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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

# SOLITUDE IN THE NOVELS OF MIGUEL DELIBES: THEME, CHARACTER AND SYMBOL

A DISSERTATION

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degree of

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SOLITUDE IN THE NOVELS OF MIGUEL DELIBES:

THEME, CHARACTER AND SYMBOL

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# SOLITUDE IN THE NOVELS OF MIGUEL DELIBES: THEME, CHARACTER AND SYMBOL

## CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Solitude is a major theme in the novels of Miguel Delibes, contemporary Spanish writer. He expresses the feeling of rootlessness, isolation and abandonment of modern man and describes the sorrows and joys of human existence that are a part of the solitary condition. In three decades of writing, Delibes has addressed himself consistently to the dilemma of the individual in today's world, and his profound interest in man's adjustment to life has never diminished. Since solitude is a universal and pervasive condition, coping with it plays a vital role in that adjustment and is therefore a constant concern in Delibes' novels.

In his treatment of the theme of solitude, Delibes focuses upon the concreteness of human existence and studies its problematic character. Modern technological advances,

the possibility of nuclear annihilation and an obsession with material acquisition have conspired to make man an egotistical and selfish creature. Human beings have become alienated from one another and the individual has begun to doubt his own worth. He has consequently developed feelings of isolation and loneliness and of metaphysical unrest. So that a person may invest experience with meaning in this seemingly meaningless world, Delibes suggests that the individual make an adjustment to life by coming to terms with his own form of voluntary or involuntary solitude. Not only must he be able to cope with the negative aspects of his solitude, but he must also learn that "aloneness" and "loneliness" are not synonymous terms and that solitude can have positive connotations. Solitude is an important personal, social and metaphysical consideration in Delibes' novels.

Delibes has published works in several literary genres. He is a journalist, having been editor of "El Norte de Castilla," a newspaper in his native Valladolid. He is the author of travel accounts, including Por esos mundos, USA y yo and La primavera de Praga. Among his short stories are the collections La partida, La mortaja and Siestas con viento sur. Delibes has written twelve novels, the first eleven of which are analyzed here: La sombra del ciprés es alargada (1948), for which he received the Premio Nadal in 1947; Aún es de día (1949); El camino (1950); Mi idolatrado

hijo Sisí (1953); Diario de un cazador (1955), winner of the Premio Nacional de Literatura in 1956; Diario de un emigrante (1958); La hoja roja (1959); Las ratas (1961); Cinco horas con Mario (1965); Parábola del náufrago (1969); El príncipe destronado (1973); and Las guerras de nuestros antepasados (1975).

In order to understand Delibes' attention to solitude, one must consider the philosophical and political climate in which he has produced his works. Since near the beginning of the twentieth century, with the disasters that befell Spain in 1898, such Spanish writers as Miguel de Unamuno and José Ortega y Gasset have sought to voice the anguish and bitterness aroused in them by the physical and spiritual devastation of their country. The senseless fratricide of the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39 and the authoritarian regime of Francisco Franco, coupled with an awareness of tragic world events, have made the Spanish writer acutely aware of man's solitary and contingent existence. The contemporary author therefore portrays modern man as a homeless, dispossessed and fragmentary being who ineluctably encounters

> . . . alienation and estrangement; a sense of the basic fragility and contingency of human life; the impotence of reason confronted with the depths of existence; the threat of nothingness, and the solitary and unsheltered condition of the individual before this threat.[1]

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[1]William Barrett, Irrational Man. A Study in Existential Philosophy (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1962), p. 36.

Alienation and solitude, while closely related terms, are not synonymous. Alienation implies the estrangement of a person or of his affections and interest; a state of unfriendliness, hostility or indifference remains where an attachment formerly existed. Solitude is the result of either a voluntary or involuntary wish or compulsion, and denotes the actual state of being alone or remote from society. Alienation is usually imposed from without; solitude may or may not be self-imposed. A person may be alienated from one group and yet be an effective member of another; solitude is usually complete. Alienation generally has negative connotations; solitude has both positive and negative meanings. Solitude as an inevitable portion of man's life as he lives it in the twentieth century is a crucial theme in the novels of Miguel Delibes.

In his novels, Delibes depicts an absurd world in which man is estranged and alone. He describes the common man facing life and death situations inevitably common to all men, investigating all elements of human reality, portraying man as he exists at a certain time, place and moment, involved in ordinary activities and universal preoccupations:

> . . . lo aparentemente sencillo y elemental, por cotidiano y trivial, por usual y universal, cobija las tramas más hondas y fecundas de Delibes.[2]

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[2]J. L. Guereña, "Un año de la vida de Delibes," Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos LXX, No. 210:177.

Although it has been remarked that Delibes' attitude toward modern themes is intuitive rather than intellectual,[3] the novelist neither exhibits mental provincialism nor lends himself to mere costumbrismo. He depicts instead the commonplace realities of the "hombre de carne y hueso" to whom Unamuno gave primary importance, thus graphically presenting metaphysical doubts and truths. In the complex and chaotic present,

> . . . the specifically human world . . . is discoverable only when one descends into the interior of the person and begins to study the self's experience of itself and its relatedness to the environing reality of nature and human society.[4]

In his insistence upon experiential concreteness and his emphasis upon the individual response to solitude, Delibes attempts to increase the reader's awareness of the solitary human condition.

A satisfactory definition of solitude in the novels of Miguel Delibes can be formulated through an emphasis upon theme, characters and symbols in the novels themselves. Delibes' analysis of the theme of solitude shows the profound influence of Ortega y Gasset and Unamuno. The concept of the "hombre de carne y hueso" is taken from Unamuno. In his essay "El tema de nuestro tiempo," Ortega stresses the

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[3]Manuel García Viño, Novela española actual (Madrid: Guadarrama, 1967), pp. 40-41.

[4]Nathan A. Scott, Jr., The Unquiet Vision: Mirrors of Man in Existentialism (New York: World Publishing Company, 1969), p. 187.

importance of life here and now, the idea of la razón vital, in which reason is subordinated to life, and the relativity of truth. In his concern for the individual and his relationship to his fellow man, Delibes gives meaning to Ortega's postulate, "Yo soy yo y mis circunstancias." Each person creates his own reality as he relates to himself and others. Delibes exhibits Ortega's concern with the concrete and individual aspects of the immediate human situation, and " . . . carries throughout the awareness of the problems of man and his adjustment to life."[5] Many of the major themes of Delibes' novels, such as old age, egoism, religion and death, concern this adjustment, much of which is caused or affected by the problem of man's essential solitude. In portraying this adjustment, Delibes feels that the proper study of mankind is indeed man. For this reason, he concentrates on man's life as he actually lives it and thus upon the depiction of characters in his novels. To reinforce his attention to theme and character, Delibes relies upon the symbol as the most effective and affective stylistic technique. In all three aspects of the novels, theme, character and symbol, the idea of man's essential solitude is a constant preoccupation.

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[5]Judith Ann Link, "Major Themes in the Novels of Miguel Delibes," (M.A. thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1960), p. 4.

## CHAPTER II

## SOLITUDE IN THEME AND CHARACTER

The principal thematic concern in the novels of Miguel Delibes is the individual's adjustment to life, an adjustment in which solitude plays a major role. For Delibes, "la novela es el hombre"[1] and this adjustment is therefore best illustrated in the characters of his novels. Delibes concentrates upon the portrayal of his characters not only as individuals, but also as representatives of the themes he has chosen to elaborate. The theme of solitude is an important part of the philosophical background against which Delibes draws his characters.

As the individual attempts to adjust to life and to solitude, he discovers the reasoning of Ortega y Gasset's "yo soy yo y mis circunstancias," the idea that man forms his own reality through himself and others. The theme of man's essential solitude can be viable only if it is

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[1]Miguel Delibes, Obra completa (Barcelona, Ediciones Destino, 1964) I, 9.

considered in light of the solitary character's existing with others. According to Delibes,

> Todo ser nace para aliviar la soledad de otro ser, y . . . el sentido de clase, la educación, etc., son fronteras convencionales levantadas entre los hombres que no tienen razón de existir.[2]

As Delibes portrays the solitary "hombre de carne y hueso" in his search for meaning in life, he necessarily depicts the interpersonal relationships that serve as foils or buffers to the individual's anguished loneliness. For this reason, the most revealing aspect of Delibes' attitude toward solitude is his analysis of these relationships. He especially deplores the lack of communication, understanding and solidarity among human beings and, at the same time, underscores the sincerity, compassion, love and concern for el prójimo, one's fellow man, that can break down barriers and alleviate the problem of solitude.

