

THE WOMAN IN THE CRISTERO NOVEL

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PREFACE

The Cristero Novel has been paid very scant attention by literary critics for two main reasons, the most important being that the questions raised by the Cristero movement and consequently by the novel are still controversial in Mexico, since the religious question has not been entirely settled, even though the Cristero Revolt took place more than thirty-five years ago. The other main reason is that the Cristero Novel has been overshadowed by the Novel of the Revolution, which is larger in scope and more prolific in production. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the women protagonists in the following Cristero novels: Héctor, by Jorge Gram; La virgen de los cristeros, by Fernando Robles; Los cristeros, by José Guadalupe de Anda; and Pensativa, by Jesús Goytortúa y Santos. These four particular novels were chosen because the women protagonists play a large part in them and demonstrate the part the woman played in the Cristero Revolt and the role she plays in Mexican society. Héctor (1930), the only Cristero Novel written during the conflict, has very little artistic value and is obviously intended as propaganda for the Cristero cause. La virgen de los cristeros (1934), a thesis novel, is interesting for its study of the conflict of ideologies involved in the Cristero Revolt and for the

colloquial language used by its characters. Los cristeros (1937) has won acclaim for its depiction of the Mexican peon and for its use of colloquial language in the speech of its characters. Pensativa (1945) won the coveted Lanz Duret Prize for Literature in 1945.

The following approach is used to examine the women protagonists in these novels. The women in general are studied to determine the role they play in the novel. Then a more detailed analysis of the main women protagonists is made. Finally, a judgment of the function of the main women protagonists is given.

In particular, this thesis treats the main women protagonists in these novels, since the woman plays a much larger part in the Cristero Novel than she does in the Novel of the Revolution, and is, therefore, worthy of study. In fact, in the Novel of the Revolution the woman hardly appears, and when she does, she has little or no importance. In the Cristero Novel the central woman character is often one of the principal protagonists, and even in those in which a male is the main protagonist, such as in Héctor, the woman is as daring and valiant as the hero himself. Like the Novel of the Revolution, the Cristero Novel adjusts itself to historic reality. The woman had no social consciousness and did not take part in the Revolution in any capacity greater than that of a soldier companion to her man. During the Cristero Revolt,

however, she was as important to the cause as her man. Often she was as cruel and bloodthirsty as the Clergy which led her, and even more cruel than her enemies.

Since the Cristero Novel treats such a controversial matter as the religious question of Mexico, very little literary criticism has been made of it. Therefore, the comments and opinions expressed in this thesis are entirely my own, except where acknowledgment is given.

A special debt of gratitude is owed to Professor Renato Rosaldo for his helpful criticism and direction in the preparation of this thesis. A word of appreciation is also due to Professors Ruth Lee Kennedy and Charles Olstad and to Harry Joe Dennis for their able advice and guidance.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines in detail the role the Mexican woman played in the Cristero Revolt, a religious conflict which took place in Mexico from 1926 to 1929. By examining the role of the Mexican woman in this civil war, an insight can be gained concerning the part the woman played in the war and also concerning the role she plays in her society. In Héctor (1930), the first novel examined, Consuelo and Soledad serve to inspire and encourage Héctor to fight for the Cristero cause. Carmen, in La virgen de los cristeros (1934), also inspires Felipe and Carlos to join the Cristero cause, but her main function is to represent a woman who is a victim of the war. Marta Torres, Doña Enedina, and Doña Trinidad of Los cristeros (1937), are also victims of the conflict, each in her own way. In Pensativa (1945), Pensativa retires to the life of a nun because of her feeling of guilt about the part she took in the Cristero Revolt. Each of the women in these four Cristero novels has suffered in some way because of the Cristero Revolt. It is the author's opinion that the Cristero novelists intended to use the women protagonists to help demonstrate the futility and horror of the recurrent civil wars in Mexico, and in particular of the Cristero Revolt.

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Since colonial times, the Catholic clergy in Mexico has had tremendous influence on the Mexican people and has enjoyed a position of privilege in the society, as can be noted by the fact that a church or cathedral is always one of the central buildings in any Mexican town. However, during the Reform movement, headed by Benito Juárez, a number of laws were promulgated, which were designed to take from the Church some of her traditional privileges and monopolies, but the Laws of the Reform were not enforced because the people were not ready for them.¹ The laws attempted to separate Church and State, making the Church secondary to the State. An example of the type of law the Reform movement advocated is the law making marriage a civil ceremony rather than a sacrament of the Church. Such a law could not be accepted by the Mexican Catholics, since they had been taught by the Church, and they firmly believed, that marriage is a sacrament of the Church, and not a civil ceremony. The people were tied to the Church in their daily lives and in their basic beliefs; so that no law could separate them from Church authority.

1. Tristan Marof, México de frente y de perfil (Buenos Aires, n.d.), p. 86.

No matter what kind of "enlightened" laws the government tried to enforce, if they interfered with the authority of the Church, there was sure to be trouble. The Church had such power over the minds of the Mexican people, especially over those of the peasants, that it could, and often did, use its power to topple governments. Due to the ignorance and fanaticism of the people, the Church could instill panic with the idea of Hell and present as saintly the act of dying to defend one's religion.² An example of how the Church would use its power over the minds of the people to interfere in the political life of the country is the role it played in the Revolution of 1910 and the political upheavals which followed. During the Díaz regime, the Clerical Party, still very powerful and wealthy, gradually worked its way into the administration and gained control of the situation anew after having had difficulties during the Reform movement.³ Madero, who followed Díaz, did not satisfy the clergy completely; so it rebelled against Madero and supported Victoriano Huerta, including giving money to his cause, which helped substantially to bring Huerta his victory.⁴

The Constitution of 1917, based largely on the Laws

2. Ibid.

3. Emilio Portes Gil, The Conflict between the Civil Power and the Clergy (México, 1935), p. 91.

4. Marof, p. 85.

of the Reform, laid the legal bases for neutralizing the tremendous influence of the Church and for submitting it to civil authority in whatever was not a question of dogma. However, the Church was still all powerful. Neither Carranza, Adolfo de la Huerta, nor Alvaro Obregón dared to promulgate the legislation which would make the Constitution of 1917 effective.⁵ Not until the presidency of Plutarco Elías Calles, which began on November 30, 1924, were laws passed which made the Constitution of 1917 effective.

Calles began his attack on the Church in 1925 by sending more than two hundred Spanish priests out of the country.⁶ The obvious question is "Why would he send these priests into exile?" One must bear in mind that Calles had a craving for power which culminated in the founding of the Partido Nacional Revolucionario on September 1, 1928, which made Calles absolute party boss of the Revolution.⁷ His craving for power was such that he attacked any institution which was powerful enough to be a threat. He attacked the Church, big ranching, and big business, all in the name of carrying out the ideals of the Revolution. His big blow to

5. Manuel Pedro González, Trayectoria de la novela en México (México, 1951), p. 296.

6. José Vasconcelos, Breve historia de México (México, 1944), p. 532.

7. Joseph H. L. Schlarman, Mexico, a Land of Volcanoes (Milwaukee, 1950), p. 495.

the Church came on January 7, 1926, when he received powers from Congress to reform the Penal Code so far as it applied to religious matters. He based his reform on Article 130 of the Constitution of 1917, the one to which the Church objected. Article 130 states that Federal authority has the power to regulate the external discipline of the Church, that the Church has no juridical standing, that state legislatures have the power to determine the number of ministers of any religion, that every minister must be a native Mexican, that appeals from a decision concerning any of these regulations shall not be tried before a jury.⁸ On February 22, 1926, Calles enforced Article 3, which states that any attempt at religious instruction is a crime punishable by law. Many schools and seminaries were closed, and there were no additional schools to replace them. On June 14, 1926, he published his Penal Code, which broadened and sharpened the anti-Church articles of the Constitution of 1917, and in some cases openly contradicted the Constitution. This Penal Code became known as the Ley Calles.⁹ It was to become effective on July 31, 1926. The bishops of Mexico decided to use passive resistance by suspending all public religious services as of August 1, 1926.

It is worthy of note that Calles, who had refused to

8. Ibid., p. 499.

9. Ibid., p. 501.

change even one title of his vindictive Penal Code, on October 21, 1926, amended Article 83, which forbids the holding of a second term as president under any pretext, so that Obregon could return to the presidency.¹⁰

Calles had incurred much ill will among many segments of society. Two candidates rose up to oppose his attempt at re-electing Obregón, his political ally. On June 23, 1927, General Arnulfo Gómez announced himself as a candidate for the presidency on the anti-re-election ticket. General Francisco Serrano, a long-time friend of Obregón, tried to dissuade Obregón from accepting a second term. The result of the conference was that the former friends became bitter enemies, and Serrano announced his candidacy for the presidency.¹¹ On October 3, 1927, there was a Serrano rally in Cuernavaca. That night Obregón's men took Serrano and his men and shot them. A few days later General Gómez was shot in Vera Cruz. Others who opposed Calles and Obregón were shot in various parts of the country in an attempt to purge the nation of all opposition.¹²

Meanwhile, the Cristeros in Los Altos, in Zacatecas, in Colima, in Michoacán, and Durango were driving the nettling

10. Ibid., p. 505.

11. Ibid., p. 508.

12. Ibid., p. 509.

thorn deeper into the side of the Calles government.¹³ The Cristeros were groups of armed guerilla fighters, sponsored by the Liga Nacional Defensora de la Libertad Religiosa. The Liga, organized by Anacleto González Flores, was all of the Catholic organizations united into one front.¹⁴ The Church had tried passive resistance in closing the churches and in the Liga's declaring an economic boycott, the slogan of which was, "Buy nothing, at any rate nothing superfluous. If you must buy, buy only from those friendly to our cause. Absolute boycott as to our enemies."¹⁵ The failure of the boycott, even though it had been effective in Jalisco and surrounding areas, drove the Liga to look for other masters than Mahatma Gandhi. It turned to the de Valeras and the Maccabees. A call was issued to the zealous Catholics to withdraw to the mountains known as Los Altos in Jalisco. Open guerilla warfare was started in January, 1927. The Mexican clergy had used the fanaticism of the peasants to incite them to arms. The Cristeros would go into battle shouting "Viva Cristo Rey!"¹⁶ punctuated by unmentionable oaths denouncing the government forces which opposed them. The Church had declared a holy war, and like all religious wars, this was inhuman and

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., p. 498.

