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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION AS THEMATIC ELEMENTS IN THE WORKS OF DOLORES MEDIO

A DISSERTATION

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BY

HELEN CASEY

Norman, Oklahoma

1975

LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION AS THEMATIC ELEMENTS

IN THE WORKS OF DOLORES MEDIO

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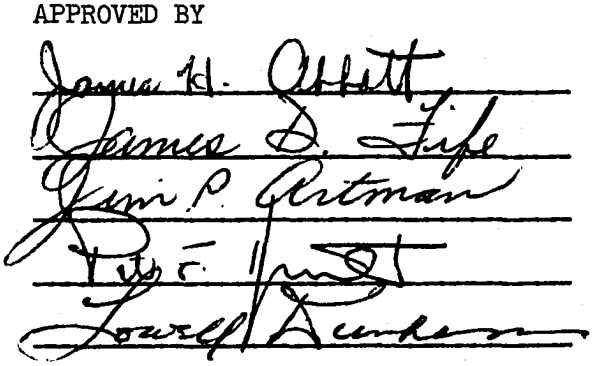

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

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LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION AS THEMATIC ELEMENTS IN THE WORKS OF DOLORES MEDIO

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Dolores Medio's approach to the novel reflects a special attitude toward language and communication. Language itself and the problem of lack of communication in interpersonal relationships are at the core of her stylistic presentation. These factors are also intrinsically linked to the theme of most of her novels -- that of alienation. By means of her treatment of language, Dolores Medio is able to illustrate dramatically the alienation that exists in interpersonal relationships as well as between the individual and the society in which he lives. The language of her characters is above all superficial, focusing on the most commonplace elements of social interchange. Because of an inability to communicate with others, her characters are alienated on an individual level and because of the nature of the society in which they live, they feel alienated from most social institutions. In this way man's role in society becomes an important theme, directing the author's attention toward the hardships of the lower classes. Dolores Medio's most frequent subject is the hombre

medio, confronted with such problems as the high cost of living, changing family relationships in a modern society, inadequate housing, or low-paying jobs. These problems constitute the social ills which afflict the characters and are treated to some degree in each of her novels. Such social problems represent an external source of alienation. However, social alienation is merely one aspect of the author's theme; she explores man's spiritual nature and finds that his problems are not wholely external. By means of style she shows that incommunication and alienation characterize modern life. In each of her novels, Nosotros, los Rivero (1953), Funcionario público (1956), El pez sigue flotando (1959), Diario de una maestra (1961), and Bibiana (1967), Dolores Medio treats some aspect of the problem of alienation and develops a progressively more speech-oriented presentation.

Three of these novels, Funcionario público, El pez sigue flotando, and Bibiana, deal with the problems of middle and lower class existence in contemporary Spain while Nosotros, los Rivero and Diario de una maestra evoke the recent past and recall the author's memories of her childhood in Oviedo and her career as a teacher in a provincial Spanish town. Born in Oviedo in 1914, Dolores Medio began her education in that City, first studying art and music at the Escuela de Bellas Artes and later, education at the Escuela Normal. She taught in the small Asturian town of Nava before and after the war. Winning the Premio Concha Espina in 1945, she moved to Madrid where she studied at the Escuela Superior and the Escuela de Periodismo. Living now in Madrid she has established herself as one of Spain's important novelists. Although she is known primarily as a novelist, she has written short stories and a biography of Isabel II. In

addition to the Premio Concha Espina for her collection of short stories entitled Nina, she received the Premio Sésamo in 1963 for another collection entitled Andrés. However, the most important literary award of her career is the Premio Eugenio Nadal of 1952 for her novel Nosotros, los Rivero. With this novel Dolores Medio became well known and established herself as a novelist.

These five novels show a definite pattern of stylistic evolution. From the traditional treatment of dialogue in Nosotros, los Rivero, one can follow the development of an increasingly speech-oriented style in all of her subsequent novels. The dialogue of these novels consists, for the most part, of speech presented directly with only limited elaboration and intellectual commentary by the author. Private speech in the form of interior monologue alternates with dialogue between characters to comprise the greater part of her novels; thus narration and description are relegated to minor positions. Even when the character's musings are expressed in the third person by the author herself, these thoughts still have the effect of first person narration since the character's point of view is carefully retained. The subject thus seems to define himself through his speech and his behavior rather than being directly described and judged by an omniscient creator.

This presentation leads to an ironic situation since so much talking does not lead to meaningful communcation in the relations between one character and another or between the individual and the social institutions with which he must cope. Indeed, Dolores Medio's characters seem to be handicapped rather than aided by speech. They scheme, worry, and hesitate under the impact of the smallest events of everyday life and

although they express their preoccupations verbally, they generally are incapable of effectively communicating their anxiety to others. Thus they must suffer in the utmost isolation and solitude. Their groping to communicate and ultimately to act in modern society constitutes the real subject matter of Dolores Medio's novels.

Deterministically, circumstances and events seem to trap her characters in the frustrating positions they occupy. Society is the force which shapes their destiny and they, in their futile struggling, are incapable of making any changes in the social structure. However, Dolores Medio's viewpoint is not nineteenth-century determinism. The naturalists of the last century were concerned with the effect of scientifically measurable factors on an individual viewed as a member of a larger general category rather than as an individual with certain rights within society. They assumed that scientific studies of man in society would lead the way to the establishment of the perfect relationship between the individual and social institutions. Since a perfect relationship has not been established, writers today seek other approaches to the problem of man in society. Like most of her contemporaries, Dolores Medio sees man as oppressed and alienated within an indifferent and all-powerful social structure. She focuses on the individual pitted against the pressures of living in a modern society, a situation which is exacerbated by Spain's particular political circumstances. Her characters, like the residents of any other modern nation, are alienated from their policitcal and social institutions and suffer consequently from a loss of identity and an inability to identify the cause of their suffering and to communicate these problems to others.

In accordance with the requirements of the modern social predicament, Dolores Medio's stylistic approach is austere and extremely objective. The contemporary writer knows that his own prejudices inevitably color what he might intend to be scientific and objective. Therefore the most severe form of objectivity is often the goal of the writer of today. This approach is especially prevalent in the contemporary Spanish novel. Reflecting this propensity toward objectivity, Dolores Medio depends upon an aspect of daily social intercourse that lends itself most readily to objective presentation. That aspect is speech. Noting the modern reader's skeptical reaction to the judgments of an omniscient narrator, Dolores Medio exploits popular speech to the exclusion of visual perception and psychological interpretation. The cinema is a more appropriate medium for visual interpretation and, for the modern mentality, psychological analysis does not offer the key to total knowledge of a personality. With this in mind, Dolores Medio turns to speech as the more appropriate tool for the objective novelist. Her characters are developed through speech -- their own cliches, individual speech patterns, and favorite sayings. This aspect of her style is also a tool of social criticism, for language presented in this way is a condemnation of the social values and ideas which prompt such speech. The characters use cliches rather than think, they suffer but do not know why they suffer, and they are incapable of developing their ideas intellectually through language.

This approach is only partially apparent in Dolores Medio's first novel Nosotros, los Rivero. In this work, dealing with the experiences of a young girl growing up in the decade preceding the Spanish Civil War, the predominant theme of alienation appears although it is developed in a

traditional manner. With its artistic and erudite vocabulary and relatively involved plot, this first novel lacks the integration of style and theme of the author's later works.

Nosotros, los Rivero was followed in 1956 by Funcionario público, a novel depicting the problems of a lower level civil servant in Madrid. It is in this novel that the author presents for the first time in her work the problem of communication as the cause and effect of alienation mainly through interior monologue and dialogue. While the protagonist and his wife drift off into private dream worlds, their marriage disintegrates. Their inevitable separation is accomplished without a single discussion of their mutual problems. With no home of their own and no chance for job advancement, they are overwhelmed by the hopelessness of their situation; nevertheless, they cannot face their problems realistically. They fantasize about winning the lottery or an idealized romantic attachement. Alienated from each other and from society, they eventually abandon all attempts to communicate.

In El pez sigue flotando the author employs the same stylistic approach. A Madrid apartment house provides an ironic setting. Living in close physical proximity, the inhabitants are nevertheless alienated from each other. Interior monologue reveals their struggle to break out of their isolation and to change the situation in which they seem to be trapped. But they are affected by external forces -- generally economic -- against which they struggle futilely. The modest storekeeper, the poorly-paid typist, the seamstress, and the other working class people of the apartment building are tied to their situation in life by class, education, limited job opportunities, and the intellectual stagnation of the

society in which they live. Any attempt to act seems quite useless despite the tension and sense of desperation of the individual situations. Their tentative actions and musings come to nothing in the end.

Diario de una maestra represents a digression from the trend toward the speech-oriented stylistic approach initiated in Funcionario público. In Diario de una maestra a profoundly idealistic school teacher goes to a small Spanish town to practice the modern teaching methods she has learned at the university. She is alienated from the villagers because of her new ideas and her liberal political beliefs. However, she is not alienated on a personal level but rather on the more abstract level of political and ideological differences.

Dolores Medio's latest novel Bibiana, the first of a proposed trilogy entitled Los que vamos a pie, marks the culmination of a tendency to use interior monologue and dialogue predominantly. The reader learns about the characters through their own private thoughts and their conversations with others. Bibiana, a middle class housewife, seems to wander aimlessly through life, confused by only vaguely understood obligations to family, society, and to herself. The novel consists of her attempts to communicate with others and to act with some degree of independence.

In all of these novels with the exception of Nosotros, los Rivero, traditional psychology and introspection are disavowed and replaced by an immersion in the character's thoughts. Dolores Medio attempts to record as directly as possible the contact with things and persons which her characters experience by situating the reader within the subconscious of another person. As a result the reader gains knowledge of a particular personality in stages. A sequence of single bits of information develops

into a pattern of speech and thought. The author limits herself in the creation of character to those sources of information such as silent language that represent the words of the character himself. Within this framework the past and a psychological interpretation of motives are simply not available. It is speech -- whether conscious or subconscious -- that reveals a particular character more than any other novelistic element.

Although objectivity is at the heart of Dolores Medio's presentation, she does not allow herself to discount social influences. Her preoccupation with an objective presentation is always tempered significantly by social circumstances. Her civil servants, storekeepers, and housewives are limited not only by personal inadequacies but also by pressures that come directly from the society in which they live. In Bibiana and in El pez sigue flotando the stifling social situation affects almost every aspect of the characters' lives. This is a deterministic view of reality since the author's approach leads inevitably to the conclusion that these people are conditioned by their environment and that their inability to communicate merely reflects the isolation of many people in similar circumstances. One is cautioned to remember that "el estado no puede pensar en el individuo, sino la colectividad. Los casos aislados no le interesan."[1] Social institutions are indifferent to the individual and all of Dolores Medio's characters suffer as a result of that indifference. By examining the life and problems of a single individual, she indirectly illustrates that his particular problems mirror those of the nation as a whole.

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[1]Dolores Medio, Funcionario público (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1956), p. 224.

Thus in her novels Dolores Medio attempts to study social problems -- especially those of the lower classes -- by means of a stylistic approach which emphasizes language and communication. External social pressures coupled with interpersonal problems in communication cause her characters to be helplessly isolated and alienated under the impact of an increasingly demanding society. Although the picture she paints of life in Spain today -- whether in Madrid, Oviedo, or a small provincial town -- is rather grim, there exists throughout her work the element of hope or at least the suggestion that the betterment of man is possible despite dire circumstances. She is always compassionate although the somber, almost hopeless, impression that comes from her choice of subject matter might suggest a more nihilistic point of view. Her characters never become completely despondent partly because they do not conceive of themselves as important enough to take a stand and rebel in even the smallest way. There are no glorious suicides in her work but rather the stories of lowly civil servants, insecure housewives, poorly-paid clerks, shopkeepers, and vendors who do not expect much from life and when they are denied even that, they manage to continue their struggle against the pressures of daily life. By revealing the suffering and misery of a large portion of Spanish society -- the financially and spiritually impoverished lower classes -- it appears that Dolores Medio is fulfilling an ideal which she expresses in her novels. That ideal is the belief that the human condition can be improved. In accordance with that belief she exposes social injustice as she studies its effect on the individual who is caught in it grasp.