La sombra del ciprés es alargada (1948) introduces the theme of adjustment to life and the dilemma of solitude in a retrospective first-person narrative. Pedro's solitary nature is formed at an early age when, cast aside by a guardian uncle, the orphan is sent to live with a tutor, Mateo Lesmes. Sensitive and lonely, the boy finds little warmth in the hermetic and pessimistic Lesmes family and in their sad, cold and silent house. Pedro is almost a

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[2]César Alonso de los Ríos, Conversaciones con Miguel Delibes (Madrid: Editorial Magisterio Español, S.A., 1971), p. 86.

personification of solitude, but remains a basic, simplistic characterization at this point in the development of the novel. Already predisposed by loss and abandonment in early childhood to avoiding attachment to others, Pedro is attracted by Lesmes' theory of desasimiento, "Siempre es más fácil perder que ganar . . . y por eso conviene quedarse en poco;"[3] if one does not form intimate relationships, then he will not be hurt by the dissolution of such ties. Here, the complication of plot parallels the development of solitude from circumstantial to quasi-philosophical solitude. On visits to the cemetery with his tutor, Pedro becomes obsessed with the idea of death. He has begun a close friendship with Alfredo, another orphaned and abandoned boy who shares Pedro's need to escape loneliness, and he resolves that he will not become deeply involved with anyone, fearing the eventual loss of that person to death. In contrast to Alfredo's open and unquestioning nature, Pedro finds that he himself is introspective and unwilling to accept anything at face value. Becoming aware of his "insólita contextura espiritual"[4] and of the fact that he is prone to "navegar contra corriente,"[5] Pedro discovers that he is not like others. These realizations make him feel even more alone,

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[3]Delibes, Obra completa, I:65.

[4]Ibid., p. 176.

[5]Ibid., p. 177.

and he decides that his life will be a neutral and isolated one, lending itself only to God's influence. He is further convinced of the validity of his stand after Alfredo's premature death. The first test of his isolationist theory, his doctrine of solitude, proves the value of his position as a bulwark against pain and the almost metaphysical discomfort of human loss.

Not wishing to risk being hurt again by a great personal tragedy, Pedro chooses the life of a sea captain so that he can live on inner experiences and memories and withdraw from human society. From brief encounters with others and from a growing awareness of his selfishness and egotism, however, he eventually realizes the social impossibility of living a completely isolated existence. He begins to talk with his first mate, Luis Bolea, who slowly convinces him that he has an unhealthy fear of life, that he lacks the balance to live alone, and that life has greater meaning when a person looks beyond himself to others. Through Bolea's contagious philosophizing, Pedro begins to feel more confident in his role as social being. Delibes thus portrays the persistent battle between man's instinctively gregarious nature and his rational experiential disillusionment, the solitary alienation he knows and the social positivism he feels. Pedro, buoyed by his untested feelings of hope against solitude, ventures a relationship with Jane, an American woman. Pedro is at first merely physically attracted to

her, but soon becomes emotionally involved when he realizes that she understands his psychological struggle and is willing to help him wage it. The theory of desasimiento still has a strong hold on him after so many years, but Pedro feels that he has an opportunity and a right to escape his dreadful solitude.

His new relationships continue to reinforce his eager pursuit of pleasure and significance in life. Pedro visits Bolea's country home and converses intimately with Luis' mother. At Bolea's suggestion, Doña Sole, in her wisdom and experience, advises Pedro that he should not be afraid to live life fully, that some suffering is inevitable, and that only God can weigh the balance of pessimism and optimism that is the real truth in life. Now the characterization of Pedro becomes one with a core of solitude which is sentimentally obscured by a pastiche of optimism which he longs to prove, to experience. Pedro then seeks a secluded country grove to mull over the influences and motives of his solitary existence, delighting for the first time in the calm, beautiful solitude that nature can afford, expanding his basically negative feeling of solitude toward a synthesis of positives and negatives into a more human philosophical stance. Soon he is able to share this discovery with Jane in sea and mountainside explorations, and nature provides the background for a happy solitude.

These new social and natural encounters convince Pedro that he must begin to make his own memories, to ease his own solitude, and he turns to the balance and stability that Jane lovingly offers him. Escaping into marriage from the solitude that has long oppressed him, Pedro makes plans for a home and family, joyfully molding and stabilizing his future. Soon after their marriage, however, Jane dies tragically, leaving Pedro alone again. At this point, the character of Pedro as well as the solitudinal theme he personifies begins a process of reversion not only toward the security of a philosophical position grounded in actual experience, but also toward a renewal of hope and faith. He returns to his childhood home to visit the Lesmes family, hoping to find some refuge from loneliness in the renewal of former relationships. However, the Lesmes' have no more affection for him now than they did when he lived with them. Moreover, Lesmes denies the theory which contributed so much to the shaping of Pedro's lonely life, admitting that every man has much to lose, although he may not choose to acknowledge it. Lesmes realizes now that anyone whose life touches another's must conceal the escapist sentiments which an impractical and destructive theory like desasimiento arouses in him. Disheartened by Lesmes' tardy revelations, Pedro returns to the cemetery where Alfredo is buried. Although he concludes that his personality has predisposed him to his solitary anguish, he does not feel quite so lonely

as before, for he has been no more immune to the influences of his mature years than to those of his youth. Now convinced of the value of close personal relationships despite the feelings of loss they inevitably occasion, Pedro treasures memories of Jane and Alfredo, finds solace in the nature he shared with them, and discovers a refuge from solitude in God: "Ya no me encontraba solo. . . . Y por encima aún me quedaba Dios."[6]

From this romantic retreat of a Delibes hero into a traditional, sentimental concession to his own disillusionment and actual failure to communicate and interact effectively with those he meets, the author turns toward a more realistic, even naturalistic, hero and setting in his second novel. The solitary adventurer becomes more closely attuned to the modern man, solitary and alone in the midst of a common, quotidian crowd. Therefore, the theme of solitude is also central in Aún es de día (1949), the story of Sebastián Ferrón, a young hunchback who lives a monotonous, gray and ordinary life in the miserable barrio of a provincial capital. Isolated by his physical deformity and by his depressing environment, sensitive Sebastián finds little relief in others from his painful solitude. His mother and sister, Aurelia and Orencia, can offer him no consolation, for they have been made bitter and indifferent by their own narrow and lonely lives, and his co-workers isolate him from

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[6]Ibid., p. 303.

their camaraderie by making him the target of their cruel jokes and pranks. Attempting to escape the silence, hostility and indifference of home and work, Sebastián falls in love with Aurora, who offers him his first intimate contact with another human being. Unlike Delibes' first hero, Sebastián seems to be a character whose solitude is not of an easily recognizable kind. Both the physical fact of his geographical location as well as that of his misshapen body immediately deny any romantic predisposition one may have toward solitude.

Sebastián is unaware that Aurora turns to him only now that she is pregnant and rejected, although she eventually considers him an acceptable refuge from her own insecurity and solitude. When Sebastián meets Irene, a customer, he turns his attention away from Aurora. He is overwhelmed by Irene's beauty and grace and decides to merit her attention despite his own physical unattractiveness, so lonely and eager is he for acceptance outside his own limited, tawdry world. He therefore seeks the advice of Padre Matías, who provides him with the only warm and sympathetic exchange of confidences he has ever known. The priest reveals to Sebastián the supremacy of the spirit over the flesh: "El cuerpo no se elige . . . pero el alma sí."[7] Since the young man cannot correct his physical defects, he resolves to perfect his spirit in contact with others, thus perhaps easing not only his own solitude but that of his fellow man.

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[7]Ibid., III:198.

He soon understands, however, that his ambitions toward Irene are unrealistic, and that a man of his position and appearance has little choice. Unlike Pedro, Sebastián finds it less important to extend himself fully before he comes to the realization of the practical bounds of his solitude. Delibes thus manipulates his character less adventurously in order to assert the prevalence of solitude as both physical and psychological isolation. Sebastián discovers Aurora's deception and refuses to marry her. He is totally alone now, having rejected Aurora, having been rejected by his family, who sought material gain from the marriage, and having been dismissed from his job for the theft of Irene's glove, which he kept for comfort in his loneliness. He soon realizes the grief and solitude brought about by his own egotism and by the indifference of others. Reviewing his spiritual lessons, he becomes aware of his own intrinsic worth and his ability to share that worth with others. In his desolation, he determines to help Aurora in her plight, although he will be accused of marrying for money, and thus sacrifices his reputation and pride out of compassion for another suffering and lonely human being. Thus the hero in the second novel finds his concession to the solitary necessity in a much more mundane sacrifice of his spirit than the meditative retreat of Pedro in La sombra del ciprés es alargada.

