THE COLOMBIAN NOVELIST AS CRITIC AND AGENT OF SOCIAL CHANGE

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AGENT OF SOCIAL CHANGE

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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The distinction between reality and illusion has been particularly elusive in the New World. Its discovery, conquest and development is a bizarre combination of fact and hope. It is as if the inert reality of this hemisphere were penetrated by some great dreamer to sire a race of men torn between what is and what could, should or might be. This dissertation seeks to discover the tension between reality and illusion as revealed in the contemporary Colombian novel. The study is based upon an analysis of twenty-six novels published between 1950 and 1970 and selected because of the authors’ prestige, critical recognition and personal preference. Thus, except for the latter criterion, the risks of predetermining the results of the analysis through the selection process have been somewhat minimized.

A brief review of Colombian political, social and economic conditions reveals a consensus among social scientists regarding the fundamental features of the society but a basic division in regard to modernization, the illusion that paradoxically seems to sustain contemporary reality. The main body of the dissertation reveals a similar consensus among the novelists but no such ambivalence in regard to modernization.

The fictional situation, whether related to socio-
logical, humanistic or entropic perceptions of the human condition, is sustained by a set of social inequities or incongruities and the resolution thereof generally results in violence, withdrawal or despair—never in accommodation through modernization and only occasionally in compassion. The setting, divided both horizontally and vertically, accentuates the disintegration of traditional institutions; and the resultant vacuum in social and moral values exposes the individual to the full impact of an irrational environment. Frequent confusion in temporal relationships lends ontological significance to the inanity of the immediate situation. The characters, like the cast in a morality play, exist and are therefore analyzed in terms of their social function or position. The wealthy and powerful are invariably bad and the poor and defenseless are either good or guiltless. Between these two extremes, a disoriented middle class ignores and thus perpetuates the fundamental dichotomy. Beyond these sociological categories, a few characters personify the potential dignity of man but the gap between them and the normal run of men only serves to emphasize further the frailties of the majority.

The total picture projected by the foregoing analysis reveals a basically pessimistic image of contemporary Colombia, a distinct lack of enthusiasm for the idea of modernization and a possibly exaggerated sense of desperation or alienation. As far as the novelists are concerned, a cruel and inane reality preempts any illusions of modernization.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .................................................. 1

Chapter

I. SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND .................. 12

II. THE NOVELISTS .............................. 33

III. THE NOVELISTIC SITUATION ................. 71
    The Social Protest Novels
    The Humanistic Novel
    The Entropic Novel

IV. THE SITUATION AS A FUNCTION OF THE
    LITERARY ENVIRONMENT .......................... 122
    The Rural Novel
    The Interior Provinces
    The Coastal Provinces
    The Urban Novel
    The Upper Class
    The Lower Class
    The Middle Class

V. CHARACTERS AS CLASS AND FUNCTIONAL SYMBOLS . 163
    Characters as Class Symbols
    Characters as Functional Symbols

VI. CONCLUSION .............................................. 218

BIBLIOGRAPHY .............................................. 227
INTRODUCTION

Addressing the Congress of Angostura, Simón Bolívar made the following observation concerning the peoples he had liberated:

We are not Europeans; we are not Indians; we are but a mixed species of aborigines and Spaniards. Americans by birth and Europeans by law, we find ourselves engaged in a dual conflict: we are disputing with the natives for titles of land ownership and at the same time we are struggling to maintain ourselves in the country that gave us birth against the opposition of the invaders. Thus our position is most extraordinary and complicated.¹

Some 130 years later, Leopoldo Zea summarized the development of the Spanish American republics following independence.

Instead of trying to solve our problems by the dialectical method, we Hispanic Americans have only accumulated them. The contradiction between conquered and conqueror was still not resolved when we decided to become republicans, liberals and democrats according to the model which great countries, especially Anglo-Saxon ones, gave us. Following that, and without resolving the new contradictions which faced us, we aspired to establish a 'bourgeoisie' similar to the great European 'bourgeoisie' without succeeding. . . . While in our time we have not yet attained the economic power which makes the disintegration of the 'bourgeoisie sui generis', we are faced with the problems of the class struggle.²


Zea was not the first to denounce the Latin American penchant for chasing false illusions. For over a century Latin Americans had been decrying their cultural dependence upon foreign models and proclaiming the need to develop in accordance with their own reality. Finally, a year after Zea had published his observations, Octavio Paz—working from an existential rather than an historical perspective—exposed the loneliness of the modern Mexican and suggested that loneliness was a fundamental universal reality. It may manifest itself differently from one country to another but it afflicts all men everywhere. Paz's perception of the universality of this reality precludes all illusions of imported or domestic utopias.

Suddenly we have reached the limit: in these few years we have exhausted all the historical forms Europe could provide us. There is nothing left except nakedness of lies. After the general collapse of Faith and Reason, of God and Utopia, none of the intellectual systems—new or old—is capable of alleviating our anguish or calming our fears. We are alone at last, like all men, and like them we live in a world of violence and deception, a world dominated by Don Nadie. . . . For the first time in our history, we are contemporaries of all mankind.3

While new ideas took years to cross the oceans, one could hope that one was simply behind, that somewhere man had discovered justice and found meaning and had thus resolved his solitude. This was the hope that distracted many Latin Americans and perverted the reality of Spanish

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America. Now that the elusive dream of imported perfection has shattered traditional structures and realities and left man increasingly alone and defenseless, such hope is no longer possible. Now each country, each individual, is alone in the search to resolve the human dilemma. The search may also be an illusion. Whether it is or not, perhaps it will help man to discover himself; at least, he can no longer evade himself.

Modern man has devised new tools with which to study his situation. To the old humanistic tools, he has added the social and natural sciences. The sciences have broken existence down into many parts, patterns, processes and probabilities. Unfortunately, these neither correlate with the old mysteries and values nor do they inspire a coherent set of new ones. Consequently, man is in an ontological limbo. This is the total reality of his situation. The impact of this reality is, according to Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, most effectively expressed in creative literature.

The novelist has no magic short cut to that present state of knowledge in the social sciences which constitute the 'truth' against which his fictional reality is to be checked. . . . His real function is to make us perceive what we see, imagine what we already, conceptually or practically, know.4

The novelist may or may not be aware of the perceptions he

stimulates; he may or may not explicate them in the novel; he may or may not embed them in a web of symbols and ambiguities—reaching or trying to reach beyond the level of verbal sensitivity; in short, the novelist may be as committed and/or as subtle as he cares to be. However, the world he creates must be sufficiently comprehensive and coherent to retain a fundamental and conceivable connection with reality.  

Finally, the novel, like the rest of the world, is both static and dynamic. According to Gabriel García Márquez, the novel not only stands alone in its particular place and moment but also forms part of an ever evolving literary reality. Each novelist recreates a particular aspect of the total picture and together they are creating a literary testimony. Latin America thus resembles the proverbial elephant and each novelist looks at it from a different angle.

In this study, I will analyze the contributions of the men who are writing the Colombian novel. Following a brief overview of the Colombian situation as projected by the social scientists, I will introduce the novelists and relate the important aspects of their work with regard to tension-conflict, setting and characterization.

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5 Ibid., p. 214.

The situational analysis will be directed toward identifying the nature and implications of the tension or conflict that sustains the novel and the manner in which either is resolved or left unresolved. The chapter on setting will describe the basic physical, psychological and temporal framework that prevails in the various fictional situations and the degree to which the setting conditions or reflects thematic implications. The chapter on characters will emphasize social and functional characteristics and some inferences will be drawn concerning the novelists' perception of the world based on character presentation and development. Finally, the reality projected by the novelists, as well as the world they are trying to discover for themselves, will be related to the modernization process. Thus, although the analysis will hopefully reflect the general reality of contemporary Colombia, it will particularly emphasize the novelistic perception of the impact and promise of modernization upon the society.

About 240 novels were published by Colombian novelists between 1950 and 1970. Aside from classification problems, the figure is not exact because, in spite of a governmental decree of 1961 obliging all editors and publishers to submit one copy of every
book published to the Bibliographical Department of the Instituto Caro y Cuervo, not all have complied with the law. Furthermore, many Colombian writers publish their works abroad.

For initial orientation in the field of Colombian literature, the following works proved particularly useful. *La novela sobre la violencia* by Gerardo Suárez Rondón, *Evolución de la novela en Colombia* by Antonio Curcio Altamar and *La novela histórica en Colombia* by Donald Mc Grady. Primary bibliographical sources were the Anuario Bibliográfico Colombiano, the Boletín Cultural Bibliográfico and the card catalogue indexes of both the Instituto Caro y Cuervo and the Biblioteca Luis Angel Arango. While it is unlikely that the bibliography is complete, it is probable that those novels which have been lost were not of exceptional value.

A more serious problem is the surprising number of books for which there is bibliographical and sometimes even critical reference but which cannot be located. Of the approximately 240 novels published in the last 20 years, only 164 could be located. Nevertheless, this is still too many to analyze adequately in one paper. After carefully scanning those available, 26 were eliminated because they
were not thematically contemporary. Of the remaining 138, 26 were selected for inclusion in this study on the basis of the following criteria: literary prestige of the author, formal critical recognition of the novel, social relevance and, finally, personal preference. Except for the latter criterion, this insured a random selection and minimized the risk of predetermining the results of the analysis through the selection process. The reader will note that few novels about La Violencia met these criteria.\footnote{\textit{La Violencia} was a period of extreme social instability that began, more or less, with the election of President Ospina Pérez in 1946, reached a peak during that of Laureano Gómez, was somewhat contained during the dictatorship of Gen. Rojas Pinilla and finally resolved during the early years of the National Front. Estimates of the number of dead in this 10 to 15 year period range from 100,000 to 300,000. Initially associated with a struggle for political position on the local level as Liberals and Conservatives tried to either maximize or minimize the results of the 1946 election, political motivations soon became confused with personal hatreds and greed. As criminal elements gained dominance and as the government became increasingly repressive, the struggle for political hegemony degenerated into gratuitous brutality.} Many such novels have been written but they tend to be excessively polemical. Furthermore, it is felt that La Violencia was an aberration, symptomatic of social maladjustments but not chronic. The works selected go beyond the specifics of this one nightmare to the fundamental social and psychological maladjustments that could trigger further violence.
On the basis of the first criterion, all the novels published in the last twenty years by Gabriel García Márquez and Eduardo Caballero Calderón have been included. Both of these writers are well known internationally—the bibliography on García Márquez is particularly extensive. Both have inspired dissertations in Colombia and abroad, have been awarded prizes for literary excellence and have seen their novels translated on either side of the Iron Curtain. Of the two, García Márquez is probably better known because he is a major figure among the new wave of Latin American novelists while Caballero Calderón follows a more conservative literary tradition.

On the basis of the second criterion, all novels that won the Premio Esso and which develop contemporary themes have been included. The Premio Esso is Colombia's most prestigious literary prize and is awarded annually to the best unpublished novel submitted for consideration. It has stimulated considerable controversy with traditionalists and experimentalists on opposite sides of the question. However, most observers recognize that the major factor determining the quality of the prize winning novel is not the bias of the judges but the quality of the manuscripts submitted for consideration. In one year, 1966, the jury simply declared that there was no contest. However, in the years the prize is awarded, it inevitably assures a fairly wide audience to the winner. This may in part attest to the literary merit of most of the winning
noveles. The following works have been awarded the Premio Esso: 1961, *La mala hora* by Gabriel García Márquez; 1962, *Detrás del rostro* by Manuel Zapata Olivella; 1963, *El camino en la sombra* by José Antonio Osorio Lizarazo; 1964, *Guayacán* by José Manuel Prada Sarmiento; 1965, *La picúa cebá* by Lucy Barco de Valderrama; 1967, *En noviembre llega el arzobispo* by Héctor Rojas Herzog; *Mateo el flautista* by Alberto Duque López; 1969, *Las causas supremas* by Héctor Sánchez. Except for *El camino en la sombra*, which is not included because it is set in 19th century Bogotá, all of these are included in this study.