CHAPTER II

NOSOTROS, LOS RIVERO

Dolores Medio's first novel Nosotros, los Rivero received the Premio Eugenio Nadal in 1952. With a total of seven editions it represents her greatest popular success, despite the fact that the critical reaction was generally less than favorable. Eugenio de Nora notes the author's lack of imagination and creativity: "Ante todo ninguna novedad técnica o temática, ninguna audacia de fondo ni de forma...La narración es lineal y sencilla; la expresión, salpicada de frases hechas...los personajes, centrados en la visión casi infantil."[1] Dolored Medio herself has acknowledged certain weaknesses in this first novel: "...el fallo esential era el lenguaje...lejano del que la novela moderna requería."[2] Whether the major defect of Nosotros, los Rivero is merely one of language may be open to debate; however, it is clear that in subsequent novels Dolores Medio's use of language is quite different. From the traditional realism of Nosotros, los Rivero, the author has moved toward a particularly

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[1]Eugenio de Nora, La novela española contemporánea (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1962), p. 208.

[2]Carlos Murciano, "Dolores Medio o la experiencia novelada," La Estafeta Literaria, 403 (1968), p. 8.

distinctive style. The sparse, language-oriented approach to novel writing evident in later works has resulted in a very effective presentation of theme and development of characters which is the most distinctive aspect of Dolores Medio's work today.

The popular success of Nosotros, los Rivero in the 1950's was, at least partially, due to the fact that this was one of the first novels of the post-war period to study the effect of the war on the Spanish people in fiction. The need for the assimilation of this devastating national experience was thus partially fulfilled through a fictionalized view of that period in Spanish history. Dolores Medio's work, although only indirectly dealing with political and ideological conflicts, presents the emotional atmosphere of those years to a public wanting to understand the complicated background of personal and national motivations which came into play during that period. With the action set in Oviedo, Dolores Medio uses significant dates of the civil war to form the background for the action of the novel: the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic in April of 1931 and the reaction of the citizens of Oviedo, the tension of October 1934 with the fall of the Republican government in Oviedo and the workers strike, the entrance of Nationalist troops into the city and the defeat of the Republicans by the end of October, and the privations and suffering of the winter of 1934-35. The fictionalization of these events from the recent past must surely have contributed to the immediate popularity of the novel when it appeared in 1952.

Other than the choice of this unique period in time as the setting for the novel, however, Dolores Medio does not display a great deal of creative imagination in other aspects of the work. Even the first

lines of the novel indicate the writer's insecurity. In this first novel she seems to be searching for a technique and a point of view with which to give novelistic substance to her ideas. Following the example of another Asturian Leopoldo Alas, she sets the action of the novel in the capital of that province. Alas, of course, immortalized the city of Oviedo in his La Regenta (1884), perhaps the best known example of Spanish naturalism. Like her nineteenth-century predecessor, Dolores Medio exploits the traditional atmosphere of the city in order to establish and develop the thematic basis of the novel. Both novels deal with the effect of the forces of tradition and social change on the inhabitants of Oviedo. Dolores Medio models her opening paragraph very closely after the first lines of La Regenta. Her nineteenth-century model begins with a description of Oviedo in which the image of a sleeping city symbolizes the hold of tradition on the inhabitants and their resistance to change. In accordance with Alas' deterministic philosophy, he immediately introduces the reader to a world of detail by magnifying the smallest element of the environment.

> La heroica ciudad dormía la siesta. El viento sur, caliente y perezoso, empujaba las nubes blanquecinas que rasgaban al correr hacia el norte. En las calles no había más ruido que el rumor estridente de los remolinos de polvo, trapos, pajas y papeles, que iban de arroyo en arroyo, de acera en acera, de esquina en esquina, revolando y persiguiéndose, como mariposas que se buscan y huyen y que el aire envuelve en sus pliegues invisibles. Cual turbas de pilluellos, aquellas migajas de la basura, aquellas sobres de todo, se juntaban en un montón, parábanse como dormidas un momento y brincaban de nuevo sobresaltadas, dispersándose, trepando unas por las paredes hasta los cristales temblorosos de los faroles, otras hasta los carteles de papel mal pegados a las esquinas, y había pluma que llegaba a un tercer piso, y arenilla que se

> incrustaba para días, o para años, en la vidriera de un escaparate, agarrada a un plomo.[1]

With an accumulation of details -- tiny figments of dust, straw, and paper blowing in the air, Alas creates the effect of matter viewed through a microscope; then scrutinized before being reassembled and reinterpreted by the narrator. The omniscient narrator views these disparate elements of nature and judges their importance without hesitation. Such concepts as time and the meaning of the universe are entirely within his realm. As the omniscient observer, he does not slight even the smallest detail of the environment. With equal care Alas presents his characters in this famous naturalistic study of provincial life in the last century.

Using Alas' description of Oviedo as a model, Dolores Medio carefully analyzes the details of the environment as she opens Nosotros, los Rivero. Oviedo is again a sleeping city:

> Oviedo es una ciudad dormida.
> Por las calles, estrechas y empinadas, del Oviedo antiguo, envueltas, de ordinario, en espesa niebla, corre un sueño de siglos. Las moradas humildes, de paredes desconchadas por la humedad, se aprietan en torno a los palacios y caserones con fachadas de piedra renegrecida. Unos y otra parecen dormitar constantemente en un dulce letargo. El gris plomizo del cielo ampara el plácido sueño de la ciudad, y la niebla, que la envuelve celosamente, amortigua los ruidos callejeros.[2]

Dolores Medio includes the same elements that Alas emphasized in his description of the city. The image of time and sleep again create a feeling of a tradition-bound society. The afternoon siesta is compared to the

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[1]Leopoldo Alas, La Regenta (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1969), p. 7.

[2]Dolores Medio, Nosotros, los Rivero (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1970), p. 11.

sleep of centuries that has made the city impervious to change. Her style is less detailed, verbose, and meandering but it nevertheless reproduces the tone and style of its nineteenth-century model. Both authors use this setting to introduce the conflict between tradition and social change. Oviedo's traditions and illustrious past hold its citizens in a position between the past and the present:

> Los ovetenses saben que no es fácil sacudirse la tiranía de este espíritu imponderable de la vieja ciudad. Que atesora, por otra parte, cuanto de típico, de artístico, de folklórico que existe en la capital del Principado.[1]

The city itself with its numerous monuments recalling the past and its strictly-defined social structure forms the background in which the young heroine matures and where she must try to reconcile old ways with the demands of twentieth-century life.

The importance of environment and heredity is stated by the protagonist, Lena Rivero, at the onset. Lena, a successful writer, has returned to her childhood home to recall the past and identify her roots. She maintains that it is heredity that shapes one's life: "Lena Rivero defendía...la influencia de lo hereditario sobre el ambiente, como factor determinante de la personalidad."[2] This echo of nineteenth-century determinism does not initiate a study of that philosophy however. For Dolores Medio it is merely a literary tool used to unify the novel. Her treatment of the influence of heredity on the individual amounts to a series of reappearing statements about a family curse: "...llevaban en la sangre la

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[1] Ibid., p. 12.

[2] Ibid., p. 13.

herencia de los Rivero, con su caudal de inquietudes, de ansia de vuelo, imposible de frenar."[1]

In search of the meaning of her destiny as revealed in this blood heritage, the protagonist looks back on the 20's and 30's when she was an adolescent. She sees her family heritage as the key to understanding the meaning of her past. From her father she believes that she has inherited a spirit of adventure and innovation while her mother's family represents conservatism and tradition: "...habían heredado de los Rivero el espíritu inovador y aventurero, pero...no cabe duda que actuaba también sobre ellos la sangre conservadora de los Quintana."[2] Lena's predicament resembles that of her country in the pre-war years when the Spanish people were caught between two political extremes: the more traditional and conservative philosophy of the Nationalists and the communistic ideals of the Republicans. Lena is growing up in a changing society which requires certain adjustments on her part in order for her to function effectively in that society. At the same time she finds that she is held by traditions and customs which do not yield to the demands of the times. In much the same way her country is drifting inevitably toward civil war because of similar conflicts between traditions and new ideas.

The nineteenth-century formula again appears in the circular structural pattern. In the opening chapter the adult Lena returns to her childhood home. The following chapters are a flashback representing her life between the ages of nine and eighteen when she leaves for Madrid to begin her career as a writer. This adolescent period develops in a

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[1]Ibid., p. 76. [2]Ibid., p. 33.

generally lineal time sequence until the last chapter when time moves back to the present with the adult Lena terminating her visit and returning to Madrid.

The narrator with unlimited knowledge of the character's motives is another element which contributes to the nineteenth-century flavor of the work. Defined from the outside, Dolores Medio's characters do not reveal their nature gradually through speech and action. The author depends primarily on narration and description rather than dialogue to create her fictional world. Because dialogue is limited, the characters seem to be defined rather than developed naturally and credibly. Their development is superficial and forced because each person's character is summed up in a few words by the omniscient narrator: Lena's sister María is described when she first appears as "limpia, formal, obediente,"[1] her brother Germán is "un muchacho hermoso, alto, fuerte,"[2] her sister Heidi is the opposite of Lena herself since Heidi is "encantadora...una muchacha alegre,"[3] and her aunt Mag is "sentimental, inocente, un poco cursi."[4] Lena is the only one who is shown to have a complex personality. Her development reveals several stages including coquetry, mysticism, political involvement, and finally artistic creativity. Her gradual character growth and the fact that she is developed through her own speech and actions makes her the most believable personality in the novel.

In addition to this inexperience in the creation of characters, Nosotros, los Rivero displays other defects. The novel shows a lack of

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[1] Ibid., p. 33.

[2] Ibid., p. 35.

[3] Ibid., p. 68.

[4] Ibid., p. 74.

imagination which often manifests itself in a tendency to depend too heavily on other literary sources and to be melodramatic and superficial. Often this tendency results from the use of unimaginative stylistic devices intended to unify the work. One of the most frequent is the idea of a family curse: "los Rivero ¡no mueren nunca en la cama!"[1] "la sangre de los Rivero no se desmentía jamás,"[2] and "nos gusta morir con las botas puestas."[3] Lena also suffers from dark thoughts, depressions, and a sense of foreboding which she calls her mariposas negras. With repetition and no further development her mariposas negras and the melodramatic characterization of the Riveros soon become tiresome.

Symbolism is also obvious and commonplace. Aunt Mag always wears an "humilde delantal color chocolate"[4] while Señora Rivero wears an "elegante bata de terciopelo azul...con esterillas negras."[5] The comparison shows, in an obvious way, that Mag is the inferior in the family situation and that Señora Rivero is the mistress of the house with all the privileges that accompany such a position. When this clothing eventually fades, it signifies the spiritual and material decay of the family. The symbol itself is commonplace and its integration into the rest of the novel is merely a matter of repeating the idea from time to time. This is just one example of a use of symbolism that generally reveals a lack of imagination or perhaps merely experience in novelistic technique.

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[1] Ibid., p. 44.

[2] Ibid., p. 60.

[3] Ibid., p. 163.

[4] Ibid., p. 66.

[5] Ibid., p. 65.

