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Theme of maturation in the novels of Carmen Laforet

Ruth Sheryl Ostenson

The University of Montana

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THE THEME OF
MATURATION IN THE NOVELS OF
CARMEN LAFORET

By
Ruth Sheryl Ostenson

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INTRODUCTION

I. The Post-Civil War Novel
II. Biographical Data
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"A country could hardly experience an upheaval as devastating as the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) without reflecting in its postwar literature a marked change wrought by suffering, doubt, and soul-searching."¹ Although traditionally Spanish writers have been quite positive in defending their points of view, the post-war period is one of questioning and dubiety.

The war ended in March, 1939, after enduring for three terrible years full of bloodshed and disorder. "The excesses to which the Civil War had given rise had woven an appalling net of hate and counter-hate."² Murders and executions were estimated at 800,000 and military losses at 400,000.³ On February 13, 1939, General Franco issued a decree concerned with the treatment of political offenders. It was applicable to "all persons 'guilty of subversive activities' from October 1st, 1934, to July 18th, 1936, as well as to all those who since then had 'opposed the national movement in fact or by grave passivity.'"⁴ As a result, many people were executed simply because of their association with the wrong side during the war. Other penalties less severe than execution included confiscation of property, fines, loss of civic rights, exile, and imprisonment.


³Ibid.

⁴Madariaga, 424.
Obviously, this approach was not restoring peace in Spain. "Through the tragic failure of the Caudillo to find the right tone, the new attitude, the true voice, the gash in the nation's soul was not being healed and the spirit of the Civil War was still at large over the country."  

The economic situation of the country was in an equally degenerate state:

The capital of the country had been thrown into the furnace of the Civil War and there destroyed, with equal recklessness by both sides. The gold was in Moscow; the cattle had been decimated; the railway rolling-stock halved; the motor vehicles reduced to one-third; the roads and bridges broken up; thousands of houses, streets, public buildings were in ruins; the merchant navy had been all but wiped out; and, to complete the picture, Europe was heading straight for a war and the very foreign policy which nationalist Spain was bound to follow put credits out of the question.  

In 1939, after Franco's forces captured Madrid, he established censorship almost immediately. The bookstores in the capital were closed for approximately a week so that all "subversive" titles might be cleared from the shelves. "Local printing was controlled by supplying stock only for the work of writers who followed party precepts and propaganda... Established writers had to conform to new conditions or flee their homeland."  

The first novelistic endeavors which appeared could better be termed propaganda than literature, e.g., Se ha ocupado el kilómetro 6, by Cecilio Benítez de Castro, 1939. It was not until 1942, three years...
later, that Spain began to show signs of artistic activity in the field of literature. La familia de Pascual Duarte by Camilo José Cela (1942) and Nada by Carmen Laforet (1944) were the first real novelistic successes after the Spanish Civil War. Both appeared to the Spanish public as daring attempts to break away from conventional thought and trivial topics. At last novels began to appear with the emphasis on people, rather than causes.

Character portrayal and development are the more important aspects in the majority of the post-Civil War novels; plot and setting are usually secondary. "Most of the Spanish novels of today are a series of episodes threaded on the personality of the protagonist, like beads on a string, instead of being a well-knot plot of cause and effect."9 "The novel of today results from personal reactions of the protagonist to his ambient; he is a twentieth-century man who closely resembles his author."10

The novel since 1940 stresses the somber aspects of life—suffering, violence, poverty, anxiety, boredom, despair. For a while the term tremendismo enjoyed a great popularity in Spain literature, perhaps because it may be considered a one-word representation of the characteristics of this period. Tremendismo is often defined as a disguised literary expression of existentialism. It is "a kind of emphatic realism that accentuates the sombre aspects of life, with cruelty and violence in the foreground of men's relations and with an atmosphere of boredom and anguish."11

9 Ibid., 310.
10 Ibid.
Whether or not *Nada*, in particular, can correctly be labeled as a piece of existentialist literature is a matter of individual opinion. However, its climate can accurately be associated with certain elements of the movement. It is representative of "an age in which faith in absolutes has been lost, and the individual, in a harassed search for authenticity, finds himself tossed about between chance, aspiration, and nothingness."  

_*La familia de Pascual Duarte*_ is often considered as the novel which began the *tremendista* movement in Spanish literature. It deals with the life of Pascual Duarte, a country boy from the province of Extremadura. The elements of violence, crime, anguish, and death prevail. Pascual is guided by his instincts and impulses; he takes the law into his own hands. However, he is as much a victim of external circumstances as he is an aggressor. Neither society nor his family can offer him any positive values. He can only adopt the behavior of those who surround him and thus resorts to physical violence.

Obviously, the post-Civil War novelists display some external traits of existentialism. In the opinion of Dorothy McMahon, however, their thinking more accurately lies in the realm of Christian doctrine and "can best be epitomized, whether the authors are aware of it or not as: The Kingdom of God lies within you. Man's happiness depends less on external factors than it does on the workings of his own mind and heart."  

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13 McMahon, 230.
Futility is a common theme in the post-Civil War novel and the age-old search for a meaning to existence is predominant. "Characters see themselves as miserable impotent creatures, incapable of satisfying their needs and wants, wants at times not clearly defined in their own minds."\textsuperscript{14}

An insistence upon an absolute acceptance of the individual just as he is prevails, which "could be a plea for greater tolerance and comprehension. It could also bespeak a desire to be free of the restraints of convention. . ."\textsuperscript{15} Attitudes long accepted by Spaniards are questioned, a radical departure from traditional Spanish thought. Spaniards have traditionally been a people "who were so convinced of their role as God's chosen people that they died in life as well as in fiction with abandon, in order to defend their ideas."\textsuperscript{16}

The appearance of a large number of female writers during this time is an innovation in Spanish literature. Traditionally, the family has always been the basis of Spanish society. Female members usually led a secluded life; accepted activities did not go beyond domestic or religious affairs. Consequently, there were only a few outstanding female writers in the history of Spanish literature. (ie., Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, Concha Espina, Emilia Pardo Bazán) until the post-Civil War period.

After the war, however, women gained more equality and their potential for various occupations was more openly recognized. This

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 228.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 229.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
newly acquired status which women enjoy may have been due in part to the immediate necessity of utilizing all available man-power in order to improve the economic condition of Spain. The increase in the number of literary contests is also responsible for the discovery of many of the present-day Spanish novelists, men as well as women. In 1944 there were 26 entries in the Nadal competition; in 1954 there were 171; and in 1955, 215 entries.

At any rate, there has been a tremendous growth in the number of women novelists writing in Spain today. Four, in particular, are noted for their literary contributions: Carmen Laforet, Ana María Matute, Dolores Medio, and Elena Quiroga. Miss Matute has won several literary prizes, among them, the Nadal, the Planeta, the Crítica, and the Nacional de Literatura. Probably her best known work is Primera memoria; she is also the writer of many children's stories. In her novel, En esta tierra, which takes place in Barcelona, Miss Matute portrays the terrible suffering and devastating hunger which existed during the Civil War years.

Dolores Medio became well-known to the Spanish reading public with the appearance of her novel Nosotros, los Rivero, for which she won the Premio Nadal in 1953. The protagonist, Lena Rivero relates her family chronicle in retrospect against the background of Oviedo. Miss Medio often presents a representative slice of society, as in El pez sigue flotando and Funcionario público. The latter novel deals with the pitiful situation of a middle-class couple, who are typical of hundreds of thousands of Spaniards, victims of the postwar Spanish economy.

Elena Quiroga won the Nadal prize in 1950 for her novel, Viento del norte. Most of her novels have a Galician setting and are penetrating
character studies. *Algo pasa en la calle*, in particular, would seem to have universal appeal because of its emphasis on character. Although the novel is set in Madrid, the narrative itself is cosmopolitan in nature and does not contain elements which are particularly Spanish.

The value and relative importance of the post-Civil War novelistic genre in Spanish literature cannot be accurately evaluated at the present time. Because of the lack of historical perspective, it is difficult to make any well-founded judgments on the merits of the novels which have appeared thus far. However, Spain could very well be moving into a Golden Age of the novel. "At least it is a Renaissance full of literary activity well worth the attention of students."17

17 Jones, 311.
BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Carmen Laforet was born on September 6, 1921, in Barcelona. When she was just two years old, her family moved to Las Palmas, a city located on Gran Canaria, one of the Canary Islands. She lived there until 1939 and during that time completed her bachillerato.

Her father was an architect and also a professor of the Escuela de Peritaje Industrial. The family’s move to the Canary Islands was due to the necessities of this professorship. Miss Laforet remembers her father as young, well-built, and very athletic. He had the custom of smoking a pipe and used an excellent mixture of tobacco, "cuyo olor se ha quedado en mí ... como uno de los olores inconfundibles de mi infancia." (Pp. 9-10)

Her father was of Nordic descent and the son of Sevillans. He was educated in Barcelona, where he became skilled in the art of sailing. In his youth he had been a champion at target shooting and had also won several trophies in bicycle races. He taught his children to swim and to endure physical fatigue without complaining, to excel at target shooting, and he and his children made several excursions into the interior of the islands. Carmen Laforet found all of these things much more difficult than did her two brothers, Eduardo and Juan.

Her mother was Toledan, the daughter of a very humble family. She received her primary education in a nun’s school for poor children.

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1 All biographical material, unless otherwise specified, is taken from Laforet, Mis páginas mejores, (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1956).
and later was awarded a scholarship in order to become a teacher. She met her husband when she was a student in a drawing class which he happened to be teaching at a normal school in Toledo.

Her mother was eighteen when she married, twenty when Carmen was born, and thirty-three when she died in the Canary Islands. Miss Laforet remembers her as small in stature, with an enormous spiritual energy, a sharp intelligence, and a Castillian sense of duty. She taught her children the importance of veracity, of not leaving things half-done, and of accepting the consequences of their own acts.

Carmen Laforet's father remarried after her mother's death, and she and her stepmother had an incompatible relationship. In her own words: "... a pesar de todas mis resistencias a creer en los cuentos de hadas, me confirmó su veracidad, comportándose como las madrastras de estos cuentos. De ella aprendí que la fantasía siempre es pobre comparada con la realidad." (Pp. 10-11)

At the end of the Civil War in 1939, Miss Laforet returned to Barcelona and enrolled in the University, concentrating her studies in the area of the humanities. She lived there until 1942, at which time she moved to Madrid and studied law at the University. She never completed either course of study.

While living in Madrid, she completed her first novel, Nada, between January and September of 1944. She wrote Nada without being able to revise it in order to meet the contest deadline for the first Nadal Prize of Literature. This prize was originated in 1944 by the publishers of the weekly review, Destino, as a memorial to one of their employees, Eugenio Nadal, who died during the same year. There were
twenty-six entries in the first competition and Miss Laforet won 5,000 pesetas. She also won the Fastenrath Prize in 1945, awarded by the Real Academia Española de la Lengua. Obviously, Nada had an extraordinary success with both the public and the critics; she became famous practically overnight. In 1957 Nada had gone through some twelve editions and had sold more than 100,000 copies.\(^2\)

In 1946 Carmen Laforet married the journalist and literary critic Manuel Cerezales. For a time he was in charge of a Spanish newspaper in Tangier. She and her husband now have three daughters and two sons.

Between her first and second novel there was an interval of seven years, during which time Miss Laforet published only a few short stories and articles. \textit{La muerta} (1947) is a collection of several of these short stories.

In 1952 appeared her second novel, \textit{La isla y los demonios}. This novel is a combination and expansion of several articles which she wrote for the magazine \textit{Destino}, and the daily newspaper \textit{Informaciones}. It was followed by a volume entitled \textit{La llamada} (1954), which contains four short novels: \textit{La llamada}, \textit{El último verano}, \textit{Un noviazgo}, and \textit{El piano}.

In 1955 she published her third novel, \textit{La mujer nueva}, which won the Premio Menorca of 200,000 pesetas. She also received the Premio Nacional de Literature Miguel de Cervantes in 1956 for this same novel. It is the story of a woman's conversion to the Catholic faith.

\(^2\)Jones, 305.
El hecho humano que motivó la temática de esta novela fue mi propia conversión (en diciembre de 1951) a la fe católica... Fe que podría suponerse que me era natural, pues fui bautizada al nacer, pero de la que jamás me volví a preocupar después de salir de la infancia, y cuyas prácticas—para mí enmhecidas y sin sentido—había dejado totalmente.3

In 1956 appeared Mis páginas mejores, a collection of articles, short stories, short novels, and chapters from several of her full-length novels which Miss Laforet considered her most significant contributions between the years 1944 and 1955.

During the next few years Miss Laforet published a travel guide entitled Gran Canaria (1961), contributed a weekly article to the daily newspaper Pueblo, and also contributed to the newspaper Ya.

In 1963 her fourth novel, La insolación was published. It was announced as the first volume of a trilogy to be entitled Tres pasos fuera del tiempo. At the present time, Miss Laforet's most immediate literary undertaking is Al volver la esquina, the second novel of this trilogy, which she hopes to publish some time during 1967.4

Soon to appear is Paralelo 35, which is now in press. It contains Miss Laforet's impressions of a trip which she made to North America.5

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5. Ibid.
MATURATION

With the necessity of choosing a unifying concept to facilitate my discussion of the novels of Carmen Laforet, I have chosen the topic of maturation—a theme common to each of the four novels which she has written.