Several novels have been included on the basis of critical interest. *El día señalado* by Manuel Mejía Vallejo won the Premio Nadal in 1964 and has been widely acclaimed in Colombia and abroad. *Al pie de la ciudad* by the same author is of lesser literary significance but, because of the novelist's prestige and the novel's thematic relevance, it has enjoyed considerable critical interest. *En Chimá nace un santo* by Manuel Zapata Olivella is considered by most critics to be his best work. *La calle 10* and *Chambacú, corral de negros* by the same author are included not because of their literary merit but because of the unequivocal force of the author's social criticism and his popularity among Marxist critics. *La casa grande* is Alvaro Cepeda Samudio's only novel to date and, according to the Uruguayan critic Angel Rama, it is better than García Márquez' early works. *La rebelión de las ratas* by Fernando Soto Aparicio is his
best effort and merits the critical acclaim it received first in Spain and subsequently in Colombia. López Michelson's *Los elegidos* is included because of its quality and because of the author's importance as a contemporary political figure. Finally, and appropriately, *El terremoto* by Germán Pinzón has been included on the basis of the second criterion because it won the Premio Nadaísmo in 1966 and is the best work produced so far by the nadaístas.

A few works have been included on the basis of relevance and personal choice. None of them has been widely read or acclaimed. They are, however, in the writer's opinion the best of the many unread and unacclaimed novels of the last twenty years. *El despertar de los demonios* by Víctor Aragón sustains an ambitious philosophical disquisition set in a peculiarly Colombian part of Colombia, i. e. Popayán. *Al final de la calle* by Oscar Hernández Monsalve is a curious lyrical evocation of the moral decadence of poverty. *Los años de la esfíxia* by José Stevenson, published by Losada in Buenos Aires, laments the loss of youthful illusions and has already been mentioned in one of our more popular texts concerning Latin America as representative of contemporary Colombian literature.  

A study such as this is at best incomplete and at worst inaccurate. It will be incomplete because it is based on only 26 of the 240 novels published by Colombians in the last 20 years--1950 to 1970--and because of necessity these fictional worlds must be reduced to only a few pages. It will be inaccurate to the extent that the writer's perceptual framework differs from that of the novelists or the readers. Unfortunately, no scientific procedure cloaks my personal responsibility nor is a large body of prior critical opinion available from which to select that which might sustain my interpretations.
CHAPTER I

SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Cyril Black has identified seven patterns of development within the modernization process. ¹ Colombia, along with other Latin American nations, falls within the fourth pattern of Black's typology. It is an offshoot of a European society which itself was exposed to the popular phase of the modernization process through conquest and which has not yet fully committed itself to the social, economic, and political imperatives of the process. Thus Colombia has been exposed both vicariously through its historic and cultural affiliation with Spain and directly through the philosophical impact of the American and French revolutions and the more pervasive impact of European and American economic and cultural penetration.

There is considerable debate among social scientists regarding the extent of change necessary to effect modernization. In fact, since the direction of this paper was first proposed, the use of the term modernization as

synonymous with development has been increasingly rejected because of its obvious exogenous origins and because it involves, according to some, a special form of economic change which emphasizes bureaucratic innovation and a host of mending processes. In contrast, the structuralist school of development requires smashing more than mending.\textsuperscript{2}

The mending or gradualist approach obviously appeals to those who have an investment in the present system. Since it is their system, they understand its complexities and are in positions of economic and political power from which they can effect, moderate or frustrate reform. However, given the pace of change, many critics question the sensitivity and commitment of the effective leadership to the need for meaningful reform. Stripped of its glamorous connotations, modernization, or gradualism, may be nothing more than a façade behind which lurks a reactionary power structure.\textsuperscript{3}

The structural approach, on the other hand, enjoys the advantage of simplicity and the support of those who have little to lose from "smashing" the system. Because of its simplicity and intrinsic popular appeal, because


economic progress has not eliminated social inequities and because identification with the dispossessed is currently fashionable, the structural approach receives considerable support from many intellectuals. Consequenty, "to the long-standing charges against cultural elites of barren sycophancy, imitativeness, and disconnection from local realities have been added the more contemporary accusations of disloyalty and deliberate subversion." Frank Bonilla, for whom modernization and development are apparently synonymous, further suggests that intellectuals are not just subverting the system but also efforts to modernize it.

Noting the disenchantment with modernization, whether according to a capitalistic or socialistic model, Aldo Solari observes that either approach requires a commitment to a specific set of values and that few Latin Americans are deeply committed to any value system. In fact, he suggests that they are barely committed to the values of industrial society. Irving Louis Horowitz makes the same


6 Unless specifically contrasted, these terms are considered synonymous in this paper.

point when he accuses Latin American educators of "imbuing the entire society with an orientation and ideology which is at once revolutionary in phraseology and reactionary in content."\(^8\) Divorced from economic and political realities, which Bonilla sees as symptomatic of the Latin American intellectual's dislocation in society, there seems to be a revival of the idea that the primordial factor in development is the individual and, consequently, a reemphasis upon the restructuring of values and attitudes.\(^9\) Thus to the charge of social subversion is added that of cultural subversion.

Approaching the issue from a dialectical point of view, Orlando Fals Borda focuses upon the total process of change in Colombia rather than any particular manifestation or technique. He identifies various "orders" or topias and various "subversions" or utopias.\(^10\) Modernization, with reference to a particular time or place, may be one of the utopias, but it is not the process. To convey the direction of change, Fals Borda prefers a less relative concept such as development. Although he never defines his concept of development, one can probably assume he would agree that, over an intermediate time span, progress entails the extension of economic and political power to previously

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\(^8\) Horowitz, *Three Worlds*, p. 357.


marginal sectors of the society. To facilitate the process, the intellectual must expose the incongruities of the status quo as regards the extension of participation to the masses. Consequently, instead of a bias in favor of equilibrium, the investigator should be committed to change. Through the phenomena he selects for research or, if a novelist, the themes he develops, he should contribute to the subversion of the establishment. Obviously, such activities may ultimately lead to violence but the responsibility for non-violence rests not only upon those who seek change but also upon those who resist it.\footnote{Ibid., p. 205.} In any event, the one proceeding from a syndromic analysis and the other from a diachronic analysis, Fals Borda and Bonilla reach approximately the same conclusion. The latter maintains that the intellectual is subversive and the former that he should be.

Given the web of mutual interests that unites Colombian leadership, an attack upon one sector constitutes a threat to the entire system. Without the protection of the state, industry would collapse before vigorous competition, the Church would confront the full impact of contemporary skepticism and the civilian and military bureaucracy would simply disappear. On the other hand, without the support of its partners, the state would be unable to govern. The semi-private economic sector finances the state, the Church preaches obedience, the military
contains the rebellious and the bureaucracy absorbs enough unemployed to diffuse the problem. This unity of interests is not new. William Brisk, extending the cacique concept beyond the individual to the group, observes that the modern Latin American state is much like the colonial or 19th century state. It is a collection of caciques, now functionally rather than regionally oriented, who have united to form a state and thus legitimatize and maximize their power. "The impoverished state, remote from the enterprises it presumably governs, tied to the owners of these enterprises socially and economically and dependent on their support politically, cannot in fact regulate them."\(^{12}\)

In Colombia, the dominant element in the alliance is the economic sector. The capitalists' power is based on their ownership of the best lands and their control of the processing and exporting of commodities and prime resources. Associations of producers protect their own interests often at the expense of the nation. "Their latent function is to underutilize and misutilize Colombia's resources, and to lock her in the unproductive embrace of a form of monopoly capital."\(^{13}\) The same pattern applies to


Colombian industry. It is concentrated in a few import substitution areas and protected by tariff barriers. Consequently, with an assured market, these industries grow rapidly until they reach the limits of the internal market. Then, too inefficient to compete on the international market and never strong enough to withstand competition in the domestic market, they drain the nation's resources without actually contributing to its development. Given the limitations on growth and the Colombian capitalists' aversion to risk, Colombia in some years exports more capital than it imports. This is particularly disturbing in the face of a rural-urban population shift which has exposed a serious unemployment problem. Such a paradox, of course, reenforces the contention that the plutocracy lacks entrepreneurial and innovative skills; but, more probably, investment bottlenecks reflect the vacillation of Colombian economic policy between economic independence and dependence. The nation hesitates to commit itself fully to the exploitation of basic resources and cannot develop, under existing circumstances, a primary industrial capacity. In trying to resolve this dilemma, Colombia has joined the Andean pact; but, while this arrangement has stimulated Colombian industry, it tends to divert more trade than it creates and may, in the long run, further inhibit Latin American development. Much depends upon whether, after the initial phase, the Colombian and Latin American manufacturers can retain and expand their markets without the aid of costly
preferential treatment. The record of the Colombian eco-
nomic elite is not encouraging.

The Church is also an important factor in the
Colombian political equation. As in other Latin American
countries, the Colombian Church was the target of 19th
century Liberal reform; but the Conservative response in
Colombia, unlike that of other countries, has not only
been pro-Church but also, at least in Antioquia, pro-
modernization. Furthermore, the paternal features of
Antioquian capitalism coincide with the Thomistic bias of
the Catholic Church and, not insignificantly, of the
majority of Colombians. Now that the status of the Church
has been largely resolved, though by no means entirely
diffused, the Church has begun to pull away from its asso-
ciation with the Conservative party and has become less
partisan.\textsuperscript{14} During the Violencia, many parish priests
openly supported the Conservatives but others, particularly
those in positions of authority, disclaimed any sectarian
interest and sought to restrain political passions. Conse-
quently, at least on the national level, the Church has
emerged as a champion of conciliation and an ally in the
National Front. In this capacity, it has actively supported
various social welfare programs. However, like the National
Front, the Church is accused of only superficial commitment

\textsuperscript{14} Robert H. Dix, The Political Dimensions of Change
to social change. It continues to preach Christian charity rather than revolution. However, in 1968, forty priests and one bishop signed a manifesto calling for revolutionary action against imperialism and the neo-colonial bourgeoisie.\(^{15}\) There is reason to believe that this leftward shift will accelerate as more lower class youths enter the priesthood and as the international religious community drifts further away from bourgeois capitalism. Thus, while not necessarily at the forefront of revolutionary reform, the Church remains in touch with various contemporary movements and retains considerable influence among the majority of Colombians.

Whereas the Catholic Church is relatively strong, the Colombian military is relatively weak. Since the foundation of the republic, Colombia has placed more constitutional limits upon the military than its sister Latin American republics.\(^{16}\) Furthermore, given the federalist orientation of the 19th century Liberal party, the military establishment was a frequent object of Liberal concern. In the constitution of 1863, the army was virtually replaced by state militias. Federalism, like anti-clericalism, has long since been eclipsed by more contemporary issues and the army has regained its role as guarantor of the survival of the state. However, since Conservatives have traditionally

\(^{15}\)Zeitlin, Torres, p. 45.