15. Ibid., p. 506.

16. Marof, p. 85.

savage. The fanatics fought hard and gave no quarter.¹⁷ There appeared blood-thirsty and fanatic priests such as those of the Carlist wars in Spain, who tortured and assassinated in the name of Christ all who fell into their hands. The government employed methods almost as barbarous as those of the Cristeros, and during three years (1926-1929) the country gave the world a bloodier spectacle than had been seen even during the Revolution of 1910.¹⁸

Toward the end of the war, on July 17, 1928, Obregón was assassinated by an artist, José de León Toral. Calles charged the assassination to the Catholics, when actually he, himself, was highly suspected by the Mexican people. Feeling resentment running high and having experienced a sample of the difficulties the Church could cause, Calles, in an annual message to Congress, announced his retirement from office at the expiration of his term. On September 25, 1928, the Federal Congress designated Emilio Portes Gil interim president to hold office until February 5, 1930.¹⁹

On June 21, 1929, President Portes Gil and Archbishop Ruiz announced that an agreement had been reached between Church and State. It was agreed that priests in charge of property should be registered, but others were not required

17. González, p. 297.

18. Ibid.

19. Schlarman, p. 519.

to go through the formality, Religious instruction in public and private schools was prohibited, but such instruction within church confines was to be allowed. Also, church members were guaranteed the right to exercise the right of petition for amendment, repeal, or passage of any law. On June 27, 1929, mass was celebrated in eleven Catholic churches of the Federal District for the first time since July 31, 1926. The Mexican government, however, had won the chief contentions: the clergy owning property were still required to register; the laws as to monastic orders were to remain the same; ownership of real estate by the clergy was to be limited; the number and selection of the clergy was to be controlled; the political rights of ministers remained the same.

On July 14, 1929, soon after the official end of the Cristero Revolt, the National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty admitted that it had supported the Cristero Revolt. It stated that, because of the agreement of June 21, the rebels would abide by the government rulings.²⁰

Since the Cristero Revolt was a civil war and one which involved religion, it was extremely bloody and violent, characterized by fanaticism on both sides. The spirit of compromise did not exist. A clear understanding of the tone of the conflict can be acquired by studying some of the

20. Wilfrid Hardy Callcott, Liberalism in Mexico, 1857-1929 (Stanford, 1931), pp. 378-379.

official statements of both factions. Emilio Portes Gil, Attorney General of the Republic, spoke these words,

Fanaticism, which has not stopped short at crime, as shown by the murder of General Obregón and which has not, either, stopped at treason to the country, as history records and as we have pointed out in the course of our narration, now asserts that we are attempting to pervert youth, by means of the new constitutional program of education. By making this assertion, the Clergy pursues its own tactics of misleading public opinion and of creating a stifling atmosphere that hinders the onward march of the Government . . . Nothing shall, however, make us pause in our desire to make childhood understand that it constitutes an organic element of society, and that it will only be able to achieve individual well-being if collective well-being be achieved as well. We shall likewise teach childhood how dangerous is that belief taught by the Clergy over so many centuries, according to which the poor and downtrodden have nothing to expect in this world and can but await their redemption in the next. Mexico does not desire such teaching.²¹

Portes Gil continued his attack on the clergy by saying, "The members of the Clergy do not feel themselves subjects of the Mexican State but of the Pope . . . What is there wanting to warrant us in considering them purely and simply as undesirable aliens?" He clarifies the Government's attack on the Church by saying, "The Clergy confuses religion with its own privileges which are all that we are attacking."²³ He states the Government's stand: "To the Church has now come the hour when its responsibility will be exacted from it;

21. Portes Gil, p. 105.

22. Ibid., p. 107.

23. Ibid., p. 103.

the Mexican State cannot in any way permit a renewal of criminal interference by any religious group."²⁴

The clergy's reply was phrased in a similar tone, but in a different vein. The Bishop of Huejutla's document called, "Third Message to the Civilized World," states:

Mr. Calles calls upon all the Governments of the States of the Republic, on all the authorities and on all revolutionary elements to go to any lengths that may be necessary because childhood and youth must belong to the Revolution . . . Will ye, O fathers of families, allow your children to become, after all, the prey of the Revolution? Will ye allow the offspring of your loins to be devoured by that hellish pack that has dug its claws into the bosom of your country?²⁵

The message of protest from the Apostolic Delegate, Leopoldo Ruíz y Flores to the Catholics of Mexico states, "No Catholic can be a socialist without seriously falling short of his duties, nor can he either be a member of the PNR in view of the fact that the latter has declared itself to be openly socialistic and what is worse atheistic."²⁶

The Cristero Revolt was too violent and passionate a struggle to fail to impress writers and poets. Apart from a good number of stories, ballads, and propaganda, this dramatic event has left some novels worth noting.²⁷

24. Ibid., p. 6.

25. Ibid., pp. 115-116.

26. Ibid., p. 135.

27. González, p. 298.

CHAPTER II
THE CRISTERO NOVEL

The Cristero Novel, since it is a novel rooted in the Cristero Revolt, is considered by most literary historians as part of the genre known as the Novel of the Revolution, which, of course, treats the Revolution of 1910 in Mexico. This revolution was one in which the common man came to the attention of the nation for the first time.¹ The novelist, being a product of his time, followed the ideals of the Revolution and produced a literary revolution. Before, during the time of Porfirio Díaz, Mexican literature had been influenced by French literature, since Mexico had broken ties with the Spanish culture during the Independence movement and could not return to her Indian culture.² In fact, before 1910, the Mexican did not notice nor did he want to notice what was his. He followed a system of imitation, rejecting things Mexican and substituting the foreign, which, at the same time, was not essentially understood by him. Before 1910, the Mexican didn't believe that his national characteristics had any value. To him, Porfirio Díaz was a

1. Luis Villoro, "La cultura mexicana de 1910 a 1960," Historia mexicana, X (1960), 200.

2. Luis Leal, "Contemporary Mexican Literature: A Mirror of Social Change," Arizona Quarterly, XVIII, 1962, 202.

symbol of the imitation of the European culture. Seeing the Díaz regime fall in the Revolution of 1910, and also being disillusioned by the same European culture during World War I, the Mexican could not fail to lose faith in European culture. It was then that Mexican writers began to call attention to the Mexican Revolution. From this moment, the Mexican began to realize his own value and explore it so that little by little his painters, philosophers, musicians, and literary men began to paint him. They did not lose time in taking advantage of the rich spring of their own culture which had been kept hidden. The artist used realism so that his work would portray Mexican reality; therefore he tended to express the brutal. His characters are typically Mexican in their face, skin, way of life, even in their manner of loving, fighting, thinking, dying. His heroes are ordinary men, but they are men who are imbued with the ideals of liberty and equality.³ He expresses a horror of the violence of the Revolution; but, behind the feeling of revulsion, there is a feeling of fraternity with the real persons, a feeling of reverence, a call to real charity which is almost physical.⁴ The Mexican Revolution started Mexico on the road from a culture divorced from its main stream of life, in which its

3. F. Rand Morton, Los novelistas de la Revolución Mexicana (México, 1949), pp. 243-245.

4. Jaime Torres Bodet, Perspectiva de la literatura mexicana actual (México, 1928), p. 203.

people were incapable of working together, to one aware of its life stream and capable of expressing its national characteristics.⁵ One can see this tendency in the way the artist paints the Mexican as hopeful but lacking in experience, demonstrating the kind of inexperience which more mature cultures might judge as foolishness or mere perverseness.⁶ One can notice in this literature a similarity to Janus, who presents to the world two different faces. One is a mask of iron, the sign of disillusion, which has an austere, hard outline. The latter is a result of the political atmosphere charged with frequent economic and social overtones. Nevertheless, in spite of the frequent shedding of blood in internal battles and the stupor of minds dulled by too violent passions, there is the mask of hope of redemption, which gives a glimpse of better times in the future.⁷ The majority of the writers present the iron mask since for them the Revolution was a disillusion. For this reason, the general impression the Novel of the Revolution conveys is disenchantment and disillusion. One must bear in mind that disillusion implies a previous illusion. In this case the illusion was the accomplishment of the ideals of the Revolution, an illusion which did not seem to be true because of

5. Villoro, p. 215.

6. Morton, p. 247.

7. Torres Bodet, p. 2.

the slowness with which the Revolution seemed to be realizing its promises. It is interesting that even Mariano Azuela, the most realistic and least inclined to optimism of the novelists of the Revolution, portrays in some of his first books the hope that with the Revolution the people will triumph. His disillusion grows, as does that of other writers, and he fills his books more and more with criticism of the political and social status quo. The fact that he rails against the lamentable social, economic, and political situation indicates that, within and in spite of the disillusion, there still exists hope.⁸

There is no doubt that the Novel of the Revolution has a very definite social and historical value. It presents a wealth of historic facts, a faithful picture of different places, portraits of the principal people involved, anecdotes, eyewitness reports. In short, it is the history of the Revolution, not in its final, most academic form, but in its most faithful-to-life form.⁹

The literary value of the Novel of the Revolution is of least importance. In this genre there is more interest in reflecting life and happenings than in creating a literary work. Down deep, the writer is not interested in form; and, for this reason, form does not receive much attention. The

8. Morton, pp. 250-251.

9. Ibid., pp. 251-253.

value of this novel lies, not in its form, but in its inspiration. Stylistically, the short chapter, which most of these novels use, impedes the impression of greatness, and only once in a while does it constitute any merit by itself. As to the novels themselves, being short, they can be considered more as long stories rather than as novels because they lack the care taken to establish a psychological relation to the reader. Another stylistic element which hinders the greatness of this novel is the treatment of character. More attention is given to the physical description of the person and his immediate surroundings than to his character development. Such a character hangs in air. However, the Novel of the Revolution does have one outstanding literary merit, and it is, without a doubt, its faithful reproduction of the popular language of the Mexican.¹⁰