In each instance she is recording experiences—discoveries, surprises, disillusionments—through which the central characters grow and develop. Each novel begins with a definite change, such as an enlargement or change of the environment, and the reader follows the central character in the process of transformation. The major characters are similar in that each experiences confusion and frustration periodically and seems incapable of satisfying his needs and wants. Each is attempting to achieve a rapport with his environment. Andrea (Nada) and Marta (La isla y los demonios), as adolescents, are seeking their independence: they want to escape the dominating influence of their relatives. Paulina (La mujer nueva), at the age of thirty-three, is trying to formulate a decision as to what her role in life should be—that of a wife, a mother, or a nun. Martín (La insolución), also an adolescent, needs to achieve a sense of masculinity as well as the friendship and acceptance of his peers.

In order to facilitate my discussion of this rather broad topic, one which is fundamental to human life but difficult to define, I have chosen H. A. Overstreet's definition of maturity,¹ certain elements of

which will serve as guidelines to my treatment of this theme.

Maturation is a continuous, dynamic process which every individual experiences in his own unique way. It is a human transformation; a movement and growth toward certain goals or ideals.

Overstreet lists six criteria of maturity:

(1) The human being is born ignorant and moves toward the attainment of knowledge. The important aspect of this element of maturity is not the acquisition of mere facts but the relationship which exists between knowledge and the individual's situation.

Man matures, we have noted to the extent that he gains knowledge enough to handle with competent understanding the situation in which he finds himself; and to the extent, also, that he has the habits and means of gaining further knowledge as his situation changes. (P. 169)

(2) The individual moves from irresponsibility toward responsibility. Everyone must make the transition from the dependent, protected state of childhood to adult status and responsibility, with all that this implies in terms of independence and self-directed activity.

(3) "The human being is born inarticulate." (P. 54) As he matures, he develops his ability to communicate and attempts to establish word-linkages between himself and his world so he may better express the strong uniqueness of his own human experience.

(4) Man moves toward sexual maturity. He goes through certain stages of normal development and matures "toward a specific and creative sexual relationship." (P. 58)

(5) "The human being is born self-centered." (P. 63) He moves away from native egocentricity and toward an understanding of himself as one among others in a social setting.
"The human being is born to a world of isolated particulars," (P. 68) and moves toward wholes of meaning. Man must "take into account all that is involved in a situation and tie to that 'all' both his present behaviors and his future plans and expectations." (P. 69)

At no stage in life does maturation cease. "A mature person is not one who has come to a certain level of achievement and stopped there. He is rather a maturing person--one whose linkages with life are constantly becoming stronger and richer because his attitudes are such as to encourage their growth rather than their stoppage." (P. 43)

Naturally certain criteria of maturity are more representative of one specific life stage than another. In the early childhood years, for example, the process of maturation may imply growth in the areas of self-confidence and the arts of companionship--learning to interact successfully with one's peers. In late adolescence, the individual is usually more concerned with assuming self-responsibility and breaking family ties. The mature adult may be more actively involved in confronting life. "To affirm life he must be involved, heart and soul, in the process of living. He must know what his powers are and must make them competent for life." (p. 35)

Regardless of chronological age, however, one underlying goal is usually inherent in all facets of maturation: that of attaining a harmonious relationship with one's environment. This may be achieved not only through growth and development on the part of the individual but also by a change of environmental factors. This alteration of one's environment may be the result of a conscious choice on the part of the individual or may simply be determined by factors beyond his control. Man is only free to choose within the realms of certain confinements.
As a result, he may be limited in his attempts to control external circumstances and because of this confinement, may experience feelings of frustration and/or confusion. Thus, we see man in conflict with his environment. He is in a continual state of involvement, moving toward the achievement of a harmonious relationship.

Those factors in the environment which tend to confine the central character, which limit him or at least make difficult the fulfillment of his wishes, will be termed negative influences. Likewise, those factors which either directly or indirectly assist or encourage the central character in the achievement of his goals or desires, or which simply aid in the removal of a limiting factor, will be called positive influences.

Positive and negative factors can be easily recognized in the cases of Andrea and Marta. They are obviously trying to break family ties and assume responsibility only to themselves. These influences are not easily defined in the case of Paulina, however, because her wishes and wants are not clearly defined in her own mind. Because she is in a different life stage and has not consciously made a choice as to what her situation in life will be, those factors which are influential in her decision will be dealt with on the basis of relative importance to her and the formulation of her decision, instead of in positive or negative terms.

Martín, to a greater degree than any of the other major characters, maintains a considerable amount of control over his environment. He is less the victim of external circumstances and is more in command of his situation. Thus, the terms positive and negative are not so directly applicable to his position.
Chapters I, II, III, and IV are devoted to a discussion of the theme of maturation in each of Miss Laforet's four novels: Nada, La isla y los demonios, La mujer nueva, and La insolución. Each chapter is prefaced with a short resume of the novel. Chapter V is an attempt to give a critical evaluation of Carmen Laforet's own personal development as a writer and is followed by the conclusion.
As is the case in all the novels of Carmen Laforet, *Nada* opens with an abrupt change of environment. Andrea, the protagonist, is arriving in the early morning hours in Barcelona, where she has come to enroll in the University. At the age of eighteen, she is inexperienced and sensitive, but also excited and optimistic about her future in this enchanting city.

She moves into the house on Aribau street where her relatives live, and is immediately confronted by an atmosphere of discord. The house contains a strange conglomeration of personalities living in disharmony. Tension, quarreling, and abuse are the common occurrence; trust, love, and loyalty are almost lacking. In the words of Román, Andrea’s uncle: "... no somos seres maduros, redondos, parados, como ella; sino aguas ciegas que vamos golpeando, como podemos, la tierra para salir a algo inesperado ..." (P. 103) In this nightmarish setting, Andrea feels suffocated and choked. She goes to bed on her first night in Barcelona fearful and terrified; her feelings of hope and excitement have disappeared.

Andrea becomes involved, often without wanting to, in the affairs of each of her relatives. She experiences alternate feelings of attraction and abhorrence toward each of them.

Andrea's grandmother is aware of the atmosphere of anguish which prevails in her household, but is unable to remedy or better the
situation, probably due to her lack of understanding. She has the strange habit of roaming about the house in the middle of the night. This shadowlike description contributes to her portrayal as a fleeting, unstable person. Ironically, however, the grandmother is the only member of the household who frequently displays warmth and consideration for the other members.

Román, Andrea's uncle, is a disturbed personality who takes a sadistic pleasure in tormenting the other members of his family. He pries into the personal belongings of both Angustias and Andreas and invents lies with the deliberate intention of hurting them. Andrea experiences a very unhappy Christmas day because of Román's meddling. He discovers the absence of a lace handkerchief in Andrea's belongings and accuses Gloria, his sister-in-law, of stealing it. In actuality, Andrea had given the handkerchief to her friend, Ena, as a Christmas present. Because of Roman's fabrication, an argument results; the atmosphere of discord is not what one would normally expect to find on Christmas day.

Román loves music and often invites Andrea to his room to listen to him play his violin. He is involved in a rather hazardous method of self-support—smuggling.

Juan, Andrea's other uncle, is on the one hand submissive in his dealings with Román, but on the other, brutal and cruel in the treatment of his wife, Gloria. Gloria is a rather immature and vain woman. She gambles to support her husband and leads him to believe that the money she wins is from the sale of his art work.
Angustias, Andrea's aunt, interferes with her life perhaps more than any other member of the family. She is an extremely critical woman and is constantly telling Andrea what she should and should not do. She feels she must guide and "mother" Andrea so as to protect her from the perils of the city.

Part I of *Nada* closes with the departure of Angustias; she has decided to enter a convent after an unsuccessful love affair. During Part II, Andrea seems to have a more optimistic outlook. "Por primera vez me sentía suelta y libre en la ciudad." (P. 83) Her friendship with Ena, a classmate at the University, gives her a means of escaping the intolerable situation at home. She admires Ena’s mother very much and consequently spends a great deal of time at their home, as well as with Ena and her boyfriend, Jaime.

Through Ena, Andrea becomes acquainted with some of her other classmates at the University, especially Pons, who is particularly friendly to her. Andrea is attracted by his bohemian group of friends and feels very comfortable in their carefree atmosphere. When Pons invites her to a dance at his house, she feels very flattered. After she arrives, however, she discovers that she knows very few people there and is inappropriately dressed. Andrea feels extremely uncomfortable and is ill-at-ease; her Cinderella-like dreams are quickly dissolved and converted into feelings of remorse and embarrassment.

Andrea is particularly appreciative of the other friends she has made when, later in the novel, Ena begins to avoid her. The cause of the interruption of the friendship between the two girls reverts back to the house on Aribau street, where all the major conflicts of the novel
seem to be rooted. Ena is attracted by Román, Andrea's uncle, and at the same time, wants to hurt him, since he caused her own mother a great deal of suffering during her youth. Andrea tries to warn Ena about him: "Román y los demás de allí, no tienen ningún mérito más que el de ser peores que las otras personas que tú conoces y vivir entre cosas torpes y sucias." (P. 151) However, this warning is of no avail.

In Part III we see the dramatic portrayal of the suicide of Román, the reconciliation between Ena and Andrea, and Andrea's prospects for the future. She receives a letter from Ena, whose family has moved to Madrid, inviting her to live with them. Andrea leaves Barcelona, optimistic about her future in Madrid--there she will be able to attend classes and work in the office of Ena's father.
II.

During the course of Nada we follow Andrea through a series of experiences as she attempts to satisfy her needs and wants. Discoveries, surprises, disillusionments, disappointments—all contribute to the growth and development of this central character.

One of the strongest forces in Nada through which Miss Laforet conveys feelings of limitation and oppressiveness is the house on the Calle de Aribau. Miss Laforet most ably depicts a somber atmosphere. She does not give us a mere description of physical objects but a definite feeling of sordidness by appealing to the senses—she depicts light and shadows, strange sounds, offensive odors and tastes, and an unpleasant sense of touch. For example:

Al fin se fueron, dejándome con la sombra de los muebles que la luz de la vela hinchaba llenando de palpitations y profunda vida. El hedor que se advertía en toda la casa llegó en una ráfaga más fuerte. Era un olor a porquería de gato. Sentí que me ahogaba y trepé en peligroso alpinismo sobre el respaldo de un sillón ... (P. 29)

Andrea decides to take a shower before retiring and Miss Laforet does a great deal more than simply describe the physical structure of the bathroom.

Parecía una casa de brujas aquel cuarto de baño. Las paredes tiznadas conservaban la huella de manos ganchudas, de gritos de desesperanza. Por todas partes los desconchados abrían sus bocas desdentadas rezumantes de humedad. Sobre el espejo, porque no cabía en otro sitio, habían colocado un bodegón macabro de besugos pálidos y cebollas sobre fondo negro. La locura sonreía en los grifos torcidos. (P. 28-29)

The most obvious human factor which acts as a limiting force on Andrea is Angustias. Her aunt says that it is her duty to take care of
Andrea and mother her in order to save her from a multitude of dangers. However, the fact that Angustias has never married and has no children of her own would seem to be a more accurate explanation of her efforts to dominate Andrea. Because of Angustias' authoritativeness, Andrea feels as if she were in prison. She is not rid of this domination until Part II of the novel when Angustias decides to enter a convent. The accusations which Roman, Gloria, and Juan make concerning Angustias and her love affair are a typical example of the cruel and inhuman interpersonal relations which prevail in the house on Aribau street.

Angustias' room both attracts and repels Andrea. She is instinctively repulsed simply because it belongs to Angustias, but is attracted by the cleanliness and comfort which she finds there. This discovery eventually causes her to move in when Angustias leaves, although she loses some privacy in return.

Roman is both a positive and negative influence on Andrea. She feels an intense repulsion against him because of his cruelty, but at the same time she is attracted by his music and his mysteriousness—he is probably the most intriguing character in the novel. Roman is the epitome of frustration, having failed many years before in his attempt at being a musician. This failure was due to a lack of dedication and persistence—a key deficiency in his character. However, he has developed a certain air of superiority and mystery which is perhaps a front for his inner feelings. He claims that he rules the household: "No te has dado cuenta de que yo los manejo a todos, de que dispongo de sus nervios." (P. 89)
Román enjoys keeping as distant from the family as possible, to the extent of having his room on a different floor. His room serves as an escape for Andrea, as there she is able to separate herself from the sordid environment in which she and her other relatives live.

After Andrea has become friends with Ena, Román once again is seen as a limiting factor which causes Andrea unhappiness. Her friendship with Ena is temporarily broken off when Román comes between them.

Román, who seems to have died in spirit many years ago, dies physically near the end of the novel when he commits suicide. This self-inflicted death strengthens his role as a symbol of failure and frustration.

Juan and Gloria exert lesser influences on Andrea but are important elements in the house on Aribau street. A great majority of the tensions and quarrels which create such an atmosphere of discord are caused by these two characters, especially by the cruel and brutal treatment which Gloria receives from Juan.

The merciless way in which Juan treats his wife is perhaps due to his need to prove his masculinity. In many ways he feels inferior to his brother, Román, and is submissive in his relations with him. He compensates for this lack of self-direction and self-confidence by beating his wife and thus is able to assert himself in some manner, even though it is only by a display of physical strength.

