by a small boat enclosed in a bottle. The symbols concerning spiritualism and materialism are those of the white bread for which materialistic persons strive as contrasted to a white, or pure, soul. Honor and dignity, which are rapidly losing ground in these times, are likened to water escaping from a colander. It is the mission of spiritual people to stop up the holes left open by others who are not so spiritual.

The more recent works exhibit a trend away from the plotted novels toward an interest in the anecdotal and psychological suggestion, with a touch of human bitter-sweetness and gentle humor. Lighter in tone, they tend to lack the emotional and philosophical profundity of the

earlier works. The themes aforementioned as being part of the psychological novels are not used as such in the anecdotal novels but merely treated as aspects of life. The theme of the portrayal of the city and its negative effects on man, contrasted with the wholesome, traditionally satisfying, and invigorating joys of nature or of the life of a small town, first appears in La sombra del ciprés es alargada and follows through the novels until it becomes an application of humble, natural living in a most simple form in the anecdotal novels. The philosophy of spiritualism, of return to the simple, natural way of life, takes the form in the novels of a negative view of the city which engenders materialism in its dirty, crowded, commercially-oriented life, and an emphasis upon the favorable aspects of nature and life lived close to it. The natural setting is always lovely, luxuriant, healthful, the scene of happiness and a balanced outlook. Delibes vividly describes many hunting scenes, long country walks, wild animal life and the conservation problems which plague Spain today.

Miguel Delibes is an author who has unforgettably affected modern Spanish literature. At a time when many authors have been striving for a tremendismo effect in their writing, Delibes has put forth an optimistic view of life. This does not mean that he has not shown many unpleasant facets of Spanish life, but those with which he has dealt have always left the reader with a vision of hope and optimism.

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