It is not strange that painting and poetry best express this stage of Mexican history since the Mexican artist is most fluent and spontaneous in expressing detail. Especially in the pictorial revelation of the Revolution, there is a certain candor, freshness and joviality. Octavio Paz has stated that the whole culture seemed to live in a big fiesta, and Orozco is quoted as having said, "La Revolución fue para mí el más alegre y divertido de los carnavales."¹¹

10. Ibid., pp. 253-257.

11. Villoro, pp. 202-203.

To judge the Novel of the Revolution fairly, one must have an intelligent knowledge of the novel and its limitations as a genre and a profound understanding of the Mexican people. The Novel of the Revolution is not only literature, but it is also a history of the Revolution in every sense of the word. One must ask the question, "¿Es justo, desde un principio, pretender buscar una *raison de'être* estética en una literatura que nació de algo que es todo lo contrario?"¹²

The Cristero Novel encompasses the happenings in Mexico between 1926 and 1929, the period of the bloody religious war which took place during the Calles government.¹³ From a literary point of view, the Cristero Novel continues the Novel of the Revolution.¹⁴ And like the Novel of the Revolution, it treats Mexican reality and is a form of social protest. There are two kinds of Cristero Novel. One is in communion with the ideals of those on the battlefield who wanted to regain religious liberty. The other, which came later, does not identify itself so much with the ideals of the Cristero Revolt; instead it takes the whole incident as a war adventure which easily adapts to the novel.¹⁵

12. Morton, p. 241.

13. María del Carmen Millán, Literatura mexicana (México, 1963), p. 277.

14. John S. Brushwood and José Rojas Garcidueñas, Breve historia de la novela mexicana (México, 1959), p. 109.

15. Alberto Valenzuela Rodarte, Historia de la literatura en México (México, 1961), p. 536.

Many of the books which deal with the Cristero Revolt can not be considered novels, since they are written more in the form of memoirs, biographies, chronicles, or propaganda. For example, Entre las patas de los caballos (1953), by Luis Rivero de Val, is a well-told history, true to the facts, but very much like a newspaper story.¹⁶ Rescoldo (1961), by Antonio Estrada is a history of a band of Cristeros in the mountains of Durango. El santo que asesino (1936), by Fernando Robles, tells of the assassination of Obregón by José de León Toral. Prisionero de callistas y cristeros (1956), by José Andrés Lara, is the narration of the part the author took in the Cristero Revolt.

However, the four Cristero works treated in this thesis can be considered novels in that they have a plot and protagonists which develop. These novels can not be considered great novels because they are careless of form in the interest of giving details of the war or of furthering some ideology, whether it be Cristero or anti-Cristero.

16. Ibid., p. 537.

CHAPTER III

HÉCTOR

Héctor, written by a priest named David G. Ramírez under the pseudonym of Jorge Gram, was first printed in Mexico City in 1930. The first edition, for political reasons, had a false place of printing, which was Marfa, Texas, but as clarified by the sixth edition (México, 1953), the 1930 place of printing is now known to be Mexico City.¹

This novel, more than any other Cristero Novel, reflects the intransigency and fanaticism of the Cristeros. It is designed to vilify Calles. The author is principally interested in demonstrating the holiness of the Cristero cause, the purity and heroism of its defenders, and the cruelty and corruption of the government which tried to put down the rebellion. The attitude of the author is so partial and fanatic that the book betrays its purpose to any impartial reader. Because of its lack of objectivity, its historical value is nullified. The author uses his pen with the same furious destructiveness with which his comrades used the rifle and pistol. Not even one of the crimes of the Cristeros is denounced nor even mentioned in the novel, and yet we know that there were crimes committed by them from the

1. Brushwood and Garcidueñas, p. 109.

very fact that there are people still living who are without ears because of the Cristero "desorejadores."

If this novel lacks historical validity because of its fanaticism, it has plenty of action and vigorous dialogue. If it had been written with more serenity and respect for historical truth, it would be one of the most dynamic and dramatic novels of Mexico.²

The work begins historically and later concentrates on the thesis, which is to justify and glorify the Cristero cause. Some of the personages are historical and retain their real names. The love story of Héctor and Consuelo is not peripheral, since both are active protagonists in the heroic work.³

The main plot of the novel is that of Héctor Martínez de los Ríos (named Héctor after the famous defender of Troy), who lives up to his namesake by becoming an important leader of the Cristero Revolt in Zacatecas. His mother, Soledad, and Consuelo Madrigal, who becomes his wife by the end of the novel, serve to encourage and inspire him to dedicate himself to the Cristero cause.

The other women besides Consuelo and Soledad demonstrate the general attitude of the women involved in the

2. González, pp. 298-299.

3. Valenzuela Rodarte, pp. 540-541.

Cristero Revolt and reinforce the characters of Consuelo and Soledad by providing a backdrop which lets these two show themselves to be outstanding.

In general the woman in the Cristero Novel is not behind the scenes, but is taking an active part in the revolt. She is involved merely by the fact that she lives in the society, as clearly seen in the first chapter by the evacuation of the convent of the Colegio Teresiano by Federal forces. The women do not accept the evacuation order without question. They remind the Federal troops that Article 16 of the Constitution of 1917 states: "Nadie puede ser molestado en su persona, familia, domicilio, papeles o posesiones, sino en virtud de mandamiento escrito de la autoridad competente, que funde y motive la causa legal del procedimiento. No podrá librarse ninguna orden de aprehensión o detención ..."⁴ The troops do not have a warrant, and the nuns are perfectly within their rights to refuse to evacuate. They even dare to send a copy of the Constitution to the General in charge of the troops, since no one in the whole group has a copy. Of course, the General fumes at the thought that a group of nuns can make him appear a fool since he does not know the Constitution as well as they.

These women know their rights and will stand up for

4. Gram, Jorge, Héctor (6th ed., México, 1953), p. 26. (In quotations from the four Cristero novels accents have been added to conform to modern usage.)

them, even against the very government which is supposed to protect these rights. They are ready to show the entire world, and especially the government, that "en muchos casos las mujeres tienen más azaduras que los hombres ..."⁵ The women of the town gather together in front of the jailhouse to demand the release of Consuelo and her aunt. The General had called Consuelo and her aunt in to try to dissuade them from circulating any more literature for the Liga. The General had not expected such a violent reaction from the women. In order to keep the peace, he is forced to let Consuelo and her aunt go free.

These women, who will storm a jail and demand that one of their colleagues be set free, are not exceptional women. They are mothers, nuns, and young women who are devout Catholics, incensed to the point of rebellion. One of these is Lola Noriega, a member of Consuelo's chapter of the Liga. She is described as a "palomita que se ha convertido en águila."⁶ Before all of the trouble caused by the Ley Calles, Lola had been a quiet, timid girl. Now she writes to Mary, her schoolmate, telling her of the part she played in helping to distribute Liga literature in Mexico City.

5. Ibid., p. 16.

6. Ibid., p. 138.

Yet these ordinarily quiet, peaceful women have helped to wake up the Catholics of Mexico to rebellion, and in the process they have become dedicated and fanatic about the cause. The following dialogue demonstrates the type of fanaticism these women support:

--Es que asistimos al despertar de un México nuevo --dijo con su fuego habitual y con profunda convicción la recién llegada --y es que se prepara, Dios lo quiera, el momento de vencer, por la buena o por la mala, a fuerza de golpe y de sangre.

-- Jesús nos ampare! -exclamó la Argüelles --Pero eso no es cristiano; eso es horrible.

--Horrible y todo, Jacintita --replicó María en el acto--; pero más feo y más espantoso es que nos arrebatan la fe.

--Con la oración --replicó la beatita.

--A Dios rogando y con el máuser dando ...

--No hay "pero" que valga. Mire señorita--añadió María con ímpetu--, si Francia se ha conservado nación católica, es porque los católicos se armaron contra los protestantes y no se dejaron. Precisamente en la "Santa Liga Católica" ... Aquí ya ha corrido la sangre y va a seguir corriendo.

--La nuestra: seremos mártires.⁷

Even though these women are capable and dedicated, they are far from being masculine or from trying to take any of what are considered male prerogatives, as can be seen by the way Madre Francisca handles her telephone conversation with General Ortuzar:

Llegó tarde al teléfono. La Madre Francisca se le había adelantado y se abría ya de capa, personalmente, con el General Ortuzar. Pálida, con los labios ligeramente trémulos, pero con su rica voz de mezzosoprano, la valiente monja cantóle a la bocina toda una estrofa heroica de entereza femenina.

7. Ibid., p. 140.

--General --le dijo--: le han informado a usted muy mal. No hemos pedido nada, absolutamente nada. Lo que hemos dicho es que no saldremos sino por la fuerza, pues que el artículo 16 de la Constitución está de nuestra parte ...⁴

The women in this novel have shown themselves capable of doing their part to help a cause they believe just. They collect ammunition, make clothes, distribute propaganda, help organize leagues. Neverthelèss, their main function is to inspire and encourage the men to support the cause of defending religion. They realize that as women they have certain limitations, as can be seen by the following dialogue:

-- Ah! Si en toda la repùblica fueran tan cumplidos como somos en Zacatecas, en tres días los-tumbábamos a puro boycott ...

--Pues gracias a Dios que sí lo son. Dice Guillermo López que las noticias de toda la repùblica son excelentes ... El Gobierno siente ya el vacío, se asfixia, se ahoga.

--Por eso comienza a matar gente--dijo la Argüelles.

--¡Sí, ya lo sabemos! Pero si no entiende con el boycott, ya buscaremos "el otro" sistema que le arda más ...

--Somos mujeres, tú.

--Pero también hay hombres --dijo Consuelito --. Yo conozco uno que lo es de verdad.⁹

Consuelo Madrigal and Soledad Martínez de los Ríos, the main women protagonists, demonstrate that the main function of the women in this novel is to support their men, even though both of these women are quite capable of doing much for the cause in their own right.

8. Ibid., p. 33.

9. Ibid., p. 141.

The novel clearly shows that Soledad has been a dedicated mother to Héctor. She has made every effort to bring him up in a very Christian, saintly environment. The author relates one incident which shows how strong the Christian influence is which Soledad has inculcated into Héctor:

Por eso un día en que el maestro no había asistido a la escuela y en que los muchachos habían pasado la tarde de su cuenta y riesgo, Héctor, al volver a casa apenas cerró la puerta, sintió un nudo en la garganta, y al mirar a su madre dulce, bella y serena como nunca la había visto, rompió en llanto y se arrojó en sus brazos, y con la voz entrecortada, como miedoso, como indignado:

--¡Mamacita del alma! --exclamó--; Pedro Téllez me ha enseñado una cosa que yo no sabía . . .