Other than these typical literary devices, there is also another example of lack of imagination and excessive dependence on past literature. Occasionally the author repeats, without much change, a situation borrowed from another work. The reaction of Lena and her sister María to their mother's death, for example, seems to be modeled very closely after Palacio Valdés' treatment of a similar situation in his novel Marta y María in 1888. In this work two sisters, Marta and María, exemplify different kinds of Christianity in their reaction to their mother's death. María insists that the dying mother know of her imminent death in order to prepare her properly for the religious rites of death and thereby secure the salvation of her soul. Marta, who is more compassionate, tries to keep this information from her mother so that her last moments might be less painful. Palacio Valdés uses this scene to dramatize the contrast between Marta's humane behavior and her sister's fanaticism. Lena and her sister María enact a twentieth-century version of this scene in Nosotros, los Rivero. Lena, who wants to spare her mother from additional suffering, must fight against her sister's insistence on religious formalities. Since the scene is changed very little from the Palacio Valdés version and is poorly integrated into the novel, the aspects of character illustrated by the scene seem gratuitous rather than the natural and logical consequence of previously established attitudes and previous action. There are other examples of borrowed scenes. The Cathedral of Oviedo is the ironic setting for a seduction just as it is in Alas' La Regenta. Lena meets an old family friend in the Church where he tries to seduce her. These scenes have the effect of being inserted rather clumsily into the action of the novel and again show the author's inexperience in writing technique.

A defect which belies poorly executed characters as much as literary borrowing is the tendency to idealize characters. Dolores Medio defines the nature of the Rivero family through generalizations. In later novels she is able to overcome this tendency. After Nosotros, los Rivero she no longer studies people who are special and unique in a very positive way. She substitutes for this approach the study of people who are unique because of the very fact that they lack goals, ideals, ambitions, and interesting personalities. She populates her fiction with people who are decidedly ordinary. However, in this first novel all the characters are viewed in a positive, idealized way which may be a result of the autobiographical nature of the work. Like the heroine of her novel Dolores Medio was born in Oviedo of middle class parents. Her father died when she was nine leaving the family in financial difficulty. She studied art and music at the Escuela de Bellas Artes as Lena did. And like her heroine her own mother died during the Civil War. Perhaps because of these autobiographical elements, Dolores Medio tends to idealize the characters in Nosotros, los Rivero. This tendency to idealize is one of the major defects of the novel. They all are in some way special: her father is an adventurous eccentric; Germán is a brave and idealistic intellectual and social reformer; María is an angelically devout Catholic; the flirtatious Heidi is appealingly adventurous. The author seems unable to stand back from her characters and view them with the objectivity necessary to see and describe a complex personality.

The theme of the hereditary influence on one's life along with the stylistic approach of Nosotros, los Rivero are essentially traditional. Although Dolores Medio's style is very different in later novels, there

are some indications of what later becomes her characteristic style in Nosotros, los Rivero. The occasional use of shorter sentences and sentence fragments creating a fast-moving rhythm in the novel are examples of the initial development of the author's own particular style. It is not until her second novel, Funcionario público, that this style emerges as fully developed. Nosotros, los Rivero is important in the career of Dolores Medio primarily as a learning experience since, more than anything else, it represents an experimental first novel reflecting a tentative approach to novel writing. Her characteristic style is not firmly set until Funcionario público where it becomes obvious that Dolores Medio has abandoned all dependence on past literary precedents and established a style of her own. That style is less verbose, it is fast moving, and the action covers a shorter period of time. The essential difference comes from the changed point of view which rejects narration, description, and dialogue as the three main narrative viewpoints for an emphasis on dialogue and interior speech. The idealization of Nosotros, los Rivero is replaced by extreme objectivity. The author maintains her interest in depicting the lives and problems of the middle class from her first to her last novel. The objectivity she displays after her first novel makes her interpretation of middle class existence much more convincing in later novels. In short, it is principally style that has changed since this first novel. The idealistic and traditional approach of Nosotros, los Rivero is replaced in later works by an essentially objective presentation. The author handles this new approach so well that the defects in style which marred her first novel do not reappear.

The stylistic defects in Nosotros, los Rivero belies a lack of experience that also shows itself in the development of theme. The presentation of theme suffers from sentimentality and melodrama. The Riveros with the curse and heroic nature are romantic, exaggerated types. The theme of a family heritage which fatalistically follows each family member is superficially developed and seems excessively melodramatic from the very onset. Regardless of this weakness in theme however, certain other themes are introduced in this novel which are of special interest because of the fact that in later novels they are treated with greater skill. The author displays in this first novel a preoccupation with the theme of alienation. The intellectual alienation of Lena as an artist, the political alienation of Ger, the alienation from their stereotyped roles of the women in the novel, the alienation of social class and financial position, and the alienation of youth from the established social structure as felt by Lena. These aspects of alienation are part of the basic initiation theme of the novel. The work focuses on Lena and her development into maturity with her eventual integration into adult society.

The alienation of youth is an important theme in Nosotros, los Rivero since the novel centers on Lena's adolescent years and early adulthood. Unable to adjust to social and family demands, Lena finds herself isolated. She is pressured to assume a particular social role following the example of her mother, her aunt, or other women within the family circle but her desire to make her own life makes the easy transition from girlhood to an acceptable female role impossible for her to achieve. It is her mother who represents the established, traditional ideas and life from which she wants to free herself. Thus when her mother dies and the

war ends at about the same time, she feels free not only from fears and preoccupations of the war but from the requirements of her family. The isolation of youth, especially in family relationships, reappears in later works.

A second aspect of alienation treated in Nosotros, los Rivero is that of social stereotyping. Socially-defined types such as the spinster, the Don Juan, the middle class matron, and the marriage-oriented young girl figure among the characters presented. It is significant that many of these social categories consist of women. Dolores Medio shows special insight in describing the plight of different types of women in terms of their social roles. She suggests through her fictional characters that the individual is often obliterated by the social forces which push that person into a particular social category. The pressures that had their effect on the women Lena is expected to emulate are likewise influencing Lena and her sisters. Because of the emphasis on these pressures, the novel is in many ways a study of how to educate a young girl. The emphasis, of course, is on what not to do since Lena and her sisters are educated in a non-productive and restrictive manner. The author analyzes the plight of the untrained woman in the 1930's -- a period beginning to reflect a need to change to meet new demands. Lena's brother articulates the nature of the problem. Speaking of Lena he states:

> ¿Qué hombre va a cargar con ella?....Me entristece pensar en su porvenir....Si hay un problema que me haya apasionado hasta quitarme el sueño...es éste de la mujer (especialmente de la mujer española), tan mal dotada para enfrentarse con la vida, tan superditada al hombre, tan indefensa...[1]

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[1] Ibid., p. 187-188.

Ger insists that the days of the totally dependent woman are over in Spain, that his sisters have to be trained to take an independent place in society. His arguments, however, have no effect on Señora Rivero who is so conditioned by her social training that she is incapable of considering a change in the existing order.

Alienation also results from an inferior social position and financial considerations. The Rivero family falls from middle class respectability to a marginal existence because of the war and the failure of the family business after the death of Señor Rivero. What has happened seems to be beyond their control. Because of the family's exalted view of their position in society, Lena and María cannot work outside the home and Ger must aspire to a professional rather than a business career. The war and the post-war economic situation merely accentuate the almost predestined economic and emotional downfall of the family. This is not yet the social protest of Funcionario público which focuses more directly on instances of social injustice. The social criticism of Nosotros, los Rivero is indirect, merely hinting at what will become a more direct concern of the author in later works.

Political alienation is illustrated primarily by the exploits of Lena's brother Ger. The political activities and beliefs which lead him to become actively involved in the war effort also cause him to be alienated and isolated from the rest of the community. His political work cuts him off from his own social class since his own mother and the friends of the family are very much opposed to any kind of social change. Nevertheless, his convictions force him to take a stand for what he considers to be the common good. Lena attempts to join her brother but she finds that

she is unable to commit herself completely to a political ideal. It is art rather than politics which ultimately becomes her obsession. Ger, however, is the political rebel ready to die for his beliefs. He is the only flamboyant and glamorous social reformer to appear in Dolores Medio's work. In later works, she tends to focus on the victim rather than the active reformer. Her work eventually becomes more and more pointed toward specific social conditions and even political issues but the characters who are involved in the action usually are unable to take any positive action. There are no glamorous Gers who run out to do battle and die for the cause of liberty and justice. Instead there are passive, suffering characters who are incapable of action or occasionally compassionate thinkers who contemplate political problems but are unable to effect any changes in the social situation. After Nosotros, los Rivero Dolores Medio focuses on the reasons for the suffering and despair rather than the fact that someone is capable of making a personal sacrifice for an ideal. In each of her later works -- Funcionario público, El pez sigue flotando, Diario de una maestra, and Bibiana -- a depressing and hopeless atmosphere is created to show the need for social change rather than the example of a hero who can perform miraculous deeds.

The alienation of the intellectual and the idealist is another theme which first appears in Nosotros, los Rivero and continues in other works. Lena represents the alienated artist misunderstood in a materialistic society. Her writing is strictly a personal endeavor; she does not enjoy the encouragement of family nor frineds. Her need to be creative shows itself in her first attempts to earn money for her needy family in the years immediately following the war. She and her sister take on a job

of copying legal documents in longhand for a meager sum. Lena cannot tolerate the drudgery of the work. However she does enjoy a later job, painting the faces on dolls because it, at least, affords her a minimum of creativity. By that time the need to be creative had become an essential element for her happiness. Her ambition to become a writer is shown to be exceptionally strong since she manages to write in spite of the social stereotyping of the times. As a woman she is limited to a particular group of social roles which do not include writing. The young Lena must overcome these preconceived ideas in order to assert her own personality and make her own life. A highly structured society thus isolates the creative, idealistic, and the intellectual. For challenging the acceptable social roles and the established customs, Lena must suffer isolation and at times the ridicule and misunderstanding of others.

In summary, several aspects of alienation are introduced in Nosotros, los Rivero. In this first novel they are secondary to the central theme of the work; however, in subsequent novels they represent the major thrust of the theme. Nosotros, los Rivero is a sentimental novel characterized by an obvious and commonplace treatment of style and theme. The major defect of the work comes from the lack of creativity it displays. Superficiality, sentimentality, melodrama, and commonplace situations characterize the novel. Nosotros, los Rivero is not linked in a direct way to the novels that follow. Dolores Medio's four subsequent novels are decidedly superior in coneption of theme and execution. The stylistic approach is imaginative and the theme in the majority of these novels is intrinsically related to the style. Communication and language are related to theme in a very effective way. The aspects of alienation

developed in Nosotros, los Rivero indicate a tendency to view man's social situation in terms of alienation. The same kinds of alienation -- political, class, financial, intellectual, idealistic -- appear in subsequent works and are emphasized in varying degrees. Dolores Medio maintains the same basic attitude in all of her novels: man is an alienated creature in an often hostile environment. Repeatedly in Nosotros, los Rivero the author asserts that one must "luchar contra una sociedad que lo asfixiaba."[1]

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[1] Ibid., p. 214.

CHAPTER III

FUNCIONARIO PÚBLICO

Dolores Medio's second novel Funcionario público, published in 1956, shows a marked difference in style from her first novel. The theme of alienation continues to be dominant but the stylistic defects of Nosotros, los Rivero have been resolved. A more innovative style is substituted for the traditional approach of her first novel. Style and theme in Funcionario público are more compatible thereby eliminating the clash of an old-fashioned style with a contemporary theme which weakened her depiction of the war years in Oviedo. In her second novel Dolores Medio further develops a theme introduced in Nosotros, los Rivero -- the alienation of the individual in modern society. However, her presentation has changed from a traditional novelistic formula -- narration, description, and dialogue -- to a more objective and contemporary approach utilizing primarily dialogue and monologue with the almost complete elimination of the omniscient narrator.