This tack toward a more realistic characterization is checked in Delibes' third novel. However, the theme of solitude is dealt with in a much more restricted rendering of time and space. El camino (1950) records the impressions of young Daniel, leaving his village for the first time for city and school and foreseeing the loneliness that he will experience there. On the night before his departure, he remembers his early life. He especially recalls the village priest's sermon on "el camino," the individual path that each person must follow, and decides that his path is in the village, although he feels a duty toward his father, who believes in progress. Daniel dreads the imminent separation from his loved ones and from the sounds, smells and sights of his childhood home. He calls to mind his mother's warmth and kindness and his father's hard work, frustrated ambitions and early withdrawal from him. He also remembers Paco, the virile and sensitive blacksmith, and Uca-uca, a motherless and hermetic child who often tries to cling to him. As he recalls his friends Roque and Germán, with whom he has shared the idyllic country life, the circumstances surrounding Germán's death also come to mind. Faced with the loss of a good friend at the same time that he is confronting the separation from his village, Daniel experiences a sense of utter loneliness. He is consoled by the villagers' solidarity in mourning for young Germán, but many of the adults do not realize the depth of his grieving solitude. Although he

receives no consolation from his father, Daniel does find comfort in others: Paco, who truly understands children, tearfully shares his anguish, and Uca-uca also senses Daniel's loss, offers her support, and the two children become steadfast friends. Daniel cries on the morning of his journey, knowing that his path lies in the village with his cherished family and friends. His youthful sense of obedience to his father cannot dispel the loneliness he already feels. Delibes seems to present an idyllic hiatus in his presentation of solitude as the prevalent condition which isolates the soul of modern man. Perhaps the only escape is a momentary one couched in recollection at times when the reality of isolation impinges most upon the individual's consciousness.

From this idyll one is thrust again into a stark and realistic presentation of the psychologically monstrous results of the struggle against solitude within a family group in which non-communication is unhealthily subverted. Mi idolatrado hijo Sisí (1953) narrates the theme of solitude through two main characters, Cecilio Rubes and his son Sisí. Cecilio, a businessman, thinks only of his own gain and his own boredom and loneliness. A man with little capacity for loving, he considers his wife Adela his social and intellectual inferior, isolating her physically by his jealousy and emotionally by his condescension and inattention; she in turn merely tolerates his sexual demands. Both Adela and Cecilio look outside their lonely marriage for rather self-centered

companionship, Adela turning to her secure and understanding neighbor, Gloria Sendín, and Cecilio to his young mistress Paulina, whose favor he must curry with material rewards. Cecilio gives his attention to Adela only when she becomes pregnant, for the couple cling to the hope that a child will give meaning to their lonely existence. Sisí, as the sole repository of his parents' ambitions, quickly becomes spoiled and egotistical and disappoints his parents in their dreams for him. Drafted into military service and sent to a supply post away from the front, the young man discovers a social and natural world beyond his egocentric one, and once again a Delibes character turns to the solitude of nature for refuge and comfort. Estranged from the parents whose lonely disenchantment encouraged his selfish formation, he relies instead on Elisa Sendín, a young neighbor, for moral and spiritual support and on Paulina for sexual satisfaction, seeking a refuge from his new and isolating routine. When Sisí dies taking cover from enemy gunfire in a supply shed, Cecilio, in his anguished loneliness, blames everyone but himself for the tragedy, not taking into account the feelings of others. Elisa offers him consolation at first, but soon resumes her normal routine. Paulina is left completely alone, without either Cecilio or Sisí. Although she finds some comfort in the knowledge that she is bearing the young soldier's child, she begins to fear the isolation that old age will soon bring, for her only hold on another person has

been through her physical beauty. Adela, deeply saddened, resigns herself to the loss, aware that she and her husband are to blame for Sisí's self-centered upbringing and his cowardly, egotistical death. She turns her attention now to Cecilio, who does not possess her spiritual courage. He ignores reality and Adela's feelings when he insists that his menopausal wife have another child. Unable to adjust to the loneliness of a world without Sisí and unwilling to live with Adela, Cecilio kills himself. His overpowering egoism isolated him from others and embittered their lives, eventually bringing about his own destruction. The horror of solitude reaches its logical conclusion in the ultimate human negation. Delibes allows his hero to become an unquestionable anti-hero, completely distorted by his animal will in an effort to defy his solitude. The expansion to fill the void that solitude imposes would seem to lead only to self destruction, both physical and spiritual.

Diario de un cazador (1955) concentrates mainly on the hunting experiences of a young bedel, describing the calm and beauty he finds in the solitude of nature. When not actually hunting, Lorenzo is planning or reliving an excursion into nature with Pepe and Melecio, his best friends. When he begins to court Anita, she demands that he choose between her and the gun, but he cannot give up the hunt for long. However, although the theme of hunting seems to take precedence over any other theme in this journal, Lorenzo,

like the earlier protagonists, faces moments of agonizing solitude. Closely attached to his friends and family, as well as passionately devoted to his sport, Lorenzo feels keenly the loss of Melecio's son Mele, his hunting friend Pepe, and his mother and father, all of whose deaths are recounted in the diary. In fact, it is Anita's warmth and sympathy after his mother's death that helps Lorenzo decide that marriage might be one solution for his loneliness. Lorenzo's grieving reactions to these deaths, as well as his strong doubts about himself and others, indicated by the recurring phrase "Ni yo mismo sé lo que quiero . . .,"[8] concerning his questions about marriage, family, career and travel, demonstrate that Lorenzo, like the others, feels unsettled and adrift in his loneliness. The Delibes hero no longer retreats into sentimentality, religious fervor or idyllic martyrdom, but recognizes, even on an elementary level, the inexplicable necessity of solitude as the predominant human condition.

However, Delibes retreats once again from such a harsh representation of essential solitude with his next novel. Diario de un emigrante (1958) narrates Lorenzo and Anita's trip to America and illustrates the isolation and loneliness that such emigration can produce. Although he looks forward to making a new life for himself and his pregnant wife, Lorenzo leaves Spain somewhat reluctantly.

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[8]Ibid., II:100.

Not until the sentimental farewell celebrations does he realize his love for the people, places and things he has always known. The couple make a satisfactory adjustment to life in Chile, but still feel the spiritual and physical isolation from their native country. As their thoughts turn increasingly toward Spain, the two lonely young people seem to withdraw from one another. Lorenzo then decides that opportunities in Chile vary little from those in Spain and returns to his native land, where he has felt secure and well-liked. He knows now that family, friends and home mean far more to him than any adventure. The excitement and hopefulness of his emigration could not compensate for the loneliness it created. Delibes thus seems to return to a kind of provincialism that was evident in his even more sentimental El camino as a bulwark against solitude when, in fact, this feeling of retreat to one's home was discounted in Delibes' first novel when Pedro seeks meaning in a youthful habitat made hopeful mainly by recollection.

La hoja roja (1959) is the study of solitude principally as it relates to old age. Retired after years as a public servant, the aging Eloy finds that he has nothing left to do in life. Rejected by former co-workers and ignored by others, he discovers that retirement is "la antesala de la muerte."[9] Living on memories of long-dead family and friends, he clings to Isaías, the one remaining

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[9]Ibid., III:265.

friend, and, when he dies soon after Eloy's retirement, the old man's sense of solitude is further increased. Isaías and Eloy had shared a lifelong relationship, and now Eloy fears being left completely alone. He becomes increasingly obsessed with the idea of death, reviewing the names of his many friends now in the cemetery and minutely calculating the time left to him. Eloy soon turns to Desi, his slow-witted but kind young housekeeper, and finds great relief from solitude in the warmth of their communication. The sensitive Desi spends her solitary hours envisioning a life with Picaza, her diffident and silent village boyfriend, and welcomes the refuge from loneliness that Eloy provides for her. Both Desi and Eloy, young and old, live with constant fear, emptiness and isolation: Eloy, left fatherless at an early age, still searches for the warmth and affection he has missed, and is almost as anxious about this as he is about impending death; Desi fears being unmarried and abandoned. Their need for human contact is so urgent that they begin to share an unusual trust in each other, especially after he has been slighted by a harried, egotistical son and his haughty wife and she has seen her marriage plans go tragically awry. Despite differences in age, background and ambitions, Desi and Eloy agree not to abandon each other, and they cheat their solitude by developing a solid sense of community, learning to respond to one another's needs. They discover that human compassion, the warmth that Eloy so desires, can help to ease their

solitude: "lo importante . . . es tener calor."[10] Thus, in this subtle yet penetrating character study, Delibes treats the most harrowing and enormous construct of isolation within human understanding: death. Against the enormity of death, his hero can tolerate and learn to cope with the stark necessity of solitude and nullify it only to the extent that he can concede to it and sacrifice himself lovingly, as opposed to the desperate sacrifice of Sebastián in Aún es de día.