La madre lo comprendió todo. Y lloró con él unas lágrimas mil veces más ardientes.

Al día siguiente madre e hijo comulgaron juntos.

Y Héctor no volvió a poner el pie en aquella escuela maldita.¹⁰

Soledad is also an ambitious mother. She wants her son to be like the Greek hero, Héctor, just as his grandfather had dreamed. She thinks to herself, "¡Héctor el defensor de Troya, estaba ahí! ¡Ella misma lo había nutrido con la leche cristiana de sus pechos! . . ." ¹¹

Because of his mother, Héctor decides to dedicate himself to the Cristero cause. When he sees her wounded because of the skirmish at the Colegio Teresiano with the Federal troops, he breaks into tears, but when he collects

10. Ibid., p. 49.

11. Ibid., p. 56.

himself, he swears, "¡Oh, Cristo! ¡Por Ti, por mi madre! Te juro que éstas serán mis últimas lágrimas de mujer. Desde hoy en adelante, sólo pensaré en defenderte a ti y a ella ... ¡como hombre!"¹² Later on Soledad says to him to encourage him to carry on the fight, "Hoy la santidad consiste en luchar por Cristo; ¡lucha, pues, por El y cumplirás el ideal de tu madre ...!"¹³ Héctor replies, "¡Gracias, madre querida! ¡Si ésa es la madre mejicana, no faltarán caudillos a los hijos de Dios ...!"¹⁴ After this talk with his mother he feels that he can take on the whole world single-handed. He says:

--¡Soy dichoso, soy grande! Seré invencible, seré triunfante! Todos los enemigos son pequeños y delez-nables ... Mi fe, mi ardor, mi resolución, mi juventud, todo vale más que ellos ... ¡Calles, Calles ...! ¡Pigmeo cruel y ensoberbecido, porque te soportamos con miedo y timidez! ¡Ya verás cuando nosotros, bien organizados y bien pertrechados, te hagamos rendir a nuestros pies ...!"¹⁵

Consuelo Madrigal also serves to inspire Hector to fight for the cause, but in the capacity of sweetheart and, later, as his wife. She is a beautiful, well-to-do, aristocratic girl who has been educated in the United States. Yet she has had the misfortune of losing both her mother and

12. Ibid., p. 91.

13. Ibid., p. 165.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., p. 166.

later her father when she was quite young, which matured her judgment more quickly. Because of her misfortune, she is capable of sympathizing with the unfortunate. In spite of her unhappy youth, she has grown to be a very charming young lady and has always had plenty of suitors. Her present suitor, before she falls in love with Héctor, is Pepe Soberón, the insipid son of a rich businessman. She realizes that he leaves much to be desired, since he lacks by far the spirit she has, but she hopes to capitalize on his good qualities. She is a woman of action. She leads the Zacatecas branch of the Liga; she directs the Catholic youth group (A.C.J.M.); and she does not hesitate to take part in the skirmishes herself. In fact, she is put in jail twice for her Cristero activities.

She is well-liked by all. Her League members idolize her; and when she is put in jail, they march to the jailhouse to demand her release. The boys of the A.C.J.M. await her messages asking for help. Yet she is still a young lady; and when Héctor asks some A.C.J.M. boys to walk her home, they feel like Don Quixote guarding his lady fair. She responds by being gracious in going to have a snack with them in an inexpensive restaurant, and by offering to lend them money when they discover that they do not have enough to pay the bill. She is charming and tactful in many instances, but one example which stands out is when she tactfully goes with

Héctor to ask Padre Martín for money, even though she knows that Padre Martín does not support the Cristero cause. She gracefully leaves the two to talk together. When Héctor returns, after having been refused financial aid for the cause, Consuelo is there waiting to help him continue the battle. She shows a democratic attitude in the way she mixes with all classes, even though she belongs to the social elite. One instance when she shows this democratic attitude is the following, which occurs after she has been released from jail at the insistence of the townswomen:

De pronto, a codazos y empujones se abrió paso entre la apretada y bullente muchedumbre, una tosca y vulgar mujer: era la Chata de la fonda que logró llegar hasta Consuelito, y presentándole algo que llevaba cubierto en el delantal, le dice, con el acento más suplicante del mundo:

--Niña tómese estas enchiladitas que le llevaba yo a la prisión.

Y en un gesto de demócrata finísima, con dos deditos apenas, tomó Consuelo una enchilada roja y caliente como la sangre de aquella turba y comenzó a engullirla sabrosamente en medio de la más entusiasta algazara de sus ingenuas admiradoras.

Una viejecita temblorosa se acercó entonces también a Consuelo.

--Niña --le dijo--, déjeme besarle la mano. Y cuando guste, nó más háblenos.

Y volviéndose a la multitud, añade:

--¿Verdad, mujeres?

--¡Sí!!! --contestaron frenéticas las trescientas voces dilacerantes.¹⁶

In this incident, Consuelo not only demonstrates a democratic attitude but also a certain genius for leading people, which she displays on so many occasions. Besides being amiable,

16. Ibid., pp. 107-108.

she is spirited to the point that when she gives a command, she is obeyed enthusiastically. When she sends Luisillo to deliver the note to General Ortúzar sending him a copy of the Constitution, he goes eagerly, glad to have the opportunity to do something for Consuelo, even though he knows the mission is dangerous, and even though he returns with his back full of scars from machete wounds.

In everything Consuelo is a model. She is perfect, especially in her love affair with Héctor. The relationship begins simply as friendship, and gradually Hector comes to recognize Consuelo's good qualities and falls in love with her. They are twin souls in that they are both leaders who are working for the same cause. The difference in social class between Consuelo and Héctor bothers Héctor, but Consuelo aptly reassures him that no importance should be attributed to the difference, since the important thing is that they are dedicated to the same ideals. Consuelo very tactfully encourages Héctor and convinces him that they are equals. For instance, she even comes to meet him at a window of her house to say good-bye before he leaves for Mexico City, and he finds her waiting for him in a peasant costume. She, the aristocratic Consuelo Madrigal, does not hesitate to accompany him to the station, although it is late at night. That very night Héctor declares his love for her, and she encourages him. They are married in a secret ceremony; and

directly after the ceremony, Héctor has to flee to escape the Federalists who pursue him.

Consuelo inspires Héctor to carry on his work for the cause. Toward the end of the novel, Consuelo and Soledad are on a train bound for Guadalajara, which is also carrying a convoy of Federal troops. Héctor is leading the Cristeros who are to bomb the train, and he learns that the two women he loves are on the train. He almost weakens to the point of letting the train go untouched, but he receives a note from Consuelo telling him to attack the train. He reacts as follows: "¡Consuelo!... ¡Mi virgen! ¡Mi esposa! ¡Mi capitana!... ¡Tú sí eres valiente! ¡Tú sí eres cristiana! ¡Cristo Rey te corone, porque eres tú la que combates y la que triunfas en esta noche memorable ...!"¹⁷ Héctor is rewarded for his love of country, since Don Tomás, one of his loyal captains, manages to unhook the car in which the women are traveling before Héctor blows the train to pieces.

The story ends happily, since the peace is signed between Church and State. The war is ended, Héctor and Consuelo have each other, and all are free to practice their religion. The entire novel is very idealistic and very colored so that the historical facts which are presented are shaded heavily to serve as Cristero propaganda. Consuelo and Soledad, as all of the characters in the novel, are

17. Ibid., p. 284.

idealized to the point that they are not characters, but types and symbols.

It is interesting to notice that, not only "¡Viva Cristo Rey!" is the cry of the Cristeros in this novel, but also "¡Santa María de Guadalupe, esperanza nuestra, salva a nuestra Patria!"¹⁸ "¡Viva la Virgen Santísima de Guadalupe! ..!"¹⁹ and "¡Viva Cristo Rey...! ¡Viva la Virgen de Guadalupe...! ¡Viva Méjico!"²⁰ In the latter, the order of those mentioned in the exclamation--Christ, the Virgin of Guadalupe, and Mexico--is interesting to notice. Throughout the novel, the Virgin of Guadalupe is implored as the spiritual mother, the one who will inspire, comfort, and direct her spiritual children, just as Soledad, the symbol in this novel of the Mexican mother, inspires, comforts and directs Héctor.

18. Ibid., p. 88.

19. Ibid., p. 223.

20. Ibid., p. 269.

CHAPTER IV

LA VIRGEN DE LOS CRISTEROS

The life of Fernando Robles, author of La virgen de los cristeros, is interesting since it influences his novels, which contain many autobiographical references. Tracing his life back from the publication of La virgen de los cristeros, published in 1934 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the connection between his life and this novel will become evident. The novel was written in Montevideo, Uruguay, two years before its publication, during two months of Robles' exile from Argentina. Robles had been exiled because of his outspoken newspaper articles against the dictatorship of General Uriburu.

Robles' novels are thesis novels in which the ideals of liberty and democracy predominate. It is not strange that he is dedicated to such ideals since he attended, from 1920 to 1927, Columbia University in New York, London University in England, The Sorbonne in Paris, and The University of Rome in Italy, at which he assimilated the fundamental principles upon which liberty and democracy are based. In La virgen de los cristeros, young Don Carlos de Fuentes y Alba, who has been educated in the United States, expresses through his actions the author's belief in the democratic processes, but more particularly in his monologues in which he expresses his

hopes for the future of his country and of his ranch. Carlos is full of modern, progressive ideas, but he is thwarted at every turn by the political corruption of Mexico during the Cristero Revolt.

After his studies abroad, Fernando Robles returned to his native state of Guanajuato to live with his mother. His father had died during his adolescence, assassinated during the Mexican Revolution simply for his money, and not even for political reasons. Carmen, in La virgen de los cristeros, is also orphaned of her father during the Mexican Revolution, a circumstance which leaves a permanent mark on her personality.