In addition, the author has moved from the recent past and provincial life to a large metropolitan center and the contemporary scene. With the action set in Madrid in 1953, the author focuses directly on

contemporary problems and issues. The change in style is apparent in the opening paragraphs of the novel. The protagonist, on his way to work in rush-hour crowds, finds himself in a nightmarish situation with many obstacles and rules to follow:

> Pasa un camión. Después un tranvía arrastrado por un remolcador. Se interponen dos coches. Tres coches. Cuatro coches. Toda una caravana. El hombre se pregunta por qué diablos no circulan los coches por el centro. Seguramente para fastidiarle....El hombre retrocede. Mira el reloj. Las manecillas parece que no se mueven, pero el semáforo ha encendido su farol amarillo y suena el timbre de alerta: Cinco segundos. Luz verde: Paso libre para los peatones.[1]

The long descriptive passages of Nosotros, los Rivero have been replaced by a series of short sentences and phrases. This style contrasts with the traditional development of background and environment in Dolores Medio's first novel. In Funcionario público the environment is reflected through the character's reactions rather than directly by the narrator. The emphasis has shifted from the background and the past to the immediate present: "Mira el reloj. Las manecillas parecen que no se mueven." The shift is from past time to the fictional character's immediate present with the emphasis on experience rather than details of environment.

The scene in the city street suggests the anonymity and insignificance of the individual in modern society. The protagonist is pushed along by the crowd and ordered about by the police. When he tries to cross the street without permission, he is immediately overwhelmed by fears of punishment.

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[1]Funcionario público (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1956), p. 11-12.

> El hombre mira impaciente en torno suyo. Al reloj de Comunicaciones. A los coches. Al agente, con una muda interrogación: ¿Dos pesetas de multa?
>
> No. El guardia no dice nada. Fue una tonta imprevisión. Siempre sucede lo mismo. Pues bien, que aguarde allí plantado hasta que le dé paso. Así aprenderá a cruzar la calle cuando le corresponda.[1]

What seems to be the ordinary task of walking through city streets becomes an intimidating experience. The subject's isolation and feeling of manipulation recall the neurotic preoccupations of a Kafka character. Everyday events are magnified to the extent that they acquire a suggestive quality far beyond their commonplace meaning. Merely crossing the street involves rules and the possibility of breaking those rules. However, for the most part Dolores Medio stays within the limits of mundane reality. Her style merely gives the impression of the isolation and manipulation of the individual without the wider metaphysical implications of Kafka's art.

Rather than Kafka, Dolores Medio recalls the French nouveau roman with its emphasis on visual description and rejection of psychology. However, she does not maintain the strict objectivity which characterizes the work of such writers as Alain Robbe-Grillet and Nathalie Sarraute. She shares with them, however, the view that the author is best equipped to be an objective observer rather than an interpreter of events and personalities. Therefore she generally limits herself to the description of external characteristics. Hers is a visual presentation primarily with limited psychological judgments. Although Dolores Medio always strives to be objective, her concern for social problems sets her apart from the

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[1] Ibid., p. 12.

more extreme dedication to objectivity of Robbe-Grillet and Sarraute. The objective viewpoint requires a detached narrator who can eliminate to a great extent his own attitudes. Dolores Medio, however, finds it im-- possible to deny the social environment of her characters. Like many Spanish novels of the fifties and sixties, Funcionario público is both objective in style and socially-oriented in theme. Its objectivity recalls the nouveau roman while its treatment of social problems reflects the particular political situation in Spain. Dolores Medio feels strongly that the novel has a social function. In an article dealing with the question of the social mission of the novel in the twentieth century, she maintains that the novel must reflect the society from which it has developed.

> A mi juicio, tan difícil como separar al hombre de su sombra o apartar al humo del fuego, es intentar aislar al personaje de una novela actual del ambiente....que le obliga a actuar, que es el móvil que le obliga a actuar y que determina el argumento de la novela.[1]

This insistence on the social function of the novel reveals a basic concern for human problems which the author cannot deny for the sake of strictly aesthetic considerations. Unlike the nouveau roman novelists who strive to eliminate all subjective judgments, Dolores Medio includes social concern within an overall objective framework.

The particular social environment which concerns Dolores Medio in Funcionario público is that of the Madrid working class. Her protagonist is Pablo Marín, a telegrapher for the Madrid Office of Telecommunications. As a civil servant, his financial problems are immense. The

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[1]Dolores Medio, "Lo social en la novela," Ateneo de Santander, 22 Oct. 1965 (Santander, 1966).

high cost of living, inadequate living accomodations, and his low wages make his life almost intolerable. The small inconveniences which seem to overwhelm him on the way to work merely reflect the broader social pressures which manipulate and restrict him. In both instances he is unable to exert his own will. Because of his own ineffectiveness and his inferior financial position, the most commonplace problem is difficult for him. Small inconveniences merely reflect more serious problems on another level. An apartment, an advancement at work, and a car are all beyond his reach. The most pressing need is adequate housing. Pablo and his wife Teresa desperately want a home of their own; however, like many Spaniards, they find such a dream impossible to attain. Living in a rented room, they manage to tolerate the shabbiness of their existence by clinging to the hope that such conditions are only temporary. When it becomes clear that they will never be able to afford better quarters, they can no longer tolerate a life of privation. Because she cannot continue without that dream, Teresa leaves her husband. Faced with having to continue alone, Pablo attempts suicide. Both Pablo and his wife seem to be controlled from the outside by forces that seem linked to their economic condition. They are members of an exploited and underprivileged group who are the first to suffer when the society undergoes changes.

The plight of the civil servant in the post war years is an unfortunate one:

> En el ajuste de salarios y precios, los funcionarios marchan siempre a la zaga, dando saltos tardíos, sin alcanzar la nivelación indispensable. Quien dice funcionario se refiere a un ser condenado a la mediocridad. El representante típico de la baja clase media.[1]

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[1] Funcionario público (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1956), p. 224.

Oppressed, exploited, and powerless, Pablo reflects in the inevitable pattern of his life the power of social forces. A closed, stagnant social order appears to have condemned him to mediocrity. Although Dolores Medio is generally objective in her presentation, she is not so removed from her subject as to exclude social commentary altogether. Her intent is to achieve social change by educating the reader:

> ....la novela es el anzuelo emocional que prende la atención del hombre y con frecuencia la domina, ejerciendo indudablemente, una función educadora y por tanto social.[1]

In Funcionario público Dolores Medio illustrates to the Spanish people the existence of serious inequities within their society. She hopes to persuade them by means of a fictional story that an actual problem exists. For her this is the special function of the novel which she tries to exploit in her work.

In her analysis of the causes of the alienation and incommunication of her hero Dolores Medio finds the roots of the predicament in the civil war:

> ....Se acabó la guerra. Ahora a ajustar de nuevo. ¿Cómo es que sobran piezas? Naturalmente. Tampoco tiene importancia. Sucede siempre. ¿Qué ocurre cuando los niños desarman un juguete para saber lo que tiene dentro? Que se olvidan de colocar las piezas en su sitio. Y sobran piezas. También los hombres, cuando juegan a ver que tiene dentro esta máquina infernal de la sociedad, se encuentran después perplejos al reconstruirla. Sobra algo o falta algo que se creía imprescindible. Pero la máquina vuelve a ponerse en marcha. Encuanto a los engranajes, ¿quién repara en ellos?[2]

Pablo cannot adjust to the new social order after the war. He had hoped to find security by working for the state but he has found instead the

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[1]Medio, "Los social en la novela," p. 6.

[2]Funcionario público (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1956), p. 95.

means to a marginal existence in a highly restricted society. Teresa too had shared his confidence in the future; they abandoned the country for what they thought would be a better life in the city. However, the post-war Spanish society developed in such a way that the cities suffered more than rural areas in the forties and fifties. Therefore Pablo and his wife are unable to identify the specific cause of their misery -- a factor which seems to intensify their frustration. By lamenting their plight, Dolores Medio is giving her analysis of the situation in Spain after the war. After the turmoil of the war years many Spaniards rushed to the city to find work and a new life. Instead of a haven, they found limited opportunities and poor housing. Dolores Medio portrays a society disoriented by the war and led by a government which appears to be indifferent to the needs of a large segment of its population.

Pablo and Teresa have no source of hope. Living under a dictatorship, they do not engage in political activity or analyze their lives in political terms. Therefore, they have no hope for change or even an understanding of their situation. Pablo is indifferent to circumstances which affect him in a real and practical way. Reading about sports is his only form of entertainment. He cannot afford books or movies, and even a radio in his room is forbidden by his landlady. During his leisure hours, he walks alone through the streets of the city. His wife will not accompany him because she is depressed and frustrated by the store windows filled with things she cannot afford to buy. Pablo and Teresa feel threatened and intimidated by the society in which they live.

For Pablo there areaa limited number of alternatives. He can continue without changing the course of his life from the hopeless

existence he now leads. However, the examples of two of his colleagues seem to offer the possibility of change. His friend Leo Miralles has somehow managed to maintain an optimistic attitude toward life despite the fact that he has a large family to support. He passively accepts the social conditions which make it impossible for him to better his situation.

> Debemos adaptarnos a las circunstancias si no podemos modificarlas según nuestro deseo. Esta es la piedra de toque de la relativa felicidad que en la vida puede conseguirse.[1]

Pablo, however, cannot accept such stoic resignation in the face of all the evidence around him that many are able to modify social conditions to their benefit. Pablo admires his friend Sixto Magnet because he seems to be able to get what he wants out of life. Sixto augments his salary with shady business deals and has even managed to keep a mistress. He has been able to circumvent the system which holds Pablo so firmly in its grip. However, when he learns that Sixto has committed suicide, Pablo loses even this possibility of escape from the inevitable course of his life. Even corruption does not offer a solution to his predicament.

Pablo cannot accept these alternatives. Neither false optimism, corruption of the system, nor suicide can provide him with a solution. It is the powerful hold of routine which ultimately keeps him going. Even on the day of his attempted suicide he manages not to miss his shift at work. He is so inhibited and conditioned by external social forces that he is incapable of acting independently. Dolores Medio sees no hope for the struggling and suffering funcionario. In her presentation her hero has the choice of blind optimism, indifference, or suicide. His choice,

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[1] Ibid., p. 53.

as it happens, is that of indifference as he returns to his job without the support of his wife or any other source of hope.

This desolate, lonely, almost hopeless atmosphere is not merely external but linked to Pablo's own view of the world. At the heart of his attitude toward life is a desire to escapte from reality. He creates his own dream world which is developed in his long talks with himself. Having found an old notebook in the street, Pablo imagines that the name in the book, Natalia Blay, belongs to a beautiful young girl whom he will meet and seduce. Natalia will give him the love and respect denied him by his wife. As he studies the notebook, his imagination begins to expand:

> (--Natalia Blay es una mujer. Otra mujer que no es Teresa, ¿comprendes, Pablo? Y en este encuentro hay una posibilidad de...Sí, hombre de eso que no te atreves todavía a confesarte....)[1]

He had never before considered deceiving his wife with another woman and even in a daydream, he hesitates to consider the possibility. At first Natalia merely symbolizes the possibility of love but ultimately she comes to represent something to break the routine of his existence. With no friends, the pathetic daydream grows in importance as Pablo's real life becomes more and more depressing and empty. This fantasy substitutes for a concrete reality requiring some kind of communication and interpersonal relationships. By insulating himself from that reality, Pablo cuts himself off from the means to establish such relationships. He makes meaningful communication impossible by retreating from spoken language. He talks to himself creating a completely private world.