Las ratas (1961) depicts the lonely life of a poor and desolate Spanish village. Nini, the young protagonist, is the product of an incestuous relationship, and he might be excluded from village society were it not for his precociousness. The boy possesses an almost mystical understanding of his natural environment, and, as a result of his curiosity and observation, perceives changes which he readily relates to villagers distraught over their drought-stricken and unproductive land. Despite his generous counsel to others, Nini's only true friends are his silent and simpleminded father, the hermetic Ratero, his dog Fa, who shares his master's love for nature's solitude, and Rufo, el Centenario, whose horrible cancerous death inflicts a great feeling of loss upon Nini. The boy lives in a cave with his dog and his father, who hunts rats for their livelihood; they share a mute understanding and seem happy

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[10] Ibid., p. 438.

in their life close to the earth. However, other people seem intent on destroying their contentment. Tourism officials want to remove them from their embarassing cave dwelling, and townspeople want to uproot Nini from his home and family to send him to a city school. El Ratero, adamant in his refusal to be separated from the son and home he loves, responds on his primitive level: "La cueva es mía;"[11] "El Nini es mío."[12] And, when another ratter hunts his territory for mere sport, he proclaims "Las ratas son mías,"[13] and kills the man for trespassing. Although Nini has recently saved the villagers from a natural disaster, he realizes that they will judge his father's rage and vengeance harshly. Father and son would like to remain together in the village, enjoying both the solitary hours spent in nature and their few acquaintances. Now, however, their existence in the town is seriously threatened, since most of the people cannot understand their reclusive, solitary way of life. The theme of solitude becomes one of integrity as total acceptance of one's isolation becomes the only means of maintaining dignity within a world whose starkness is magnificently mirrored in basic physical survival.

Similarly, yet in a much subtler, more indirect manner, Cinco horas con Mario (1965) considers the tragic

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[11] Ibid., p. 554.

[12] Ibid., p. 534.

[13] Ibid., p. 570.

figure of the egoist and materialist who creates his own dreadful solitude. The psychological study of one lonely woman, it also depicts a pitiful marriage lacking in communication and understanding, but with less of the grotesque than the earlier Mi idolatrado hijo Sisí. Carmen, keeping an all-night vigil over her husband Mario's body, finds his Bible and reads the underlined verses. As she reads his personal spiritual counsels, she maintains a solitary dialogue with her husband, often interpreting the verses as badly as she had interpreted his actions. An egotistical and conservative woman concerned primarily with the physical and material, she cannot understand Mario's asthenic nature, his nervousness and depression, his feelings of persecution. Although she says that she is generous and understanding, while men are proud and egotistical, Carmen criticizes Mario's liberal leanings and humanitarian sentiments and his lack of interest in outward appearances. Her relationship with their three children seems strained, too, for she lives in constant fear that they will adopt their father's non-traditional and unorthodox views, and she maintains her friendships on the same suspicious and self-centered basis. Even Paco, who nearly becomes her lover, represents little more to her than money, status and an escape from Mario's inattention. When Carmen tells the dead Mario that she suspects him of infidelity, she is trying to reveal her own contemplated adultery instead, begging a tardy forgiveness

from her faithful and complacent husband. However, it is too late to escape in this way from the loneliness that her guilt produces in her. In her narrowmindedness and selfishness, Carmen isolates herself from those who might offer affection and support. Her lack of sympathy and acceptance for family and friends demonstrates the destruction of human potential, the frustration and misery that can result in great loneliness when people are isolated emotionally and intellectually from one another.

Parábola del náufrago (1969) reflects the chaotic state of modern society and man's loneliness within that depersonalized structure. The parable of the "náufrago" represents a person's helplessness and desolation in a society which denies his individuality and erects barriers between human beings. Jacinto San José, a pacifist and humanitarian, is isolated in a rigid and impersonal technocracy. Orphaned early and with few friends responsive to his sensitive nature, he longs for personal security and companionship and struggles in vain to break down barriers to communication. A sumador in Don Abdón's paternalistic collective society, Jacinto becomes fearful and dizzy when he realizes that he might be replaced by calculators, and is sent to a recovery center, where he is ordered to plant a hedge. Jacinto at first enjoys his solitude, but soon discovers that he is the victim of the hedge's rampant foliage, and the timid man soon feels completely alone and abandoned. Not resigned to his fate,

Jacinto tries in vain to escape. He then begins to suffer physical and mental changes; his metamorphosis into a sheep symbolizes the loss of his individuality. He once worried about humanity; now that he has lost his identity, he is concerned only with living. Jacinto sought an escape from loneliness through open and sincere communication, but the machinations of a powerful technological society put an end to his timid but hopeful efforts. Delibes' obsession with solitude thus extends to the modern tyranny of a mechanized society in which the natural isolation and alienation of man is heightened. Rather than immediate self-destruction, man's fate becomes less passionate, less human, but equally as frightening as the grotesqueness of Mi idolatrado hijo Sisí.

El príncipe destronado (1973), a novel of home life written from the viewpoint of Quico, an imaginative four-year-old, portrays the problem of solitude particularly as it pertains to a young child. The fifth of six children, Quico finds his position in the family a lonely one, especially since Cristina, the youngest child, receives the attention he once had. In the one day that Quico relates, his main activities are vaunting his apparent triumph over bedwetting, teasing Cristina and pretending to have swallowed a needle, all attention-getting devices. The two youngest children are often confined to the nursery, away from family activities, while the other children have outside interests. The parents do not respect each other's feelings and are in

constant disagreement, isolating themselves physically and emotionally from each other and from the children. Quico has to resort to pranks, outlandish questions and obscene language to attract attention, but hardly any household member, including the mother, understands that a child can be vulnerable to psychological abuse. Rather than seeking the true motives of his actions, they dismiss his behavior as boyish perversity: "No hay quien pueda con él."[14] The doctor searching for the missing needle calls Quico the "príncipe destronado";[15] before Cristina's birth, he ruled the home, but now he must adjust to new and lonely circumstances. Quico's mother, grown nervous from marital discord and years of childbearing, tries to assuage the youngster's fears about his new status. Nevertheless, she herself is sure of nothing and can only tell him that "eso [el temor] ya no tiene remedio,"[16] and Quico becomes aware at an early age of man's frightening solitary condition. Reverting to isolation and solitude through the eyes of a child, Delibes does not simply repeat the constructions set forth in the first part of La sombra del ciprés es alargada, El camino or Las ratas. He seems to synthesize the realism of Aún es de día, the grotesque caricature of Mi idolatrado hijo Sisí

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[14]Miguel Delibes, El príncipe destronado (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1973), p. 54.

[15]Ibid., p. 135.

[16]Ibid., p. 167.

and the psychological portrayal of Cinco horas con Mario to develop a paedocentric work in which the resolution of solitude remains as elusive as in Diario de un cazador.

Although these eleven novels span a period of almost thirty years, they share a strong emphasis on the theme of man's essential solitude, especially as it involves interpersonal relationships. Several constants are predominant in Delibes' entire literary production and reinforce his attention to solitude. Concentrating on the concrete and individual aspects of the theme through his characters, Delibes portrays such negative aspects of solitude as the fear of separation and death, the loss of individuality and personal security, and the disintegration of the family unit, since they are principal concerns of modern man. The instances of positive solitude in his novels are few, although Delibes does point out that solitude can be restorative when shared with loved ones or spent in the peace and beauty of nature. The novels demonstrate the universality of solitude, indicating that it is not restricted to a particular age group, socioeconomic class, geographical location, mental level or moment in time. His works also illustrate the pervasiveness of the solitary condition, from the cold and somber atmosphere of La sombra del ciprés es alargada to the isolated and frightening toddler world of El príncipe destronado. In all his novels, Delibes decries man's inhumanity to man and affirms the need for strong and sincere

interpersonal relationships to counter the lack of communication and understanding, the egoism and materialism, that divide men and isolate them from one another.

## CHAPTER III

## THE SYMBOLISM OF SOLITUDE

Miguel Delibes employs the symbol as an effective and affective stylistic technique for conveying the idea of solitude in his novels. The symbols which appear throughout the works can be grouped into four major categories: symbols of light and darkness, warmth and coldness, death and separation, and natural and physical surroundings of the protagonists. Each symbol contributes to the theme of solitude, especially as it gives evidence of Delibes' concern with the individual and with valid interpersonal relationships.

The use of light and darkness in the symbolism of solitude is apparent in the title of Delibes' first novel, La sombra del ciprés es alargada. Feeling predisposed by early circumstances to a miserable and lonely life, Pedro refers to "'la luz bajo la cual camina,'"[1] a fatalistic idea symbolized by the shadows which the trees cast over Ávila's cemetery. Delibes characterizes personality types according to Pedro's theory. Those of expansive temperament, destined

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[1]Miguel Delibes, Obra completa (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1964), I:169.

to lead full and happy lives, are like the "sombra . . . redonda"[2] of the pine, casting a full, enveloping shadow, while those of more mournful disposition, meant to spend unhappy and isolated lives, are like the "sombra alargada"[3] of the cypress, giving a narrow and gloomy aspect. These two symbols are powerful references to the fatalistic attitude with which Pedro lives, and throughout the novel he is portrayed as groping in darkness with only intermittent passages of light, seeking relief from solitude. After Alfredo's death, Pedro refers to strangling shadows and to his acceptance of Lesmes' desasimiento theory as "el telón que me eclipsaba la vida con todo su cohorte de inquietudes y miserias."[4] Although Jane's love brightens his dismal life, her death places him once again under "el patrocinio de la sombra,"[5] haunted by "la sombra del ausente."[6] When he returns to Ávila to reaffirm his ties to land, people and God, Pedro no longer feels alone, as he sees before him "un día transparente, fúlgido."[7] Although he has so often witnessed the dark side of life, he hopes to forge ahead, bringing light into his lonely existence.