It has been said that Fernando Robles took part in the Cristero Revolt. He became involved when the government appropriated forty-five acres of his small ranch, and he could not obtain justice through legal channels. He fled to the mountains with his own band, which was independent of both the Cristero movement and the Government. In retreating to the mountains with his men, Robles was simply standing up for elementary principles of justice which he considered violated by the expropriation of his land. He was obviously not in agreement with the agrarian reform policy of re-
apportioning the land, a sentiment which Carlos, in La virgen de los cristeros, expresses. Carlos too leads a band of men to the mountains to protest the expropriation of his land.

Only later in the novel is Carlos persuaded to join the Cristero cause.

After his short rebellious adventure, Fernando Robles left the country with permission from the Government; and from then on he began his career as a newspaperman, first in New York, writing in English, and later in South America, writing in Spanish. In La virgen de los cristeros Carlos departs from Mexico, disillusioned by the corruption of the Government.

Even though Fernando Robles is not actively in favor of the Cristero cause, as is Padre Ramírez, the author of Héctor, he does take the side of the Cristeros rather than that of the Government.¹ He criticizes the atrocities committed by both sides, but his main protagonist, Carlos, joins the Cristeros for a short while before he leaves the country.

Since this novel is a thesis novel, it contains a weakness characteristic of this type of novel: the characters lack sufficient life of their own.² Carmen is a young fanatic who consecrates her life to the triumph of the "Holy Cause," and Carlos presents a more tolerant, humanitarian viewpoint. In various dialogues these two characters

1. González, p. 300.

2. Brushwood and Garcidueñas, p. 110.

present their respective interpretations of the spiritual and social realities in Mexico.³

The plot of the novel begins when Carlos, a young Mexican educated in the United States, returns to his native land to take over his aging father's ranch. He is filled with youthful idealism, faith in the ideal of liberty and the democratic processes, and a desire to help develop his country in accordance with his ideals. He is thwarted by the all-pervading political corruption of Mexico in every attempt to modernize his ranch and improve living conditions for the peons that work the ranch. During the course of his struggles, Carlos meets Carmen, a schoolteacher who works for the Cristero cause. She is brought to live at Carlos' ranch by his father Don Pedro, who wants to make her his wife, but who decides to accept her as a daughter. Carlos and Carmen fall in love, have a physical relationship (which makes Carmen, "la virgen de los cristeros," no longer a virgin), separate because Carmen feels duty-bound to leave to work for the Cristero cause, meet again just as Carmen is dying from wounds incurred as a passenger on a train carrying Federal troops, which is attacked by Cristero troops led by Carlos. Carlos, broken-hearted by the death of Carmen, renounces the Cristero Revolt as contrary to his ideals of democracy and humanitarianism; and he leaves the country, this time with

3. González, p. 301.

all of his illusions blasted and his faith in the near future of Mexico broken.

The women in this novel, as in Héctor, assume the role of supporting the men. Carmen, the only woman who stands out as a character, serves to inspire Felipe, the main foreman of Carlos' ranch, to lead the Cristero Revolt of the area. Most important, she supports Carlos in his idealistic plans for the ranch. On her own account, she leads the women in the making of clothes, in the carrying of messages, and in the other services the women can render to the cause.

Carmen is similar to Consuelo in Héctor in that she is well educated and good looking. She is described as being fairly tall, fair, brunette, fine-featured. In other words, she has the physical appearance of what is considered an aristocratic type in Mexico. Felipe, the foreman who is in love with her, considers her beyond his reach because she is a young lady from the city and is "bien leída y escribida."

Her youth has not been a particularly happy one. Her father, a poet and lawyer, who in his youth had been a leader in the opposition to Porfirio Díaz, had united with Madero and had become the Governor of the state. Later, he was killed because of his political connections. At this time Carmen was ten years old. Her uncle brought her to Mexico City and took charge of her education. Carmen, prematurely chastised by life, gave herself over to her books as an

escape. Her mother, a very religious woman, dedicated herself to her Catholic religious duties, abandoning her daughter. She was disturbed, however, to see that her daughter was so serious. It grieved her to think that Carmen was so much like her father. Carmen began to work for the Cristero cause because it stood for liberty of conscience to her, the creed for which her father was killed. Because of her unhappy youth, Carmen had been deprived of the normal share of love a child should have; and as a result, as an adult she feels that she is a forgotten woman. She feels that she has been cheated, and therefore wants revenge. She wants to avenge the death of her father by helping the Cristero cause, and also she wants to avenge the injustices done her country by the corrupt government which deprives the people of their religious liberties. Actually, she most wants to avenge herself, the forgotten woman.

She does not hope to find love, and for this reason she goes with Don Pedro, Carlos' father, to the ranch to become his wife, even though she does not love him. The marriage is prevented by Felipe, who tells Don Pedro that Carmen is not for a rough old rancher such as himself, and by the arrival of Carlos. Carmen becomes a member of the household, and Don Pedro gives her an inheritance as he would give to a daughter. She helps with the secretarial work of the ranch, serves as hostess, nurses Carlos when he is

wounded. In short, she almost becomes a member of the family.

Before she went to live at the Fuentes y Alba ranch, she lived alone with her housekeeper Inés and ran a school for the children of the area. She also led a group of Cristeras, who make clothing and carry messages for the cause under the cover of music lessons. Even when she goes to live at the ranch, she continues both her teaching and her Cristero activities, again under the pretext of giving music lessons.

She is a strong-willed woman. Although she comes to love Carlos, she turns against him because he will not join the Cristero conspiracy because he believes in the democratic principle of supporting the elected government. She not only turns against Carlos, but she offers to go with Felipe as his woman if he will lead the Cristero movement in the Bajío region around Guanajuato. Felipe, because he loves her, decides to leave Don Pedro, who has raised him as he would a son, to lead the Cristero forces. In the meantime, before it is time for Carmen to leave with Felipe, Felipe sees Carmen at the bedside of the wounded Carlos, declaring her love for him; so Felipe leaves without her, cognizant that she is above him socially.

Even though she is strong-willed, she is a very emotional woman. She cries from nervousness and indecision when she has to decide if she will go with Don Pedro to his ranch or not. She cries again, just as a child would in a strange

house, when she is brought to Don Pedro's ranch for the first time. She expresses opinions which are based purely on emotion, such as the following:

--¿Pero cómo? Se llama a los padres, y no hacen caso; se advierte a la autoridad del distrito, y tampoco atiende ... En verdad lo único que les interesa es que exista la escuela, para contarla en la estadística y poder anunciar pomposamente: ¡Tenemos tantos miles de escuelas rurales! Pero la instrucción, el que en realidad se eduquen los niños del campo, los tiene sin cuidado ... Es como el agrarismo: lo que le interesa al Gobierno es confiscar y repartir, porque ésa es su mejor arma política; pero el beneficio del campesino y la producción nacional no le preocupa. Ya habrá visto usted los ejidos vecinos: están abandonados o mal trabajados, porque los ejidatarios saben que el fruto se perderá en manos del jefe agrarista y del representante del Gobierno ... Aquí en nuestro país todo es una comedia más o menos bien representada; sólo una revolución, la ...

Carlos miró a Carmen con aire incrédulo, y ésta, cortada no terminó la frase.⁴

--Pero el Gobierno --interrumpió Carmen-- nunca entenderá eso, porque los líderes emplean a este semi-analfabeto como un instrumento. ¡Ya verá usted cuando conozca a los jefes agraristas! Nada de comparables con los de la revolución rusa; aquí son simplemente los antiguos bandidos que han reorganizado sus gavillas a la sombra del Gobierno. ¡Ojalá que no tenga usted que convencerse por su propia experiencia! Al Gobierno y a la nación les falta una moral; la teníamos en tiempo del virreinato, era el catolicismo, pero desde la Revolución de la Reforma la hemos venido perdiendo debido a un liberalismo de segunda mano adquirido en Europa. Ahora mismo ya ve usted la persecución religiosa: los sacerdotes son cazados como perros rabiosos y los católicos sufren toda clase de atropellos y vejaciones ... ¿Y todo por qué? La Iglesia perdió sus bienes desde 1857 y no existe ninguna vinculación entre ella y el Estado; la instrucción misma es laica, ¿entonces? Lo que se persigue es la moral católica, la única barrera para la norteamericanización completa ...⁵

4. Fernando Robles, La virgen de los cristeros (México, 1959), p. 65.

5. Ibid., p. 66.

Toward the end of the novel she becomes hysterical when she realizes that she is wounded and that she and her unborn baby might die.

She acts young, in that she calls for her mother when Don Pedro tries to seduce her, "¡Quiero irme! ¡Déjeme, quiero irme! ¡Madre! ¡Madre!"⁶ She likes to dance with Carlos, and she completely forgets about time when they are together. She is charming and gay in a fresh, youthful manner, and she is outspoken and daring in a way which characterizes youth. She likes to swim, play tennis, play medicine ball, and she serves as coach for the basketball and water polo teams.

As is the custom of the young, she is impetuous. She supports the Cristero Revolt because it is a rebellion against the government. She impulsively decides to go to Don Pedro's ranch with him and worry about the consequences later. She offers to go with Felipe as his woman if he will lead the Cristero cause. She falls in love with Carlos, has a passionate affair with him, goes off to help the Cristero cause, and looks forward to being a good wife to Carlos and mother to the "cowboy" she bears.

She is not a paragon of virtue in the sense that she is not prudent, chaste, nor constant. It is ironic that she is "La virgen de los cristeros" even though she is not a virgin. The irony of her situation is clearly seen in the

following words of Felipe, "Por favor, Carlos, déjame aquí y en cuanto tomen Colima ven a recogerme ... La Virgen del Carmen tiene que hacer el milagro de que resista ..., por el cowboy y por ti ... ¡Ahora cumplamos con nuestro deber!"⁷

Even though she has shown herself to be a frightened, childlike girl, a charming flirt, a rebel, a dedicated fanatic, an impetuous, changeable young woman, she shows that she can be a mature woman when she takes compassion on a wounded Federal soldier, and when she lies dying and yet tells Carlos to leave her to lead the Cristeros in battle. As a consequence, she dies without him near her.

She serves the same purpose that Consuelo and Soledad served in Héctor. That purpose is to support, encourage and inspire Carlos and Felipe to fight for the Cristero cause.