Interpersonal relationships in Funcionario público are unusual because communication by means of language is limited. The characters

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[1] Ibid., p. 18.

rarely speak to each other; the dominant form of speech is the monologue. The subjective "I," whether expressed in the first person or indirectly in the third person, is the general point of view creating what seems to be a continuous stream of monologue. The dialogue that does occur is generally between Pablo and his wife. They are developed by what they say and do rather than by an omniscient narrator. The characteristic pattern of presentation is a carefully intertwined sequence of interior speech, dialogue, and narration from the point of view of the character. Pablo and Teresa are discussing the future:

> --Cuando tengamos nuestro piso, ¿verdad, Panocha? entonces será otra cosa. Bien, a primeros de año nos pagarán las horas extraordinarias con un buen aumento. Se habla de 7,50 hora. ¿No es un buen bocado? Y todos lo dan por hecho. Entonces, dejaré algunas tardes libres, iremos al cine...
>
> Teresa le escucha con el fastidio de oír siempre el mismo disco. Conoce el tema. Y no le sigue en sus proyectos, aunque no proteste.
>
> Pablo piensa entre tanto:
>
> (--Teresa es buena chica. Al fin comprende...)
>
> Pero Teresa no dice nada, porque el cansancio de abordar cada día la misma monótona realidad, le ha quitado hasta las fuerzas para rebelarse.[1]

The monologue that follows their exchange expresses the true feelings of the speaker. Pablo and Teresa cannot bring themselves to discuss their lives realistically because of the bleakness of the future. The exchanges between them are superficial and commonplace, never resulting in meaningful communication. Because the reality of their lives is so devastating, they have built their relationship on the tacit agreement to avoid real issues.

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[1] Ibid., p. 23.

A generalization of the relationship between Pablo and Teresa suggests the existence of a society in which there is little personal exchange of ideas, love, and feelings. Like the politically manipulated language of government censorship their language is useless as a tool for communication. Pablo, like so many others, reads only the sports section of the newspaper and accepts soccer as the only acceptable topic of conversation.

> De lo que se habla es de fútbol. Es el tema de eterna actualidad. Se ve "Marca" en todas las manos....Harto de especulaciones sobre una nueva guerra y cansado de los cubileteos de las Cancillerías, el hombre de la calle se refugia en los deportes, vuelca en ellos su interés, su pasión, sus fobias y sus filias y hasta su dinero en las apuestas mutuas.[1]

Even when a news article pertains directly to his particular problem, the language is so cloudy and imprecise that its message is unclear.

Frustrated, Pablo loses interest and returns to an account of the latest sporting event. The deterioration of language has contributed to Pablo's sense of alienation. Language as a means of communication becomes less and less important as he retreats within himself. In this way he gives up his last link with society before resigning from it completely through attempted suicide. There is a lack of meaningful communication from the authoritative level down to the individual.

Dolores Medio's first two novels develop the theme of alienation with the traditional style of Nosotros, los Rivero giving way to an objective presentation in Funcionario público. In her second novel the author uses language to show that the inability to communicate is both the cause and the symptom of alienation. Her characters are attacked from the

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[1]Ibid., p. 159.

outside by dehumanizing and impersonal forces and they in turn cause their own isolation and estrangement by retreating even more into themselves. The outside forces are the social institutions that limit and oppress the *funcionario*. His alienation and incommunication are intensified by his inferior social position. By focusing on speech, Dolores Medio lets her subjects reveal themselves as incommunicative, inarticulate, and isolated. Thus style and theme are more closely linked in this novel than in *Nosotros, los Rivero*. The style which illustrates incommunication also establishes it as a theme.

CHAPTER IV

EL PEZ SIGUE FLOTANDO

In Funcionario público, a frustrated civil servant is in a general way the victim of alienation in modern society and more specifically the victim of financial and class oppression in contemporary Spain. Oppressive social conditions continue to preoccupy Dolores Medio in her next novel El pez sigue flotando (1959). In this work, a place rather than a job is the dramatic symbol of the effects of alienation. By means of an apartment house setting, the author illustrates how a group of people living in close proximity nevertheless display the same tendency to withdraw from contact with others and the same inability to communicate that handicapped the funcionario. The patio of the apartment building symbolizes the superficial nature of their relationships:

> Los "entes" se mezclan a ciertas horas, en una intimidad impuesta por las circunstancias, pero después, cuando se cierran las ventanas y se quieta el patio, "cada mochuelo a su olivo".....Y en el patio solo queda flotando el pez.[1]

The speaker is Lena Rivero whose adolescent years are treated in Nosotros, los Rivero. In Dolores Medio's third novel Lena has reached young

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[1]Dolores Medio, El pez sigue flotando (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1959), p. 10.

adulthood and has begun her career as a writer in Madrid. Living in the apartment house, she observes its inhabitants and notes their alienation and lack of meaningful personal contact. The floating fish to which she refers is part of a novelty aquarium which often commands her attention in contemplative moments. No matter how much its container is shaken, the plastic fish continues to float.

> Ahora toma entre las manos el pequeño acuario. Lo agita suavemente. Y observa como van cayendo al fondo -- una cualquiera de las seis caras -- los corales, las algas, las piedrecitas...En cuanto al pez....El Pez no dice nada. Su ojo redondo mira a Lena maliciosamente. Después hace una pirueta y sigue flotando.[1]

Lena sees the fish as a symbol of the inevitable course of the lives of the people in the building. It seems to be held in place by a force, just as constant and unyielding as the one that controls their lives. Regardless of their efforts, the force of external circumstances seems overpowering. These symbols -- the fish and the apartment building -- introduce the reader to an atmosphere of inevitable destiny and isolation of the individual like that of Funcionario público. Ironically, the inhabitants of the apartment house are physically close to each other but spiritually quite distant. And, like the funcionario, they seem to be incapable of expressing or even understanding their own feelings.

In this novel Dolores Medio's social intent is served, as it was in Funcionario público, by her choice of character. Like the funcionario the inhabitants of the apartment house are to some extent victims of social circumstances. Again the author studies the habits and problems of the lower middle class worker. Alternately, the chapters deal with

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[1] Ibid., p. 12.

the lives of such people as a shopkeeper, a typist, a seamstress, a night club dancer, the apartment portero, and a street vendor. These isolated individuals, living in the same building, display the same general needs and problems. The pattern of their lives reveals misery and hopelessness. Jobs are unavilable and housing is expensive and scarce. As members of the exploited and oppressed working class, their present and future consist of a futile struggle to improve their lives. Marta Ribé supports herself and the woman who cared for her as a child. Now aged and ill, Tata represents a burden which holds Marta down as much as the economic limitations of the social situation. Supporting herself by typing manuscripts in her apartment, Marta endures the long hours and the low pay because there is nothing else available. Even the modest hope of supporting two people on her salary is out of reach in the society in which she lives. Equally pathetic is the dismal existence of the apartment portero. José Cilleiro dreams of a better position that has been promised him in a new apartment building. Having placed all his hopes in this dream, he is shattered when he is casually informed that the job has gone to someone else. Somehow he manages to return to the hopelessness of a job that promises no satisfaction or rewards. The night club dancer Veva Martínez is portrayed as gradually losing all hope as she drifts toward a life of prostitution. Bruno Jiménez, who works at whatever job he can find, recognizes the futility of his struggle and the inferiority of his position in the economic structure. He complains of the tipos gordos who manage to live well in spite of the general economic hardship of the lower classes.

> --...tipos gordos...Para esos tipos gordos no hay problema. Piso para fulana, piso para mengana...Y otro para el ganado...¿Eh? ¿Quién protesta?...¡Nadie!...¡Me cisco yo en la madre que los parió!...Tipos gordos ese es. ¡Hay que ser un tío gordo para vivir![1]

At the bottom of the social and economic scale, he realizes that he has no avenue of escape since he lacks the aggressiveness and cunning necessary to challenge the established order. For Bruno and his neighbors, the world belongs to the tipos gordos.

As in Funcionario público, speech is turned inward rather than toward others to create a bond of communication. Again her characters spend a great deal of time talking to themselves about their problems. Marta Ribé, for example, tries to reconcile her resentment of the responsibility of caring for Tata with the love she feels toward the old woman. After an illness that brings Tata close to death, the doctor informs Marta that her charge will recover and live for many years. Recalling this prediction, Marta struggles with her conscience:

> (--Tendrá usted Tata para muchos años...Para muchos años ...Para muchos años...Todos los que me quedan de juventud. ¿Por qué no saldría una del hospicio, para no tener deberes? Vivir sola..., libre..., libre. No tener que querer a nadie...Porque yo quiero a Tata. Mucho.. La quiero mucho. Si no la quisiera...La dejaría en el asilo, claro, como ella dice...Pero no se irá. Yo la cuidaré. Hasta que se muera...¿Años?...Pues años. Todo lo que me queda de juventud...Hasta ahora, nada tengo que reprocharme. ¡Tata querida!...Cuántas veces, cuando yo era pequeñita...)[2]

Marta never discusses these feelings with anyone. Her hostile and limited environment contributes to this tendency to withdraw from the external world which is also characteristic of most of her neighbors.

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[1] Ibid., p. 59.

[2] Ibid., p. 134.

Similarly frustrated and inhibited, they reject each other just as society seems to have rejected them.

As this lack of communication indicates, the characters maintain their distance in interpersonal relationships. They pass each other in the hall or see their neighbors in the opposite window but their interactions are always superficial. Dolores Medio emphasizes the negative aspects of this voluntary isolation by dramatizing the loneliness and frustration it produces. She suggests that one has a need for others as well as a responsibility toward them. Lena regrets the loss of the ideals of her youth and the tendency to become more and more egocentric:

> ...la vida le fué achatando sus ideales, le fué derribando sus ideales, le fué devorando sus ideales...Le dejó solo el "yo" como único objectivo. Un "yo" que empieza a burlarse de todo con suave ironía...en el vacío que le han dejando las grandes causas, en su egoísmo materialista del "sálvese quien pueda," sólo hay lugar para la compasión hacia el individuo, hacia su pequeña tragedia...[1]

Dolores Medio's social concern and her preoccupation with interpersonal relationships stem from this humanitarian attitude. Lena's sentiments parallel the author's deep concern for the welfare of other Spaniards which has lead her to expose the bleak lives of a powerless segment of the population. She criticizes the indifference of those who are able to work for change and laments the indifference produced in those subjugated by social forces.

The victimized worker Dolores Medio describes in El pez sigue flotando and Funcionario público exists in a kind of thoughtless limbo in which he suffers uncomplainingly. He accepts life on its terms with no

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[1] Ibid., p. 251.

concept of political ideology which might bear on his situation. The group protagonist of El pez sigue flotando, representing a cross-section of the working class, is shown to be hard-working and stoically resigned to hardship. By creating such characters, the author reveals admiration for her subject while, at the same time, she laments their dehumanization and alienation. She suggests that economic exploitation affects the spiritual well-being of its victims. Her workers persevere in spite of obstacles but they do so at some cost to themselves. While society benefits from their sacrifices, they are debilitated in a profound way. Their growing indifference gradually undermines all desire to act positively. It is not conceivable that one of these characters would attack directly the causes of his troubles or even be able to identify them with accuracy.