Juan Luis Alborg calls La sombra del ciprés es alargada "la historia de un pesimismo"[8] because of Pedro's tragic

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[2]Ibid., p. 96. [3]Ibid., p. 96. [4]Ibid., p. 127.

[5]Ibid., p. 267. [6]Ibid., p. 297. [7]Ibid., p. 303.

[8]Juan Luis Alborg, Hora actual de la novela española (Madrid: Taurus, 1958), p. 162.

character and fatalistic philosophy. This idea is reflected in the dark and somber symbolism and in the title of the novel. On the other hand, he terms Aún es de día "la historia de un optimismo,"[9] since the work is only quasi-naturalistic and Sebastián finds a practical moral solution for his solitude. This idea is evident in the title of the work, as well as in the many symbols related to light. Sebastián makes a difficult spiritual sacrifice when he marries Aurora, but the idea of redemption, the hope implied in the phrase "still it is day," as well as in the symbolic quality of her name, lends an optimistic note to the resolution of the novel. Other symbols of light and darkness show the abyss between Sebastián's gloomy existence and the brighter spiritual life to which he aspires. Emphasizing his physical and psychological burdens, Delibes describes him as a man who

> . . . por instinto rehuía la luz. Le disgustaba mantenerse . . . expuesto al análisis del público. De aquí que hallase una saludable paz en la penumbra.[10]

However, when he begins to consider spiritual matters, Sebastián envisions his soul's destination as "un reino lleno de luz,"[11] where misery and pettiness are unknown. As he begins to recognize his inherent worth, he seeks a refuge from his isolation, finally discovering a pragmatic solution for his loneliness.

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[9]Ibid., p. 164.

[10]Delibes, Obra completa, III:91.

[11]Ibid., p. 199.

Delibes' next four novels lack the abundant symbolism of the first two, although there are several declarations of solitude, and the theme remains a major one. In Mi idolatrado hijo Sisí, the younger Rubes realizes his affection for Elisa Sendín and sees a possible end to his loneliness: "su conversación con la muchacha había venido a descubrir en la sima en que . . . se movía, una rendijita de luz."[12] In El camino, Daniel senses the presence of "hombres que hoy eran sombras,"[13] but sees them as benevolent influences, proof of the permanence and stability of his beloved village, and he feels no more lonely for their presence. In this instance, Delibes uses sombra to represent a positive quality, rather than a negative one. In the two Diarios, Lorenzo often gazes upon the lights of his provincial city, which represent an assurance to him in his moments of loneliness that he is a part of his beloved home, as do the comforting lights of Buenos Aires and Spain when he returns from Chile.

La hoja roja marks a return to the more traditional psychological novel and to the frequent use of symbols. Preoccupied with encroaching death and desperate loneliness, Eloy seems mostly to dwell in a shadow world, as does Desi. The two spend Christmas Eve together, attempting to ward off

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[12]Ibid., I:722-723.

[13]Ibid., p. 325.

the specter of solitude that seems especially menacing at a holiday time, and the contrast of light and dark comes dramatically into play:

> La chica se puso en pie y el viejo la tomó por las manos y bajo la pobre lámpara de 25 vatios, ambos empezaron a girar vertiginosamente y sus sombras se achataban y se agigantaban sin cesar sobre los muros, y sus voces desacompasadas clamaban contra la vaciedad y el aislamiento y el miedo.[14]

Against a somber background, Eloy and Desi's frantic grasp at happiness seems graphically immediate. At the end of the novel, when they join forces against solitude, Eloy offers to leave the little he has to her in return for her presence in his last days. When she agrees to stay with him, a light appears in her dull eyes, for she realizes that the only meaningful thing they have to share is their positive resistance to solitude.

Nini in Las ratas is closely identified with nature, as evidenced in a passage in which the play of light against a dark background stresses the uniqueness of the solitary moment:

> Durante las lunas de primavera, el niño gustaba de salir al campo y . . . veía al raposo . . . aprovechando el plenilunio que inundaba la cuenca de una irreal, fosforescente claridad lechosa. . . . Con frecuencia, el destello de la luna hacía relampaguear con un brillo verde claro sus rasgados ojos y, en esos casos, el animal parecía una sobrenatural aparición.[15]

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[14]Ibid., III:351.

[15]Ibid., p. 480.

Other inhabitants curse the desert-like solitude of the village, but Nini regards it as an appropriate setting for lone ramblings. Delibes describes this brilliant nocturnal scene in a vivid and dramatic manner, thereby emphasizing the positive quality of Nini's solitude.

Cinco horas con Mario, written in the form of a solitary dialogue, is full of colloquial speech and personal anecdotes and contains very few single examples of symbolism. Instead, the form in which the whole novel is couched is a symbol of solitude, and this structural and stylistic experimentation precludes any use of sensory symbols.

In Parábola del náufrago, the imprisoned Jacinto panics in his isolation and races to the roof of his forced enclosure to signal an airplane and regain human contact:

> La luz del sol le ciega al principio . . . , le invade una extraña sensación, como si fuera un feto alumbrado después de cuarenta y cuatro años en el seno materno.[16]

Light here represents the need of and hope for interpersonal communication. Two sources of light offer comfort to the often lonely Quico in El príncipe destronado, "la lámpara de sube y baja, de amplias alas--el Ángel de la Guarda,"[17] and what his brother calls the "Arco Iris,"[18] the morning light shining on books in shelves, casting "vivos destellos rojos,

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[16]Miguel Delibes, Parábola del náufrago (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1969), p. 218.

[17]Miguel Delibes, El príncipe destronado (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1973), p. 9.

[18]Ibid., p. 9.

azules, verdes y amarillos."[19] Quico is obviously forced to seek emotional support from sensory experiences rather than from persons. From La sombra del ciprés es alargada to this novel, Delibes uses sombra principally to represent solitude and despair, luz to symbolize hope, valid relationships and positive communication among human beings.

The symbols related to warmth and coldness play a major part in conveying the theme of solitude in Delibes' novels. In La sombra del ciprés es alargada, symbols of coldness predominate. Affected by the "frío físico y mineral"[20] of Ávila and by Lesmes and his cold, silent house, Pedro can describe his early days in the home only as "aquella existencia monótona y fría,"[21] and Lesmes' pessimistic theory as "la fría exposición."[22] When Alfredo and Pedro turn to each other in their loneliness, however, this cold melancholy is replaced by human warmth:

> Estabamos ya hechos como la mano y el guante, para encontrar uno en el otro la forma y, el otro en el uno, el calor.[23]

Unfortunately, this cordial exchange of affections is short-lived. Following Alfredo's death, Pedro commits himself

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[19]Ibid., p. 9.

[20]César Alonso de los Ríos, Conversaciones con Miguel Delibes (Madrid: Editorial Magisterio Español, 1971), p. 38.

[21]Miguel Delibes, Obra completa, I:44.

[22]Ibid., p. 82.

[23]Ibid., p. 64.

fully to Lesmes' teachings, especially after viewing the flagrant disrespect shown at his friend's burial: "Me mordió en las entrañas la glacial indiferencia que me rodeaba."[24] Witnessing war atrocities from his ship, he is further convinced of man's inhumanity to man, of "la frialdad humana."[25] Then, after Jane's death, Pedro is cast again into a cold, unloving world. Nevertheless, when he places the wedding band in his friend's grave, he feels a warm rush of courage and hope, symbolized by the "día transparente y fúlgido"[26] which he surveys.

The symbolism of warmth and coldness continues as an effective representation of the theme of solitude in Aún es de día. When Sebastián is coaxed from his almost total isolation by Aurora's attentions, he expresses the idea that " . . . todos formaban parte de un mismo rebaño y que cada cual precisaba del calor del prójimo para subsistir."[27] However, this companionship or solidarity never becomes a reality for him, and he is a constant witness to the "frialdad glacial"[28] of his sister Orencia, the "glacial indiferencia"[29] of his fellow employees, and his own "absoluto y frío aislamiento."[30] Despite all this coldness, however, Sebastián continues to believe that " . . . en el

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[24]Ibid., p. 138. [25]Ibid., p. 176. [26]Ibid., p. 303.
[27]Ibid., III:72. [28]Ibid., p. 20. [29]Ibid., p. 243.
[30]Ibid., p. 116.

interior de todos los seres existe un rescoldo adormecido, susceptible de metamorfosearse en una llamarada fulgurante,"[31] and that only sincerity and fellowship can ignite this spark.