However, the one most outstanding characteristic of Carmen is that she represents the woman who is the victim of all the brutality which accompanies the recurrent civil wars of Mexico. In her youth, she is blighted and left orphaned of a father because of the Revolution. As a young woman she is killed fighting for a cause which she believes will avenge her father's death by establishing liberty of conscience, the ideal for which her father died. The author clearly indicates that Carmen represents the victim of the political corruption of the Mexican government when he asks:

7. Ibid., p. 260.

¿No era también ella una flor abrazada por la misma hoguera que encendía todo el país? No; los responsables no estaban ahí, no eran ella ni los agentes secretos de los católicos, ni los mismos agraristas ...; los responsables eran los falsos caudillos que sin escrúpulo alguno, para satisfacer únicamente sus personales ambiciones, inventaban problemas que no existían o desnaturalizaban los verdaderos. A esos caudillos era a los que se debía suprimir como elementos disolventes de la familia mexicana, como obstáculos a la marcha de la nación, que debería ser útil al bienestar de la humanidad.⁸

8. Ibid., p. 144.

CHAPTER V
LOS CRISTEROS

José Guadalupe de Anda, author of Los cristeros, was born on December 12, 1880, in San Juan de los Lagos, in the state of Jalisco, in a region called Los Altos.¹ As most of the Cristero novelists, he participated in the internal conflicts of Mexico from his youth. After he finished school, he was chief of a station of the National Railway until 1914, when he left to take part in the Revolution in a civil capacity. In 1918, he was elected Representative to Congress for the Los Altos region. After that, he served as Senator of Jalisco until 1930. His love for literature was born in this period of his life. He was especially influenced by all the incidents of the Cristero Revolt which surrounded him, especially since Los Altos was one of the regions most affected by the revolt. He had always had a natural love for literature since his father had been a writer and teacher, but he did not begin to write until middle age.² After Los cristeros (1937), he continued his writing career with Los bragados (1942), in which some of the characters of Los

1. Julia Hernández, Novelistas y cuentistas de la Revolución (México, 1960), p. 25.

2. José Guadalupe de Anda, Los cristeros, pról. Octavio G. Barreda (México, 1941), p. 11.

cristeros reappear, Juan del Riel (1943), and Otras obras (1945).³ He died in 1950.⁴

Los cristeros or La guerra santa en los Altos, his first work, was written when he was a literary unknown and when he did not belong to any literary group. The very title of the novel was an obstacle to its acceptance among the elite of the country. Nevertheless, it is becoming better known by the general reading public. It clearly belongs to the Novel of the Revolution since it has the same social consciousness, the same methods of description, the same angle of focus on scenes and characters, the same taste to flee from verbalisms or superfluous explanations, and the ability to reach the center of the question.⁵

In Los cristeros we see the Cristero Revolt from the inside, in all of its ugliness. Here lies the documentary value of the work. The author's dialogue is agile and true-to-life. In fact the language of his characters is an indelible document for philologists to study. It is so colloquial in the district, that de Anda includes a glossary of the terms not contained in a dictionary of the Spanish Academy of the Language.

3. Hernández, p. 26.

4. Brushwood and Garcidueñas, p. 111.

5. De Anda, p. 12.

His characters are described by a direct method in which the author does not delve into interior conflicts. None of his characters is fully developed. Nevertheless, they are outlined very well. He opens the book by introducing almost all of the characters. The members of the Bermúdez family represent divergent and opposing attitudes which divide the family. This family could well symbolize the Mexican family during civil strife, although the author has not attempted to project that far.⁶

Doña María Engracia shows herself to be a dedicated fanatic for the Cristero cause when she denies water and salt to all who support or even sympathize with the government. Policarpo, an ambitious man of action, takes the Cristero Revolt as an opportunity to make himself renowned. Uncle Alejo, an old man, refuses to take part at all. Felipe, an ex-seminarian, who is the most amiable and most cultured of the family, is the only one who dares to condemn the Cristero butchering and defy the anathemas of Doña María Engracia. Don Ramón, meek and believing, understands nothing of the revolt; yet he follows the "padrecitos," whom, in good faith, he believes to be mistreated by the Government.⁷

The description of the cruelty and ferocity of both sides makes this the most faithful-to-reality of the Cristero

6. González, p. 303.

7. Ibid., p. 304.

novels, since most of the others are written in evident partiality to the cause of the rebels.⁸ De Anda disapproves of the crimes of the Government as he does those of the priests and their followers. If the Cristeros seem more bloodthirsty in his novel, it is because they were in reality. The soldiers of the Government shot their prisoners, but they did not torture nor mutilate them as the Cristeros did.⁹

The plot of the novel is that the priests convince the men of Los Altos that it is their Catholic duty to fight for the Cristero cause. The men, led by Policarpo, form a band of Cristeros which becomes successful, but also very brutal and cruel. At last, after a history of battles won in the name of the cause, Policarpo is betrayed by Father Vega, who is envious of Policarpo's popularity with the people. Father Vega accuses him of treason and condemns him to death. Back on the ranch, the peons, as well as Policarpo's family, are ordered off the lands by the Government so that the countryside can be cleared of Cristeros. The farmers abandon their homes and move to town where they are badly treated by the townspeople. Because of the Government's action, the number of Cristero forces doubles and becomes more determined. The Bermúdez family, the central unit of

8. Brushwood and Garcidueñas, p. 111.

9. González, p. 302.

resistence of the novel, is left in a sorry state by the end of the book. Policarpo has been assassinated, Dona María Engracia has died of grief, and Don Ramón, Policarpo's father, has gone mad. All is destruction and despair.

Since the characters are not examined in depth in this novel, but are merely outlined, they appear more as types than as personalities. The woman in this novel, especially, is treated as a type. She is presented as the long-suffering Mexican peasant woman. She is ample of figure, as can be seen from the following description of Doña Melitona: "Doña Melitona, la esposa de don Chón, con sus anchas enaguas de olán al vuelo, botines de charol rechina-dores y un monumental chongo anudado con un listón carmesí, va hacia todo lados, moviendo rítmicamente sus robustas asentaderas."¹⁰

She suffers all the hardships a peasant woman suffers. She is left at home to fend for herself when her men leave to fight, as Timoteo laments, "Afigúrate como iré yo, habiendo dejao a Feliciana, mi mujer, ya pa'salir de su cuidao; sola, sin quien le dé un trago de agua. ¡Hazme el favor...!"¹¹ She is left to worry that she may never see her men again: "Las mujeres de la ranchería abandonan los metates y se asoman a las puertas de los jacales con la

10. De Anda, p. 102.

11. Ibid., p. 89.

ilusión de que puedan venir allí sus hombres. Se paran en las puntas de los pies o trepan sobre las piedras de las cercas; alargan la cabeza y escrutan con ansiedad las caras de los que llegan."¹² Often her worst fears become reality: "¡Padre! --se abraza una mujer a las rodillas del cura, bañada en lágrimas y sangre--, ¡me han matado a mi marido y a mis hijos ...!"¹³ She carries at least her share of the burden of the war, as can be seen from the description of the exodus of the peons from their homes to the town, "Las mujeres, algunas, lanzan gritos insólitos de desesperación; otras, sollozan impetrando a los santos; las más vienen llorando en silencio. Llevan en los brazos a los críos que no saben andar, y cargado a la espalda un lío de harapos."¹⁴ "Otras mujeres van tocadas con anchos sombreros de pelo o de petate; llevan colgados a los hombros manojos de pollos y gallinas, o van arriando al puerquito cebado o al borrego sancho, a la espalda su montón de trapos y su guitarra, todo su patrimonio."¹⁵

The woman even fights, if necessary, as we are told by one of the peasants, "Y si no sobramos ninguno de los hombres, quedan nuestras mujeres que también saben echar

12. Ibid., p. 179.

13. Ibid., p. 228.

14. Ibid., p. 249.

15. Ibid., p. 250.

bala... Mah ...!"¹⁶ In fact, the woman does fight alongside Policarpo and his men, "Después del agarre de San Julián donde hasta las mujeres del pueblo combatieron al lado de Policarpo, contra los pelones, a quienes derrotó completamente, salió para San Isidro, arrastrando los laureles."¹⁷

The woman represents the moralizing influence in the society. She shows a strong sense of duty to religious teachings. She encourages her men to make the pilgrimage in which the priests convince them to fight for Christ the King. As Chancharras says, "Nicolasa, mi mujer, dende ayer no me ha dejao en paz, haciéndome cargos de concencia si no venía a la pelegrinación. Y usté sabe, don Ramón, lo que son las mujeres ... Sobre todo cuando train encima a los padrecitos, no lo dejan a uno ni resollar; todo el santo día están friegue y friegue ..."¹⁸ The women also demonstrate a strong sense of moral duty. An example is that of Doña Melitona who judges certain dances immoral. She says to Toribio, "Me vas a hacer el favor de dispensarme, ¡pero lo que es aquí en mi casa no se valsan esos bailes tan pecaminosos ...! ¡Muncho menos estando aquí los padrecitos ...!"¹⁹ Even the prostitutes have an allegiance to the cause. One asks Policarpo,

16. Ibid., p. 123.

17. Ibid., p. 234.

18. Ibid., p. 36.

19. Ibid., p. 104.

"Oigan: ¿quis que ya va a'ber misa otra vez, y ya van a volver los padrecitos?"²⁰

The entire female population puts its faith in God and his representatives on earth, the priests. In their hours of need or in times of fear, they pray with a vengeance. When the government planes fly overhead delivering leaflets ordering the peasants to leave their homes, "Una mujer saca la vela encendida y suena la campana, y otra alarga el brazo y con un cuchillo marca una cruz en al aire, diciendo: 'Yo te conjuro, enemigo malo, en el Nombre de Dios Padre, de Dios Hijo y de Dios Espíritu Santo!'"²¹

Doña María Engracia, Policarpo's grandmother, and Doña Trinidad, his mother, are typical of the peasant women just described. However, they each have certain distinctive characteristics of their own. María Engracia is outspoken in favor of the Cristero cause. She accuses Uncle Alejo of siding with the Government because he is not for putting the Government's schoolteachers in jail. She says to him, "Tú cállate, viejo cara de cuajo ...! ¡Arrastro!, que en lugar de estar con el rosario en la mano, pidiendo a Dios misericordia, porque ya andas 'dando las tres y últimas,' con las patas como quien dice en sepultura, estás defendiendo a los

20. Ibid., p. 49.

21. Ibid., p. 246.

maldecidos judíos del gobierno ..."²² She is a devoted and strong mother to Don Ramón. When he returns bloody and beaten from a foray with a band of cristeros, who take his horse from him and beat him, she comforts him and tells him to suffer in the name of the Lord. She says, "¡Hijo! --rompe al fin el silencio doña Engracia--, hay que conformarse y sufrirlo todo por Dios."²³ She finally dies of grief, seeing Don Ramón go mad and hearing of Policarpo's assassination by Father Vega.