Dolores Medio's view of life is quite dismal with the boredom of routine and the hopelessness of economic and social conditions weighing heavily upon her characters. Dismal housing conditions and meager salaries or no job at all are the fundamental conditions of life in which her characters exist. Their lives are characterized by limited ambitions and dreams, and the occasional ray of hope that does appear is quickly extinguished. The fish in the aquarium continues to float just as their lives seem to follow the same inevitable course of action. From the beginning of the novel to the end, there is no significant change in anyone's life. Someone dies, a romance fades, or a dream is unfulfilled but the general direction of their lives remains the same. Tata eventually dies but Marta's life will continue as hopelessly as before. The prevailing conditions do not offer any opportunities for her with or without the responsibility of supporting a dependent. The storekeeper's romance with one

of his neighbors ends with neither party irreparably wounded. This flirtation represents the only attempt he has made to break out of his isolation and, as it happens, it is totally inappropriate. He has become infatuated with a married woman who considers their relationship strictly impersonal. After this experience, he returns to his solitary existence not much wiser than before. If Veva Martínez' life has changed at all, it is probably for the worse. She has begun to accept the rather sordid nature of her work with less reluctance than in the beginning. The portero, José Cilleiro, greets the others every day with a certain resentment because they show him very little respect. He must accept this treatment with resignation tinged with bitterness after he learns that his new job has gone to a younger man with connections José does not possess. None of them have come to any conclusions about their status nor do any of them have any plan to change their lives. In short, nothing has improved and no one has learned anything.

Dolores Medio's style in El pez sigue flotando depends on the spoken word just as it did in Funcionario público. Again monologue and dialogue linked by objective narration produce the sensation of constant speech. Focused always on the most trivial matters, this talk creates the feeling of deadening routine and a superficial existence. When serious thoughts intrude, they are quickly dispelled. The storekeeper, Senén Morales, senses during an unaccustomed moment of introspection that there is an area of his life which cannot be dealt with in the usual way. He cannot tolerate unsettling thoughts for the briefest of moments.

> ...Nada. Senén Morales no dice nada. No puede concretar nada. Piensa solo que ha vivido ya este momento. Sí... Otra vez...Quizá otras veces...Se ha asomado a la ventana

> esperando algo y ha sentido la misma angustia...Su angustia tiene un origen que desconoce. Como si...
> (--Nada! Como si nada...Inútil darle vueltas. No conseguiré explicarme lo que me sucede.)[1]

He quickly falls back into the routine of his daily existence and discounts this momentary flash of insecurity and introspection. The problems that concern Dolores Medio's characters are generally superficial. Veva Martínez, the night club dancer, sees only her most immediate problems. Her bleak future and sordid existence appear only indirectly in her thoughts. The immediate reality of the night club and her customers occupy her attention:

> Esta noche ha bebido mucho. Tiene los labios secos.
> (--Es curioso...Más secos cuanto más se bebe. Y la garganta. Me quema. Pero me acostumbraré. Otras lo hacen. Y una tiene que pensar en la vejez. ¿Un pellejo? A la basura. Que me importa lo que fuiste...¿Buen cuerpo? ¿Buenas piernas? ¿Buenas narices! Tanto tienes, tanto vales. ¿Pagas? Todo va vien. ¿No pagas? A la cochina...)[2]

In this way Veva's semi-conscious thoughts provide the reader with an insight into her existence. She manages to face life by avoiding serious problems and by holding on to dreams of a miraculous salvation.

> ...Piensa también que puede surgir de pronto un empresario o un padrino poderoso y convertirla en la <u>vedette</u> de moda. No sabe cantar. No sabe bailar...Y eso ¿para qué sirve? Tiene buen cuerpo. Los hombres la miran. Si un hombre con dinero quiere lanzarla...[3]

Her fantasies, however unrealistic they may be, are an important part of her view of the world and her acceptance of it. These attitudes constitute her motivations, self-concept, and her goals. Veva and Senén are

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[1] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 207-208.

[2] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 107.

[3] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 201.

isolated even in the company of others. Speech is turned inward and dialogue depends on cliches and commonplace expressions thus making meaningful communication impossible.

From Nosotros, los Rivero to Funcionario público and El pez sigue flotando there is a progression from a traditional presentation to a style centered on character development and emphasizing dialogue and monologue. There is also a change in time from the civil war years to contemporary Spain. El pez sigue flotando and Funcionario público both exhibit a similar relationship between theme and style. The cliches of everyday speech create the feeling of superficiality and routine and the characters' subconscious speech reveals their tendency to retreat from genuine relationships. This presentation represents a significant change when compared to the traditional presentation of Nosotros, los Rivero. The objective style supports the theme of alienation to a great degree since Dolores Medio's characters reveal by their own words and actions their alienated and isolated position in a dehumanizing environment.

CHAPTER V

DIARIO DE UNA MAESTRA

In Dolores Medio's fourth novel, Diario de una maestra (1961), it is the alienation of the intellectual and the idealist that concerns the author rather than the dismal plight of the worker which dominated previous works. Possibly the change in emphasis comes from the autobiographical nature of the work. The objectivity of the two preceding novels gives way to a more subjective presentation colored by events in the author's own life. As she did in Nosotros, los Rivero, Dolores Medio looks to her own past for novelistic material. Again the action is set in Asturias and again she describes the experiences of a young woman whose life closely resembles her own. The Lena Rivero of the author's first novel has aged a few years and appears here as Irene Gal, a young and very idealistic school teacher in a small provincial town. As a young woman Dolores Medio worked as a teacher in the city of Nava in Asturias. She was eventually dismissed from that position because of her progressive ideas about education. In a similar way, her heroine Irene clashes with the forces of tradition and conservatism in a small Asturian town which the author names La Estrada. The novel deals with Irene's experiences

there, and to some extent in Madrid and Oviedo, during the Civil War and its aftermath. Influenced by the idealism of her university professor, Irene sets out to change the world by educating the masses.

> ...tenemos la obligación de renovar la enseñanza, de revitalizarla, de llevar a la escuela el nuevo concepto de la existencia. Es en la escuela, precisamente, donde se elabora la auténtica democracia...Crear, crear...! La gente se olvida de esto, de crear, de despertar sentimientos, de hacer al hombre responsable de sus obras y de su pensamiento...[1]

However, rural Spain presents certain obstacles. Habits and beliefs of many years resist the reforms Irene wants so desperately to effect. Isolated from the villagers because of her liberal ideas, she becomes the object of prejudice and persecution with the start of the war. Irene's struggle to remain true to her ideals in the face of disillusion and isolation is the subject matter of the novel.

Irene Gal's dedication to teaching is established during her university study in Madrid. There her professor, Máximo Sáenz, wins her admiration and ultimately her love. They make plans to work together to change the world for the better. With this goal in mind, Irene sets off for Asturias to teach school. Their plan is for her to return to her studies and to Máximo within a year. However, the future they have planned is disrupted by the war. The Nationalists imprison Máximo because of his Republican sympathies. Irene tries to follow him as he is moved from one prison to another but when that becomes impossible, she settles for the good she can accomplish as a nurse in a Nationalist hospital. With the end of the war, the suffering of the losing side continues. Máximo

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[1]Dolores Medio, Diario de una maestra (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1961), p. 18.

remains in prison and Irene loses her job. Since her crimes are considered less serious, she is eventually reinstated in La Estrada. Where she toils selflessly for the fifteen years of Máximo's imprisonment. Never faltering in her devotion to him nor in her idealistic belief in her mission as an educator, she is devastated to find that when she and Máximo are finally reunited, he is not the same man. A tired and broken man, he is willing to trade his principles for some material benefits in the remaining years of his life. She, on the other hand, has remained true to the goals they set in the years together at the university. Having brought about some changes in the lives of the villagers, she feels reassured by that small measure of success. Despite what it has cost her in terms of isolation and loneliness, she is determined to continue her efforts to bring education to the masses. She discovers that her belief in that ideal is stronger than her dependence on Máximo.

By devoting herself to such an ideal, Irene alienates herself from the majority. She is not deterred by the ignorance, intolerance, and fear that motivates those she is trying to serve. The war, which has forced the Spanish people into opposing ideological camps, results in the persecution of those who do not conform to a particular way of thinking. Irene is resented, first of all, for her intellectualism. Given the emotionalism and irrationality of the times, the objectivity of the intellectual evokes the deepest fears of the villagers. Even before the outbreak of the war her progressive ideas about education make her suspect to most of the townspeople. With the outbreak of the war, her relationship with Sáenz is more than enough cause for her dismissal. Máximo, who is for her the savior of mankind, represents to the townspeople the hated

intellectual who meddles in their affairs only to find safety for himself when trouble comes:

> ...Este es de los que tiran la piedra y esconden la mano ...Un filósofo de vía estrecha. De los de Ortega. Siembran ideas subversivas y después se lavan las manos. Son los verdaderos culpables de cuánto sucede...uno no sabe cómo tratarles, como deshacerse de ellos. Más daño hacen...[1]

Although Irene is ultimately welcomed back by the people of La Estrada, she remains an outsider. Her idealism and her intellectualism will always set her apart from the masses. The townspeople sense that she is not one their kind. She cannot help but see both sides; she sympathizes with the conservative priest as well as the Republican outcast. The basic alienation that exists between her and the villagers has merely been intensified by the war.

In illustrating this theme, Dolores Medio modifies the stylistic approach that characterizes her two previous novels. She returns to the more traditional style of Nosotros, los Rivero. In Funcionario público and El pez sigue flotando, language and communication are elements of the style which are intimately related to the theme of alienation. Speech is both the cause and the symptom of the individual's isolation. In Diario de una maestra, however, style is not so directly related to theme. In the two previous works Dolores Medio made an effort to eliminate the presence of the narrator while in Diario de una maestra she allows her opinions to be more or less directly stated. Irene serves as the sympathetic and idealized spokeswoman for the author. In addition, the objective presentation of character through speech which characterizes Funcionario

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[1] Ibid., p. 101.

público and El pez sigue flotando gives way to characters defined from the outside by an omniscient narrator. Characters do not reveal themselves gradually by what they say and do but rather are immediately defined as possessing certain characteristics and often judged as good or bad. Irene is an idealized character defined as intelligent, inquisitive, and generous by nature. She is a special person who fights to change things not so much because of the immediate circumstances but because of her innately rebellious nature. "Su innata rebeldía la llevó, desde niña, a apartarse de la manada, a no aceptar, porque sí, un hecho impuesto por costumbre."[1] Irene's subsequent behavior does not contradict this definition but she does not hold much interest for the reader since this aspect of her character comes through definition rather than development. Not only is she defined directly but her possessions and surroundings reflect her unusual personality. In her living quarters one discerns her dedication and sense of sacrifice.

> Irene Gal se encuentra bien en su casa. Puertas adentro, el pequeño departamento que ocupa sobre la escuela, pese a su sobriedad, a su pobreza franciscana, o quizás a causa de ella es para Irene Gal su Morada de Paz. Su único lujo, los libros. Libros por todas partes. Sobre las pequeñas estanterías, sobre el somier de colchoneta escocesa que le sirve de cama, sobre la mesa de pino...Los libros son los mejores amigos de Irene Gal. Nunca la han defraudado.[2]

As an idealized personality Irene serves as a vehicle for the author's own ideas. Irene is not an objectively conceived character who grows before the reader in stages and who defines herself through action and speech.

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[1]Ibid., p. 16.

[2]Ibid., p. 66.

Through Irene, the author presents her ideas about education, politics, justice, social change, and the war itself. Dolores Medio's attitudes are generally liberal in contrast to the more conservative and traditional background of the work. With regard to the ideological conflicts of the war, Irene does not reflect on specific issues. She sees the struggle in human terms as when she contemplates the spectacle of young men dying for antagonisms generated by the older generation. The side the men represent is of little concern.

> En verdad que es cosa triste que estos muchachos jóvenes y optimistas, llenos de vida, tengan que enfrentarse con otros hombres, también jóvenes y ansiosos de vivir, que militan en el Ejército de la República.[1]

At times, although ostensibly speaking through Irene, it is the author who seems to be providing information about important social issues and problems. Irene witnesses the changing position of women in Spanish society brought on, to a certain extent, by the upheaval of the war.