The frightening experience of the chase which Andrea becomes involved in is a result of the untruthful relationship which exists between Juan and Gloria. Even though her small son is ill, Gloria has left the house to attend to her gambling activities. Juan, intent on finding his
wife, begins searching for her blindly and Andrea is instructed by her grandmother to follow him. "Corrí en su persecución como si en ello me fuera la vida. Asustada. Viendo acercarse los faroles y las gentes a mis ojos como estampas confusas." (P. 156) The entire chase seems like a nightmare to Andrea, as if she were imagining the whole adventure.

Todo el mundo me parecía disfrazado con mal gusto y me rozaba el ruido y el olor a vino. ... Todo aquello no era más que un marco de pesadilla, irreal como todo lo externo a mi persecución. (P. 159)

One of Andrea's strongest emotions is that of rebellion caused by the diverse limiting factors in her environment. In particular, she feels that her situation would be tolerable if it weren't for the inhibiting figure of Angustias who is constantly trampling on her desires and curiosity.

Me di cuenta de que podía soportarlo todo; el frío que calaba mis ropas gastadas, la tristeza de mi absoluta miseria, el sordo horror de aquella casa sucia. Todo menos su autoridad sobre mí. Era aquello lo que me había ahogado al llegar a Bracelona. (P. 96)

Coupled with her feelings of rebellion are those of impatience and frustration because of her inability to escape.

She often experiences the pains of loneliness and solitude and desires human companionship. Until Andrea becomes friends with Ena, she lives in an atmosphere which is almost completely void of human tenderness and friendship.

Andrea is very often disillusioned after her arrival in Barcelona when what she encounters does not live up to her expectations. She came to Barcelona full of dreams of independence. However, these dreams never become reality and are soon disintegrated due to the influence of Angustias and Andrea's isolation in the house on Aribau street.
Ena and Jaime seem to enjoy each other's company very much and Andrea shares much of their happiness. She gains a sense of exaltation by simply being with them. However, when Ena becomes involved with Román, she practically ignores Jaime and displays a great deal of indifference toward her former boyfriend. Andrea is extremely disillusioned; she feels that Ena is betraying Jaime and thus can no longer believe in the beauty and truth of human emotions.

Perhaps Andrea's greatest disillusionment takes place at the dance at Pons's house. Before going, Andrea pictures herself as the "belle of the ball," the center of attraction. However, after she arrives, she feels terribly self-conscious and ill at ease. She knows no one except Pons and feels inappropriately dressed.

She manages to excuse herself and leaves, terribly disappointed and humiliated. Unable to restrain her emotions any longer, Andrea bursts into tears while resting on a bench on her way home.

Andrea also experiences anguish, confusion, and frustration because life is a puzzle to her. She desperately wants to satisfy her longings, but often cannot even define them. In her confusion she asks herself: "¿Quién puede entender los mil hilos que unen las almas de los hombres y el alcance de las palabras?" (P. 188) She says that some people are born to live, and others merely to look at life. She feels she is playing the small and useless role of a spectator; that it
is impossible to free herself from this confinement. She often wishes to have new horizons opened for her and to be carried away by some unknown force.

The Spanish Civil War did not affect Andrea directly, as she spent the greater part of it in a "colegio de monjas." However, her relatives were directly involved and through Andrea's relations with them, we can feel its negative results. Román and Juan both served in the war and Gloria's child was born during one of the battles. She blames the war for the fact that she has to live on Aribau street. (She was separated from Juan during the war and he put Román in charge of taking her to Barcelona.) Augustias believes that the grandmother's sufferings during the war caused her mind to deteriorate. She seems to be living in the past as she often speaks of her sons and their role in the civil war.

One cannot help feeling that the spiritual void and confusion which surrounds these characters is representative of the post-civil war period in Spain. The younger generation, especially, blames its elders for its present state of bewilderment. The sign which Andrea reads at one of the gatherings of her bohemian friends is proof of their feelings: "Demos gracias al cielo de que valemos infinitamente más que nuestros antepasados." (P. 146) The younger generation is questioning attitudes long accepted by Spaniards and is skeptical of those who think they know all the answers. Ena exemplifies this attitude perfectly when she becomes so intrigued by Román and Andrea's other relatives. She sees them as original, sensitive people who have a distinct viewpoint and compares them with her family which seems to be too normal and commonplace.
The strongest positive force which influences Andrea is Ena. Through her, Andrea makes pleasing discoveries and doors to new opportunities are opened for her. She experiences the joys of friendship and a feeling of contentment because someone cares about her. Andrea, in her own words, says that her life has received "chorros de luz" (P. 129) from Eina. Her relationship with Eina gives her a warm feeling of companionship and, perhaps more important, she has someone with whom she can share and in whom she can confide.

Andrea is received warmly by Eina's family and spends a great deal of time at her friend's home. This new friendship serves as an escape for Andrea, a means of avoiding her own relatives. This, coupled with the departure of Angustias, leaves Andrea feeling optimistic, happy, and fairly satisfied with her situation until her friendship with Eina is interrupted. Eina's invitation to come to Madrid at the end of the novel is an important opportunity for Andrea; finally new horizons are being opened for her.

It is through Eina that Andrea becomes acquainted with some of her other classmates at the University. She realizes that only her peers, those human beings of her own generation, can offer her the help she needs. Pons is especially thoughtful; he loans her his books and invites her to the dance at his house.

Through these relationships with her peers, Andrea discovers the meaning of an encompassing friendship—the joy and happiness of giving and receiving as well as the disappointments involved.

She also makes a series of other discoveries. Andrea develops a deep appreciation of music both through Román and Eina's mother.
Roman impresses her as a marvelous and unique artist. Her soul receives his music as arid land receives rain. Roman has recorded his own sadness and has transformed it into a beautiful musical expression. His music often gives Andrea the clear impression of death and decomposition, and his own creation, the song of Xochipilli, seems to indicate that he may commit suicide some day. Xochipilli is the Aztec God of games and flowers who in ancient times received offerings of human hearts. When Ena's mother sings and plays the piano, Andrea says that her voice awakens her hidden emotions and unleashes all of the romanticism of her eighteen years.

Andrea discovers new foods and flavors which she had never before tasted—dried fruit, toasted almonds, peanuts. She also tries to manage some of her own economic affairs and spends money frivolously. She buys roses for Ena's mother, expensive perfume and soap, and sometimes eats in a restaurant. By the end of the month her funds are usually depleted and she consequently must go without food. She often experiences strange sensations and almost becomes hysterical due to her lack of nourishment; her extreme hunger accounts for her heightened sensitivities.

Andrea discovers the beauty of the cathedral in Barcelona which she often visits:

La catedral se levantaba con una armonía severa, estilizada en formas casi vegetales, hasta la altura del limpio cielo mediterráneo. Una paz, una imponente claridad, se derramaba de la arquitectura maravillosa. (P. 109)

Andrea experiences the beauties of nature and often identifies them with her feelings of happiness. At times she is almost fearful of
nature because of the tremendous feelings of power and magnificence which it holds for her and which cause her to feel small and insignificant.

Andrea shares the happiness of the two young lovers, Ena and Jaime, and through her own relationship with Pons her womanly instincts are awakened. She wants to be loved, praised, and admired. She asks herself if perhaps the whole meaning of life for a woman consists only in being discovered, as she hopes Pons will discover her.

Andrea also makes other minor discoveries: through her relations with Román she realizes that the feelings of interest and esteem for another person do not necessarily go hand in hand. As is true of her relationship with Román, one can be interested in and curious about another person but in no sense esteem and respect his beliefs and way of life. She also says that one of the few things which she is capable of understanding wholly is poverty. One only has to look at the economic situation of Andrea, her family, and her friends to find proof of this.

The novel ends on an optimistic note, much in the same way that it began. During the course of one year, we have followed Andrea in her adventures and discoveries while living in Barcelona. She is leaving without actually finding what she had vaguely hoped for—life in its fullness, happiness, profound interest, love, etc. In her own words, "De la casa de Aribau, no me llevaba nada." (P. 192) However, one can't help but believe that Andrea has developed and matured. Although she has no specific answers close at hand, she is leaving the house on Aribau street with more than "nothing"—she acquired a wealth of human experience.
CHAPTER II

LA ISLA Y LOS DEMONIOS

I

La isla y los demonios takes place during the years 1938-1939 on Gran Canaria, one of the Canary Islands. When the novel opens, an addition to the present environment of Marta Camino is taking place. She is waiting on the pier on the outskirts of Las Palmas with her brother and sister-in-law, José and Pino. They have come to meet relatives who are arriving from Spain.

Marta, at the age of sixteen, is naive and inexperienced. During the course of the novel she makes various discoveries as she encounters new experiences, and very often becomes disillusioned.

Marta's father died several years prior to this time and her mother is mentally ill. For these reasons she is living with her brother and his wife. José is a serious person and is quite authoritative in his dealings with other people. His wife, Pino, is rather immature and self-centered. She is emotionally unstable and very often launches into fits of crying, floundering in her self-pity.

Marta has dreamed about the arrival of her relatives for two months and consequently has many preconceived notions as to what her two aunts, Honesta and Matilde, her uncle Daniel, and their friend Pablo will be like. They are fleeing Spain because of the Civil War and are hoping to find refuge in Las Palmas.

Pablo, who is an artist, perhaps plays a more important role in the life of Marta than any other character in the novel. In the
beginning Marta respects and admires Pablo: however her feelings for him soon become much more passionate. She falls in love with Pablo, despite the fact that he is several years older than she. Pablo develops a meaningful friendship with Marta but cannot possibly conceive of falling in love with her. As a result, a great portion of the novel is concerned with Marta's efforts to resolve this conflict. She cannot rationally control her emotions and consequently is in an anguished state of mind a great deal of the time.

Vicenta, one of the maids in José's home, is perhaps the most mysterious character in the novel. She seems to have a sixth sense about what will happen in the future and makes quite accurate forecasts. In the latter part of the novel, Teresa, Marta's mother, dies. Vicenta was extremely close to Teresa before her illness and predicts that her death will occur. She accuses Pino of poisoning Teresa, but no proof is ever given of this.

Sixto, one of Marta's friends, is the same age as she and finds her quite attractive. He functions primarily as a companion for Marta and is a replacement for Pablo when she is unable to see him.

One of Marta's most intense wishes is to leave Las Palmas. She would like to go to Madrid to study, and someday visit other countries. Her family is completely opposed to this proposal, however. She tries to make arrangements on her own to escape but has difficulty in obtaining her passport, as means of transportation, etc. Finally near the end of the novel and after the death of Teresa, José grants his permission. At last Marta will be able to fulfill her dream. She is excited about leaving the island and optimistic about the future which lies ahead of her in a completely new environment.
When *La isla y los demonios* opens, Miss Laforet immediately sets the tone for the theme of the novel—the awakening of an adolescent, the maturation of Marta. She describes Marta as infantile and insignificant in her own eyes, as feeling suddenly timid after having dreamed about the arrival of her relatives for two months.

The strongest limiting factors which seem to influence Marta throughout the novel are human beings. José, her brother, is the most authoritative person of those with whom Marta has contact. Since Marta's mother is confined to her room because of her illness, José feels that it is his duty to assume a parental role with Marta. He is similar to Angustias in *Nada*: he frequently tells Marta what to do and makes decisions for her which she herself is capable of making. We see an example of this in the very first scene of the novel—José warns Marta not to stand too close to the edge of the pier. In José's own words, when talking to Daniel: "Tú debieras vigilar a las mujeres de tu casa, como yo a las de la mía, con mano firme." (P. 417)

When Marta decides that she wants to leave the island when the war ends and go to Madrid to study, José immediately expresses his disapproval. Marta feels that José constantly denies her the realization of even her smallest dream.

One of the cruelest things which José does is confining Marta to the house because of her relations with Sixto. He forbids her to attend any more classes even though it is almost time for her examinations. José punishes her because he believes that Marta intends to marry Sixto, which is actually one of the things farthest from Marta's mind. She is
confined to the house for fifteen days and as a result becomes very nervous and unhappy. The most unbearable part of her confinement is the obligation which is forced on her to sit every afternoon with Pino and sew.

Finally, she feels she can stand no more and tells José that if he keeps her confined any longer, without letting her even attend classes, she will run away with Sixto and marry him anyway. José replies that when the time comes, he will assume the responsibility of choosing her novio. After Marta promises to never see Sixto again, José decides that she can return to the Instituto.

At times José gets so violent that he actually harms Marta bodily:

José colgó el teléfono y cogió a Marta por la nuca, con unos dedos duros. A la muchacha hizo el efecto de que iba a ahogarla. Sólo la empujaba hacia fuera de la cocina; pero la empujaba rabiosamente. (P. 513)

Near the end of the novel, after Teresa's death, Marta's brother ceases to be such a restraining influence on her life. Don Juan, who is Teresa's doctor and also a family friend, helps José realize how much Marta has suffered because of his domination and that he has been too concerned with what he feels are his responsibilities to Teresa and to Marta, and thus has neglected his wife Pino. Don Juan tells him that he should allow Marta to leave the island and José finally takes his advice.

Marta has a strong dislike for Pino and the way she lives. She seems to be too concerned with small, domestic problems and material comforts which are not important to Marta. Marta sees the necessity of escaping the island so that her life won't end up like Pino's--mediocre,
sad, and full of boredom.