\(^{16}\)Dix, Change, p. 295.
dominated the officer corps, the Liberals have continued to seek the restriction of the military's potential political power. In the second López administration, the president's attitude contributed to considerable dissatisfaction among the military. In 1944, there was a military revolt in Pasto; but, although many officers sympathized with the coup, it was quickly crushed.

As the political situation deteriorated in the late forties and early fifties, the military was increasingly called upon to help preserve order. Since the Conservatives were in power, the armed forces were perceived as an instrument of the Conservative party. Many officers resented their role but they did not rebel until Titular President Laureano Gómez sought to remove Gen. Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, the commander-in-chief of the entire military establishment. A reluctant Rojas Pinilla was forced to act; and, after Mariano Osipina Pérez and then Roberto Urdaneta Arboláez refused to assume the presidency, he finally accepted the responsibility. Thus, power was thrust upon the military rather than seized by it.

Almost all sectors of Colombian society welcomed the Rojas Pinilla coup. Unfortunately, the man who promised peace and order brought confusion and more violence. One of his basic problems was the fact that he had no specific

constituency. He sought to create a "Third Force" but the grip of the traditional parties upon the Colombian people was too strong and his appeal, particularly as time went on, too weak. After four years, Rojas Pinilla had alienated all sectors of Colombian society and was removed from office by his fellow officers. They, unlike him, were sufficiently chastised by their calamitous flirtation with politics to turn the government back to professional politicians. By peacefully transferring power back to the civilians, the military salvaged its reputation, but it will be a long time before Colombians, military or civilian, forget the Rojas Pinilla episode. Curiously, as time passes, the implications of the previous sentence become somewhat ambiguous because Rojas Pinilla not only is not forgotten, he appears to be remembered with some fervor by an electorate searching for an alternative to the National Front. As presently envisioned, the Front will be formally dissolved in 1974 and it is a matter of considerable interest whether the two traditional parties will then be able to reassert their claim upon the vast majority of all Colombians.

In recent years, other groups have emerged to assault the traditional bastions of political power. However, these groups have not as yet fully asserted themselves. The Colombian labor movement, for example, retains close connections with, on the one hand, the Liberal party and, on the other, the Catholic Church. Furthermore, both labor
confederations support the National Front. In return, the unions have been rewarded with government support in their wage and social welfare demands, thus further committing them to the National Front's gradualist approach to change. In a sense, the very success the unions have had in improving the welfare of their members tends to create a privileged group among Colombian workers that increasingly identifies itself with the middle class rather than with the lower classes. "Finally, the fact that most Colombian industry has been domestically owned and operated has perhaps made it harder for labor to cohere politically around a common set of nationalistic objectives."\(^{18}\)

Student organizations are probably more nationally oriented. The fact that they must appeal either to the government or public opinion for the redress of many of their grievances, encourages student leaders to identify their cause with the "peoples'" cause. Consequently, student demonstrations acquire significant political importance and are frequently manipulated by the political parties for purely sectarian purposes. At the present, the parties of the far Left are particularly active on the campuses.\(^{19}\) Consequently, student organizations are frequent champions of fundamental change. However, many effective student leaders are co-opted by one or the other major party


\(^{19}\)Ibid., p. 346.
because, aside from initial visibility, the small radical parties offer few opportunities to the politically ambitious student. As a result, the student movement poses a constant threat but has not as yet exercised much real influence.

There are many other interest groups within Colombia and there are numerous divisions within the various groups. Furthermore, a basic tendency toward the extension of participatory status to an ever increasing number of interest groups can be discerned. However, the significance of the foregoing survey lies not so much in the content as in the format. If the format is correct—as contended—then Colombia is neither a feudal society of a few powerful individuals nor is it a mass society. Personal relationships remain important while, on the other hand, there may be a growing sense of allegiance to the body politic; but, the dominant forces in the Colombian power structure are the interest groups.

The state itself is relatively weak but, since it dispenses favors and sanctions privilege, it is the primary interest group. As Irving Horowitz suggests, third world countries are basically political societies. The state may rely upon other interest groups for much of its legislative research and initiative but their proposals are ultimately accepted or rejected through the political process. Consequently, those who hold political power are

\[20\] Horowitz, Three Worlds, p. 417.
in a peculiarly strategic position from which to manipulate the system.

In the last few years, several interesting analyses of the Colombian political situation have been published. They approach the subject differently but they all agree that the Liberal and Conservative parties dominated and, under the National Front, continue to dominate Colombian politics. Under this arrangement, all elective and appointive offices are shared equally by both parties. Consequently, neither party controls national or local legislative bodies. The presidency alternates between both parties and the president appoints both Liberals and Conservatives to ministerial and gubernatorial positions. The ministers and governors, in turn, divide their political appointments equally among the adherents of both parties. Within each party, however, various factions can and do maneuver for party hegemony. Thus a faction basically hostile to the National Front could capture control of either party. To date, whether because factional leadership has been co-opted or because reformers have chosen to work within the system, the position of the elite is relatively secure. In the long run, its security depends upon whether the rebels have in fact been co-opted or whether they have chosen reform in preference to revolution. In the latter case, they run the risk of intellectual condemnation but they may also ultimately effect
cumulative reforms that approximate revolutionary change. 21

Traditionally, Colombians have accepted the leadership of the upper classes. Like their Spanish ancestors, they are subjects rather than participants. 22 That is, they await action from above rather than initiating it themselves. However, paternalism requires respect and compliance. Here again, the Colombian preserves the colonial tradition of obedience but non-compliance, 23 hence, the government in Bogotá has tended to operate in a vacuum. Its connection to the people is further weakened through the appointment rather than election of governors and mayors. Lacking a local power base, political appointees must appease those who hold real economic and political power in the community. In a survey conducted in an urban lower-middle class neighborhood, A. Eugene Havens and William L. Flinn discovered that the local priest was the most influential figure followed at some distance by the police inspector and several caciques. In this setting, the caciques (Havens and Flinn identify them as gamonales) were store owners rather than landowners. 24

22 Dix, Change, p. 176.
23 Ibid., p. 177.
Before the massive migration to the cities, the country was a patchwork of Liberal and Conservative fiefdoms. Everybody was "plugged into" the paternalistic system. Even the lowest campesino identified his interests with those of the patrón. When the elite was divided, therefore, the divisions extended throughout the body politic. These allegiances no longer apply with the same force and new divisions, based on ideology, have been slow to emerge. The issues of the 19th century are dead and the new utopias apparently inspire little fervor. Camilo Torres, a utopian leader, failed long before he was killed in the mountains of Eastern Colombia. The people simply did not respond to his vision. They may be lost but they are not as yet ready for revolution. For example, a survey in a lower middle class suburb in 1968 revealed that only 6% of the respondents favored a revolution. 25 Apparently the fear of drastic change is most acute among those who have suffered the consequences of recent political violence. 26 The middle classes, aspiring to upper class status, are even less prone to support revolutionary movements. 27


26 Ibid., p. 124.

Robert H. Dix, utilizing A. F. K. Organski's schema for political development, classifies the Colombian political system as "syncratic". Although it differs in form from Organski's historical examples, it fulfills the fundamental characteristics: a highly politicalized mass of people torn from traditional allegiances, a compromise between two antagonistic elites, protection of landed interests and modernization within structural constraints and decelerating economic growth threatening potential unrest. Obviously, the latter characteristic does not always apply. In Colombia, for example, the rate of growth varies considerably from year to year. Still, whether accelerating or decelerating, it does not meet the growing expectations of the people. Consequently, syncratic politics involves a very delicate balance of governmental largesse and economic discipline. The alternatives to a syncratic regime are: (1) laissez faire capitalism, (2) Stalinist communism, (3) a modernizing coalition including non-elitist elements and infused with a spirit of nationalistic and popular democracy or (4) political decay. Regardless of which direction Colombia takes, all require a reorientation of traditional values.

Social scientists debate the relative importance of value orientations, but there is general agreement that social values condition development. Certain values elicit

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28 Dix, Change, pp. 272 passim.
certain behavioral patterns, or vice versa, and these in turn influence the viability of economic and political structures. The problem with values is that there is normally a gap between professed value systems and actual values as revealed through behavioral patterns. The moralists may bewail this fact but the social scientist must accept it. In fact, the extent and nature of the discrepancy help the observer to identify the rate and direction of change. Talcott Parsons, comparing developed with underdeveloped countries, identified the values that, a posteriori, appear to facilitate development and those that seem to inhibit it. There are four pairs: (1) affective neutrality--affectivity, (2) achievement--ascription, (3) universalism--particularism, (4) specificity--diffuseness. 29 Seymour Lipset has added another, libertarianism--elitism and I have added a sixth, rationalism--irrationalism. The first behavioral pattern in each pair is the modern pattern.

At this point, reference should be made to Albert Hirschman's warning concerning paradigms. He cautions us to beware of them because, while they help organize disparate facts, they may also obscure our vision. Furthermore, developmental momentum may well be a cluster of fortuitous circumstances, or unperceived discrepancies

between the conventional wisdom and reality, that catch traditional sectors by surprise. This point, of course, raises the question of whether structural or value changes take precedence and it cannot be resolved in this paper. However, Hirschman's warning is well taken. For example, in regard to Parsons' typology, one might ask the following questions: To what extent and in what sectors of the population must the developmental values apply? What are the evolving implications of development? What is the probability of value reorientation in accordance with this paradigm within vastly different cultural contexts? To what extent might preoccupation with these particular values inhibit development through an entirely unsuspected set of circumstances or values? These are valid questions and cannot be ignored; but, its weaknesses notwithstanding, the Parsons' typology will help bring the values recorded and projected by the novelists into a more meaningful prospective.

In order to place the fictional value system in perspective, it would be well to identify certain salient points as perceived by social scientists. The literature is obviously extensive but Albert Hirschman and John Payne are fairly representative of the broad spectrum of interpretation of behavioral patterns and the essential consensus

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Hirschman, Bias, pp. 342 passim.
in regard to the Parsons' paradigm. Hirschman observes that Colombian politicians, by their own admission, are specialists in everything and, consequently, strongly opinionated on every issue. Given the absence of specific expertise, positions are held on the basis of partisan and/or ideological purity. Therefore, factions form around ideologies rather than sectional or specific issues and majorities are formed through shifting alliances rather than "logrolling".  

31 James L. Payne, observing the same phenomenon, suggests that the Colombian politician is only marginally influenced by ideology or program but extremely interested in his own personal status. For purposes of personal advancement, he joins a faction. The faction then maneuvers for position within the power structure. It may cloak its motives in ideological rhetoric, but the goal is status rather than program-oriented.  

32 Whatever the case may be, both analyses are predicated upon the non-developmental behavioral patterns of Colombian politicians. Parenthetically, other studies suggest that these actualized value systems are not peculiar to Colombia or to politicians but extend throughout Latin American society.  

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31 Hirschman, Journeys, p. 296 passim.


The purpose of this chapter was to draw, in admittedly broad strokes, a picture of Colombia as projected by social scientists. Within a developmental context, emphasis has been placed on salient social realities, the ideological confusion concerning the definition and direction of change, and the nature of Colombian behavioral patterns. The remainder of this study is designed to discover the degree to which Colombian novelists confirm, contradict or add to the picture.
CHAPTER II

THE NOVELISTS

The Colombian novels represented in this study differ considerably as to form, content, subtlety and balance. However, the intention is not to analyze the novels from a purely esthetic point of view but rather to relate them to the myth or process of change. Therefore, this chapter about the writers is merely an introduction and not an analysis. Occasional references, particularly in regard to the major novelists, are made concerning philosophical position and stylistical developments but the emphasis is essentially biographical. Furthermore, the nature of the introductory material is a function of the availability of material by and about the various novelists. As might be expected, the accessibility of material correlates closely with the importance of the writer. The order in which the authors are introduced reflects this correlation. Consequently, Gabriel García Márquez heads the parade of modern Colombian novelists.