One of the significant features of Mi idolatrado hijo Sisí is the lack of real warmth and understanding on the part of its egotistical characters, and the chilling atmosphere that is therefore created. Cecilio Rubes is described as "lejano y frío,"[32] especially after his son's death. His wife Adela, to whom he claims to have given everything, offers him nothing but "unos encantos disminuidos por encogimiento y frialdad,"[33] and between the couple exist " . . . unos enormes espacios vacíos por donde escapaban el calor y la cordialidad."[34] Adela finds some relief from her loneliness at Sisí's birth, when she feels the presence of "una dicha próxima y caliente."[35] Cecilio gains satisfaction from being an over-indulgent father, but still turns to his mistress Paulina, whom he finally renounces after Sisí's death. She then responds to him only with "glacial indiferencia."[36] Sisí regards Paulina mainly as a sexual outlet and contrasts " . . . la fría aspereza de la guerra y la cálida suavidad femenina,"[37] thinking only in physical

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[31]Ibid., p. 219. [32]Ibid., I:761. [33]Ibid., p. 470.
[34]Ibid., p. 475. [35]Ibid., p. 520. [36]Ibid., p. 560.
[37]Ibid., p. 750.

terms. The preponderance of symbols of coldness mirrors the lack of human warmth displayed by the characters.

The next three novels are anecdotal and lack the psychological penetration and philosophical depth of the first three novels. The theme of solitude is still important, although the symbols of warmth and coldness are of particular note only in El camino. Daniel hates to be sent away from his village, even for the sake of progress, and Germán's death increases his reluctance. However, he does find consolation in Uca-uca's sympathy during the burial, when she offers him "el calor de una mano amiga,"[38] helping him to confront "el frío de la muerte."[39]

The theme of human warmth as a solution to solitude has perhaps its greatest force in Delibes' seventh novel, La hoja roja. For the aging and isolated Eloy, the most important thing in life is warmth, el calor. He recalls from early childhood the loss of his father and the warmth of his nurse Antonia. He also remembers his sister Elena, who was "despegada, áspera y fría como un réptil."[40] He recalls his wife Lucita as having "un calor áspero, pero confortable,"[41] and his best friend Isaías as representing "el calor . . . y toda una vida."[42] Eloy characterizes people according to the warmth or coldness they provide, feeling that

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[38]Ibid., p. 446. [39]Ibid., p. 441. [40]Ibid., III:298.

[41]Ibid., p. 378. [42]Ibid., p. 398.

> . . . el hombre precisa un calor por dentro y otro por fuera y que cuando se inventó el fuego todo iba bien, porque los hombres se sentaban en torno y surgía una intimidad que provenía de las mismas llamas, pero que desde vino el progreso y el calor se entubó, la comunidad se había roto porque era un contrasentido servirse de un fuego sin humo.[43]

To recapture this lost warmth, the lonely old man turns to the comfort of the kitchen and of Desi, and the two provide each other with sympathetic companionship.

In Las ratas, the primary concern is man's relationship to nature, as well as man's relationship to other men. Therefore, the symbols of warmth and coldness are closely allied with the solitude that the forces of nature bring about:

> En el pueblo, las gentes maldecían de la soledad y ante los nublados, la sequía o la helada negra, blasfemaban y decían: "No se puede vivir en este desierto."[44]

The vicissitudes of weather are the vehicle for expressing the positive and negative qualities of solitude. Although others may curse the isolation of the village and its unpredictable weather, Nini relishes the natural solitude and appreciates every plant, animal and season in his beloved countryside.

In Cinco horas con Mario, the symbols of warmth and coldness involve the lack of communication and understanding in Carmen's relationships with others, especially her husband. Her lack of warmth is first seen as she exchanges "besos sin

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[43]Ibid., p. 399.

[44]Ibid., I:463.

calor"[45] with those who have come to pay their last respects to Mario. As Carmen conducts her long monologue at his side, she tells him, "Fuiste frío conmigo,"[46] and accuses him of being "más frío que otro poco."[47] Even after a long night of self-recrimination and confession, she is still not aware that her own lack of warmth and compassion pushed the sensitive, nervous Mario to the limits of his understanding and endurance.

Jacinto in Parábola del náufrago is removed from a cold impersonal technocracy to a shelter soon surrounded by a hedge. At first, he views his refuge positively, but he soon feels trapped, walled in, and is finally transformed into a sheep through his timidity, becoming a part of the nature he loves. Jacinto struggles to retain his individuality and his concern for others, but personal security is his greatest need. Orphaned early, he conserves " . . . la huidiza imagen de una frondosidad humana tibia y protectora,"[48] and, with nature's creatures, he can regain some of this warmth. As Jacinto feeds a pigeon, he discovers that "Le conmueve aquella tibieza menuda, la sensación de un cuerpo vivo en

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[45]Miguel Delibes, Cinco horas con Mario (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1965), p. 12.

[46]Ibid., p. 67.

[47]Ibid., p. 123.

[48]Miguel Delibes, Parábola del náufrago, p. 42.

contacto con su piel huérfana."[49] Jacinto longs for warmth, finds it in nature, and eventually becomes a part of that nature.

Although Quico in El príncipe destronado is a very young boy, he experiences lonely moments, and the need for human warmth is again apparent. When the child has night fears, he turns to his often neglectful mother for "el calor protector,"[50] not knowing that she, too, has her own chilling moments of fear.

In the prologue to Volume III of his Obra completa (1968), Delibes lists nature as one of the essential themes of his works. In his acceptance speech before the Spanish Royal Academy, included in a group of essays entitled SOS (1976), Delibes again stresses man's relationship to nature and his own environmental concerns. Nature provides many of the symbols of solitude in Delibes' novels, as do the material objects which help to make up the world surrounding man.

Nature plays a major role in La sombra del ciprés es alargada as Pedro journeys from Ávila to the sea and back. The mystical city with its ancient yellowed walls and cold climate and the silent, deserted plaza around Lesmes' gloomy home contribute to Pedro's hermetic nature. In Ávila's

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[49]Ibid., p. 198.

[50]Miguel Delibes, El príncipe destronado, p. 166.

cemetery, Delibes finds two moving symbols of solitude: the shadow of the cypress, "alargada y corta como un cuchillo,"[51] stands for Pedro's fatalism and apartness, as well as for death; the "sombra . . . redonda"[52] of the pine not only symbolizes the life force but also Pedro's feeling of loss when Alfredo is buried beneath an acacia. Taking to the sea to avoid human contact, he begins to identify with the "cielo y mar en un abrazo,"[53] the joining of earth and sky on the horizon. He discovers that he cannot completely isolate himself from others, and longs for such closeness for himself. Ironically, it is on the ocean that he meets and loses Jane. After her death, Pedro returns to Ávila's cemetery and places his wedding band in Alfredo's grave, symbolically acknowledging the union of the two positive influences in his life. He then surveys the ageless walls of Ávila, which impress him now with their stability and permanence, and resolves to continue his search for roots.

The lower-class barrio setting of Aún es de día offers one of the first indications of Sebastián's tormented solitude. His feeling of being different, of not belonging, is aggravated by the senseless merriment of his neighborhood, since he realizes that " . . . el dolor que producía este

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[51]Ibid., I:96.

[52]Ibid., p. 96.

[53]Ibid., p. 168.

optimismo en el pecho estribaba en la comprensible incompatibilidad del alma del barrio con su alma."[54] Two of the most poignant material reminders of Sebastián's loneliness are a bannister ornament or barandilla, his best friend and only interlocutor, and the fabric store mannequin with whom he attempts sexual relations.

The young protagonist of Mi idolatrado hijo Sisí is trapped in a bourgeois prison in which appearances are the main concern. Although his material and physical desires are immediately gratified, Sisí's spiritual development receives little consideration. Only when military service places him in a natural setting does he realize the emptiness of his life, the lack of personal and social fulfillment, his metaphysical unrest. The direct contact with nature and his new self-knowledge encourage Sisí to look beyond himself, and his spiritual longings are consummated in the peace and beauty of natural solitude: "Amaba el aire libre, la luz y el calor del sol, la fría communicación de las estrellas."[55] What material abundance could not provide him, the solitude of nature does.

In El camino, Delibes illustrates the sadness and loneliness one feels when separated from natural surroundings, and he takes symbols from nature to heighten the sense of

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[54]Ibid., III:26.

[55]Ibid., I:746.

Daniel's grief at leaving the idyllic scene of his childhood. One of the most moving symbols describes his reaction to the tolling of the bells during Germán's burial:

> Todo el valle . . . se llenaba hasta impregnarse de los tañidos sordos, opacos, oscuros y huecos de las campanas parroquiales. Y el frío de sus vibraciones pasaba a los estratos de la tierra y a las raíces de las plantas y a la medula de los huesos de los hombres y al corazón de los niños. Y el corazón de Daniel . . . se tornaba mollar y maleable--blando como el plomo derretido--bajo el solemne tañir de las campanas.[56]

Daniel's sadness and distress is reflected in the mournful tolling of death bells which seems to permeate the valley with its grief, and the boy's growing sense of loneliness takes complete possession of him.