As an individual, Pino often seems to be self-centered and have a great deal of self-pity. Her role as a negative factor in the life of Marta is not so much one of domination as is José's, but she is still a relatively important character in the novel. The unpleasant atmosphere in Marta's home is frequently due to the quarrels between Pino and José. She is an emotionally unstable person and in one instance even goes so far as to throw a knife at Marta in a violent rage.

Marta suffers a disillusionment with respect to her three relatives who arrive from Spain—Honesta, Matilde, and Daniel. She is hoping to encounter creative, unusual people who are concerned with the spirit and soul. Instead she finds them to be rather commonplace, concerned with social conventions and their own economic well-being. Matilde, in particular, is a supporter of "causes" and believes in self-sacrifice for the common good of society. Marta feels compelled to contend with people who aren't important to her.

As a character in *La isla y los demonios*, Vicenta is intriguing because of her mysteriousness. In this respect she is similar to Román in *Nada*. She has very little contact with Marta, however, and because of this seems to lose some of the vitality and importance which Miss Laforet could have allocated to her in the novel. During the few occasions when she does deal with Marta, however, she reveals her keen insight. Vicenta is aware of Marta's conflict with her environment and offers her sound advice. "Tí deberías estar en tu puesto, que ya eres grande. Echarle el ojo a todo, pedir cuentas de todo lo tuyo. Echarlos a ellos, desde que puedas." (P. 483)
Although Marta is disillusioned after the arrival of her three relatives, her reaction to Pablo is of a different nature. He can be termed a positive factor with respect to the influence he has on Marta. She equates spiritual qualities with Pablo and feels he is in essence the kind of person she likes to associate with--one who is especially creative and original and to whom social conventions are unimportant. His questions touch her intimately and she feels that in no way can she deceive him. Marta says that Pablo couldn't possibly have that vanity of men which so often obscures and dims the spontaneity of relations between the sexes.

Pablo, in his youth, escaped from his home and left behind comforts and conveniences in order to know the "inquieta y áspera maravilla del mundo." (P. 447) Marta sees this type of adventure as very appealing and wants quite naturally to do the same thing.

Pablo takes a very personal interest in Marta, something to which she has previously been unaccustomed. He is interested in the verses she has written about the devils of the island and even draws her a picture of his concept of them.

Marta is envious of the fact that Pablo is a free man, that he can come and go as he pleases. She, in turn, yearns for her own freedom.

From time to time Pablo offers some of his philosophical beliefs to Marta. Sometimes she is in agreement with him but in other instances she seems incapable of achieving a full understanding. She quite openly disagrees with his concept of a woman's role in marriage. Pablo feels that a woman should do all she can so that her husband may live according
to his own wishes. Marta hears many theories of life from Pablo, the most important of them being his belief that artistic creativity is the only road to personal salvation. It is the only consoling escape available from the hells of life. He tells her that man's worst defect is not being honest with himself.

Pablo advises Marta never to leave the island: "quédate quieta entre tus calles y tus campos." (P. 474) She is young, naive and sensitive; perhaps he wants to protect her from experiencing the evils he has encountered. He feels possessed by a demon which he hopes will never catch Marta.

Marta acquires strong feelings of admiration and friendship for Pablo and frequently believes she is in love with him. Her heartbeat quickens when his name is mentioned and she feels a great deal of tenderness for him. On one occasion Pablo reveals himself deeply and confides to Marta his feelings for his wife who is still in Spain. Pablo believed that it was impossible to be a good husband and still have the necessary time to devote to his art, and consequently left her behind when he came to the Canary Islands. Marta becomes aware of how deeply Pablo loves his wife; she believes he is an unusually sensitive person and feels especially important for having shared his intimate thoughts with him.

At one point Pablo informs Marta that he has promised someone, whose identity he won't reveal, that he won't see her again because it is damaging to her reputation to be seen so much with a man of his age. She is quite naturally heart-broken and disappointed, and her immediate reaction is a vengeful desire to hurt Pablo in return. Because of this incident Marta suffers a great deal. At times she feels desperate
because of her intensely passionate longing to see Pablo. She believes there are two Martas in her life—one which is rational and mature and one which is childish and emotional where Pablo is concerned. She feels ashamed because she needs him so desperately and can't understand why this feeling isn't mutual. He becomes an obsession with her.

Marta is so strongly attracted to Pablo because of his depth of perception and his ability to comprehend what is really important in her eyes. She feels she must find him and communicate with him for the last time before he leaves the island and so goes to the village where he is staying. She feels she must explain to Pablo her relationship with Sixto and must ask his help in escaping. He refuses to take part in her preparations to leave the island, but does help her avoid being punished by José because she has come to the village to see him. Pablo reminds Marta that nothing is impossible to attain if one wants it badly enough.

Near the end of the novel, before her departure from the island, Marta reflects on her relationship with Pablo. She feels she loves Pablo and can never again care about anyone else as deeply or as strongly. She believes she has learned many things about life from being in love—especially how easily one can become emotionally involved and lose his rational perspective.

Marta's acquaintance with Sixto is a fairly influential experience in her life. She is quite preoccupied and distant when Sixto interrupts her thoughts. At first she is irritated by his presence but at the same time is consoled because he likes her. He helps to remove her obsession with Pablo and they share much happiness together. Sixto
indirectly becomes a negative factor in her life when José confines Marta to her house because of her relationship with him.

The thoughts and opinions of her peers play an important role in the maturation of Marta—she feels much more united to them than she does to her family. Her group of friends all enjoy reading and have a common adoration for any type of art. Marta feels that her friends are extraordinary and unusual. Among them courage and naturalness are the norms to follow, and many times they criticize the hypocrisy of other generations.

Thus far, the important characters in La isla y los demonios have been dealt with from the viewpoint of how they influence Marta as she matures and grows. In addition, Marta makes a series of discoveries in this process of awakening and comes in contact with new emotions and ideas.

One of Marta's most important experiences throughout the novel is her discovery of Nature. The island imparts a feeling of warmth to her, as if something had flowered inside her, and the sea gives her an impression of serenity and sadness. At other times she feels insignificant before the tremendous power, grandeur, and variety of Nature. "Parecía imposible que una isla tan pequeña guardara tan diferentes paisajes en su redondo interior, climas diferentes entre sí, como las almas de los hombres son diferentes unas de otras." (P. 480)

Marta is fascinated by the idea of creativity and has a special place in her attic where she goes to write. She writes legends about the old Canary god, Alcorah, who created the seven islands and poems about devils dancing in the moonlight.
Marta is also intrigued with the idea of being a bohemian or vagabond. She likes to wander around the streets and can't stand being forced to stay at home. She wants to visit Madrid and also see other lands.

Marta, like Andrea, has strong desires and urges, many of which have been mentioned, but in some instances has trouble identifying exactly what she is looking for and what she wants.

Marta discovers her own womanly charms and learns to use them to her own advantage. She enjoys flirting with one of the soldiers at a party and in one instance is able to persuade a young clerk to grant her a passport without the proper authorization.

Marta comes to believe that life for a woman is simply love. When she is with Pablo, the fulfillment of her wants seems simple in her own eyes:

> Sólo deseaba ser como esta noche una criatura solitaria en el mundo sin más compañía que la de un amigo elegido por su alma, sin bienes que la ataran ni la entorpecieran. (P. 545)

Through her group of friends and also through Pablo, Marta discovers the joy of a meaningful friendship, as well as some of the disappointments which are involved. Many times she feels the need to confide in someone: "Tenía que decírselo a alguien porque, si no, pensaba que se iba a ahogar." (P. 523) She wishes she had a friend to help her escape and after her separation from Pablo, yearns to see him because she feels he is the only person who really understands her.

From time to time Marta experiences a variety of emotions which she usually attempts to control, and often searches for meaning in them. Crying is one of the most puzzling things she reflects upon.
At first it seems very meaningless to her; later she is almost ashamed because she doesn't cry immediately when she learns of her mother's death. (In fact she tends to view it as an obstacle to her escape.) She finally feels consoled when crying:

> No podia acabar aquel llanto. Sentia en él un salvaje consuelo; tambien dulzura, felicidad, orgullo. (P. 477)
> Le parecio, por primera vez en su vida, que hay algo muy hermoso en el llanto. (P. 478)

Very often Marta is offended by the actions of her relatives and is tempted to seek revenge. She realizes that she is self-centered much of the time but knows that she still loves her relatives and is concerned with their welfare. She experiences loneliness and pities herself because her family seems to ignore her wishes so much of the time. "Ella estaba absolutamente sola con Dios." (P. 411)

She experiences anguish and frustration because she feels so helpless in her situation. She resents the control people have over her and has an intense desire to be free. When she actually tries on her own to make arrangements to escape, however, she feels inadequate. "Para algunas cosas de la vida se sentia incapaz, absurda, debil." (P. 518)

At the same time a physical blow from Jose arouses in Marta the instinct of self-defense. She wants desperately to fight back and believes that no one can ever conquer her. Marta is sometimes envious and displays jealousy when she sees Pablo with Honesta. She is often superstitious, and when she experiences a full sense of happiness, she is immediately afraid that destiny has some harm in store for her.

The thought of death quite naturally makes her fearful and timorous.
Marta believes that she suffers mentally a great deal but that she understands the utility of grief and sorrow—she says it is like an injection of morphine which calms the body. Pablo says she is too young to realize the importance of forgetting.

One of the adjectives which most accurately depicts Marta is curious. She feels possessed by a desire to learn and know more, to experience. Perhaps the strongest element in her feelings of curiosity is the uncertainty involved—the impossibility of knowing what lies ahead when she leaves the island.

Marta, like most adolescents considers herself unique in her sentiments. It seems impossible to her that other people could ever experience emotions such as hers. She oscillates between feelings of fear and timidity and those of confidence and boldness. She is surprisingly confident for the most part when she dreams about leaving the island.

Marta experiences a full, deep sense of happiness from a variety of things—swimming in the ocean, being with Pablo, thinking about escaping, etc. At the same time, however, she is skeptical as to how meaningful these feelings are because of her superstitious fear that something will destroy this happiness.

Marta is enchanted by new things, exemplified by an instance when she enters a cafetucho:

No sabía por qué tenía para ella aquel ambiente un encanto tan fascinador. Quizá fuese únicamente porque era nuevo, distinto de todo lo que la niña había tenido siempre por costumbre. (P. 461)

She also discovers she likes drinking wine and the comforting effect she receives from it.
Very often Marta creates her own fantasy world. She does this to a large extent when her relatives from Spain arrive. She has led her friends to believe that Daniel, Honesta, and Matilde are artistic, creative people. In actuality, these artistic tendencies are merely hobbies or incidental interests.

From time to time, especially in the beginning of the novel, Miss Laforet depicts Marta as behaving in a rather infantile way. Her facial expressions, the manner in which she reacts to certain situations, the way she dresses, etc., are all indicative of a young, inexperienced person. Marta wants to act and live in a more responsible, mature manner, but doesn't know exactly how to acquire this capability. Consequently she often feels embarrassed. She looks back to her childhood days and sees them as a carefree, happy period in her life. "Entonces no tenía preocupaciones. No creía necesario para ser feliz salir de la isla y conocer gentes distintas, parecidas a los complicados héroes de las novelas." (P 489-490) Because of her experiences and discoveries, however, Marta begins to realize that she is learning and maturing and she gradually feels more capable and confident in dealing with her problems.

Near the end of the novel, before Marta learns that José has decided to allow her to leave the island, she shows a great deal of self-pity and believes she has suffered deeply. She feels as if she has been fleeing from life in order to reach an ideal and upon approaching it she sees herself entangled in restraining circumstances. She says that never again can she be the blind and happy creature of before, after having been bitten by the devils. Quite clearly she is still
suffering from her need to be with Pablo.

Time is a natural healer however, and Marta begins to see life with a broader scope when José tells her she may leave the island. She becomes so involved in her preparations that she almost obliterates Pablo from her mind.

The novel ends much in the same way that it began—optimistically. Marta feels destined to "correr el mundo" and believes that new horizons will be opened for her when she leaves the island. She says she is not one of those people who look backward and she burns her diary without regret. There she had recorded her inner feelings--her love for Pablo. She doesn't want to be burdened with past memories and feels that the girl who wrote those pages is no longer she. "Aquello era, verdaderamente convertir en cenizas su adolescencia." (P. 634)

She also decides to burn her precious legends of Alcorah. She realizes that she won't need them to remember the beauty of the island, for no matter where she goes her feeling for the island will always be with her. "Todos aquellos caminos, hartos de soportar el peso de sus sandalias, estaban dentro de su alma." (P. 635)

Superstition has it that demons dwell on this Canary Island but Marta concludes that devils are found in all parts of the world and that they enter into the hearts of all men. She believes they are the seven capital sins.

Marta could very well be viewed as an Andrea in her younger years. We first see her as naive, optimistic, and full of illusions. She is restless, in love with certain ideals, and desires her independence. She encounters an immediate shock with reality and after a series of
experiences and discoveries, Marta (like Andrea) feels she has matured and grown. She has acquired a wealth of knowledge and experience and is eager to meet her next situation in life.
La mujer nueva opens with the fleeing of Paulina Goya, 33, from the Villa de Robre, a fictitious village located in the province of León. Miss Laforet immediately depicts the sense of preoccupation in Paulina's mind—she appears distracted, oblivious to her surroundings. "Paulina no se fijaba dónde ponía los pies, bajaba la cuesta muy de prisa. No sentía más que los golpes, pesados también, de su corazón." (P. 1021)

Paulina is about to take the train to Ponferrada, and from there the Galicia express to Madrid, leaving behind her husband, Eulogio, and her son, Miguel, who is only ten years old. She will not consent to Eugolio's asking his second cousin, Antonio Nives, to drive her to Ponferrada. It seems strange that she is so strongly opposed to this suggestion until we learn that Paulina is in love with Antonio. For this reason, she is fleeing the Villa de Robre without even saying goodbye to her son. Eulogio is convinced that absolutely nothing can prevent Paulina from doing what she wants and consequently does not try to stop her.