When García Márquez was eight, he lost his grandfather who had been the most influential person in the young boy's life for he had introduced him to the wonders
of the world.\textsuperscript{1} In those early years, Gabriel absorbed the magic and the reality, or the magic reality, of Aracataca. Macondo is a distillation of this magic reality; but for García Márquez it is not very different from other towns in Latin America. He believes that Latin Americans live surrounded by extraordinary and fantastic phenomena while writers insist upon writing about superficial realities. What is needed is a new technique that will capture the fundamental reality of a world not devoid of magical dimensions.\textsuperscript{2}

García Márquez remembers wanting to tell the story of Macondo after a visit to Aracataca that, through his mother's tears, he experienced as a wake for a dead town. He was fifteen then and lacked both the language and the skill to relate it. However, after graduating from a Jesuit college in Bogotá, he entered law school and began experimenting with stories that would lead the way back to Macondo. He wrote not to reform the world but to tell a good story. This, and the admiration of friends continue to be his primary motivations.\textsuperscript{3} However, the friends are a select and exacting group of fellow novelists and he has come to feel that the novel has, aside from a purely personal


\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., p. 20.

\textsuperscript{3}Ibid., p. 8.
function, a broad social function. In his view, novels and novelists should be subversive, hence there is no great literary work that serves to exalt established values.\textsuperscript{4} Great literature is a product of conflict between the author and his environment. If the writer is sincere, his effort to resolve the conflict will inevitably find its way into the novel.

Colombia's most acclaimed contemporary novelist does not consider his early stories particularly entertaining or profound, dismissing them as poor imitations of Joyce and Kafka.\textsuperscript{5} However, they were published in the literary supplement of El Espectador and García Márquez escaped an unpromising university career to become a journalist. In this capacity, he traveled throughout Colombia and then, in 1954, he went to Europe where he studied and reported on continental cinematography until El Espectador was closed by Rojas Pinilla.

Curiously, it was during his first year, the financially secure year, that he conceived his protagonist for El colonel no tiene quien le escriba as an essentially comic character within a larger work. During the second year, when the checks from El Espectador stopped coming, the character emerged whole and tragic. Before completing

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., p. 8.

\textsuperscript{5}Luis Harss and Barbara Dohmann, Los nuestros (Buenos Aires, 1966), p. 386.
this novel, however, and after five years of rejections, he published _La hojarasca_ in 1955. It is typical of the theme and settings that characterize his subsequent novels but stylistically far less precise. There is too much of Faulkner—an influence he readily admits. Thematically, this is inevitable. Faulkner's world borders on the Gulf of Mexico and is similar to the one García Márquez knows. It is a world of small, stagnant, forgotten towns, heavy with heat and memories—a dense world that defies structure.

His first novel came easily. It poured out of him without restraint. In his subsequent novels, García Márquez has conserved his basic thematic orientation but has abandoned Faulkner's convoluted style and the stream of consciousness technique. Now he writes carefully and has perfected a very clear and fluid narrative style that alludes to the complexities of Macondo without being complex.

In 1956 Gabriel left France, returned to Colombia to marry a childhood sweetheart and then went to Caracas to work as a journalist. In 1959, he was back in Colombia to open an office for Prensa Latina in Bogotá. Subsequently, he covered the United Nations but in 1961 he resigned and moved to Mexico. There, after nine rewritings, he published _El colonel no tiene quien le escriba_ and shortly thereafter, in 1962, _La mala hora_ and _Los funerales de la Mama Grande_. However, this flurry of activity was less of a success.

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6Ibid., p. 396.
than a result of his failure to fit these separate pieces into a total master work. When Luis Harss and Barbara Dohmann visited him in 1965, he was working on avant garde film scripts and frustratingly stalled in his efforts to write the epic tragedy of Macondo. However, these years in the valley of Anáhuac were very important because they exposed García Márquez to a philosophical climate that helped to clarify his conceptions of Macondo.

When Leopoldo Zea wrote of the history of Latin America as an accumulation of unresolved and frequently imported conflicts, when Octavio Paz wrote of the all pervading reality of loneliness, when Emilio Uranga wrote of the sense of impending disaster, they helped García Márquez see more clearly the psychological reality of Macondo. Macondo suffers from moral gangrene. It is a town of bad consciences where nobody likes anybody else. The past may be buried but it keeps returning as a collective nightmare. Nobody sleeps well in Macondo because a smell of death hangs over the town.  

To capture this reality, García Márquez needed more than style. In fact, he worried that his preoccupation with style would render him sterile. What he needed was a different attitude—more vigorous and more imaginative than that found in much modern literature. He discovered it in the novels of the knights errant and the simplicity

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\(^7\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 385.}\)
with which the most extraordinary events were related to him as a child. In Cien años de soledad he reconstructs a world where the knight errant, a kind of Emilio Uranga figure predisposed to disaster, struggles and then succumbs to the reality of a mad world. García Márquez does not marvel at this reality nor does he censure it, ridicule it or question it; and, after a few pages, neither does the reader. The incredible is fact. It is not suggested by subtle techniques, it is affirmed clearly and simply.

With the publication of Cien años de soledad, García Márquez has become a culture hero. He attributes his excessive popularity to the need the people have for leaders. However, although he is clearly anti-establishment and considers himself a leftist, he knows that once the people realize that a writer is only a writer they will feel betrayed. On the other hand, if a writer should accept the leadership role, he compromises his literary career. García Márquez has resolved this dilemma by living abroad.

For Eduardo Caballero Calderón there is no dilemma. He has something to say, so he writes. He has much to do, so he is active in the real world. Thus, he fits more closely the traditional pattern of the Latin American writer.

Caballero Calderón was born into the provincial

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8Márquez and Llosa, Diálogo, p. 18.
aristocracy in 1910. The family was Liberal and his father was an active participant in public affairs. Like many other boys of his social class, young Eduardo grew up between the family home in Bogotá and the family estate in Tipacoque. On one of these trips to Tipacoque, when Eduardo was eighteen, he broke his hip and was marked for life with a pronounced limp. Eduardo fought dejection, won, married Isabel Holguín and began his career as a diplomat. Over the years he has represented his country in Perú, Argentina, Spain and, most recently, as Colombian ambassador to the United Nations Economic and Social Council. Throughout his career he has maintained an association with the nation's leading Liberal newspaper, El Tiempo, and his column, "Swann's Way," is very influential. Eduardo Caballero Calderón has also represented the people of Boyacá in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. However, when I met him in the Spring of 1969, he was completely absorbed in his new position as Mayor of Tipacoque. He is at peace with himself because his roots are there and nobody disputes his real identity. His spirit soars in this natural environment and his heart divides itself among the Tipacoques.⁹

Eduardo Caballero Calderón was writing short sketches of life in Tipacoque when he was eight or nine.

Just after he was married, and while the young couple lived in Lima, he wrote *Tipacoque*. It is a nostalgic evocation of the land and the people. When he returned to Colombia, he found that the spiritual integrity he had idealized in his sketches was everywhere threatened by the encroaching materialism of the United States. He helped organize among university students an alternative to the traditional two parties. The movement was very nationalistic and anti-American. *El arte de vivir sin soñar* was written during this period and denounces the superficiality of modern America as seen by an unsympathetic visitor from another century. This novel was supplemented by a collection of essays, *El nuevo príncipe*, in which the author renewed the perpetual struggle between Caliban and Ariel. Since the war, however, Eduardo Caballero Calderón has been at peace with the United States. He has searched for Colombia not in its fear of the United States but from within. Like others, this is where he finds the fundamental ambiguities. In *Historia privada de los colombianos* he asserts that Colombia was independent before it was a nation and that since then it has been like the hermit crab, crawling under first one abandoned shell and then another.10 Now, in the modern world, it is becoming increasingly difficult to develop a sense of national identity. Threatened by

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both the communism and the Northamericanism of the complex and mechanical world of today, Colombia's only hope for self-identity is in the mysticism and poetry of its people.\textsuperscript{11} In Típacoque, Diario de Típacoque, Breviarios del Quijote, Cartas colombianas, Ancha es Castilla, Americanos y europeos, \textit{La historia en cuentos} and \textit{Memorias infantiles}, Caballero Calderón has sought to capture the spirit, agony and mystery of Colombia. If at times he despairs of finding Colombia, he has been very successful in finding and redeeming the individual Colombian. As the following remarks indicate, Caballero Calderón considers the reaffirma-
tion of individual dignity to be the modern writer's pri-
mary responsibility.

\begin{quote}
Yo creo . . . que dentro de nuestro mundo actual el escritor, el poeta, el artista, el místico tienen una función social importantísima y ella consiste en mostrarle al rebaño de los demás lo que debe ser una sola oveja, al bosque de la multitud lo que representa un solo árbol, a la masa indeterminada y anónima del partido lo que es un hombre: un ser libre, autónomo, irreductible, imprevisible, caprichoso, trágico y ridículo a la vez, grande y pequeño simultáneamente, orgulloso y humilde por lo mismo humano. Porque a ese hombre fragmentario que claudica dentro de la masa, el escritor tiene que salvar.\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

To create these characters, to make them real, one cannot be ideologically compromised. One must rise above

\textsuperscript{11}Dolly Aristizabel, "Estudio sobre la novela \textit{Siervo sin tierra}," (unpublished paper, Instituto Caro y Cuervo, 1965), p. 3.

the contemporary scene if one is to touch the mystery of life. Caballero Calderón recalls that Marcel Proust wrote *Swann's Way* while the Germans were bombing Paris. Eduardo Caballero Calderón is not quite so detached. His first two major novels denounce *La Violencia* and social injustice. The two are related through an inadequate political structure that delegates unwarranted power to local caciques who then use their position to enrich themselves. However, the priest in *Cristo de espaldas* is more than a witness to the *Violencia* and Siervo in *Siervo sin tierra* is more than a victim of injustice. They are both unforgettable characters. Caballero Calderón has been accused of loving the campesino as he loves the flora and fauna, that Siervo and others are part of the landscape. In *Tipacoque* and the *Diario de Tipacoque*, there may be found some validity to the contention. In his subsequent work there is far less. Caballero Calderón has spent much of his life among men like Siervo Joya and if Siervo is not as cerebral as some readers might prefer, the misconception is more probably the reader's rather than the author's. Furthermore, in his last three novels he has focused entirely on his characters and the physical and social setting is increasingly less important.

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13 See Marshall Nason, "The Literary Evidence III", in *Caciques* for an analysis of Caballero Calderón's attack upon caciquismo.
This gradual shift from place to individual, from Tipacoque to Manuel Pacho, attests to Caballero Calderón's growth as a writer. He began writing "costumbrista" sketches of country life, beautiful and evocative descriptions of the Chicamocha valley; and, while his descriptions remain masterpieces of sensual imagery, he now relies upon dialogue, stream of consciousness, indirect monologue to reveal his characters. This shift toward inner experience reflects his concept of the novel which, in contrast to the film, is the best vehicle for probing subjective realities.