Doña Trinidad is an example of a good peasant wife. She is always described as doing something useful for the family. She is described as serving dinner: "Una robusta campesina de senos abultados y gruesos brazos desnudos, aviva a resoplidos la lumbre del comal para que no falten las tortillas que engullen con envidiable apetito y asombrosa rapidez los tres rancheros."²⁴ It is she, who, trying to keep the family out of trouble, brings the wrong paper to show the band of Cristeros, which, as a result, sacks the house and beats Don Ramón, who is trying to save his horse. She brings the wrong paper simply because she does not know how to read. After the disaster, she tries to comfort her husband, Don Ramón, and inspire him not to give up. She says,

22. Ibid., p. 21.

23. Ibid., p. 188.

24. Ibid., p. 25.

"Ramón, ya no te apures tanto, --se le acerca doña Trinidad palmoteándole la espalda--. Realiza los animales que quedan, vende cuanto aiga y vámonos al pueblo."²⁵ Besides being a good wife to Don Ramón, she is a devoted mother to Policarpo. When she hears of his death, she grieves uncontrollably.

Marta Torres is the only woman protagonist in the novel who is at all similar to Consuelo in Héctor and Carmen in La virgen de los cristeros. She too is educated, daring, and independent. However, she appears and disappears in fifteen pages. She first appears bringing ammunition to Policarpo's band of Cristeros. She is a very handsome woman, and Policarpo falls in love with her. She returns several times bringing more ammunition, and she and Policarpo proceed to have a very passionate affair. One day she does not come to the camp because the Federal troops have arrested her. Policarpo goes looking for her in Guadalajara, and he learns that she has been exiled to the Islas Mariás, a prison much like Alcatraz, from which nobody ever escapes. Of course, upon hearing of Marta's fate, Policarpo falls into a state of grief.

Even though Marta Torres fits into the pattern of the Cristero heroine which we have seen in Héctor and in La virgen de los cristeros, she plays a small role in Los cristeros. The main woman protagonist in Los cristeros is the peasant woman.

25. Ibid., p. 190.

CHAPTER VI

PENSATIVA

In 1944 Jesús Goytortúa y Santos won the Lanz Duret Prize for Pensativa, a novel which deals with the Cristero Revolt in retrospect. His second novel, Lluvia roja, published in 1947, won the Ciudad de México Prize. Both novels reveal an adherence to the romantic tradition, probably one of the reasons for their enjoying such favor among the reading public.¹ Pensativa is, without a doubt, the work which has had the widest circulation of the Cristero novels. Nevertheless, as frequently happens, the novel which sells the most is not always of the best quality. Its characters and setting are artificial, and its ideals are false, but Goytortúa knows how to narrate and capture the attention and interest of the reader, even though what he relates may be false and superficial. In Lluvia roja, the characters are more consistent than those in Pensativa, but the theme lacks the mystery which helps the theme of the latter.²

The interest value of Pensativa does not lie in the portrayal of character, nor in the description of atmosphere,

1. Brushwood and Garcidueñas, p. 113.

2. Ibid., p. 112.

nor in ideological values. It lies in the technical skill the author employs. The plot is well planned and developed. The novel itself is a combination of various types of novel. It is essentially a love story combined with a historical theme, the Cristero Revolt. It has a tinge of the mystery novel, calculated to intrigue and sustain the attention to the last page.³ Throughout the novel, the author seems to be defending the Cristero ideology, when actually he is letting the Cristeros expose themselves. In no other work do we see so clearly the great intolerance and the implacable ferocity of these "soldiers of Christ." The author treats the period after the Cristero Revolt. Therefore, the conflict is seen in retrospect with all the hate of the fracas clearly evident. Not only the government and the liberals are objects of hate for the Cristeros, but also the priests and bishops who signed the peace. The author is so deft in masking his intention to expose the hatred behind the Cristero movement that the reader may not realize at first what the author's intention may be. Nevertheless, what predominates in Pensativa is not the exposure of the barbarity of the Cristeros, but the love story.⁴

The love story begins when Roberto returns from Mexico City to visit his ailing aunt at Santa Clara de las

3. González, p. 310.

4. Ibid., p. 311.

Rocas. He soon realizes that his aunt Enedina, his cousin Jovita, his childhood nurse Genoveva, and the family doctor are determined to marry him off to Pensativa. He meets Pensativa and is fascinated by her mysterious air; so he tries to find out all he can about her and about the Cristero Revolt which took place in the area. He learns that Pensativa's brother, Carlos, had been a Cristero leader and had died in the war, that there was a woman called the Generala who fought at Carlos' side, that his cousin Cornelio had also been a Cristero leader. He keeps trying to find out more about the events of the war because he suspects that Pensativa was involved in it more than she will admit. In the meantime, the conspiracy of the relatives and friends and the charms of the mysterious girl triumph, and Roberto falls in love. The day of the wedding, in the middle of the ceremony, Muñoz, a blind man, and Alacrán, a man who had lost his nose and ears at the hands of the Cristeros, appear and identify Pensativa as the Generala. Roberto is repelled and refuses to marry Pensativa. Her Cristero followers want to kill him and Muñoz and Alacrán on the spot, but Pensativa prevents it and has them promise to respect the lives of the three. Roberto learns that Pensativa had sent him a letter the night before through Basilio telling him of the part she played in the revolt, but Basilio had not delivered it for fear that Roberto's decision to marry Pensativa would be

altered by it. When Roberto realizes that Pensativa has not tried to deceive him (as the Generala had deceived Muñoz so that he could be captured by the Cristeros), and that he loves her dearly, in spite of her role in the revolt, he goes to look for her, but he learns that she has left the country to become a nun.

The novel contains many incongruous and not verisimilar characteristics. One is that Pensativa, a very sensitive woman, should have been the very same Generala who allowed her followers to cut out Muñoz' eyes because the Callistas had cut out the eyes of her dead brother's body. Another is that so many people are intent on having Roberto marry Pensativa. In short, this is a romantic and anti-psychological novel. There is no central idea unless it be that in Mexico one must continually suffer from a war, and this religious one is one of the many cruel and futile civil wars of Mexico.⁵

The life of the women in Santa Clara is sad, for many of them will never have the opportunity to marry because so many men died in the revolt. One of these women is Roberto's cousin Jovita, who is described as "una mujer delgada y tímida, vestida de negro."⁶

In fact, all the women are affected by the revolt in

5. Valenzuela Rodarte, p. 544.

6. Jesús Goytortúa y Santos, Pensativa (México, 1945), p. 16.

one way or another, and most of them took part in it. As Pensativa says to Roberto, "¿No sabía usted que en la guerra religiosa las mujeres participamos tanto como los hombres?"⁷ The women not only took part in the war, but they suffered the hardships that it occasioned. The fate of Doña Ursula shows this to be true. Basilio says, "A doña Ursula la echaron al río los soldados porque nos llevaba parque y noticias."⁸ Fortunately, the women in Roberto's family did not suffer such a cruel fate as that of Doña Ursula, but they did take part in the revolt. As Genoveva (Chacha) says, "Yo fui cristera. No anduve con las armas en la mano, pero hice lo que tu tía y lo que por aquí todo el mundo hizo: ayudar a los rebeldes. La situación de la Rumorosa, aislada a las puertas de Santa Clara, nos favorecía y podíamos con relativa facilidad pasar avisos, dinero y medicinas. Y hasta parque."⁹ In fact, Roberto's aunt Enedina was the one who hid the traitor Muñoz in the Rumorosa, her ranch house, and later helped the Generala to entice him to his death when it was learned that he was a traitor.

The Cristero women were a determined, ruthless group, but they were sincere and devout. Roberto notices the sincere devotion of these people:

7. Ibid., p. 65.

8. Ibid., p. 104.

9. Ibid., p. 112.

Antes de cenar, el padre rezó el rosario, al que concurrió la servidumbre. La escena fue imponente. Una sola vela alumbraba a un Crucifijo de marfil puesto sobre la mesa de estorbo y la vasta estancia sumergía sus extremos en la sombra. Me sentí en un mundo distinto al verme entre aquella gente devota, casi toda cristera, que sin duda en la guerra había debido practicar la religión en las tinieblas y en lugares secretos.¹⁰

Pensativa is idolized by these sincere, devout people for the part she played in the conflict. As the Generala, she had realized a very important role in the war. She led a band of men, just as her brother Carlos did. Brother and sister depended on each other. In fact, Carlos had been reluctant to accept orders, which supposedly came from the Liga, from the traitor Muñoz because the orders did not come through the Generala. He says to Muñoz, "--La Liga me hace mucho honor al escribirme directamente --dijo-- pero yo sólo acato las órdenes que me da la Generala."¹¹ When the Generala learned that Muñoz had betrayed Carlos and had led him to his death, she took it upon herself to avenge her brother's death. She was a beautiful woman. Genoveva describes her, "Aquella tenía una belleza mística, santa. Era Juana de Arco, era la defensora de la Patria y de la Fe, la enviada de Dios para vencer a los perseguidores de la libertad de conciencia."¹² Disguised as a servant, she attracted Muñoz, who fell in love

10. Ibid., p. 218.

11. Ibid., p. 117.

12. Ibid., p. 161.

with her. She lured him into Doña Enedina's garden, where he was trapped by her Cristero followers. Muñoz was taken to the Huerta del Conde, where Carlos had been killed by the Federal troops and where his dead body had been mutilated by having its eyes gouged out by Muñoz. The Cristeros, at the instigation of the Desorejador, who was Basilio, decided that Muñoz' eyes must be burned out before he is killed. The Generala had to accede to this demand because she realized that if she did not, she would lose face in the eyes of her men as being weak. Enraged with the pain of having his eyes blinded, Muñoz escaped, and a Cristero named Dimas was sent to make sure he was dead. Muñoz lost consciousness because of the pain, so that when Dimas shot Muñoz he believed that he had killed him. Meantime, the Generala became ill from the ordeal; and she was carried away by Cornelio, Roberto's cousin. Soon she recovered and once more led her men into battle.