Eulogio is a stocky young man with broad shoulders, blond hair and blue eyes. He is a member of the Nives family, important cattle owners in the Robre valley. He was educated to live in the Villa de Robre—to run his father's cheese and butter factory, and to take care of his land. He holds the title of industrial engineer.
Antonio is tall and thin, with pensive brown eyes; he is 25 years old. He is perhaps the richest (he inherited his fortune when his mother died at his birth) but the least characteristic of all the Nives. He is a nervous individual and claims to be an artist—he devotes a great deal of time to writing poetry but never seems to actually produce any results. Antonio is very much in love with Paulina and is practically hysterical upon discovering that she has disappeared from the Villa de Robre without even mentioning her plans to him.

Después de estar absolutamente seguro de ser su dueño en cuerpo y alma, después de haber llegado hasta a una hartura de este sentimiento... después de todo esto, Paulina había cogido su maleta, sin una palabra de aviso, sin una ruptura definitiva, sin una amenaza previa, y desaparecía. (P. 1049)

Through flashbacks, Miss Laforet gives background information necessary for a more vivid comprehension of the present situation of these three characters.

The relationship between Paulina and Eulogio was very warm and harmonious during the first months of their marriage. In Paulina's eyes an amazing magnetism existed between them; never before had she felt such a strong physical passion for a man. Eulogio's parents had expected him to choose a wealthy woman from the upper class. Because of this she was received very coldly in Eulogio's home, until she became better acquainted with his relatives.

During the Civil War, Eulogio was forced to flee from Spain and went to Central America, leaving Paulina behind in Madrid. Because of the activities he was supposedly involved in, Paulina was denounced and forced to go to jail, where her first child was born. After her release Paulina stayed in Madrid, patiently awaiting the return of her husband.
During this period of separation, life seemed to Paulina to be terribly empty and absurd. Eulogio was her security and her happiness; he was her only reason for existing.

Antonio had fallen in love with Paulina as a boy—a typical adolescent in love with an older woman (she was eight years older than he). During the time that Paulina was living in Madrid waiting for Eulogio to return, Antonio was living in Barcelona and made several trips to Madrid in order to visit her. Because of her belief that a woman could only be in love once during her lifetime, Paulina made no attempt to hide her lack of romantic interest in Antonio. He finally married a childhood friend, and Eulogio returned from America, received with open arms by Paulina.

After Eulogio's return, he and Paulina could not renew the atmosphere of warmth and love which had once existed between them. They began to experience a very unpleasant period in their marriage—Eulogio became easily irritated and reproached Paulina for the most unimportant things; in many ways he tried to change her. Eulogio finally decided that they should go to Villa de Robre to live, and here Paulina again encountered Antonio. This time, however, she viewed her dealings with Antonio from a different perspective after her recent disillusionment with Eulogio. They fell in love and it is at this point that the action of the novel commences.

Paulina is torn by feelings of guilt because of her secret relationship with Antonio and questions what her own marital obligations to Eulogio should be. Antonio's wife, Rita, is very sick with leukemia, which further troubles her conscience. After two months of torment, anguish, and confusion, Paulina feels she can no longer live with herself and flees.
While Paulina is on the train to Ponferrada, she is unable to think of anything or anybody except Antonio. She yearns deeply to know exactly how important she is to Antonio, and when she arrives at Ponferrada, much to her surprise he is there to meet her. Although he begs her to stay and she cannot help but feel secure while she is in his company, she continues her journey alone to Madrid, wanting to liberate herself from the confining circumstances which exist in the Villa de Robre and thus have a chance to formulate her decision. Although she believes that her affection for Eulogio is dead, she still cannot continue deceiving Rita day by day.

Blanca, Antonio's mother-in-law, comes to assume major importance as the novel progresses. At the end of Part I we learn that she is the only person who is aware of the relationship which exists between Paulina and Antonio. Blanca is a very warm and generous person and is extremely religious, "una beata." In this latter role she exercises an important influence over Paulina and prays for Paulina's religious illumination.

Part I of La mujer nueva, then deals with the presentation of the conflict within Paulina. A married woman in love with another man who is also a relative, she is struggling within herself to control this passion. Her sense of moral conduct and feelings of guilt torment her and quite naturally she doesn't know where to turn.

During Part II, while Paulina is on the train traveling to Madrid, she experiences a spiritual awakening—a religious transformation. She discovers the Love of God, an immense blaze of goodness and happiness and feels that for the first time in her life she has experienced the meaning of joy.
Como si un ángel la hubiese agarrado por los cabellos y la hubiese arrebatado hasta el límite de sus horizontes pequeños de siempre, y hubiese abierto aquellos horizontes, desgarrándolos y enseñándole un abismo, una dimensión de luz que jamás hubiera sospechado...

... La dimensión de la vida que no se encierra en el tiempo ni en el espacio y que es la dorada, la arrebatada, la asombrosa, inmensa dimensión del Gozo. El porqué del Universo. La Gloria de Dios. El Gozo. (P. 1135)

Part III, which takes place after Paulina has arrived in Madrid, still revolves around her inner conflicts. Although she hasn't lost her new faith, she is very distant from it. No longer does she view her religious beliefs with such supernatural clarity. Instead she feels forsaken by God and is unable to solve the profound mystery of religion or grasp its true meaning. Paulina, tossed about in her thoughts and her attempts to solve her conflicts, spends some time in a convent where she is very impressed by the atmosphere of happiness which prevails, seriously considers becoming a monja carmelita, spends many hours reading only religious books, becomes known as a beata in her neighborhood, and makes the acquaintance of Padre Gonzalez, a Catholic priest who is a friend of Blanca. She discusses with him the possibility of becoming a member of the Women of Catholic Action, who help people whom neither the Church nor State can reach in the hopes that someone may discover Christ through their efforts. She feels a very deep desire for atonement and also a strong hope of entering into a definite task where she can readily apply her desire for religious perfection.

In Madrid, Paulina is visited by both Antonio and Eulogio, which only confuses her more. She feels obliged to risk the loss of Antonio's affection and attempts to explain her religious experience to him, but he can only call her a religious fanatic.
Matters are further complicated when Rita dies and Antonio is thus freed from his marital obligations. Also, Eulogio tells Paulina that their marriage ceremony was never legally registered, so she is actually free to marry Antonio if she wishes. Paulina finally decides that she will not marry Antonio and that they can not continue seeing each other. In her own mind, she feels she is choosing between finding the happiness of God (the only real happiness which she believes to exist) and simply experiencing "la felicidad de la tierra." (P. 1283)

The novel ends with the final decision of Paulina: she will never go into a convent as long as Miguel needs her. She feels that she is finally reaching that comprehension for which she asked God so many times, and that she now understands the meaning of a Catholic marriage: it is not only a contract, but also a holy sacrament. She and Eulogio will marry again, this time secretly, and will live in Las Duras, a small village in the province of León. Paulina experiences a great peace of mind; she has finally resolved her conflict and has found her purpose in life.
"Man matures . . . to the extent that he gains knowledge enough to handle with competent understanding the situation in which he finds himself; and to the extent, also, that he has the habits and means of gaining further knowledge as his situation changes." Although Paulina Goya is thirty-three years of age, she is very much involved in the process of maturation. She is consciously trying to find her road in life and is attempting to handle competently her present situation.

Because Paulina is older and is in a different life-stage than the other major characters in the novels of Carmen Laforet, the external circumstances which confront her are of a different nature. She is not so much the victim of inhibiting forces, but instead is in the position of consciously making a choice. She is concerned with the moral and religious implications of her decision and is relatively in control of the external factors of her environment.

The results of the Civil War are perhaps the only major limiting factor in the background of Paulina's environment. Through flashbacks Miss Laforet depicts the suffering which the war caused Paulina and her relatives. The terrible execution of Paulina's father occurred near the beginning of the Civil War and in one instance Paulina was grazed by a bullet, although fortunately she was not injured. After Eulogio was forced to leave Spain, Paulina endured the agonizing experience of having

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her first child while in prison, where she was forced to remain until Eulogio's mother paid to have her released. The terrible suffering which these people experienced can perhaps partially explain the seriousness of purpose which exists in the novel. A carefree attitude is rarely found and economic concerns are often of major importance.

The element of Nature does not play a particularly important role in La mujer nueva in comparison with Miss Laforet's other novels. However, it does serve as a point of conflict between Paulina and Eulogio. Paulina does not appreciate the countryside and says that she prefers the city--its agitation, its intellectual preoccupations, its intense and varied way of life. She cannot feel at home in the environment of Villa de Robre. Eulogio, on the contrary, enjoys being close to Nature; he spent many summers as a boy in Las Duras, "una aldea misérrima, sin comunicaciones, en la gran región de bosques del linde de León con Galicia y Asturias." (P. 1036)

When Paulina is on the train, however, and experiences her religious awakening, she feels mysteriously close to God and suddenly develops a deep appreciation for Nature and its diverse elements of beauty. She imagines the sweet notes of birds and the freshness of the early morning hours, the solitude of tall snow-covered mountains, the warm waters of the sea, etc. This appreciation for Nature, which Paulina has suddenly acquired, affects her final decision.

As a young girl, Paulina had had an intense phobia against the Church. She related religious feelings to dark colors, filthy smells and sickly flesh--pale because it was always covered with heavy clothes and thus deprived of the warmth of the sun. When she grew older she simply
stopped believing in all the religious dogma that older people had previously tried to instill in her mind.

Para Paulina, la iglesia llegó a ser la escusa de todos los males de la patria, de todos los gamberrismos de los hombres, a los que, según le parecía, no exigía nunca nada; algo viejo, corrompido y malo, contra lo cual su juventud quería luchar. (P. 1077)

After Paulina's revelation, however, her thoughts and beliefs on religion are of a completely different nature. She feels as if the Love of God has awakened her human soul; that she is fully achieving, for the first time in her life, a pure and simple comprehension of God. She realizes that the tremendous feeling which has flowered inside her could take place within any human being; it is a force much stronger and much more alive than the attraction which exists between the two sexes. Paulina turns to God many times and asks him what He wants from her. She spends many hours examining her conscience and discovers how little her parents had ever taught her about the profound meaning of religion. Very often it seems to her that only a lack of intelligence had kept her from believing before. She feels now that she can finally understand what has been and what is the function of the Church. Padre González warns her that the time will come when she will doubt her religious beliefs; that there will be the moment when God will test her faith. His predictions come true very shortly.

During the time that Paulina is doubting her faith, she experiences intense feelings of insecurity and unsureness, particularly exemplified by the following incident. Julián, the son of one of Paulina's friends in Madrid, is working in the factory of don Paco. He obtained the job on the recommendation of Paulina. Julián attempts to
steal some jewels from don Paco, but his attempted robbery turns into murder when he kills don Paco's wife. Paulina is extremely affected by this incident and doesn't understand how God could permit it to happen. She is terribly disillusioned and confides in Blanca, who happens to be in Madrid at the time. Blanca advises her to ask for God's help and blames all Christians for the murder which Julián has committed. She believes that it is the obligation of every Christian to show God to others, and says that Julian has been neglected because no one has attempted to help him find God.

Throughout the novel, we see gradual change in Paulina's concept of her responsibilities to her son. In the beginning, she is so concerned with fleeing the Villa de Robre that she can't even say good-by to Miguel. She thinks a separation from him is better than forcing him to live with two parents who don't love each other and are incompatible. However, Paulina comes to realize the important task which God put in her hands upon giving her Miguel. One aspect of maturity is "one's readiness to accept the status and responsibilities demanded of adults in the community. This implies a willingness and readiness to accept children and make them truly welcomed members of the family." Padre González discourages Paulina from becoming a nun and tells her that she must find God in the life which He has given her. He reminds her that she has other obligations to assume.

Paulina is most accurately described as a dynamic character. At the outset, she appears impulsive, as it only takes her an hour to decide

to flee the Villa de Robre. However, the novel ends with the logical, well-thought-out decision which she makes. In the beginning she is involved in her own problems and disregards the welfare of Miguel. We see her as she gradually becomes aware of her responsibilities to her son.

Formerly, Paulina could not accept life in the countryside, believing that she was geared to a city atmosphere. Once she has decided to remarry Eulogio, however, she is aware of the adjustments she will have to make. After her spiritual awakening and her discovery of the splendor of Nature, she believes that she will be able to appreciate the natural beauties of Las Duras.