Caballero Calderón writes easily and rapidly. In fact, he now dictates much of his material to his wife. He sees the main character and then builds the novel around him. The story line follows the classical narrative mode; but, his preoccupation with the central character occasionally results in minor temporal inconsistencies. He acknowledges them but he prefers to retain the natural movement of his narrative than to interject adjustments. He is reluctant to risk blurring the focus on the main character and his story. This respect for the individual character reflects the author's profound liberalism. He is a liberal in the tradition of John Stewart Mill and not Auguste Comte. Perhaps he is an anachronism.

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Caballero Calderón has said that there are many Colombias. For many readers Antioquia is the best known because of its famous novelist, Tomás Carrasquilla. Today another antioqueño projects the same love of land and people, the same respect for fundamental human values, the same sense of literary responsibility. Manuel Mejía Vallejo, however, sets his novels in a multi-dimensional world and carries his message beyond the limits of Antioquia.

As the sky over Medellín changed from twilight to starlight, Manuel Mejía Vallejo and I sat at a rooftop bar talking of one thing and another. Later on, we went to an old home in the center of town, one of those homes that seem to be years removed from the world on the other side of the patio walls. There the talk was about music. Manuel had written some lyrics and the young man who had recorded the songs sang them for us. An old friend of Manuel's, Oscar Hernández Monsalve, writes that to talk about Manuel is to talk about goodness, that he is a being devoted to the marvelous task of being decent.\(^{15}\) And so it seems.

Manuel Mejía Vallejo was born in Jérico, Antioquia, in 1924. His first novel, \textit{La tierra éramos nosotros}, is thematically autobiographical and recreates the agony of a young man torn between the country and the city, between

the love of a simple country girl and the reality of a
different destiny. It ends with the girl's prayer that
he find his way. Manuel was studying drawing when he began
this novel; when he finished it, he was a novelist. How-
ever, novelists and artists face similar problems and
Manuel solved his by working as a journalist. In this
capacity he has travelled throughout Colombia and Central
America. Now he is back in Medellín and teaching at the
National University.

Mejía Vallejo is not a prolific writer. He has
published three short stories and three novels: La tierra
éramos nosotros, 1945; Al pie de la ciudad, 1958; El día
señalado, 1964. In 1967 he published Cuentos de la zona
tórrida which combines the best of his first two collec-
tions. Some critics contend that he is basically a short
story writer and that his novels are interwoven stories.
The author, however, says that the stories originate as
novelistic incidents. As he works on a novel, he occa-
sionally excerpts an incident or a situation and develops
it separately.16 In any event, the process is indicative
of the care with which he writes and rewrites. For ex-
ample, he won honorable mention in the 1965 Esso contest
for a novel, Los negociantes, and was still working on it
in 1969. For Manuel it is not enough to tell a good story,

16 Statement by Manuel Mejía Vallejo, personal inter-
one must tell it well. According to him, action used to be indispensable, but today the manner in which the action is handled, or the significance given to the lack of action is more important. 17

Life is more a question of style than of action. Manuel Mejía Vallejo respects life and so his characters all retain a measure of mystery in a world that is also mysterious and alive. In his work one senses the inter-relationships of all life. His stories take place close to nature. In response to those who lament the absence of the urban novel in Colombia, Manuel says that Colombia is basically a rural country in which even those who live in the city retain a country mentality. In Los negociantes, which he will soon publish, the main character is a construction worker who seeks to adapt himself to life in the city. This character represents, for the author, the plight of the majority of Colombians. However, the thesis is not so excessively explicit. Mejía Vallejo is far more subtle and far more effective. He writes and his characters speak simply and briefly. What is not said is as important as what is said. A mood is sustained through the repetition of certain words and phrases. A scene is impregnated with significance by the mutterings of a slightly demented character or by the sound of a distant drum.

Francois Podevyn says that Mejía Vallejo sticks to realistic descriptions but that the scene and the characters exude a kind of poetry which suggests a more elusive reality. To sustain the poetic feeling, many of his sentences lack verbs. To evoke the intermingling of man and nature, the personal "a" is used.

At this level, beyond the fictional situation, Manuel Mejía Vallejo projects an affirmative concept of life. Thus he makes a small contribution to the world. In his view it is not necessary to have the petulance or the vanity to believe that writers transform the world. The world spins, progresses, evolves, changes, with writers, without them or against them. Ideally, the writer will collaborate in this transformation and in the progress of his age.

While Manuel Mejía Vallejo seeks to contribute with a call to love, Manuel Zapata Olivella intends to lead with a denunciation of those on top and a call to those on the bottom for direct action. He himself began at the bottom. He was born in Lórica, in the coastal swampland of northern Colombia in 1920. He was brown and poor. From 1943 to 1947 he travelled through much of Central and North America on foot and from job to job. Today he is a doctor, one of Colombia's most influential

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18Ibid., p. 15.
writers, married and very active. These are facts; but, as he has said, a critic needs more than superficial biographical data. In order to understand a novel, one must understand the novelist both as an individual and as a product of his environment and his experiences. Through his contributions to Letras Nacionales, a literary journal he founded and edited until recently, and in other journals, Zapata Olivella has conscientiously sought to inform the critics and the reading public as to his ideas about life and literature.

After personally struggling with an identity problem, Manuel Zapata Olivella sympathizes with the masses of Latin America who, after spending a few vicarious hours in Hollywood or Paris, return frustrated to their shacks convinced that they represent nothing, anxious to beat their wives or their children and, in general, disposed toward violence and destruction. Colombian artists, Colombian novelists, have to find these people, put them in their novels, write about their problems, so that they can find themselves. Unfortunately, according to Zapata Olivella, when it is most urgent that creative artists proclaim those values which are fundamental and capable of restoring the motherland, there appear those who scorn national values under

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the pretext of renewing them. Consequently, many Colombians are writing works that mean nothing to, and do nothing for, the great majority of their compatriots. Furthermore, those who are seeking to be relevant are being evaluated and underrated according to the standards established by such great but non-Colombian writers as Joyce, Kafka or Proust.

Zapata Olivella does not deny the importance of these men, but he maintains that Colombian writers should be judged primarily according to the needs and tastes of their fellow Colombians. If their work has universal appeal, so much the better, but Colombia cannot afford the irrelevant novelist and cannot support the professional novelist. Unless a writer is wealthy, or unless he succeeds in winning an extra-Colombian audience, he must be more than just a writer in order to support himself. In contrast to many others, Zapata Olivella does not lament this fact. He believes that this duality of careers determines the relevance of one's literary production. To the degree that an hereditary fortune isolates one from active participation in society, such isolation is reflected in one's work. The poetry of solitude will always inspire wealthy or alienated individuals. The novel, on the other hand, bursts forth from those who are full of life.

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\(^{22}\)Ibid., p. 25.

and who have accumulated experiences. In other words, to
capture reality one must be part of it. In an under-
developed country the overwhelming reality is underdevelop-
ment. Thus, in such a society, art for art’s sake is a
total negation of reality.

Through his plays, short stories and novels, Zapata
Olivella has sought to recreate the reality of lower class
life in Colombia. His first novel, Tierra mojada, was
published in 1947. It begins with a prologue by Ciro
Alegría and follows the misfortunes of a colony of negroes
struggling to hold the lands they have reclaimed from the
river against the greedy grasp of an avaricious land baron.
As the plot and the introduction by Ciro Alegría suggest,
Tierra mojada was not terribly original. His subsequent
works, however, reveal a mature dominion of the genre.
In 1960 he published La calle 10; in 1962, Corral de
negros--later to be republished as Chambacú, corral de
negros; in 1963, he published Detrás del rostro, winner
of the 1962 ESSO prize for literature; and in 1964, En
Chimá nace un santo.

All of these novels are narrated by an omniscient
author. Zapata Olivella also uses on-the-scene inter-
mediaries to help with the narration. They, like the
author himself, sense and lament the misery and injustice
of their environment. This environment is reproduced with
a rapidly moving camera that focuses only briefly on many
aspects of the scene. When the author gets behind the
scenery, into the minds and hearts of the people, their reflections are consistent with the author's thematic purpose. However, his last novel, *En Chimá nace un santo*, is more subtle than his earlier works. The good and the bad are not as clearly delineated, the realities are both psychic and environmental and the vocabulary is richer and utilized with greater finesse. Zapata Olivella admits to a certain evolution in his approach to literature. When he was young, he wrote in the language of the people because their language was his also--he could think in no other. He still seeks to communicate with the people, to write in their language, but he also realizes that the novel is an art form and that it is necessary to conform in some measure to the evolution of the genre. Therefore, he now seeks a style that will accommodate the demands of the modern reader, the fire within his own soul and the needs of the great mass of Colombians. ²⁴ There is a unique twist to his problem because, in a literary environment that encourages alienation and ambiguity, Zapata Olivella wants the freedom to be committed and didactic.

Héctor Rojas Herazo is about the same age and is from the same coastal region as Manuel Zapata Olivella. However, Rojas Herazo is white, his family was not rich but neither was it poor and he expresses an entirely

different perception of life. Where Zapata Olivella sees a struggle to live, he sees a struggle not to die.

Rojas Herazo was born in Tolú in 1920, and spent much of his early childhood there. For many years he has lived in Bogotá but Tolú is where he finds a kind of blind flow of anonymous life that ages with vegetal obstinacy in the same patios year after year. In Tolú Rojas Herazo finds envy, bitterness, comprehension and hope in their purest form. Consequently, he writes of life and death in Tolú. He sees life and death as two inseparable aspects of the same existential process. The logical course would be to accept death but man, constantly decaying and knowing he is going to die, struggles to live. "Pero en esto, en esto precisamente, radica el orgullo y la grandeza de vivir... lo que hace la existencia un acto de sostenido y gratuita generosidad." He is the essence of tragedy and deserves love and compassion. Rojas Herazo, like Walt Whitman whom he admires, loves man for his vulnerability and his tragic grandeur. He views literature as a labor of compassion and catharsis and the novel the best medium.

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through which to recreate and to exorcise the total tragedy of life.\textsuperscript{27}

When Rojas Herazo published \textit{Respirando el verano} in 1962, he was already well known in Colombian cultural circles as a poet and a painter. The work is a random collection of images based on childhood memories which were first published separately. However, since all the images are connected with the same family, since they all reflect the author's preoccupation with death, decay and dissolution, and since the images are all narrated by the same omniscient, rather nostalgic narrator, Rojas Herazo submitted \textit{Respirando el verano} for consideration in the first ESSO literary contest. Although the judges could not unanimously agree that it was a novel, Néstor Madrid-Malo declared in the prestigious \textit{Boletín Cultural y Bibliográfico} that it was a novel and that it was better than \textit{La mala hora} which had won the 1961 ESSO award.\textsuperscript{28} In any event, Rojas Herazo did win the Premio ESSO in 1967 with \textit{En noviembre llega el arzobispo}. Structurally it is far superior to \textit{Respirando el verano}. Aside from unity of theme, place and tone, which are often constant features of an author's entire work, there is topical unity. As in

\textsuperscript{27}Herazo, "Conversación," p. 8.

many modern novels, we are given a situation, in this case Leocadio Mendieta's death agony, which an omniscient narrator fills with meaning through the memories and thoughts of those lives Mendieta has touched and an evocation of the environment that created him. All of this follows no particular sequence except that toward the end of the potpourri of compenetrations there is a sense of discovery and understanding. The reader does not know any of the characters in this novel completely but he does know that most of them are human and complex. Thus, while all the images do not fit, they all contribute to the total picture. There can be no doubt that _En noviembre llega el arzobisbo_ is a novel.