Both Diario de un cazador and Diario de un emigrante exhibit Delibes' interest in nature and physical environment. Although Delibes' hunter is an elemental character of primitive mentality, he is portrayed sensitively as a man who experiences agonizing loneliness. The recurring phrases "Sentí silbar al exprés de Galicia"[57] and "volveré a sentirlo,"[58] serve almost as a leitmotif in the Diarios to express the feeling of metaphysical solitude the distant, haunting whistle arouses in Lorenzo; it appears when he suffers emotional stress, when he has romantic difficulties

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[56]Ibid., pp. 444-445.

[57]Ibid., II:35.

[58]Ibid., p. 120.

with Anita, and when young Mele and his own mother die. Lorenzo frequently escapes from his everyday cares into the solitary, natural world of hunting. It is during such an expedition that he expresses poignantly the isolation his emigration has brought him: " . . . tampoco la perdiz roja se aclimata en estas montañas; es ley de vida."[59] Lorenzo, like Daniel, suffers from loneliness when he is separated from his natural surroundings.

One of the most effective symbols in La hoja roja is taken from the material object from which the title is derived. In a book of Spanish cigarette papers, the hoja roja reminds the user that only five sheets remain. When Eloy comes to the red one, he sees it as a warning that little time is left for him; in his loneliness and isolation, he has become obsessed with illness and death. To take refuge from both the physiological coldness of advanced years and the psychological coldness of rejection, Eloy escapes to the kitchen, to the physical comfort of heat and the human comfort of Desi: " . . . la vaharada cálida de la pieza le reconfortaba. También le reconfortaba la voz llena de la muchacha."[60] In his own home, Eloy at last finds an answer to solitude.

Las ratas continues the theme of a life lived close to nature introduced in La sombra del ciprés es alargada

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[59]Ibid., p. 65.

[60]Ibid., III:286.

and El camino. Many of its inhabitants deplore the solitude and desolation of the village, but Nini realizes the vitality of the landscape: " . . . sabía . . . que el pueblo no era un desierto y que en cada obrada de sembrado o de baldío alentaban un centenar de seres vivos."[61] In fact, Nini and nature are so closely identified as to be one, and thus the boy never feels alone.

In Cinco horas con Mario, Carmen speaks derogatorily of Mario's literary expression, especially his interest in symbols. Although the limited time and space of the novel obviate any extensive use of symbols in Carmen's monologue, several do have their basis in nature. Mario is referred to by those more sympathetic with his plight than Carmen as "un ahogado,"[62] a man so overwhelmed by his nervousness and sensitivity that he cannot cope with or mold himself to bourgeois demands. His wife accuses him of wearing a "cara de ciprés"[63] and of acting "como que [hubiera] caído de la luna,"[64] postures which she attributes to his asthenic makeup. As a victim of such intolerance, Mario must necessarily turn to his Bible and to other books,

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[61]Ibid., p. 463.

[62]Miguel Delibes, Cinco horas con Mario, p. 24.

[63]Ibid., p. 176.

[64]Ibid., p. 264.

as well as to friends and colleagues, for the love and companionship he misses at home.

Parábola del náufrago narrates the escape from an autocratic society into a natural state. In so doing, it underlines the evils brought about by a so-called progressive system that denies man his individuality. Many of its symbols of solitude are taken from the natural and physical surroundings of the protagonists, including that of the seto or hedge by which Jacinto is set apart from the rest of the world, isolated for his lack of assertiveness and his inappropriate curiosity. When he first plants the hedge, he feels no need of companionship and enjoys his solitude. However, as the foliage grows at an alarming rate, Jacinto starts to feel victimized by his natural enclosure: " . . . iba sintiéndose ajeno al mundo circundante, aislado como en un desierto."[65] In order to find relief from his stultifying loneliness, he turns to an inanimate object, his mirror, for comfort and company, as Sebastián in Aún es de día turned to the bannister ornament and the mannequin. The prisoner carries on long dialogues with the espejo, a habit initiated even before his forced confinement. Jacinto is most completely identified with his natural surroundings at the end of his entrapment, when he is turned into a sheep and becomes Jacinto.

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[65]Miguel Delibes, Parábola del náufrago, p. 109.

> Únicamente advierte el sol sobre él, la brisa serrana, el perfume del tomillo y del romero. . . . Pero nada de todo ello le deja huella, le despierta un anhelo, o le estimula. Simplemente le imbuye la idea de que está vivo; de que es.[66]

Refusing to conform to the impersonality and blind obedience demanded by his society, Jacinto renounces his attempts to bring people closer together, and becomes one with the nature that has always welcomed him.

El príncipe destronado is written from the perspective of a four-year-old boy, describes household activities during one twenty-four-hour period, and takes place almost completely within the home itself. The scope of the symbolism is therefore somewhat limited, although there are certain objects within Quico's physical surroundings that reflect his loneliness. He finds reassurance in his bedroom lamp, which he sees as a guardian angel, and in the rainbow created by the sunlight on his books. The fact that he must rely on these for comfort indicates the extent of his isolation. When he is put to bed at night, away from the company of others, his crib seems like a prison to him. And, in regard to his dethronement as the youngest child and the center of attention in the family, his mother exclaims: "'Otro príncipe destronado . . . : Yo no sé si esta casa acabará siendo el palacio real o un manicomio.'"[67]

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[66]Ibid., pp. 228-229.

[67]Miguel Delibes, El príncipe destronado, p. 73.

Thus she aptly describes the isolating atmosphere of Quico's home.

Death is one of the major preoccupations of Delibes' works, as he himself states in Volume III of his Obra completa. Actual death and separation, a sort of living death, are part of the solitary condition and provide many symbols of man's loneliness in Delibes' novels.

The principal symbol relating to death in La sombra del ciprés es alargada is that of the cypress, whose morbid effect Alfredo describes on their first cemetery visit, sitting under the pleasant shade of a pine tree:

> Los cipreses no puedo soportarlos. Parecen espectros y esos frutos crujientes que penden de sus ramas son exactamente igual que calaveritas pequeñas, como si fuesen los cráneos de esos muñecos que se venden en los bazares.[68]

These same cypresses give symbolic form to Pedro's grief and loneliness after Alfredo dies. Ávila's cemetery itself provides several effective symbols of solitude. As Mateo and the two boys stroll through the cemetery one day, they have to make way for a funeral cortege, and they notice a defeated young widower following his wife's coffin. Lesmes then has the opportunity to recite another of his pessimistic apothegms:

> Las bodas no serían tan frecuentes ni se adornarían con detalles tan superfluos e insensatos

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[68]Miguel Delibes, Obra completa, I:96.

> si los novios pensasen en su día que uno de los dos ha de enterrar al otro.[69]

Although the cemetery symbolizes death and separation, it also offers to lonely Pedro after his friend's death a comfort that he cannot derive from visits to scenes of happy childhood adventures:

> Prefería con mucho la augusta paz del camposanto. . . . Lo otro me evocaba a un Alfredo ardiente, pleno y vivaz; el cementerio me ayudaba a rememorar, pero las imagenes de mi recuerdo se movían sobre un fondo de fatalidad ya consumada que no hacía dolorosos mis retornos al momento actual, vacío e incómodo.[70]

In Aún es de día, as in the first novel, the cemetery reflects the protagonist's sense of separation from loved ones and his awareness of the unhappiness and loneliness that death brings. When Sebastián decorates his father's grave on All Saints Day, he observes that "La puerta del camposanto vomitaba toneladas de gente negra. Las tragaba con flores y sonrientes y las devolvía sin flores y apesadumbradas."[71] He thus becomes more acutely aware of the transitory nature of life and of the pervasiveness of the solitude which he himself so tragically personifies.

Sisí's death in Mi idolatrado hijo Sisí, and the agonizing loneliness that it causes his father, puts to a final test the older man's selfishness and egotism. In his

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[69] Ibid., p. 98.

[70] Ibid., p. 145.

[71] Ibid., III:51-52.

utter solitude, he turns his hatred upon everyone, and, unable to cope with the loss, considers himself a total failure. Choosing a cowardly death as his son did, he commits suicide, the ultimate lone and lonely act, for "Era, el mundo, un gigantesco desierto desolado. Sisí no estaba ya. Y al mundo enloquecido, nada le importaba."[72]

In El camino, the idea of separation from his natural surroundings, with its ensuing loneliness, is the motive of Daniel's recollections of the village and villagers. Germán's death makes the idea of separation even more difficult to conceive:

> . . . en adelante nada sería como había sido. Él pensaba que Roque, el Moñigo, y Germán, el Tiñoso, se sentirían muy solos cuando él se fuera a la ciudad a progresar, y ahora resultaba que el que se sentía solo, espantosamente solo, era él, y sólo él. . . .[73]

The loss of his good friend and the idea of imminent separation from his beloved village join together to increase Daniel's sense of loneliness as he unwillingly prepares to depart:

> Sintió entonces que la vitalidad del valle le penetraba desordenada e íntegra y que él entregaba la suya al valle en un vehemente deseo de fusión, de compenetración íntima y total. Se daban uno al otro en un enfervorizado anhelo de mutua protección, y Daniel, el Mochuelo, comprendía que dos cosas no deben separarse nunca cuando han logrado hacerse la una al modo y medida de la otra.[74]

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[72] Ibid., I:758.