En otoño, la lluvia de hojas de los viejos robles debería ser muy bella. Ahora estaba segura de que podría apreciar la belleza de aquellos grandes árboles y que la soledad le sería buena, porque teniendo a Dios, la soledad no sólo no estorba, sino que puede ser una gran maravilla, un regalo del cielo. (p. 1347)

During this period of transition, Paulina in her own mind sees herself moving away from a state of egoism towards an understanding of herself as only one among other people and above all, as one who is constantly living in the presence of God. As Paulina moves along this road towards awareness and self-discovery, she is involved in a totally new learning situation. She says she has discovered the meaning of the word suffering, that she has experienced it in all its facets. Very often, she feels alone and empty, incapable of taking care of herself adequately. Especially when she is doubting her faith, she experiences feelings of anguish, desperation, confusion, and guilt. She reacts very tensely to her immediate environment. By the time the novel ends, Paulina sees herself as one who, formerly concerned with her own
self-centered interests and material comforts, has become capable of
a full comprehension of the beauties of life because of the spiritual
discoveries which she has made.

Paulina empezó a notar en ella una gran confianza. Y una
gran paz. La paz de haber empezado, al fin, su camino y de
andar "en espíritu y en verdad." Esa paz de Cristo "que supera
todo sentido," y que la envolvía enteramente, cuando regresaron
hacia la casa. (P. 1347)
CHAPTER IV

LA INSOLACION

I.

In La insolación once again Carmen Laforet depicts the awakening of a youth. We see Martín Soto during three summers of his adolescent years—when he is fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen. Martín, who has a talent for painting and drawing, lives with his grandparents in Alicante during the school year so that he may study for his bachillerato. He looks forward to the summer months when he is able to go to Beniteca and live with his father and stepmother (His own mother died of tuberculosis when he was small).

Martín leads a rather ordinary, unexciting life in Alicante and lives for the summertime; he dreams about the beautiful beaches and warm splendor of the sun in Beniteca.

At the beginning of his first summer Martín becomes acquainted with Anita and Carlos Corsi, his nextdoor neighbors. He and his two friends create an enchanting, youthful world, which changes each summer in accordance with their ages. They entertain themselves with such varied activities as swimming, catching lizards, acting out scenes from favorite plays, and attending a verbena in Beniteca.

Mr. Corsi is away on business a great deal of the time and for this reason has rented the finca del inglés for his children's enjoyment during the summer. It is a country estate owned by an Englishman, Mr. Pyrne. Mr. Corsi has made arrangements for Frufrú, a close family friend, to live with his children and act as their guardian. She is a former
circus performer and Martín is fascinated by her; very often he and the Corsi children include her in their activities.

Other minor characters in the novel are Carmen, the Corsi's maid; don Clemente, who is a friend of Martín's father and is the only reputable doctor in Beniteca; don Clemente's son, Pepe; and the poet Oswaldo, who is a friend of Mr. Corsi.

An adventure, typical of the sort in which Martín, Carlos, and Anita become involved, occurs one afternoon when the two boys cannot find Anita. Carlos decides to search for his sister; in his possessive way, he cannot be at peace with himself until he knows her whereabouts. Periodically he has heard noises during the night in one of the rooms upstairs in his house. Perhaps because the servants tell him that the landlord, Mr. Pyrne, has forbidden anyone to enter this room, he is doubly curious and decides he must gain entry. He is convinced that Anita is hiding there. Because neither Frufrú nor Carmen will give him a key, he decides to climb onto the roof and look in the window. In his haste he falls and breaks his arm. Almost simultaneously, Martín visualizes Anita at the home of don Clemente, visiting his son, Pepe.

Although Carlos is in a great deal of pain, they quickly depart for Pepe's house and discover Anita upon their arrival. Shortly afterwards Carlos collapses; he is extremely weak because of his injury.

Despite these happenings, the mystery of the locked room has still not been solved. A few weeks later, Lobo, Anita's and Carlos's puppy, barks ferociously at the locked door, indicating the presence of some sort of life in the room. Shortly afterwards, Lobo is found dead—he has been fed meat full of broken glass. A few days later strange
sounds in the room arouse their curiosity once again. This time Anita
decides she is going to climb onto the roof in order to see inside. She
does so and at practically the same moment, Carmen agrees to unlock the
door.

To the amazement of all concerned, they discover that Carmen's
mentally retarded husband Damián is hidden there. Because of his activities
during the Civil War, Damián was instructed to leave the country. How­
ever, he never obeyed the authorities, perhaps because of his mental
condition, and for this reason is seeking refuge at his wife's home.
Carmen had Lobo killed because she was afraid that his barking might
cause the discovery of her husband.

Martín and Adela, his stepmother, are at odds with each other a
great deal of the time during the course of the novel. Adela thinks her
stepson is a nuisance and resents his presence during the summer months.
This resentment is like an open door of freedom for Martín. He becomes
completely involved with his friends and does little more than sleep and
eat at home.

Adela knows that one of the few things which her husband, Eugenio,
will not tolerate in his son is effeminacy. As much as she would like
to, she is not able to find any such tendencies in Martín's actions.
However, near the end of the novel she discovers something which she
hopes will free her of Martín forever.

Because Carlos is trying to win Anita's attention, he leads her
to believe that he is visiting "una casa de mujeres." (P. 339) Instead
he goes to Martín's house and spends the night there. Adela discovers
Carlos in Martín's room and informs her husband. Eugenio goes into a
violent rage when he discovers the two boys sleeping together; he beats his son and locks him in his room.

While Eugenio is away from the house, Adela informs Martín that her husband is planning to put him in a reformatory. She suggests that he escape to Alicante and she makes arrangements for his return. Martín tries to see Carlos but no one is home; he feels completely forsaken. He wants desperately to wait until his father returns so that he may have the opportunity to explain his behavior to him. Adela insists that he will never be able to convince Eugenio of his innocence and Martín finally consents to escaping. He feels entirely helpless in his situation, as if everyone were his enemy.

Martín returns to Alicante and the uneventful way of life which his grandparents are immersed in, leaving behind the happy and carefree world which existed for him in Beniteca. He arrives at his grandparent's home timid and afraid because of his recent experience, but cognizant of the fact that here he will be accepted. He possesses the security of knowing that his grandparents will always receive him with open arms.
II.

During Martín's three summers at Beniteca he grows and develops and gradually moves toward achieving some sort of self-identity. He comes to feel a sense of masculinity and gains an acceptance by his peers. Summertime for Martín is a new and varied way of life; it is full of surprises and novel experiences.

Perhaps the most obvious change which we see take place in Martín from summer to summer at Beniteca is a physical one. In the beginning he is ashamed of his thinness--his sunken chest and lean face covered with the soft skin of a child. His grandmother warns his father that he has a weak constitution, that he shouldn't be forced to exercise. During the next year, Martín grows by leaps and bounds but he is still thin and ugly "como un espantapájaros" (P. 91-92). With his rapid growth he has lost the harmony of his figure.

When he returns to Alicante after his second summer in Beniteca, he is still undergoing a very rapid physical growth, although he appears a little stockier and is much stronger. His grandmother is afraid that he will have to enter the military service because of his good physical condition. Martín gradually acquires a sense of pride due to his physical change -- he is proud that he is becoming a man.

Martín is immediately attracted to the virile odor of his father and admires all of his qualities of masculinity. When he first leaves Alicante, he refuses to kiss his grandmother, claiming that he is a man now. He says he abhors his grandmother, although he had loved her
more than anything when he was small. Obviously Eugenio now occupies
the position of the person he esteems most. His father is very pleased
that he is making Martín more of a man and his son in turn is gratified
at the close relationship which they have developed. Martín feels a
strong sense of loyalty to his father and even respects his weakness
for his wife, Adela.

Volvió a pensar en su padre como en otros tiempos,
admirando su hombría, sus fuertes manos, su blanca e ingenua
risa, y todas aquellas buenas cualidades de honradez, de
sencillez profunda y sana ... (P. 124)

Adela is jealous of the time Martín and her husband spend
together and comes to resent the presence of her stepson during the
summertime. She tells Eugenio that he is blind in any judgment he
makes concerning Martín. Adela thinks Martín is a nuisance; he only
increases their food bill. She also feels rancor toward him because
her husband insists on pointing out that he had a son by his first
marriage and Adela can only seem to give birth to females.

Eugenio comes to his son's defense, claiming that as a man he
has the privilege to do as he wishes. In one instance he even defends
Martín's right to be late for dinner--it is only natural that a boy
of his age "vaya a buscar a las chicas." (P. 293) He excuses Martín for
many of his actions which irritate Adela. The only things he says that
he will not tolerate in his son are cowardice and effeminacy.

When one of Eugenio's friends in Beniteca reports that he has
seen Martín and his friend Carlos walking hand in hand, Eugenio imme-
diately reprimands his son. He forbids him to attend the verbena that
evening, and when he learns that Martín has disobeyed and done so anyway,
he whips him upon his return.
As the novel progresses and Martín matures and broadens his experiences, he gradually loses the original awe which he held for his father. At one point, it seems impossible to him that Eugenio was once the person he admired most. Martín has ceased to idolize his father; he has replaced this excessive admiration with a more realistic concept of him.

The relationship which exists among Carlos, Anita, and Martín is a triangular one. The three of them very often have a harmonious friendship; at other times it is difficult for them to maintain this compatibility and two friends often side against the third.

Anita is a year older than Carlos (who is a year older than Martín) and gives a great deal of importance to her chronological age. She insists that this additional year gives her an enormous maturity, a superior wisdom, and a definite position of authority over her brother.

In the beginning, Martín is amazed by his new friends; he thinks they are flawless individuals. However, he gradually forms opinions about them. He finds that Anita is pedantic, in addition to being ignorant in many areas. She is very coquettish in her actions and is constantly arousing jealous feelings in her brother. She periodically decides she is bored with him and seeks other companionship. Anita is authoritative and is often quite blunt in her statements. She tells Martín that he will never be a great artist, that he is too much of a coward and has no personality. She claims he is too worried about what others may think of him and consequently leads no life of his own.
Martín learns to handle Anita and is rarely upset by her sharp tongue, although he sometimes believes she is behaving in a ridiculous manner. At the same time he is aware of how much respect she is capable of inspiring through such things as the tone of her voice and the demands she makes of other people.

Carlos very often displays jealousy concerning Anita's interests in other young men and would like to be able to exert more control over her. In one instance he even accuses Martín of coming between them. He claims he can't trust Anita but at the same time knows he wouldn't want her to be any different; if she were, he would be bored. He is intrigued because Anita does not even remotely resemble anyone he has ever known.

During the third summer at Beniteca, Anita is traveling with her father and the poet Oswaldo. Carlos realizes how much he misses his sister, despite how presumptuous she is. She is constantly trying to make Carlos think she doesn't need him and upon her return flirts with Oswaldo, which quite naturally makes her brother jealous.

It is difficult for Martín to understand why Carlos is always so vulnerable in his relations with his sister. As an onlooker, Martín comes to view the situation with a more accurate perspective. Carlos tends to magnify many of Anita's actions because of his personal involvement. Martín knows that Carlos could alleviate many of his problems by simply forgetting about Anita and all her pretentions; but in reality Carlos is not capable of doing so. Because of Carlos's feelings for his sister, Martín tends to consider her as a competitor, as they are both vying for Carlos's time and companionship.
Through the course of the novel Martín develops a much closer relationship with Carlos than he does with Anita. At the outset, Martín feels self-conscious in the presence of Carlos. He is so masculine and handsome: "saltaba a la vista aquella perfección de los huesos, las facciones, el color dorado de la piel y del cabello." (P. 41)

Martín likes to be with Carlos and observe his reactions. They share many secrets and Martín is constantly hearing about the affronts which Carlos receives from Anita. Martín is proud of this role he is playing as Carlos's confidant. It is a new experience for him and he comes to treasure their friendship.

Occasionally Martín actually experiences emotional feelings over Carlos—he feels tenderness for him and is ready to defend him in any situation. "Yo estoy contigo para todo, Carlos. Donde tú vayas voy yo también." (P. 137) When Carlos breaks his arm, Martín suffers with him: "El gemido de Carlos era el gemido de Martín también." (P. 151)

When Martín arrives for his third summer at Beniteca, he is surprised to find that Carlos has turned into an elegant young man. The two of them experience three weeks of adventures together—adventures which, for the most part, would never had taken place in the company of Anita.

During these three weeks, Carlos invents a new game to replace their old one of hunting lizards. He and Martín drive to the beach in his automobile almost every afternoon and talk to the girls who are swimming there. They are accepted practically immediately into this group of females, primarily because of Carlos's forwardness. His warmth and spontaneity readily attract people to him—in his own words, "como moscas alrededor de una cuchara de miel." (P. 293)
During these encounters at the beach, Martín's position is very much that of a bystander. However, he enjoys observing the situation—particularly the reactions of those surrounding Carlos: "los de los muchachos queriendo coger a Carlos en contradicciones, los de las chicas para hacerse notar por él." (P. 294) Carlos shines in his vanity; he is radiant and proud of the immediate acceptance which he has attained. Martín's only fear is that Carlos may become so interested in his conquests that the strong bonds of comradeship and confidence which the two of them have formed will cease to interest him.

During these three weeks which Carlos and Martín have spent together, Anita has been traveling with her father and Oswaldo. When she returns, Martín is not altogether pleased, as he knows that Anita will now occupy a position of prime importance in her brother's mind. The result is what Martín could foresee: the only time which he and Carlos spend alone together is the hour of the siesta.

As the novel progresses, Martín gradually becomes aware of how readily the Corsis can be indifferent and of what appears to him to be their narrowness. They tend to scorn any opinion different from their own, and Martín questions the validity of many of their statements. What is important to the Corsis is themselves—their own opinions and desires. Martín is secondary to their wishes and wants. He tries to share with them his thoughts on painting and art but they simply aren't interested and don't care to be bothered.