A Rojas Herazo novel is not easy to read. The author does not intend it to be. "La novela, que en su fondo es posible por la voluntad poética . . . es una catarsis. Y su lectura es una función especializada." For him the novel is fundamentally creative rather than didactic. Consequently, he writes lyrically, with all five senses alive to his fictional world. As a result, his prose is richly modified, frequently ambivalent and syntactically very complex. Sentences of over one hundred words with relative, parenthetical and adverbial digressions are not uncommon. As the critique of the panel of judges which awarded him the Premio ESSO for 1967 states, his

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language is so rich that on occasion it seems excessive. Houses are alive with the spirits of the dead, the darkness pants, an amethyst ring is alive and malevolent and a wooden horse talks. All of this creates a heavy and terribly significant atmosphere in which metaphors and parables multiply and bewilder the reader. Then somebody defecates and the reader is brought abruptly back to earth. Thus, through his style, he seeks to capture the mystery and vulgarity of life.

Alvaro Cepeda Samudio, born in Barranquilla in 1926, is another writer from the coast. After finishing his studies in Colombia, he traveled to the United States where he earned a master's degree in journalism from Columbia University. Returning to Barranquilla in 1954, he has since become editor of the Diario del Caribe, the principal newspaper of his native city.

Though a journalist, Cepeda Samudio has written a collection of short stories and one of the best novels to have been published in Colombia in the last twenty years. If he governed Colombia, says the Uruguayan critic, Angel Rama, he would exile Cepeda Samudio from the world of business and journalism and he would force him to devote himself completely to literature.30

La casa grande is a stylistic tour de force. Hemingway, Faulkner, Dos Passos, are all in it, and in

30Angel Rama, "Hay deformación en el panorama de la literatura Latinoamericana," in Magazine Dominical, El Espectador (Bogotá), abril 13, 1969, p. 4.
the right places. The changes in style conform to the changes in perspective; they are not superimposed. Simplicity characterizes the dialogue of the soldiers, labyrinthine subjectivity that of the heirs of the past—the children of the big house—stoic self-assurance that of the old patrón. The cruel precision and detachment of the official military pronouncements and records contrasts with the cinematographic atomism of the people. The army by conscious design and the people by the massive weight of their discontent are both monolithic.

The novel moves not through time but from one perspective to another. The revolt and massacre of the banana workers is the event that ostensibly motivates the action; but, while from the point of view of the army and the people the social issue is paramount, to those in the big house it is simply a catalyst for a still more fundamental confrontation between the past and the future. Thus Alvaro Cepeda Samudio has woven one event into two very different worlds.

In La casa grande the old patrón is a memory. In Los elegidos, by Alfonso López Michelson, the traditional oligarchy is still on top but increasingly out of touch with the rest of Colombia.

López Michelson writes of the elite with a good deal of authority. He is the son of Alfonso López Pumarejo, twice president of Colombia, and he himself is the leader of one of the major factions within the Liberal party. He
has been educated both in Colombia and abroad, has held numerous influential positions--most recently he was minister of foreign affairs--and is by all criteria a member of the elite. His novel suggests the despair that an insider must feel in the face of the venality of his closest associates, the people who sabotaged his father's second term in office. Still, López Michelson does not abandon his class. He does not direct his novel toward the masses, nor does he exhort them to revolt. Actually, he does not really include the masses. His novel is directed toward and against the elite. It is written in their language and it is about their failure to identify with the country. In Los elegidos, López Michelson warns his class of the fate that awaits them.

The novel is written from an interesting point of view. It is the autobiography--liberally sprinkled with impressions of his new environment--of a German exile to Colombia during the Second World War. These memoirs of his years in Colombia were ostensibly written while he was in detention, with other supposedly dangerous axis elements, at Fusugasugá. After his death, the memoirs were found and published by his friend, Alfonso López Michelson. The ruse is admirably maintained throughout the novel even to the extent of very plausible footnotes by the author in disguise.

López Michelson has written only one novel. It is the best fictional study of the elite yet written in Colombia. It is true that the characters are caricaturizations,
but the philosophical foundations that sustain the novel are provocative. Los elegidos is an intellectual experience.

El despertar de los demonios is another intellectual experience. The occult and bizarre aspects of the human situation fascinate Víctor Aragón. His first work, El duelo de Erasmo, recreates a conversation from the depths of eternity between Michelangelo, Erasmus, Rabelais and others. Aragón is also a politically committed writer and his second work, Los ojos del bujo, reflects the author’s political commitment. El despertar de los demonios is both occult and political.

Víctor Aragón was born in Popayán in 1905. His family was a "good" family in the context that is so peculiar to towns like Popayán. He attended the local seminary, then law school at the Universidad del Cauca. Now he lives in Bogotá and practices law because, as he says, it is his bad luck to be a lawyer. However, Popayán leaves a mark on a man. When Víctor Aragón was growing up, the city was still isolated and one could read about the twentieth century while still living in the nineteenth. Consequently, his plots are romantic, the style is classical, the setting is beautiful, the pace is unhurried and the dialogues—or rather soliloquies—recreate long hours of quiet conversation and reflection.

El despertar de los demonios was written in three months for submission in the 1967 ESSO Contest. In it
appears a real and a fictional Popayán, but at the same time the Popayán that the author knew in his youth: still a small city, introverted, in which the artisan worked with dedication. It was a city in which everybody, for good or bad, knew everybody else and from which were absent the slums that now fester on the outskirts of town and disconcert the author. Aragón did not have a preconceived plan when he began the novel but he had a collection of characters. He wrote the end of the novel and then flashed back to the beginning. Consequently, the following seven hundred pages are anti-climatic. Like life, the book slowly dies, a character here, an illusion there, until there is nothing left. Death impregnates life and in so doing provides a limbo for those spirits that are stalked by death and eventually succumb. Always there is a fine line between life and death; the novel straddles this line and thus, probably unintentionally, reenforces the author's basic premise.

If Aragón had limited himself to developing his basic theme, even developing it within the situation he chose, El despertar de los demonios would have been one of the best novels of the period under consideration. Unfortunately, he loses himself and the reader in numerous ridiculous conflicts between the libidinous and superstitious,

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the free thinkers and the rabble, the anti-clericalists' and the clericalists, the Liberals and the Conservatives. The novel might have carried this load if the author had maintained the same intellectual perspective on the mundane as on the occult, but he did not. Nevertheless, for its defects as much as for its virtues, El despertar de los demonios is part of the reality of many provincial towns.

Fernando Soto Aparicio is another witness to the perversity of the modern world. In La rebelión de las ratas he denounces the tyranny of capitalistic development. Born in Boyacá, not far from Tipacoque, he pursues Caballero Calderón's theme of the dislocation of the campesino to its tragic conclusion. Like many other young writers--Soto Aparicio was born in 1933--La Violencia has conditioned his thematic orientation. His preoccupation with violence is particularly evident in Los bienaventurados, 1960; Mientras llueve, 1965 and El espejo sombrío, 1967. However, La rebelión de las ratas is more reminiscent of such social protest novels as Barrancabermeja by Rafael Jaramillo Arangos than of the "violencia" novels. Thus, it touches the vital problems that lie behind the collapse of the paternal system and the advent of a modern industrial society. Soto Aparicio infuses his work with his conviction of the novelist's responsibility to society. The novelist, he says, must expose the world we live in: the tyranny, the superstition, the religious fanaticism
and the cruelty. Above all, whether revolutionary or not, he must be sincere.\textsuperscript{32} Soto Aparicio is intensely sincere.

All of the novelists included in this study are Colombians by birth except one. Clemente Airó was born in Madrid and is a Colombian by choice. Clemente immigrated to Colombia in 1941 when he was 23 years old. Since then he has been very active in the cultural life of his adopted country. In 1944 he founded a literary magazine which until its demise in 1965 was one of the principal literary journals of its day. Its title, Espiral, symbolizes its founder's concept of human progress. Like one of the characters in \textit{La ciudad y el viento}, Clemente Airó is a professor at the Universidad Nacional and like this character he pours his ideas and philosophy of life into the books he writes. Ideas, to be distinguished from dogmas, motivate his novels and sustain some of his characters.

Airó has published several collections of short stories, a collection of essays and three novels: \textit{Yugo de niebla} in 1948, \textit{Sombras al sol} in 1951 and \textit{La ciudad y el viento} in 1961. In his work he seeks to give a total view of the society in which he lives. According to Airó, the world has given the novelist the task of preserving for posterity, with greater depth and comprehension than a document or a history, the crucial panorama that we all

\textsuperscript{32}Fernando Soto Aparicio, personal letter.
suffer and in whose creation we have all shared.\textsuperscript{33} This allusion to the interaction of the environment and man's responsibility for the environment is implicit in the author's work and lends a certain intellectual tension to his social documentaries.

Given the fact that Airó grew up in a slightly different linguistic environment than the one he seeks to recreate and given his predilection for a literature of ideas encompassing a broad range of liberal thought, it is not surprising that his characters speak more like the author than the average bogotano. An anonymous critic in Letras Nacionales says that confronted by the social and human impact of Clemente Airó we also find ourselves faced with his principal defect, which is to say that his formality and the obvious sociological implications of the situation keep the reader at arms length and detract from the effectiveness of his message.\textsuperscript{34} The reader does not lose himself in a Clemente Airó novel. He simply accompanies a very perceptive guide on an intimate tour of urban Colombia. Eduardo Pichón Padilla classifies La ciudad y el viento with La bahía de silencio by Eduardo Mallea and La región

\textsuperscript{33}Clemente Airó, "El presente de la novela y su desarrollo en Colombia," Revista Espiral (septiembre, 1965), p. 32.

mas transparente by Carlos Fuentes. Insofar as all three novelists frequently cross the line between social commentary and fiction, Pichon's comparison is not excessive.

There is no biographical data available on Germán Pinzón. However, his novel, El terremoto, has been enthusiastically acclaimed within a narrow circle. In his introduction, Héctor Rojas Herazo says that this novel places Colombia in the mainstream of the modern novel. To the extent that the mainstream is a chronicle of despair, Rojas Herazo is correct. In recognition of this fact, El terremoto won first place in the 1966 Nadaístas literary contest.

The nadaístas are a small group of iconoclasts gathered around the flamboyant Gonzalo Arango. Arango was the first nadaísta and continues to be the most vociferous. Since about 1958 he and others of like mind have been scandalizing good Colombians. Sometimes matter-of-factly, sometimes sarcastically, sometimes childishly and frequently crudely, they have attacked both past and present. They do not denounce specific injustices nor do they champion the underprivileged. In general they decry the meaninglessness of life and the daily reality of human decay. Their inspiration does not come from Carrasquilla or Rivera but from Sartre, Camus and Robbes Grillet. They are the

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first school of Colombian existentialists and their style, their bathroom informality, was like a cold towel on a sleepy face. However, after the first few shocks, the effect has begun to wear off. El terremoto is probably the best novel to come out of the movement. The imagery is physical, the tone is human and the perception is total. Germán Finzón tells it as it may be. Furthermore he affirms, by exclusion, the necessity of individual integrity.

José Stevenson is another young writer whose work has been enthusiastically received by some critics. His only novel to date, Los años de la asfixia, was published by Losada in Buenos Aires assuring it a potentially broad audience. This may explain why Donald Worcester and Wendell Schaeffer mention José Stevenson along with Gabriel García Márquez as modern Colombian novelists who have won followings throughout the hemisphere. Stevenson was born in 1932 in Santa Marta, grew up in Panamá and now resides in Colombia. Los años de la asfixia moves back and forth through time and deals with youth and disillusion. More significantly, in a country in which the urban middle class setting is normally ignored, Stevenson offers a disturbing glimpse.