[73] Ibid., p. 440.

[74] Ibid., p. 449.

As in previous novels, the uprooting from one's natural habitat plays a major role in the creation of solitude.

In both Diario de un cazador and Diario de un emigrante, the cemetery and therefore death serves as a symbol of solitude. In the first novel, Lorenzo witnesses the burial of his hunting companion Pepe, recalls his father and longs for those who will not return. In the second, he visits Pepe's grave before going to America and realizes that "A uno . . . no desea otra cosa sino descansar en esta tierra, junto a los suyos."[75] Nevertheless, Lorenzo leaves Spain for Chile, trying in vain to adjust to life there. The separation from his native land is more than he can bear, as evidenced repeatedly in Diario de un emigrante with the phrase "Te pones a ver y como en casa en ninguna parte."[76]

Because one of its principal themes is the loneliness of old age, La hoja roja necessarily places great emphasis on the symbolism of death. The hoja roja in the cigarette papers represents for Eloy the brevity of his remaining life. He also repeats several phrases describing his nearness to death, including "la jubilación era la antesala de la muerte,"[77] and "la vida es una sala de espera."[78] In La hoja roja, as

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[75]Ibid., II:180.

[76]Ibid., p. 345.

[77]Ibid., III:265.

[78]Ibid., p. 322.

in the preceding novels, the cemetery provides symbolism for solitude, as Eloy attends Isaías' funeral and remarks to the priest that he himself " . . . tenía ya más amigos allí que en la ciudad."[79] Overwhelmed by this sobering thought, the lonely old man then calculates the number of burials he has seen and the number of days he has yet to live.

The theme of death in relation to solitude appears also in Las ratas. The young protagonist, Nini, has extremely close bonds with the earth and its creatures, and for this reason he hates death in any form, separation from the natural ties that he has made. Nini also suffers when his friend Rufo, el Centenario, dies. The imminence of the old man's cancerous death is made clear to the boy when Rufo tells him:

> A todos cuando muertos nos comen los bichos. Pero es igual, hijo. Yo soy ya tan viejo que los bichos no han tenido paciencia para aguardar.[80]

Rufo's candid and graphic remark concerning the dissolution of the body produces a tremendous feeling of isolation in Nini, especially since the centenarian is one of the boy's few personal spiritual ties.

In Cinco horas con Mario, Carmen's monologue at her dead husband's side gives stark evidence of her loneliness,

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[79] Ibid., p. 405.

[80] Ibid., p. 500.

which she herself has created with her lack of tolerance and understanding for people and ideas. The entire novel symbolizes death as well as loneliness, and this idea is so pervasive that it does not emerge in particular passages, but rather in the entire style, structure and tone of the novel.

In Parábola del náufrago, the final emphasis is on the simple fact of being, as Jacinto discovers the joy of a life lived close to nature, away from the technological society that has almost destroyed him. However, when he is trapped in his natural prison, he is forced to reflect upon life and death:

> . . . resulta que es la vida lo que le asusta . . . , pero como también le asusta la muerte, él . . . se ve en un callejón sin salida y cuando grita . . . confía en que alguien le oiga, se apiada de él, le tome entre sus brazos, le acune, le oprima contra su seno y saque de . . . su cuerpo . . . todo el miedo que guarda dentro. Pero no le oye nadie, ni se apiada nadie, ni le coge nadie.[81]

As the hedge continues to isolate him from any human aid or comfort, and causes him to reflect upon life and death, Jacinto fantasizes about his own end. However, when he becomes fully aware of his metamorphosis, he is angered and screams: "'Te han suicidado, jacinto!'"[82] It is not death he must face, but a new way of life instead. However, the symbolism of death here is the same as in the other novels,

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[81]Miguel Delibes, Parábola del náufrago, p. 112.

[82]Ibid., p. 222.

for it represents the death of the character of Jacinto and the emergence of the character of jacinto, the sheep.

The young protagonist of El príncipe destronado does not yet have to face the loneliness of death. Nevertheless, he does wonder and worry about the fate of a cat burned in the furnace. Moreover, Quico suffers separation anxiety as he calls for his mother's protection at night, so he is beginning to learn about solitude.

Symbols serve as powerful devices for communicating and reinforcing the theme of solitude in these eleven novels. The idea of loneliness and its positive counterpart in the sympathetic human relationship are dramatically and repeatedly played against one another. The symbols of light and warmth represent valid interpersonal communication; darkness and coldness represent alienating human solitude. Symbols of death and separation represent forces negative only up to a point, as they often precipitate affirmative stands against loneliness and alienation. Nature, one of Delibes' most important concerns and overall themes, symbolizes both positive and negative solitude. Variously arrayed, this group of symbols provides a cohesive imagery for the expression of solitude within the human condition.

## CHAPTER IV

## CONCLUSION

Miguel Delibes is one of the most representative of modern Spanish writers in his expression of man's plight in today's world, especially in his attention to the problem of human solitude. Affected by the historical and philosophical currents of his age and moved by his own human kindness and sympathy, he recognizes the dilemma of modern man in coping with isolation and loneliness. For this reason, the theme of solitude has been a constant preoccupation in his works for nearly three decades. As a member of the post-World War II generation of novelists, Delibes has been influenced by the aftermath of the cruelly divisive Spanish Civil War of 1936-39 as well as by the existentialist philosophy of despair and by its emphasis on the individual. As a "socially aware Christian,"[1] Delibes has been guided by his own religious faith and moral values, which inform his concern for the common man's adjusting to everyday situations and metaphysical questions. One of these questions

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[1]Janet Winecoff Díaz, "Miguel Delibes' Vision of Castilla," South Atlantic Bulletin 36, iii:62.

is the pervasive and haunting problem of solitude, whether it be expressed in the cold, forbidding and tragedy-ridden world of the young Pedro in La sombra del ciprés es alargada or in the nightmarish and nullifying existence of the imprisoned Jacinto in Parábola del náufrago. Delibes demonstrates that the sensitive person at once seeks and fears his own solitude; although he longs to determine the significance of his life, he is horrified by the emptiness he feels around him and within himself. Thus the physically deformed Sebastián of Aún es de día avoids relationships with others and struggles to perfect himself spiritually, Lorenzo of Diario de un cazador and Diario de un emigrante takes refuge in nature and yet discovers a great affection for the people and objects in his birthplace, and don Eloy in La hoja roja envisions death as a relief but still hungers for human warmth. The hope and frustration inherent in finding one's place in an incomprehensible world define the theme of solitude in the novels of Miguel Delibes.

Delibes' attention to solitude in the novels from 1947 to 1974 is most readily apparent in the three aspects of theme, character and symbol. The themes which give philosophical substance to his work, such as death, old age, love and friendship, egoism and materialism, concern problems which are crucial to man's existence and which require solutions based on an individual's knowledge of himself and of his relationships with other human beings. Many of the

dilemmas aggravate or are compounded by man's solitary feelings. Although young Daniel in El camino feels that his place is in the village, he obeys his father's wishes. The idea of solitude then derives from the boy's anguished dread of separation from the family, friends and idyllic existence he has known. In a later novel, Cinco horas con Mario, the theme of isolation and loneliness emerges from Carmen's monologue with her husband's corpse, and the tragedy of a relationship without communication, compassion and understanding for one's fellow man is starkly portrayed, despite instances of comic relief.

Delibes explores solitude as a major consideration in itself and as a vital part of these themes through his characters, to whom he gives primary consideration: "'Yo doy a los personajes un lugar preponderante entre todos los elementos que se conjugan en una novela.'"[2] The author portrays his characters as existing in a determined time and place and studies them with careful psychological penetration. To emphasize more dramatically the thematic development and characterization of solitude in the novels, Delibes uses four groups of symbols, those of light and darkness, warmth and coldness, natural and physical surroundings and death and separation. These include such powerful symbols as the shadows cast by the pine and cypress

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[2]Jacinto Luis Guereña, "Un año de la vida de Delibes," Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos 262:181.

trees in La sombra del ciprés es alargada, the protective warmth of the mother in El príncipe destronado, the cigarette paper warning in La hoja roja, and the cemeteries which appear throughout the novels. While these divisions do not encompass all of Delibes' symbolic apparatus, they do provide a most effective basis for his concentration on solitude.

Miguel Delibes, as both a humanist and a man of deep religious conviction and high moral standards, bases his literary effort upon the idea of the individual's adjustment to life. Man's responses to his own solitude and to that of others play a major role in the quality of that adjustment. Delibes exhibits in his novels a keen observation of human nature and a profound understanding of and compassion for man's solitary condition. Although he may not openly suggest or provide solutions for solitude, he does display a guarded optimism founded on moral and spiritual values which seems to afford some hope for human dignity and solidarity in a lonely modern world.

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