At the end of their second summer in Beniteca, Mr. Corsi arrives quite unexpectedly and he and his family make preparations to leave. Martín feels unimportant to the Corsis since they leave without even saying
goodbye to him. During the next year he writes to them twice but they fail to answer his letters.

Near the end of the novel, Martín tells his friends that his father has been transferred and he may possibly never see them again. However, Carlos and Anita are typically involved in their own thoughts and pay no attention to his statement.

Martín comes to know the Corsi children well and his depth of perception is shown by the fact that he is aware of most of the qualities which make up their characters. The shortcomings which he finds in their friendship are easily outweighed by the numerous enjoyable times which they spend together. Very often Martín is made to feel like a member of the Corsi family. The bonds of friendship which they form are strong and Martín lets the Corsi children completely fill his world.

During their first summer together, the three of them get into mischief in Martín's house—they break Adela's perfume bottles, etc. Martín is punished by his father for the damage they have caused but he never resents shouldering the blame for the three of them. He feels happy by simply spending time with the Corsi family. Mr. Corsi, knowing well how capricious his children are, thinks that Martín, who is perhaps more stable, is a good influence on Carlos and Anita.

The three of them have an intriguing relationship perhaps because of the uncertainty which is usually present. In their youthful spontaneity, they are never sure of each other's reactions. Martín is often fascinated by some of the special expressions which the Corsis employ, i.e., "nervioso como un flan." (P. 236) He tries to imitate them in their word games but doesn't feel that he is nearly as successful
in his attempts. He is aware that they are especially envious of his knowledge of Latin. He tries to arouse their curiosity by displaying his proficiency in the language and succeeds most readily with Anita.

Martín says that the Corsi children remind him of a band of monkeys. "Pues porque parecéis una bandada de monos. Llegáis, lo tocáis todo y después os quedáis tan tranquilos. No os importa nada de nada." (P. 319)

Carlos, Anita and Martín have a peaceful relationship in many respects. Martín believes that no one other than God could perceive wholly the simple happiness of "sentirse vivos" (P. 332) which the three of them possess. They are emotionally sensitive to each other and live in a captivating world. They are "tres sensaciones de la vida, con el círculo brillante del verano—brillante de día, brillante de noche—evolviéndoles." (P. 332)

Miss Laforet most ably depicts this world full of enchantment and mystery. She symbolizes it through the elements of Nature and color. The beautiful beaches and the intense heat of Beniteca and the unusual colors which result from the rays of the sun piercing the small window in Martín's room create an atmosphere of warmth and fascination. The incident involving Damián and the locked room is representative of this mysterious aspect in the novel. The whole succession of events which ends in the unraveling of the mystery leaves the Corsi children and Martín in a state of youthful enthrallment and self-satisfaction.

Another slight change which takes place in Martín during these three summers is in his attitude toward the opposite sex. At the outset, Martín rejects his grandmother because of her femininity.
Y Martín aborrecía a la abuela. Toda su alma al descubierto, allí, en aquella mesa. Todas sus sueños. En aquel momento no quería ser pintor, además. En aquel momento quería parecerse a su padre, sólo a su padre. (P. 18-19)

When observing some young couples in a cafe, he states that he thinks romantic love is boring. "Martín pensó que aquello era el amor. Y los encontró aburrido." (P. 33)

After he meets Carlos and his sister, he comes to appreciate and value his friendship with Anita. He can't decide if she is beautiful but takes notice of her magnetic eyes, which give her a distinctive quality. He is aware of the manner in which she changes from summer to summer and that she is becoming a woman. Nevertheless, his friendship with Carlos merits more importance in his own mind and during the third summer, he rarely misses Anita while she is traveling.

After his first acquaintance with Frufrú, Martín is quite surprised at the manner in which Carlos receives her affection. However, he soon comes to accept it as a normal, natural thing. He also comes to realize the proper role which his grandmother must play in his life as a female guardian and no longer feels any rebellion toward her.

During his second year in Alicante, Martín becomes interested in a young girl and spends time with her in the typical Spanish fashion--in the "paseos." However, he very quickly becomes bored with her and finds other activities to which he prefers to devote his time and interests. He is later attracted to Benigna, one of the servants at the Corsi house. He finds her beautiful and simpática and tells Carlos he would like to spend more time with her. Although no relationship develops, Martín is gradually showing more interest in members of the opposite sex and comes
to accept them more openly.

One of the strong points of _La insolación_ is the manner in which Miss Laforet allows the reader to gain insight into the major character, Martín Soto. She makes his thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and discoveries readily apparent by revealing them in a realistic manner, primarily through the technique of dialogue.

In the beginning we see Martín as a rather rebellious person. He is eager to break away from his grandparents' domination and he asserts himself in front of them by voicing his own opinions. He very definitely wants to live with his father during the summer months.

From time to time Martín experiences feelings of humiliation and embarrassment. Until he meets Carlos and Anita he feels out of place in Beniteca, as there is no group with whom he can readily identify. He is self-conscious in front of Carlos because of the latter's masculine physique. When Anita teaches Martín how to dance and shows him the techniques of judo, he is flattered by her advances but still feels humiliated. He also becomes embarrassed easily when confronted with any matters having to do with sexual relations. Through the course of the novel, however, these feelings of humiliation and embarrassment gradually decline with the added self-confidence which Martín acquires.

When Martín first meets Frufrú, he is very surprised by her unusual appearance. She draws attention because of her dyed hair and colorful dress. Because of this, Martín feels terribly embarrassed when she asks him to dance with her in a tavern one evening. He dislikes being on display but, because of his friendship with Frufrú, does not decline her offer.
Martín has always had an outstanding artistic talent. However, he suddenly gains a realization that art involves a great deal more than simply an aesthetic portrayal of material objects; it is a meaningful form of self-expression. Martín states that he must have absolute liberty in order to paint. He believes that in art one must break with all tradition.

Necesito una libertad absoluta. Ningún lazo familiar. ... Ni ataduras de patria tampoco. ... Ni ataduras de religión, ni mucho menos sociales ... Ni ataduras de amistad. Nada absolutamente. ... Creo que un artista tiene que ser eso, un hombre liberado en absoluto. Sólo así puede crear un mundo. (Pp. 306-307)

Martín attempts to convey these thoughts to Carlos but is disappointed when he is unable to attain a clear channel of communication with him. Carlos retorts that being an intellectual is bad for the health: "Ahora, que es malo para la salud, como dice papá. Pronto tendrás que usar gafas y te quedarás calvo si sigues pensando tanto." (P. 308) He says that he is already aware of all that is important to him as far as Martín is concerned--that he is a good friend. Nevertheless, Martín tends to feel disillusioned and questions how meaningful their friendship is.

When Martín returns to Alicante after his first summer away from his grandparents, he still displays a rebellious nature. He refuses to go to Mass or confession on Christmas day and claims that he doesn’t believe in anything.

He has difficulty studying and it costs him a great deal of self-discipline in order to pass his exams that year. The following year, however, he has changed in his outlook with the added growth and maturity he has acquired. He values the importance of an education and has no
trouble studying or passing his examinations.

Martín claims that he has come to understand what happiness is: he says it is the result of a series of concessions among those who love each other. He also decides that living for now, the present, is of utmost importance. "Lo importante era el minuto presente." (P. 318)

La insolación ends with the departure of Martín Soto for Alicante. This incident is one of the few occasions in the novel when he is seen as a victim of circumstance; he appears helpless in his situation and is unable to control the external factors in his environment. Martín, in a melancholy state of mind because of his forced departure, looks back on his three summers in Beniteca as a happy, carefree period in his life. He sees them as one enormous insolación--they are like an enchanting dream world, an evasion of the commonplace, uneventful existence which he leads in Alicante.
CHAPTEV V

LAFORET'S DEVELOPMENT AS A NOVELIST

The novels of Carmen Laforet have been discussed thus far in terms of the theme of maturation—the manner in which the central characters change and grow. Keeping in mind this groundwork which has been laid, it is now time to look at Miss Laforet's abilities as an author, to view her own personal maturation with respect to her writing.

The first aspect to be considered is the change in tone which has occurred in Miss Laforet's writing between the appearance of Nada in 1944 and La insolución in 1963.

The predominant mood of Nada is one of despair. Andrea is tossed about by an environment full of somber aspects—the house she lives in, the people who inhabit it, the cruel and inhuman way they treat her and each other. Andrea is engulfed by this oppressive atmosphere; suffering, doubt, and frustration are common elements. Until she finds outlets of escape, she is completely submerged in what Eoff has called "a nightmare comprising the agitated movement of distressed personalities in continuous collision with each other."

In her second novel, La isla y los demonios, Miss Laforet maintains a mood similar to that which exists in Nada. At atmosphere of frustration prevails as Marta attempts to manipulate her environment.

She feels confined and tries to escape the controls which her relatives place upon her. She experiences anguish because of her desire to be with Pablo. Marta realizes how passionate this desire is and how emotional and irrational her sentiments are, but she can only feel desperate and frustrated because of her inability to control the situation.

As a whole, however, _La isla y los demonios_ contains more equilibrium than _Nada_. There is more tranquility, less nervous tension, and fewer psychological dilemmas.

Although the climate of _La mujer nueva_ is of a different nature, similarities can still be found between it and Miss Laforet's first two novels. A feeling of confusion is ever-present and the elements of anguish and mental distress are evident as Paulina tries to formulate her decision. Because of her religious beliefs, however, social and moral implications are involved. Paulina feels guilty because of her extra-marital relationship and is concerned with what her moral and religious obligations should be. The atmosphere is one of questioning and soul-searching.

The element of mystery which is found in Miss Laforet's other novels, is not present in _La mujer nueva_. This may, in some respects, detract from the novel's appeal to the reader: the intrigue of Román or of La Majorera is absent.

The most marked change in novelistic mood is seen in _La insolación_. No longer are we confronted with such somber and sordid aspects of life. The atmosphere of tension, despair, and cruelty has been replaced by one of enchantment. Miss Laforet has created a youthful exciting world, full of mystery and intrigue. During three summers, Martín and his
friends live an adventuresome life—fascinating, free, and captivating from an adolescent's point of view.

The change in tone which occurs between Nada and La insolación is perhaps best exemplified by the images which Carmen Laforet employs. They seem to fall into natural divisions by class: weather, location, color, temperature, etc. In Nada her images are associated with (1) dark colors, (2) wintertime, and (3) being indoors. For example:

(1) Tenía miedo de meterme en aquella cama parecida a un ataúd. (P. 30)

(1) Al fin se fueron, dejándome con la sombra de los muebles. (P. 29)

(1) Un fondo oscuro de muebles colocados unos sobre otros como en las mudanzas. (P. 25)

(2) De las noches de invierno con sus húmedas melancolías: el crujido de una silla rompiendo el sueño y el escalofrío de los nervios al encontrar dos pequeños ojos luminosos—los ojos del gato—clavados en los míos. En aquellas heladas horas hubo algunos momentos en que la vida rompió delante de mis ojos todos sus pudores y apareció desnuda, gritando intimidades tristes, que para mí eran sólo espantosas. (P. 191)

(3) Estaba yo sola con la abuela y con Angustias, y además me encontraba algo así como en prisión correccional, pues Angustias me había cazado en el momento en que yo me disponía a escaparme a la calle andando de puntillas. (P. 67)

In La insolación they are related to warmth, summertime, bright hues of the sun, and an out-of-doors environment.

Ah, pero todo eso quedaba a un lado. Casi no había tiempo más que para disfrutar del baño de la mañana, del incendio blanco del mediodía, de las correrías de la tarde hasta que las primeras estrellas y el toque de retreta en la Batería anunciaban a Martín que tenía que volver a casa. (P. 80)

Salió a las dunas a media mañana entre aquel sol que había levantado ampollas en sus hombros los días anteriores. La arena quemaba ya bajo los pies y brillaba delante de los ojos de Martín. (P. 97)
Aquel esplendor interno en el que Martín no pensaba, sino que llamaba simplemente "el verano." (P. 268)

The variance in mood in each of the four novels which Carmen Laforet has written is perhaps an indication of change in her own personal aesthetic sensibilities. _Nada_ was written in 1944, shortly after the Spanish Civil War and during the Second World War, when Carmen Laforet was only 23. She could hardly avoid being influenced by the suffering and hardships which accompanied these two major events. The morbid home environment in _Nada_ may also be due in part to her own personal experiences. After her mother died, her father remarried and she had a strong aversion to her stepmother.

The sense of soul-searching and moral preoccupation which exists in _La mujer nueva_ (1955) is perhaps representative of Miss Laforet's own personal concern and involvement with religion: she was converted to Catholicism in 1951.

As a young writer Laforet appeared to be more belligerent and at odds with her immediate world. It seems that in her writing of _La insolución_, however, she has reached a reconciliation, and has ceased to be at war with her environment. The atmosphere which she has created in this novel is by far the most relaxed. The tension and seriousness which dominates in _Nada_ and _La mujer nueva_ is not nearly so prevalent.

Excluding the final incident which causes Martín's departure and the brief descriptive passages of life in Alicante, the mood of _La insolución_ leans more toward warmth and spontaneity.