J. M. Prada Sarmiento writes of an entirely different world. In his novel, Guayacán, the characters live as God ordained; they are tested and they triumph. The fact that the author is a practicing psychiatrist makes his denunciation of the "couch syndrome" particularly significant.

Pensar, como algunos creen, que el espíritu pueda desembarazarse diariamente de sus basuras pasionales y arrojarlas al olvido, en un cotidiano depurarse, es tan infantil como creer, que la diaria barrida de las calles, acese con el polvo ambiental o más aún, con los microbios que en millones de millones flotan en el mismo aire que se respira.37

The hero conquers depression through the help of his family, his faith and his internal resources. The plot is supplemented with expository material on the good life in rural Santander. The peasants love the landlord and the landlord loves them. Both speak like peasants and landlords can be expected to speak in novels such as this.

When Guayacán won the 1964 ESSO award, the literary world exploded. Gonzalo Arango, for example, said that Guayacán was a whitewash for a dirty world. To clean the world, Colombian writers must reveal the dirt.38 On the other hand, Father Félix Restrepo rejoiced that Sarmiento

37J. M. Prada Sarmiento, Guayacán (Bogotá; 1966), p. 109. These views, while they sounded reactionary in 1966, now fit in rather nicely with the contemporary disenchchantment with Dr. Freud.

had defied the conspiracy of cultural betrayal and affirmed the integral dignity of man and the strength of the Christian family.\textsuperscript{39} Nobody said that Sarmiento had discovered or developed any new techniques, but then there was disagreement as to the importance of innovation and technique.

The debate between those who enjoy a good story plus a little moral uplift and those who want innovation, ambiguity, futility and ugliness was rekindled when Lucy Barco de Valderrama won the 1965 ESSO award with \textit{La picúa cebá}. However, her novel did not inspire the ire that \textit{Guayacán} had engendered because she does not affirm old criollo values but, rather, the strength of a minority group—the black fishermen. Furthermore, \textit{La picúa cebá} is much better from a technical standpoint. The conflict is well motivated, fundamental and unambiguous. The story gradually builds up to the climax, the moment of suspense is sustained and the novel ends when the story is told. The novelist's style also conforms to the simplicity of the situation. Her descriptions of the sea and the coast are brief, fresh and evocative; the narrative is consistent and the dialogue fits the characters. Or does it? Are they really so simple and good? Are they real? They are probably better than real. Curiously, even to the white protagonist, all these black fishermen look the same.

\textsuperscript{39}Félix Restrepo S. I., "Guayacán," in Lecturas Dominicales, \textit{El Tiempo} (Bogotá), junio 6, 1965, p. 3.
Oscar Hernández Monsalve brings us back to the negative side of reality. In his first novel, Al final de la calle, he collects the dismal little stories of the people who live at the end of one of the city's streets. They are the rejects and the failures and seem to sustain Oscar Lewis' thesis that the poor compound their poverty by abusing one another.

Oscar Hernández was born in Medellín in 1925. He studied at the University of Antioquia and at the Pontificia Bolivariana, a Catholic university also in Medellín. He has published a collection of short stories and several collections of poetry; but, like many other writers, he makes his living as a journalist. Al final de la calle is a long poem in prose in which the images evoke the squalor and emptiness of poverty. The environment on the outskirts of the city kills hope, faith and innocence. These people do not seem to deserve redemption. As might be expected, people such as these do not discover one another through communication; rather, they are exposed by the author. Consequently, the author is very much part of the novel; he is omniscient and depressingly disillusioned.

Hernández Monsalve, along with Manuel Mejía Vallejo and Alfonso Bonilla-Naar, won special mention in the 1965 ESSO contest because the jury was deeply divided concerning the merits of the winning novel, La picúa cebá. Since the members nominated to the jury by the Colombian Academy of
Letters voted as a group in favor of *La picuda cabra*, considerable animosity was generated against the Academy which ultimately resulted in its refusal to continue to nominate members to the jury. In spite of the tempestuous polemics, none of the novels submitted for consideration was really outstanding. This was the basic problem and in 1966, rather than become embroiled once again over the relative merits of second rate novels, the jury declared that there was no contest. However, since 1966, three novels have been awarded the prize and the winners clearly reflect changes in the composition of the jury. *En noviembre llega el arzobispo, Mateo el flautista* and *Causas supremas* are modern novels. They are syntactically complicated, they drift from point to point at the whim of the narrator, they juxtapose and they shock. Probably the most shocking of the three is the 1968 winner, *Mateo el flautista*, by Alberto Duque López.

Duque López was born in Barranquilla in 1944. He was only 23 when he first submitted his novel for consideration in 1966. He has avidly read modern writers such as Cortázar and Cabrera Infante. One suspects that as a sometime employee of the United States Information Service in Barranquilla, he might have read a novel or two by Donald Barthelme or Richard Brautigan. Germán Espinoso, one of the jurors who defends the choice of the jury says that Duque was a little drunk from so much reading and his novel is more a mixed bag of techniques than a conscious
achievement but that he has the potential of a great novelist. 40

The last novel to win the ESSO award in the period under consideration, 1950-1970, Las causas supremas, epitomizes the depression and disillusionment of many Colombian novelists. Héctor Sánchez, the author, is a young man from a small town in Tolima. Born in 1940, he has already published two novels, a collection of short stories and several plays. Sánchez writes with the vigor of youth and the pessimism of old age. The world he creates is about to end and he, or the narrator, or one of the characters, is sitting in judgment. This confusion as to perspective is just part of the confusion. Las causas supremas moves back and forth in time, from character to character and situation to situation. Toward the end it frequently floats away into an introspective world free of traditional restraints. Sensing the inadequacy of language, Sánchez is constantly experimenting—trying to break word, sentence and paragraph boundaries. There are no chapter boundaries. Sometimes he is unintelligible, sometimes incisive, frequently funny and almost always fascinating.

Formal and informal, conscious and subconscious linguistic constraints plague all writers. All fear the

dominance of the word over the mind. However, the creative writer, a novelist like Sánchez for example, can seek to transcend these limitations by evading or twisting them. Thus style and technique provide the creative writer with a fourth dimension and they help him communicate. To the extent that the mechanics of the novel complement the fictional situation, one could say that the style reflects the theme. However, the relationship is more meaningful in regard to mood than message. Setting, situation and character development best capture society’s salient characteristics and the dynamics of the social and individual dilemma. The following chapters will focus on these substantive aspects of fictional Colombia.
CHAPTER III

THE NOVELISTIC SITUATION

In this chapter, the novels have been divided according to the nature of the resolution, or lack thereof, of the novelistic situation. There are three categories: sociological novels—those that end in a real or impending confrontation of social forces; humanistic novels—those which conclude with a reaffirmation of traditional human values and qualities; entropic novels—those in which the situation merely deteriorates. Obviously, all of the novels develop within the contemporary social environment and draw upon a general inventory of thematic possibilities. Change, violence and alienation dominate this fictional world suggesting the impact of modernization, or at least change, upon Colombians. The classification procedure is designed to identify various perceptions about the implications of the contemporary situation. The emphasis upon the resolution of the novels projects these perceptions into the future.

The Social Protest Novels

Power, wealth, opportunity. How much is there and who gets it? Political scientists tend to emphasize the objective or quantitative aspects of the problem while
novelists, among others, accentuate the subjective or distributive aspects. In the developed countries, some writers have begun to confuse deprivation with depravity; but, in the developing countries, the social protest novel retains the full vigor of righteous indignation. Social protest is the traditional stance of the socially sensitive novelist and it differs from post existential depression in that it is more specific and less apocalyptic. Since 
La vorágine, and until recently, novels of social realism dominated Colombian literature. Although the quest for originality and the evolution of literary themes have undermined the dominance of the genre, the conditions that motivated the early protest writers remain to plague the Colombian conscience and to attract the attention of competent novelists. However, there has been a shift in emphasis from frustration and denunciation to a premonition of impending retribution.

In Los elegidos, the euphoria of the Colombian elite reminds Alfonso López Michelson of the mood of the petty Balkan aristocracies prior to the holocaust of World War II. He portrays the country through the eyes of a German, bourgeois, Calvinist, Jew who has fled to Colombia from Nazi Germany. This character, identified only as B. K.,\(^1\) arrives with enough money to warrant admittance

\(^1\)One wonders if the protagonist may not reflect the attitudes and perspective of Victor Frankel, an Austrian exile in Colombia who enjoyed considerable prestige at
into La Cabrera, an upper class neighborhood and state of mind. With incredible ease, he joins the life of social clubs, gossip and trips to country estates; but he constantly marvels at the unreality of his environment. His new friends are optimistic in a world that for him has fallen apart. They are immoral in a nation that cannot afford immorality; they are secure in a country they have exploited. B. K. watches these people—he even begins to listen to them and soon catches the easy money disease. Immense profits could be earned bycornering the market in certain basic commodities and then selling them at 50% to 100% above the purchase price. Given the connections that he and his friends have with the government and with one another, there is relatively little risk. However, in the process of financing his activities, B. K. incurs the animosity of an influential citizen and is denounced to the American embassy. The Americans put him on their blacklist and, in an era of economic and cultural colonialism, this means social ostracism. The doors that had opened so readily to B. K. now close abruptly. Only a blonde manicurist, who paradoxically symbolizes the great mass of simple, good Colombians, remains unaffected by what the "gringos" do with their black list.

mid-century. He was essentially anti-capitalist and suggested that Colombia was following an alien cycle of development. He advocated return to a more communal type of society.
When Colombia declares war against Germany, B. K. is immediately divested of all his financial interests for the duration of the war and is interred at Fusugasauga. There he writes of his years in Colombia. However, the memoirs do not end with his death or his release. They end with a vision of a merry-go-round carrying the strange creatures he has known around and around in a world of fantasies.

Part of the fantasy in La Cabrera is the non-existence of the poor. They have been totally excluded. In Al pie de la ciudad, Manuel Mejía Vallejo exposes the policy that condemns the poor to live in obscurity. When the author lived in Guatemala, he saw a little boy fishing with his father in the river that carried the city's filth to the squalid suburbs below the city. They were fishing for trash. Al pie de la ciudad is based on this memory; it is the story of a young journalist's exposé of the misery of the poor who live on the eroded slopes, the barrancos, at the edge of the city and of the insensitivity of the rich who live in the city.

The novel is divided into three parts. They occur more or less simultaneously and each part is developed sequentially. In the first part, the author introduces the poor, describes the place where they live and presents the problems they face. The city is growing; it needs to reclaim the eroded hills and gullies below the city. The plutarchs who have built this monument of concrete, send
their agents out to the slums to evict the poor. The poor are desperate and defenseless. Some advocate resignation but a few call for violence and vengeance.