This much of the Generala's story is all that Roberto could ever learn from Genoveva and Cornelio. They both insisted that the Generala had been killed in the war; so that, when Roberto learns at the wedding ceremony that Pensativa is the Generala, he is doubly shocked.

Pensativa's life as the Generala is all past when the novel begins. She is an entirely different girl. One of her most salient characteristics is that she is very mysterious.

Her pseudonym, Pensativa, indicates that she hides some dark secret. Roberto senses the mystery surrounding her, and he wonders what kind of a woman she is to avoid using her real name, Gabriela Infante. He cannot help but notice, however, that she is admired by all who know her, and he asks himself, "Y qué mujer seductora debía ser la que provocaba de tal modo la admiración de mis parientas y de Genoveva; la muchacha que vivía, rodeada de mozos adictos, en una antigua hacienda."¹³ He cannot understand why such a charming, cultured, beautiful girl should prefer to live out in an old ranch house with a group of battle-scarred ex-Cristeros such as Basilio, her loyal captain and bodyguard. In fact, Roberto is shocked by the impoverished surroundings in which Pensativa lives, and he is repelled by Basilio. He thinks to himself, when he first sees Basilio:

¡Qué fisonomía de bandido desalmado, la suya, con aquella cicatriz feroz que la bajaba desde la frente hasta la boca! Era la de una bestia salvaje aquella faz sombría, en la que llameaban los ojos bajo unas gruesas cejas, y los labios se apretaban con una voluntad de odio y de rencor. La botonera de plata de sus pantalones relucía bajo los destellos de la lámpara. La mano derecha de Basilio acariciaba mecánicamente la cacha de la pistola guardada en una funda bordada de oro.¹⁴

Throughout the novel Roberto looks for clues which may reveal to him Pensativa's secret, which she hides behind her austere exterior, until he finally discovers on the day

13. Ibid., p. 26.

14. Ibid., p. 31.

of their wedding that she is the Generala. One clue which leads him in the right direction is that Pensativa is disturbed by blind people. While Roberto is escorting Pensativa to her ranch, they pass a blind boy on the road, and Pensativa reacts by riding her horse down an embankment into a flooded river. Roberto, of course, saves her from harm, but from then on he tries to discover why she is afraid of blind people.

He discovers, as he comes to know her, that Pensativa is a very proud, virtuous, valiant, sensitive girl. At first she is disdainful toward Roberto, whom she considers a soft, insensitive city fellow. He notices her attitude in their first meeting and says to himself, "Su amabilidad no supo disimular para mi oído algo como el eco de un íntimo desdén que vibraba en aquella voz serena, pero tenida como por el reflejo de una pasión lejana e indescifrable."¹⁵ That she is valiant and fearless is noticed by Roberto the first time he meets her. She rides horseback from her ranch to the Rumorosa in an electrical storm. She presents a very dramatic figure, which Roberto describes: "Me acercaba más aún, para ver el rostro de aquella mujer, cuando un rayo cayó sobre la calzada e iluminó la Rumorosa con un chorro de fuego. Así ví por primera vez a Pensativa, entre el estallido de las descargas eléctricas, como si la hubiese traído la misma

15. Ibid., p. 32.

tempestad."¹⁶ Pensativa is also very sensitive, even though she is daring and brave. She falls ill three times in the course of the novel, each time because she is unable to cope with some violent situation. The last time she falls ill, and almost fatally so, is when she is at the Huerta de los Condes, praying for her brother's soul on the anniversary of his death, and she hears Muñoz scream exactly as he did when his eyes were put out. In spite of all the brutality she has seen during the Cristero Revolt, she still cannot bear the thought of brutality.

Actually, she has a strong feeling of guilt because of the part she played in the war, especially the part she played in relation to Muñoz. For this reason, she lives apart from the town and refuses to marry, isolating herself from all chance of happiness in an attempt to expiate her sins. She says to Roberto, "Jamás me casaré. Estoy y debo estar fuera del mundo. Hay cosas terribles que me apartan de la vida usual y que me harán refugiarme, tarde o temprano, en un convento."¹⁷ She only consents to marry Roberto when the Cristero priest, Padre Ledesma, convinces her that she has paid in full for her part in the brutality of the revolt, and that she has a right to a chance for happiness.

The priest warns Roberto that Pensativa is not a

16. Ibid., pp. 28-29.

17. Ibid., pp. 204-205.

frivolous, insensitive girl when he says, "Pensativa no es una de esas muchachas modernas que el día en que conceden su mano se van a festejarlo al cabaret. Ella es una virgen fuerte y está entregada a la oración."¹⁸ She is, in fact, very religious and virtuous. The author makes a point of stating that Pensativa never takes alcoholic beverages. He also makes evident that she is a "virgen fuerte" by the following conversation between Pensativa and Roberto:

Ella sonrió de nuevo.

--Que tú --asintió --No me casaré por lo civil y no habrá quien pueda exigirle al padre Ledesma una formalidad risible.

--A mí no me parece risible --aduje. --Pero sea como tú quieras. Francamente, yo estoy seguro de que más tarde consentirás en esa formalidad que hoy te repugna. El estado civil de los hijos ...

No continúe, porque Pensativa había enrojecido y se había puesto de pie.

--Va a llover ya --me dijo.¹⁹

Pensativa is not only virtuous in the sense that she is chaste and pure, she is honest and courageous, although being so may cost her the man she loves. She writes a letter to Roberto the night before the wedding telling him of her part in the revolt. The letter does not reach Roberto, of course, because Basilio does not deliver it. Roberto's horrified reaction to the news that Pensativa is the Generala cuts her to the core. The nun who tells Roberto that Pensativa is Sor Asuncion in a convent in Europe relates

18. Ibid., p. 221.

19. Ibid., p. 224.

Pensativa's feelings at the wedding ceremony:

Se sintió perdonada, limpia, nueva. Por eso sufrió tanto cuando usted se horrorizó al saber que ella había sido la Generala. Se tuvo como maldita. La aparición de Muñoz, al que ella creía muerto; el horror de usted, la destrozaron. Se sostuvo con una energía ficticia y cuando llegó con su gente, huyendo a la hacienda, lo único que pudo hacer fue obligar a todos a jurar que nadie le buscaría perjuicio. Y de la hacienda se fue, con los jefes, a la sierra, donde se despidió de todos y se fue procurando que se perdiera su pista. Pasó a los Estados Unidos y de allí a Europa.²⁰

It is clearly evident that Pensativa, although she had been a heroine of the Cristero Revolt, is in reality one of its most unfortunate victims. Her life is one of the countless many that has been blighted by a Mexican civil war.

20. Ibid., p. 264.

CONCLUSION

The Cristero Novel is considered by literary critics as part of the genre called the Novel of the Revolution; therefore it displays many of the characteristics of the Novel of the Revolution. It exhibits the same lack of concern for form, and at the same time, a vital interest in detail. For this reason the characters are often poorly developed and merely outlined in terms of their physical characteristics, their function in the novel, and the attitude they represent. In the interest of detail, the language is very true-to-life and incidentally very colorful, especially in La virgen de los cristeros and Los cristeros. Details of certain historical events during the revolt, such as the assassination of Obregón and the closing of the churches, are included. Much of the detail in the Cristero Novel is used for a specific purpose. Often the purpose for which it is used is propaganda. Most of the authors had either taken part in the revolt or had been affected by it in some way, and many of the novels were written in the ten to twenty years after the revolt. In fact Héctor was written during the war. It is understandable, then, that the Cristero Novel is filled with details of the conflict and that the authors have a definite bias or propagandistic purpose in writing the novels.

Unlike the Novel of the Revolution, the Cristero Novel gives the woman a fairly large rôle to play, probably because the woman played a larger part in the Cristero Revolt than she did in the Revolution. She stood for the upholding of her religious beliefs at all costs, and she was often the motivating force behind the Cristero generals.

It is not strange, the Cristero Revolt being as brutal as it was, that the Cristero Novel, like the Novel of the Revolution, should contain a note of pessimism as to the fruits of the war. The main protagonists, especially the women, end broken in spirit or marred psychologically for participation in normal life. The only woman protagonist in these four novels who looks toward a promising future by the end of the novel is Consuelo in Héctor. Carmen, in La virgen de los cristeros, is killed by a Cristero attack on the train she is riding. Marta Torres, in Los cristeros, is imprisoned on the Islas Mariás; Doña Enedina dies of grief; and Doña Trinidad is left to care for her demented husband and to grieve for her dead son. In Pensativa, even though a heroine of the Cristero Revolt, Pensativa is actually one of its victims. Roberto's unmasked horror upon learning that she had been the Generala, once again makes her feel unworthy to attempt a normal married life, and she flees to become a nun before Roberto can change his mind.

In giving the woman a larger part in his novels, the Cristero novelist opens to himself another avenue of exploration. He brings into his novels what is considered the more defenseless, more gentle part of his society, and he shows that even this segment of the society is involved in the revolt and, most often, crushed by it. Usually he lays the blame on the Government as being responsible for the uprising. Like the Novelist of the Revolution, he demonstrates the futility and horror of civil war, and in particular of the Cristero Revolt.

Since very little has been written on the literary value of the Cristero Novel and its relation to the Novel of the Revolution, a study of this type would be of interest. Also, a philological study of the speech of the characters, most of whom are from central Mexico, would be worthy of investigation. The Mexican peon, his life, his speech, and his attitudes are presented fairly extensively in these novels; so that an interesting discussion could be based on the Mexican peon in the Cristero Novel.

This thesis has made a study of the Mexican woman in the Cristero Novel. Its purpose is to examine the part she played in the revolt and the role she played in her society. It is hoped that this study might interest others in both the Cristero movement and the role of woman in Mexican society.

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