> ...Una avalancha de mujeres se ha lanzado a conquistar los puestos que los hombres abandonan para irse al frente. Irene entre ellas. Gran parte de estas mujeres son campesinas que sirven en casas de hombres influyentes y aprovechan la influencia de los señores para conseguir su emancipación. La mujer empieza a gustar el derecho y el placer de su independencia económica y ahora se le presenta una oportunidad para conseguirlo.[2]

Changing social mores, like her attitude toward the war, are aspects of the problem of Spain as a nation that frequently elicit Dolores Medio's opinions in the novel. The enthusiasm and insistence with which she embraces these various causes reflect Dolores Medio's basic optimism.

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[1] Ibid., p. 110.

[2] Ibid., p. 143.

Even with the war as a depressing background, her heroine perseveres. Irene passes this attitude on to her students.

> Los muchachos marchan cantando o silbando, dando patadas a las piedras que encuentran en el camino, comiendo el trozo de pan de su merienda, jugando con las chicas... Es una caravana alegre e inconsciente que cumple la misión primaria de la Humanidad: Caminar, caminar...Siempre adelante. Los obstáculos del camino no deben interrumpir su alegre marcha.[1]

As a spokeswoman for the author, Irene represents a liberal political attitude and a basically optimistic philosophy. She is a vehicle for ideas rather than an objectively presented character.

The stylistic similarity of Diario de una maestra to Dolores Medio's first novel is probably linked to their similar conception and purpose. Both are autobiographical novels based on memories from the war years. In contrast to the mundane world depicted in her middle class studies, the author chooses high points of dramatic tension and interest: Irene's first romantic encounter, her highly emotional meeting with Máximo in prison, her reunion with Máximo after their long separation, and the bombing of the hospital where she worked as a nurse. This selection of material lends an air of melodrama to the work which is absent from the author's more objective studies. While the work is not plot-oriented, it is nevertheless directed to highly emotional moments. This recalling of the past, also characteristic of Nosotros, los Rivero, reflects a basically different approach from that of Funcionario público and El pez sigue flotando.

Compared to the bleak existence of most of Dolores Medio's characters, Irene's life is a productive one. Although the war exposes

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[1]Ibid., p. 205.

the worst side of human nature and those she loves forsake her, Irene manages to keep alive her optimistic belief in the betterment of society. In this respect her existence is less dreary and hopeless than the typical Dolores Medio subject. However, like the characters in the author's other works, Irene suffers from a type of alienation -- the alienation of the idealist within a materialistic society and the isolation of the intellectual. Diario de una maestra thus repeats a theme common to all of Dolores Medio's works. The essential difference between Nosotros, los Rivero and Diario de una maestra as compared to Funcionario público and El pez sigue flotando is a matter of stylistic presentation. The objectivity of previous works slackens here to allow the intrusion of the author. Thus, although the same general theme of alienation is developed in this novel, it is viewed from a different point of view. Rather than alienation of the individual presented by means of style, Dolores Medio studies alienation on a more abstract level in Diario de una maestra. Style and theme are not intimately related in such a way that an objective presentation reinforces the theme. Here the author often speaks more or less directly in order to express her ideas about certain aspects of Spanish life.

CHAPTER VI

BIBIANA

With her most recent novel, Bibiana (1967), Dolores Medio returns to the objective style of Funcionario público and El pez sigue flotando. Bibiana represents a further development of the author's dialogue-oriented technique. Again the plot is limited to a series of scenes, connected chronologically but not in a cause and effect relationship. Over a period of a few months, a middle-aged Madrid housewife, Bibiana Prats, goes about her business of caring for a husband and five children. For her efforts -- shopping, cleaning, and cooking -- she is generally ignored and unappreciated by her family. The detailed accounting of her daily chores repeats the close, objective view of the middle class that concerned the author in Funcionario público and El pez sigue flotando. To a greater extent than in any previous novel, the author uses language to capture the essential nature of a particular way of life. The generalities articulated by her characters expose the shallowness of their lives. With the character's own words as the primary source of information from which the reader can judge that character's personality, the presence of the author seems to have disappeared. By eliminating a sequentially-developed

plot, omniscient judgments, and an abundance of narration giving background material, the author gives the impression of great objectivity. Dialogue is the element that sustains the novel stylistically and thematically.

Ironically, this world of almost continuous talk does not facilitate communication but rather underscores a lack of meaningful communication in interpersonal relationships. The closest human relationships -- between husband and wife or mother and child -- are shown to be surprisingly superficial. Theirs is the alienation of inauthenticity. They talk, but in generalities. Handicapped by their language they can only grope toward understanding each other. Their isolation is rooted in their speech. Bibiana is unable to communicate with her family and express her fears. Such serious preoccupations as her suspicion that her son Xenius is a homosexual, that her unmarried daughter Natalia is pregnant, or that her husband Marcelo is unfaithful are problems that Bibiana does not articulate. So complete is her isolation that she feels the need for proof of her family's love. One day when she returns home later than usual, Bibiana is surprised and even happy to find that her family was worried:

> Llora, pero está contenta. Ahora sabe lo que la quieren. Si llegara a morirse, lo sentirían, claro. Aunque Marcelo y los chicos parecen tan despegados, tan así, la quieren. Sentirían su muerte. La quieren.[1]

Pathetically, their consternation over the fact that she is late serves as a demonstration of affection in a relationship between incommunicative individuals. This inability to communicate afflicts the entire family.

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[1]Dolores Medio, Bibiana (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1967), p. 98.

While they talk a great deal they seldom break through the shell of artificiality of their speech. Their language ties them to society in general and helps define their own social role but it does not help them relate to others on an individual basis. It is language that conceals as much as it reveals.

Defined by a stereotyped role, Bibiana and the other characters appear to be no more than that artificial image they emulate. Conforming to the commonly-held opinion that most parents do not understand their children, Bibiana and Marcelo do not expect to solve the problems that arise between them and their offspring. Rather than dealing with a prob-- lem as a unique situation, Bibiana tries to put heir situation in general terms. Thus, when her youngest daughter Francisca has difficulties in school, Bibiana analyzes their predicament by means of generalities:

> (--¡Ay, los hijos!...Quién comprende a los hijos...Una los lleva en el vientre y los amamanta, una los cría y los cuida, les va enseñando a hablar y a rezar, y hasta a pensar, digo yo...Porque todo se lo enseña una cuando son chicos...Y de pronto, ¡hala!, se nos escapan. ¡Vaya usted a saber por dónde!...No sabemos nada de ellos. Ni por qué se ríen, ni por qué lloran...Ni lo que piensan.)[1]

Francisca is no longer an individual but all teenage daughters and Bibiana is all mothers. She is reassured by a formula and thier incommunicative relationship continues. An established pattern of behavior also determines the relationship between Bibiana and her husband. Bibiana accepts Marcelo's infidelity, his selfishness, and his insensitivity to her needs and those of the children because she considers these characteristics consistent with his role. In her eyes, he is no better ncr any worse than

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[1]Ibid., p. 63.

any other husband. The most trite of cliches provides consolation: "El mejor escribano echa un borrón."[1] In a similar way, her own role limits and defines her behavior. A woman is obliged to be a good wife and mother. Thus Bibiana's life is one of sacrifice and hard work for the benefit of her family. She is shocked by Natalia's rather cynical ideas about love and marriage. "...El amor no alimenta. Ni dura siempre...Un matrimonio ventajoso es la única solución acertada para las mujeres."[2] However, although their ideas are very different, both women are following the example of a particular stereotype. Natalia, like her mother, is merely reacting to changing social expectations. These various roles -- husband, wife, and daughter -- provide a pattern of behavior for each of them to follow. Thus defined from the outside, they act and react according to that image. And, from what the reader observes, the social formula of their behavior is not merely the external shell of a deeper personality but the shallow limit of their character.

Bibiana draws from the storehouse of common thought in order to form her opinions. She enjoys the security of common, shared ideas. These attitudes put her existence on a level with others thus diminishing her unique personality and responsibility to think. Only sporadically do non-general ideas intrude. Returning from her shopping, she mumbles to herself as she climbs the steps to her apartment:

> (--Una ya va para vieja...Los años pasan...Como pasan los años...Los hijos crecen...Ah, pues nada de fresas hasta que estén en la calle...Menudo precio el de la merluza...

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[1] Ibid., p. 166.

[2] Ibid., p. 31.

> Cualquiera la alcanza...Está bien lo del carrito...No cansan los brazos...Pero a ver como lo sube una por la escalera...Lo que se inventa...El ministro...Entonces tengo que ponerme los zapatos de ante...Me aprietan...Media hora ...Y el traje de lunares...Ya está un poco rozado, pero no se nota...Pues a ver si va a estar una siempre encerrada en casa...Una, como todas...)[1]

The author is inviting the reader into the consciousness of Bibiana Prats as she reacts to the stimulae of her everyday existence: the price of fish and her tight shoes together with the fear of growing old. The common thus alternates with the specific in her thoughts. Bibiana's specific problems and peculiarities contrast with a generalized concept of herself: "Una ya va para vieja...una como todas." Her ideas and her view of herself come from a collection of generalities. She is an example of a personality almost totally defined from the outside.

Bibiana's personality -- insecure, emotional, and simple -- permeates the novel. With only occasional shifts in point of view, Bibiana reacts to the world around her. Her conversations and her silent musings are presented without the embellishment or interpretation of an omniscient narrator. The reader follows the details of Bibiana's everyday existence from a position almost within her consciousness. With no indication of her background, there is only the immediate reality of speech and action on the most instinctive level.

Immediate reality is the concern of the author as the novel sets out to examine contemporary Spanish life. The novel opens with Bibiana managing a party for Natalia and José, her oldest son, and ends with the anniversary celebration of Bibiana and Marcelo. The events of their

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[1] Ibid., p. 232.

everyday existence in the intervening months are scrutinized in the smallest detail. The war which was used to explain so many problems in earlier works is now no more than a remote memory. Bibiana wants desperately to "vivir al día."[1] When her husband recalls the old days, Bibiana insists that "Hay que vivir con los hijos, cuando los hijos, la vida moderna."[2] This vida moderna is for Bibiana an ill-defined goal but one which she nevertheless feels obliged to seek. The war is no longer an all-powerful force; they are faced with new problems and preoccupations. As it does all over the world the threat of nuclear war weighs upon them: "Si se arma la gorda, no se salva nadie...Los soldados..., eso era antes ...Ahora, paf!, sueltan una bomba y desaparecemos todos."[3] Coming to terms with the perilous nature of modern existence, Bibiana, in her own confused way, shares the common anguish of twentieth-century life.

Bibiana realizes that things are not as they were. For the first time in her life she feels the need to be important. She is part of the post-war economic recovery which has renewed the middle class. The existence of this large group is felt throughout the novel. Bibiana moves about in a crowded world. In the subway, shopping in the department store, or waiting to see a movie, she is very often in the midst of many other people who are also attempting to participate in what the changing times offer. Despite such social problems as poor housing and a general scarcity of jobs, the middle class is shown to be enjoying new opportunities. With new power and status, the masses are thrust into

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[1] Ibid., p. 25.

[2] Ibid., p. 26.

[3] Ibid., p. 67.

action. However, their aims and desires are not well-delineated. Bibiana has a vague desire to be a mujer moderna. Her uncertainty and her groping attempts to understand and to act are tied to this goal. The world around her relays messages that seem to call her to action. Movies and radio open up her limited world of narrow family relationships. Shopping in a large department store is an exciting and disconcerting experience. Among the crowds in a Madrid department store, Bibiana feels overwhelmed by the situation and completely isolated. The crowds and the varied merchandise confuse her so much that she cannot remember why she has come to the store. What seems to be the mundane task of buying a few household items has become an intimidating experience. Not only is the world confusing with its seemingly endless variety of choices but changing standards of behavior present an equally troublesome problem. The rules of behavior which governed her youth and her parents' generation are no longer applicable. Bibiana's only guidelines are the examples of those around her -- either real people or the fictitious lives of the movies and magazines. Thus different life styles like the variety of merchandise in the store contribute to Bibiana's confusion. Nevertheless she feels the need to be a part of the changing world.