The manner in which Miss Laforet portrays the adult characters in her novels is perhaps a reflection of a change in her own personal
values. In Nada and La isla y los demonios, they are depicted as authoritarian figures, as stumbling blocks which inhibit the central character from fulfilling her own wishes. In La insolación, however, respect and admiration are shown for the most part for the parents involved (Eugenio, el señor Corsi). They are authoritative only when the situation demands them to be. Perhaps this is indicative of a growing awareness on the part of the author as to the relationship which should exist between parent and child: that it is necessary to maintain balanced proportions of authoritativeness on the part of the parent and self-direction on the part of the son or daughter.

One of Miss Laforet's strongest attributes as an author, is her descriptive ability. In Nada the sordid climate is depicted by physical structure--the house on Aribau street and its contents. This fact can be substantiated very easily by simply noting the number of time "gris" is employed in her description. In La isla y los demonios she displays the beauty and enchantment of the Canary Islands.

Una tarde extraña colgaba nubes oscuras llenas de desgarrones, de patas, como enormes arañas, sobre un cielo amarillo. Allá, a la espalda de Vicenta, la carretera subía hacia la montaña de La Caldera, sólo porque los turistas pudiesen ver la vista impresionante del redondo cráter y el gran trozo de llanura y costa que desde allá se alcanza. La vieja seguía, pensativa y ensimismada, en sentido inverso, aquella carretera tan graciosamente adornada de geranios, de tapias blancas, de ceros espinosos con rosales silvestres, floridos, vallando fincas de viñas. El invierno verdecía las cunetas. Tres chaparrones, y entre los negros y fríos troncos de las viñas saltaba una alfombra de amapolas amarillas. (p. 431)

The description of physical beauty is not so prevalent in La mujer nueva. However, Carmen Laforet does give a vivid portrayal of the rusticity of Las Duras and the surrounding areas.
In La insolación Miss Laforet’s description of Nature once again assumes an important role. She beautifully portrays the beach areas and the warm splendor of the sun at Beniteca.

A critical analysis of Carmen Laforet’s abilities as a writer would involve questions such as: does the reader penetrate in the interior of her major characters, does he understand them, does he feel himself immersed in their worlds or atmospheres? These questions can be answered unhesitatingly in the affirmative with respect to Nada. One of the more outstanding aspects of Nada is Miss Laforet’s success in employing the first-person narration. The reader is able to identify immediately with Andrea and become involved in her own personal experiences.

The first two novels which Carmen Laforet has written are alike in many respects. However, because La isla y los demonios is written in the third person, it seems less intimate and lacks the vitality which makes Nada come alive. It is difficult for the reader to actually experience the thoughts and emotions of Marta or to attain a feeling of oneness which is so easily done with Andrea.

In La mujer nueva Miss Laforet once again employs the third-person narration. By means of this technique she gives an effective presentation of the sinning Paulina in Part I. She is able to project her as a vivid, living character, believable in most respects. However, during Part II of the novel, Paulina’s religious conversion seems almost too fantastic to be true. During these two chapters, Paulina seems to lose some of her reality as a living, vital character, perhaps due to the rapidity and easiness of her spiritual enlightenment, as well as the
absence of any prior indications which might lead up to such an occurrence. Such an intimate experience might be more easily portrayed through the first-person narration. During Part III of the novel, Paulina seems to lack the magnetic attraction which she possesses during Part I; she is neither forceful nor dynamic, due to her confused state of mind.

When comparing Miss Laforet's first three novels, with her last work one cannot help noting the changed proportions in dialogue versus passages of exposition and description. Dialogue plays a more important role in *La insolación* because of the constant interaction which takes place between Martín, Carlos, and Anita. In this novel Miss Laforet is continually focusing upon these three central characters as a unit; each is depicted primarily in relation to the other two.

In writing fiction, dialogue obviously serves the purpose of communication between the characters. In *La insolación*, however, Miss Laforet also employs this technique to advance the plot and more importantly, to achieve an effective character portrayal of Martín and his friends. For these reasons, *La insolación* would seem to denote an advancement in technique over Laforet's other novels because of her success in character delineation through dialogue. Prior to this time, simple exposition has been the device she has utilized most frequently.

*La insolación* is divided into three parts, as are all of Miss Laforet's novels. However, with this novel, she uses a new technique, that of including *intermedios* between each division. By means of these short passages, Laforet gives a description which is surprisingly extensive of Martín's life in Alicante; she reveals the sharp contrast which exists between his life during the summer months and during the school year.
These interludes are also differentiated from the rest of the novel because they are written in the present tense (the past being employed elsewhere). In only a few pages, Carmen Laforet captures the growth and changes in Martín and the important events in his family life in Alicante. A one-word description or sentence fragment very often sets the tone: "Oscuridad. El aire es luminoso y tibio en el invierno alicantino, pero Martín ve en todas partes una oscuridad que le hiela los huesos. Hambre, hambre devoradora." (P. 89) And in the second interlude: "Alrededor, crisis de adolescencias, incipientes, melancolías y rebeldías ya superadas por Martín." (P. 253)

Although the utilization of these intermedios is not necessarily an advancement in Laforet's writing, they are certainly representative of a more comprehensive scope. She is enlarging the resources from which she makes her choice as to the novelistic techniques she will employ.

Whether Miss Laforet's novels can be correctly termed autobiographical is a debatable point. Some of the happenings of her first three novels have actually taken place during her own lifetime. Miss Laforet lived in the Canary Islands for sixteen years, in 1939 she moved to Barcelona where she enrolled in the University, and in 1951 she was converted to Catholicism. With respect to her literary contributions, Miss Laforet states:

Este mundo en que yo personalmente me he convertido es un mundo de novelista. Un mundo con distintos ambientes humanos, con distintos personajes y ciudades y cielos y campos... Este mundo que soy yo misma, ... pero que--¡por Dios!--no es mi autobiografía, como han querido ver algunos críticos.1

Obviously, she has not written the chronicle of her own particular life

1Laforet, Mis paginas mejores, (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1956), p. 9.
in these works. However, one cannot disregard the influences which her personal experiences may possibly have had in her writing of these first three novels.

In *La insolución* no autobiographical elements are readily apparent, and for the first time, a male figure is the central character. In view of these two facts, I believe that this last novel represents the peak of Miss Laforet's creativity: for the first time in a major work she has divorced her own personal experiences from her world of fiction and is relying entirely upon her own powers of creativity. The result is her best literary contribution.

After the appearance of *La insolución*, Miss Laforet should continue to be successful in her future endeavors. In view of her development as a novelist, she should not have difficulty maintaining an eminent position in the field of contemporary literature in Spain. She has undertaken a task of greater depth and difficulty with her proposed trilogy, *Tres pasos fuera del tiempo*, indicative of her broader vision as a writer.
CONCLUSION

By dealing with the topic of maturation, I believe that I have selected the theme which is at the core of Miss Laforet's novels, and I have attempted to substantiate its predominance in the preceding chapters. Laforet has painted a realistic portrait of the growth and development of four different characters--Andrea, Marta, Paulina, and Martín.

Marta, Andrea, and Paulina could easily represent three stages in the life and growth-process of essentially the same woman. Marta and Andrea are both timid and naive; at the outset they are in love with certain ideals and have unrealistic dreams about their futures. Each is attempting to break family ties and assume responsibility only to herself.

In this respect, Marta and Andrea both exemplify Overstreet's second criterion of maturity: The individual moves from irresponsibility towards responsibility. Everyone must make the transition from the dependent, protected status of childhood to adult status and responsibility, with all that this implies in terms of independence and self-directed activity.

After experiencing an immediate encounter with reality and consequently a series of disillusionments, Marta and Andrea acquire a more realistic perspective of themselves, their expectations, and their environment.

Paulina, at the age of thirty-three, is first seen deserting her husband and her son. By the end of the novel, however, she realizes her responsibilities and the true meaning of a Catholic marriage. Overstreet's first criterion, that of acquiring adequate knowledge so
as to handle competently one's situation, is perhaps applicable to all of Miss Laforet's major characters. However, it most accurately pertains to Paulina because she is in the position of consciously making a choice.

These first three novels could very well be viewed as a trilogy whose theme is woman's progress toward maturity. In the same manner, La insolución could be considered as the first phase in a similar undertaking with a man as protagonist. In the beginning, Martín is self-conscious and rebellious; he is easily embarrassed and very often feels humiliated. Through the close friendship he forms with the Corsis, he gradually acquires self-confidence and a sense of masculinity. With reference to the latter, Martín exemplifies, more so than any of the other major characters, Overstreet's fourth criterion of maturity: Man goes through certain stages of normal development and moves toward sexual maturity. Perhaps to a lesser degree, Marta and Andrea also come to discover their own womanly instincts. They want to be praised, loved, and esteemed and in return, reciprocate these feelings in an intimate relationship.

Overstreet's third criterion, that of developing one's ability to communicate, is specifically applicable to each of Laforet's characters. At the outset, Andrea feels suffocated and is cautious about articulating her thoughts. Laforet often describes her as cerrada; she is withdrawn and is unwilling to enter into family conversations. After she has listened to Román's music for the first time, he asks her:

--¿Qué te dice la música?
--Inmediatamente se me cerraban las manos y el alma.
--Nada, no sé, sólo me gusta...
--No es verdad. Dime lo que te dice. Lo que te dice al final.
--Nada. 1

It is not until she becomes acquainted with Ena and her bohemian friends at the University that Andrea begins to dissolve her protective shell and communicates more openly.

Marta is quite similar to Andrea in view of the difficulty she has in establishing a clear channel of communication with those people in her immediate environment. After she makes the acquaintance of Pablo, however, she feels as if she has discovered the first person who truly understands her and she shares her innermost thoughts with him. In the same manner, Martín refuses to reveal himself openly until he becomes friends with the Corsi children.

Paulina's difficulty lies in her inability to relate her religious experience to other people. At the outset this spiritual awakening immediately fills her entire world; she is in a state of intense awe and reverence. Perhaps due to her state of complete personal involvement, she cannot readily convey what she considers to be the strong uniqueness of this intimate, personal experience, until the initial shock has passed.

Overstreet's fifth criterion (Supra, p. 17) is exemplified by Paulina to a greater degree than by any of the other characters. She gradually recognizes her selfish interests and moves toward an understanding of herself as one in relation to others, especially in relation to her husband and son.

It is difficult to specifically relate Overstreet's last criterion to any of Laforet's novels: The human being moves toward wholes of meaning. "Man must take into account all that is involved in a situation and tie to that 'all' both his present behaviors and his future plans and expectations." In view of its generality, this aspect, would seem
to readily apply to all of the four major characters. It is a continuous process, a goal toward which every individual aspires, and at no particular life stage should its development cease.

Miss Laforet's concept of maturity obviously involves disillusionment and the loss of innocence. We see Andrea disillusioned when her dreams of independence are dissolved, and embarrassed and humiliated after the dance at Pons house. Marta is disillusioned with respect to the arrival of Honesta, Matilde, and Daniel. They are not the creative, sensitive people she had expected them to be.

Discovery also plays an important role in Laforet's treatment of maturation. Andrea, Marta, and Martín discover the significance of such things as Nature, meaningful friendships, new foods, creativity, etc. Paulina, in turn, realizes the importance of religion and the meaning of a Catholic marriage. Martín gradually views the Corsis, his father, and his grandmother with a greater depth of perception. He is endowed with a growing awareness of their natures and of the relative influence which they should have upon his life. He seems less disillusioned than Marta and Andrea, as he is able to accept the shortcomings he finds in other people in view of their more outstanding attributes.

The pain and shock, the disappointments and discouragement involved in the process of maturation have the ultimately beneficial effect of assisting the protagonist in acquiring a realistic concept of himself and his expectations. The acquisition of this insight and perceptiveness is a necessary prerequisite for the attainment of the underlying goal inherent in all aspects of maturation— that of achieving a rapport with one's environment.
Although Overstreet's definition of maturity can be quite accurately applied to all of Laforet's characters, the importance of realizing and then assuming one's own personal responsibilities appears to be her most important consideration in dealing with the topic of maturation. The three adolescents are involved in the discovery and achievement of a sense of self-identity and self-responsibility, while Paulina is faced with the dilemma of determining her own personal obligations.

Miss Laforet's principle concern in these four novels is the portrayal of human experience. Never does she write hoping to exemplify a particular belief or wanting to reach a well-established conclusion. La mujer nueva is the only novel of the four which ends with an actual black-and-white solution: Paulina decides to remarry Eulogio and take care of her son. However, this final decision is not particularly significant in relation to the novel as a whole. Paulina could just as well have become a nun. The important consideration is the way in which Paulina comes to define her personal responsibilities. In Miss Laforet's own words:

La novela hubiera podido tener un final distinto del que tiene sin que se alterase su esencia. Nunca me ocurre en mi trabajo de novelista buscar y forzar la resolución de un problema. Esto tiene que venir dado por el mismo personaje.  

The underlying conclusion which may be drawn from the novels of Carmen Laforet is that no absolute means exist in satisfying one's needs and wants. Through human experience one learns, develops, matures, and comes to assume responsibility; thus, experience is simply a preparation

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Ibid., 1018.
for one's next situation in life. Carmen Laforet states, with respect to her literary contribution:

... el término de una tarea agotadora y que a mi primera ilusión le parece un vencimiento, es simplemente una preparación mejor para un nuevo comienzo.3

3Ibid., 13.
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