With conflicting signals from all directions, Bibiana tries to find her place. She gets the vague message from popular thinking to do something but she does not know what to do. Locked into a stereotype, she does not see herself as an individual but a mother and wife. Her husband and children simply do not listen to her. Although the stylistic presentation creates the impression of continuous speech, it is a fact that she actually does not talk much: "De ordinario, Bibiana Prats no

habla mucho. Lo necesario para que su familia se entere de lo que hizo durante el día o del precio de las cosas en el mercado."[1] The limitations of her language and the fact that she seldom speaks show that language is not a useful tool to penetrate her isolation but rather an element of that isolation. She is what she says -- no more than an accumulation of cliches outlining an abstract conception of her role in society. With no sense of uniqueness, she merely submits to pressure and reacts to stimulae. Like the vida vulgar o inerte described by Ortega, her life is dependent on external forces making her a static element in society. She does not act on her own but merely reacts to dominant social trends.

Through the Prats family,-the author studies the quality of life in Spain today. The theme of class alienation treated in Funcionario público has given way to a new interpretation. The Prats do not suffer greatly from economic hardship. With his small business Marcelo Prats is able to provide for his family at a respectable middle class level. The older Prats children work -- José as an apprentice in a shop, Natalia as a secretary, and Francisca in a beauty shop. Bibiana has to economize on groceries, clothes and other household items. The Prats represent a step up on the economic scale from the suffering of the funcionario and the residents of the apartment building in El pez sigue flotando. Their life style shows what relative economic security brings. The future offers a great deal to the Prats as evidenced by Natalia's newly-acquired taste for lujos. José, on the other hand, represents another point of view. His concern for the welfare of others brings on his father's wrath however.

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[1] Ibid., p. 100.

Marcelo calls him a "cochino comunista"[1] who will bring trouble to the family with his radical ideas. Xenius, who writes poetry, represents another element in society. But he too clashes with his father. Discovering that Xenius has written a poem, Marcelo berates him: "¡Poeta! ...Lo que nos faltaba...Mira, el marica ese, haciendo versitos."[2] Thus the Prats represent different elements of Spanish society. Whether Natalia's materialism or José's socialistic ideas will prevail in Spain is not indicated. Both are merely presented as possibilities that exist within the population.

Bibiana's grasp of social problems is instinctive and emotional. She feels sorry for the beggars, the homeless, and others who suffer from the inequities of the system but she does not comprehend the social forces which have created this situation. She represents a sheltered woman suddenly thrust upon the scene. Her extreme naivete is revealed when she becomes involved in a political demonstration without knowing its purpose. The rally is a demonstration of solidarity with the striking workers in Asturias. But Bibiana has joined the group simply out of a desire to participate.

> ...Supone un deber social hacer algo útil. Las mujeres de todo el mundo se reúnen en manifestaciones y congresos para conseguir algo. Lo ve en el cine y se lee en la prensa. Es la vida moderna. La mujer debe intervenir en las cosas de la calle, como el hombre. ¿No es así? ...Pues así es.[3]

Bibiana is dragged along with the crowd and ultimately finds herself in

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[1] Ibid., p. 197.

[2] Ibid., p. 197.

[3] Ibid., p. 236.

the group of leaders corralled by the police. Having arrested and questioned her, the authorities soon realize that she knows nothing and release her with a fine. She placed herself in this embarrassing and even dangerous predicament because of an overwhelming desire to do something important.

> ...no conoce el objeto de este paseo, o manifestación, o concentración, o como quieran llamarlo. Por eso se abstiene de hacer ningún comentario. De cualquier modo, le parece estupendo tomar parte en un acto público, ser algo en la vida social, ella tan insignificante.[1]

With her minimal understanding of political movements, whe is certainly an example of Ortega's inert masa. She embodies the mindless will to act that Ortega saw in the masses of this century.

The middle class Dolores Medio presents in Bibiana is part of her continuing study of the post-war years. From the specific war years of Nosotros, los Rivero and Diario de una maestra she moves far beyond the war in this novel. She suggests that for the Prats the war is only a vague memory. Marcelo feels slightly guilty when he recalls how he turned away from his Republican friends and relatives during the war. Because Bibiana's family was strongly Nationalistic, Marcelo broke the ties with his own kin. In the difficult years after the war, Marcelo and Bibiana benefited from this change of allegiance when they inherited an apartment from Bibiana's aunt. This slightly painful memory seems to be the extent of their heritage from the past. It is no more than a remote recollection of former commitments and associations. For the Prats children the war is history. They have the same general preoccupations as the current

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[1]Ibid., p. 238.

generation in any other European city. Dolores Medio has thus moved from a period of national crisis to modern Spain in her attempt to analyze and study a particular segment of Spanish society.

Dolores Medio's extremely objective presentation has reached full development in Bibiana. The progression toward objectivity began in Funcionario público and continued in El pez sigue flotando only to be modified in Diario de una maestra. Bibiana represents the culmination of a stylistic approach. Language and communication as stylistic elements contribute to the thematic content of the novel. The novel consists of the characters' attempts to communicate with each other. Handicapped by their speech patterns, Bibiana and the others find that ready-made ideas do not serve to solve their particular and unique problems.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The view of reality Dolores Medio creates in her novels is one of incommunication. On the surface it is an uncomplicated world she describes -- one consisting almost entirely of the most commonplace experiences. However, the author shows that what appears to be the speech of superficial social exchanges conceals frustration and confusion. It is thus through her style that Dolores Medio establishes the theme of incommunication and alienation, dominant in all her work.

The author's style in Funcionario público, El pez sigue flotando, and Bibiana is based on the careful intertwining of interior monologue and conversation. Narration often links these elements but the point of view of the character is maintained, thus eliminating the presence of an omniscient narrator. Also absent is a description of the physical world in which the character moves. The fictional realm created by the author depends essentially on the character's own words. In these works Dolores Medio's characters are, in the strictest sense, self-defined. What her stylistic presentation resembles most is a prolonged conversation, a seemingly endless stream of talk. Short or incomplete sentences convey

the idea of continuation, the use of the present tense suggests immediate reality, and the objective presentation of character makes the fictional perspective come alive before the reader. These few elements provide the basis for what seems to be an extremely simple stylistic approach. In Nosotros, los Rivero and Diario de una maestra this objectivity is not so strictly maintained. More traditional in approach, these novels depend on description, narration, dialogue, and interior monologue. Thus they stand in contrast to the character-centered approach of Dolores Medio's other novels.

As a stylist Dolores Medio achieves a strong sense of reality through the directness of her presentation and the credibility of her fictional world. Literary elegance and restraint do not weaken the impact of words as they come directly from the subject to the reader with the energy of actual speech. Because events occur haphazardly in real life, the transition from scene to scene is often abrupt. Rather than a logical sequence of events, there is only the progression that exists in a long, rambling conversation. By sharing the consciousness of one of its inhabitants, the reader learns about the environment in which that fictional character lives. The reader is invited to share a different perspective in the most direct way possible. Although Dolores Medio assumes that there are limits to what an observer can know about the inner feelings of another person, she does allow herself access to inner speech. Seeking to portray the immediate consciousness of a particular individual as thoroughly as possible, she relays that character's inner thoughts. However, this is not the voice of the subconscious but rather a kind of mumbling pre-speech. Rejecting as beyond the bounds of the novelist any form

of analysis and psychological interpretation, the author focuses on a particular aspect of external reality, one she considers within her novelistic prerogative, and records that aspect in a straightforward way. With these tools, she is able to capture the essential nature of a particular point of view. Bibiana and Marcelo seem dull and unimaginative because of what they themselves say and do. The author has not judged them. If the reader does not agree with their ideas and attitudes, he is nevertheless convinced that such a point of view is credible primarily because of the manner of presentation.

The lives of Dolores Medio's characters display what would seem to be contradictory traits -- isolation and conformity. Because of a dependence on common ideas, the capacity to resolve problems or understand drives and desires is limited. For this reason Bibiana participates in a political demonstration as if manipulated by invible forces. The funcionario is drawn toward suicide in an almost unconscious way and just as blindly he returns to his pitiful existence. The isolation from which these characters suffer is merely one more aspect of their lives which they do not understand. They see their inability to communicate as a common affliction. "¡Al diablo las mujeres!...Nunca sabe uno a qué atenerse respecto a ellas"[1] complains Pablo. Bibiana relates to her family in a similarly confused way: "¿Quién comprende a los hijos?... No sabemos nada de ellos."[2] These commonplace rationalizations do not resolve their dilemma. Thus the language and ideas that bind them to

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[1]Medio, Funcionario público, p. 61.

[2]Medio, Bibiana, p. 63.

society in general keep them in a position of perpetual perplexity and, although it seems contradictory, in a position of extreme isolation.

The incommunication of Dolores Medio's characters manifests itself in several ways. The author deals with the incommunication between one individual and another and between an individual and society. External social forces attacking the individual are seen in the political and intellectual alienation of Diario de una maestra. Irene's radical ideas cause her separation from the mainstream. Political persecution, the isolation of the intellectual, and the assault on the idealist are all manifestations of alienation with a concrete external cause. Most of Dolores Medio's characters, however, feel isolated and alone for less specific reasons; indeed, they have no idea of what it is that makes their lives so difficult. Their alienation is more directly related to an inability to communicate. Depending as they do on stereotypes and social formulas in their speech, these people are unable to relate to each other in a meaningful and authentic way. In Funcionario público, El pez sigue flotando, and Bibiana externally defined patterns of behavior provide each character with motives, goals, and a conglomeration of cliches and platitudes from which to compose his speech. In these three novels Dolores Medio studies people whose alienation results from their own outlooks and approach to life as much as from external factors.

From Nosotros, los Rivero to Bibiana there is a changing approach to the study of incommunication. In her first she introduces several aspects of incommunication. In addition to the basic inability to communicate on an individual level, the author identifies and studies several groups which tend to be isolated and alienated in contemporary Spanish

society: youth, lower social classes, intellectuals, idealists, and women. In Nosotros, los Rivero these themes are presented in a more or less traditional style. However, in subsequent novels, Dolores Medio develops the themes of alienation and incommunication by means of an objective style. In these novels language effectively illustrates the problem of incommunication. In Funcionario público, a lowly civil servant, who cannot communicate with his own wife on the most basic level, is not surprisingly alienated from society in general. Although it is clear that his inferior social position contributes to his isolation, it is his speech that dramatizes his plight. El pez sigue flotando uses language in a similar way to expose the isolated and alienated lives of Madrid's lower classes. Diario de una maestra does not depend on language as much as the two preceding novels. In this novel the author studies the alienation of the idealist and the intellectual in a more traditional manner. In her last novel, however, Dolores Medio returns to her characteristic objectivity. The author uses the speech of the masses to show the isolation of the individual. From the traditional presentation of Nosotros, los Rivero, Dolores Medio has moved toward a more painstaking and detailed approach in Bibiana. There is a progression by which language ultimately comes to represent the author's primary stylistic tool. The objective presentation of language reveals underlying incommunication. The language of the masses, a language of generalities, provides the security of common ideas while it also imposes isolation and the inability to communicate meaningfully. For this reason, Dolores Medio's characters seem to lack the will to act independently. She focuses on a particular segment of

society -- the hombre medio. He is paradoxically bound to others while he is, at the same time, isolated from them. Dolores Medio uses the most important tool of communication, language, to prove that it can also be the means by which one remains isolated.

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