In the second part, the author introduces the journalist and the rich, or more specifically, the Arenas family. Dr. Salomón Arenas is the director of the General Hospital and president of the Beneficent Society. He is not directly involved in the eviction of the poor from the barrancos--those behind the eviction remain impersonal throughout the novel; but, as director of the hospital and professional benefactor, he symbolizes the hypocrisy of the well-to-do. In spite of the humanitarian implications of his role in society, Dr. Arenas has been more interested in efficiency and economy than in charity. When pestilence and floods drive the poor to his hospital, it is unable to accommodate them. The journalist denounces Dr. Arenas' management of the hospital and creates a governmental crisis charging that even a government of austerity cannot overtly condone economy in the face of death. Dr. Arenas has become an embarrassment and his reputation and career are in jeopardy. Since reputation and career are all he has, Dr. Arenas sends his wife to ingratiate herself with the editor of the newspaper in the hope of getting him to print an exoneration. She does, but Dr. Arenas shoots himself while waiting for her to come home.
In the third part, the scene shifts back to the barrancos. A blind man and a paralytic, victims of a law expelling misery from the city, listen as the broken drunks in the slums sing "El día en que yo muera / cantaré sobre mi tumba." A young girl, anxious to fall in love, does—with a graduate of the city's jails. A little boy, the same one who fished for trash, now goes to the city with his father to sell his playmate, a goat, to the slaughterhouse. An old hag, a witch of sorts, bewails injustice and predicts a revolution. The police arrive on a rainy day and, at rifle point, evict father, son, sick mother, pregnant daughter, witch, blind man, paralytic, drunks, idiots—everybody. As they are leaving, the land gives way and many die. The living, with no place to go, struggle to their new home—the cemetery. As this funeral procession of the living stumbles along, it mingles with the elegant procession the city has arranged for Dr. Arenas. The scene becomes increasingly macabre when, at night, the living reach the cemetery, push away the bones and crawl into the tombs.

Manuel Zapata Olivella, in Detrás del rostro, develops a more complex manifestation of social insensitivity. In rural Tolima, during the Violencia, a wealthy lawyer discovers a young boy surrounded by dead bodies.

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The boy tries to hide and then, pleading that he not be killed, tries to run away. The lawyer, intent upon his act of good will, catches up with him and carries him off to Ibagué, names him Estanislao and tries to make a son out of him. He fails because his motives were selfish. The boy was unconsciously used to fulfill the psychological needs of his foster family. Consequently, his own peculiar needs were not clearly perceived. After four years, the demands upon him become overly complex and he runs away to lose himself among the many other children of incomprehension and violence who wander the streets of Bogotá.

Hungry, dirty and cold, he or somebody who looks like the boy in the picture, reappears staring through the window at the proprietress of a small shop as she eats her evening meal. The shopkeeper, a frustrated and religiously fanatical introvert, feeds him and thus fulfills her personal need to have another human being at her side while at the same time contenting herself with this manifestation of her Christian goodness. The boy, known to her as Jesus, lives with her for six months. He runs errands, watches the shop when she goes to church and is there with her when nobody else is. To show his appreciation for his new role, or so he says when apprehended, the boy steals some perfume from a nearby druggist to give his patroness on Mother's Day. He is caught, the druggist does not believe his story about the present because he knows that these vagrants are really vicious criminals, and the boy is sent to jail to be
taught a lesson. The shopkeeper feels bad but not bad enough to fight for his release.

In jail he is victimized by the older boys and the process of withdrawal, which has been latent throughout the novel, is accelerated. He is called "Gil" by his jail mates because, in the slang of the underworld which pervades this correctional institution, "Gil" is the name given to ignorant campesino types. However, when he appears before the prison psychiatrist for treatment, he calls himself Ponciano. The psychiatrist begins to make some progress in bringing his patient to the surface of reality but he pushes too hard and the boy regresses, this time into the protection of the older boys in the prison. Shortly thereafter he escapes to be found a few days later with a bullet in his head.\(^3\)

Who is this boy? Who are these boys? We will never know because they do not know themselves. They are lost and society does not care enough to help them find themselves and escape the anonymity of filth and hunger.

The gap that separates the rich from the poor, both physically and psychologically, must be closed. The rich,\(^3\)

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\(^3\)In an unpublished monograph, \textit{Una acusación a la sociedad}, on file at the Instituto Caro y Cuervo, Julio Enrique Cuervo says that Zapata Olivella told him that one of his objectives in \textit{Detrás del rostro} was to expose the inadequacy of psychoanalysis in the treatment of abandoned children. This may be true, but the strong criticism of society is certainly illuminated by his psychoanalysis of the people who touched upon the life of the boy in this novel.
as revealed in *Los elegidos*, *Al pie de la ciudad* and *Detrás del rostro*, are not prepared to embrace the poor. So far they have distracted the poor with religion, nationalism and promises about development but these palliatives are wearing thin and, as suggested by the following novels, the poor are about to close the gap on their own terms.

In *La ciudad y el viento*, Clemente Airó proclaims that socialism is at the door and he who does not open the door will be pushed aside. The author recognizes the potentiality for violence but he sees hope for peaceful change in a generation better educated than any other. *La ciudad y el viento* is a collection of stories—perhaps situations would be a better term—tenuously tied together by fortuitous interpersonal relationships. The common denominator, the significance if you will, in all these situations is that all of the characters operate in an environment dominated by family names, money and connections. However, they are not necessarily victims of an implacable environmental determinism. Each character, to the extent that he perceives his freedom, is free to perpetuate, evade or renounce the rather ambiguous set of social mores that sustain the environment. This freedom, reminiscent of that suggested by José Ortega y Gasset, places upon the characters, individually and collectively, the ultimate responsibility for their situation.

This responsibility weighs lightly on most men, but it weighs very heavily on sensitive men. The sensitive
suffer in times like these and places like Bogotá. This
is the real tragedy that is implicit in Clemente Airó's
novel. One of the characters states the problem succinctly.
"Se necesita vivir entre la mugre moral, aceptarlo todo,
poseer grandes tragaderas, todo eso, todo eso se necesita
para no encontrarse uno fregado como me encuentro yo."4
However, as the discrepancy between the explicit value
system and the effective value system becomes increasingly
apparent, more and more people reject the old values and
change becomes increasingly inevitable.

Alvaro Cepeda Samudio, in La casa grande, explores
the implications of change upon an upper class family in
a small coastal town. As in Bogotá, the upper class has
forfeited its responsibility retaining only the habit and
prerogatives of command—and the town its habit of obedi-
ence. Reality imposed itself the night the workers and the
soldiers maneuvered in a surrealistic atmosphere to confront
each other in a vague but deadly real moment of death. In
the town square, a few blocks and a half a world away from
the railroad station where the massacre happened, stand
the church, the jail and three big houses. The confronta-
tion between the army and the people reached one of these
houses. The son sympathized with the strikers and the
father denounced them. The son was asking the same ques-
tions as the people but the father had the answers. He

4Clemente Airó, La ciudad y el viento (Bogotá,
knew that between the big house and the people there was a wall of hate. The father knew that the people hated him not because of his money but because they knew he was better than they were. He also knew that they were afraid of him. He was right, but they killed him. The people killed the symbol of the past, but the weight of the past continued to lie heavily on both the town and the big house. Symbolically, as the old patrón died, his horse crossed the town leaving an open wound.

The wound is particularly deep in the big house. On one side, that of tradition and family, is the eldest daughter. On the other, in favor of breaking with the past, are the son and another daughter. The latter has three children, born to spite their grandfather but absorbed by the big house to perpetuate the family. Pawns of hate and pride, they struggle to free themselves. Their grandfather is dead and they are alive but they do not understand. Since they do not understand, they are vulnerable. Thus the past still lives and it weighs most heavily on the heirs of the patriarch. They cannot escape it nor do they have the will to re-impose it. The town, on the other hand, has freed itself of the big house but it, too, is incomplete. The fact that a foreign banana company and the army, in that order, impose what structure there is in the town attests to the disintegration of the traditional elite. Cepeda Samudio has captured the final moments of
disintegration, but he hesitates to reveal its ultimate implications.

The old order, encrusted in the minds of patrón and peon alike through centuries of exploitation, is dead. As Cepeda Samudio reveals, the landlord is merely a shadow of his former self. However, for those who cannot perceive the deterioration and irrelevance of the old order, change simply compounds their misery. Siervo Joya, in Siervo sin tierra by Eduardo Caballero Calderón, is such a man.

As his ancestors have done for centuries, Siervo struggles to wrest a living from his piece of land perched on the edge of the Chicamocha valley. To secure seed he has to work for the patrón, an eminence who remains nameless throughout the novel, and to get water he must work for his neighbor, a man who has secured a slightly higher status through political and economic agility. Siervo, however, is stuck, without a mule, at the bottom of the social pyramid. He and his wife pull the plow; with a rusty hoe they break the land and with their hands they level it and plant the seed. Working so close to the earth, sweating on it as he has since he was born, Siervo dreams of owning it; but, after centuries of inertia, the valley of the Chicamocha is beginning to change rapidly and Siervo is drawn into the vortex. Terribly ill-prepared, he remains loyal to the old illusions. He is still locked in the paternal system although it is about to collapse. Confronted with
the rumors that the *patrón* is selling off pieces of his land, Siervo begs to be allowed to purchase his small parcel but the landlord cannot take Siervo seriously. Furthermore, the *patrón* wants money not promises. Siervo pleads with the administrator, Don Ramírez, the real power on the hacienda, to let him plant tobacco, a cash crop, but he refuses. Siervo applies for a loan from the Caja Agraria only to become enmeshed in red tape and confounded by a slovenly drunken bureaucrat. Still, the situation could be worse. The Conservatives could be in power.

Siervo Joya was born a Liberal and he will die a Liberal. "Yo soy Liberal porque así me criaron, y ésa es la verdad; y como me llamo Siervo que moriré en mi ley."^5 One day, at a political rally, there is a fight and Siervo, waking from a drunken stupor, stabs a Conservative campesino. Immediately he is a murderer and, except for a few murmured assurances, Siervo is abandoned by his leaders. As he languishes in jail, he wonders about the gods that have forsaken him.

No hay quien entienda a los jefes. Primero lo mandan a uno que grite y alborote y mantenga a raya a los godos, y después, cuando se arma la grande, ellos se lavan las manos y nos vuelven la espalda. ^6

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^5Eduardo Caballero Calderón, Obras completas de Eduardo Caballero Calderón II (Medellín, 1964), p. 400.

^6Ibid., p. 382.
After almost three years in jail, during the convivencia, a congressional commission visits the prison. The honorable members are scandalized to learn that Siervo has not yet been tried. However, since the commission is half Liberal and half Conservative, Siervo's case is lost in a fog of mutual recriminations. Finally, in the tumultuous days following Gaitan's murder, Siervo escapes, returns to the Chicamocha valley and once again is swept into the political maelstrom. The convivencia has disintegrated and the Conservatives have grabbed all the power. Don Arsenio, the new Conservative cacique whom the government has found in God knows what jail, personifies the new order. He terrorizes the countryside, robbing, burning and killing as he goes. Abandoned by their leaders—the lesser ones have fled to the mountains and the others are in Europe—Siervo and his neighbors are driven off the land.

In an epilogue, Caballero Calderón relates how the army, no longer able to tolerate the monster that consumed the nation, finally intervened promising amnesty and peace.

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*During the administration of Mariano Ospina Pérez, an effort was made by the two political parties to share governmental responsibilities. The period was known as the convivencia.*

to all Colombians. Thus Siervo returns to the Chicamocha valley and, with the money he saved while in exile, he makes a down payment on his small plot. However, there is no more life left in him. Drained by friend and foe alike, Siervo dies on the trail from the big house.

In reality, what are the options open to men like Siervo. They can try to hold onto their land—and probably lose it anyway; or, they can cast themselves adrift. Fernando Soto Aparicio, in _La rebelión de las ratas_, reveals the fate that awaits them in a nearby town or a distant city.

The setting is Timbalí, a town created by a mine. Rudecindo Cristancho, adrift for years, arrives in Timbalí and is hired to work in the mine. However, he will not be paid until next pay day. In the meantime, his family must eat. His wife makes a few pesos washing clothes, his daughter begs for credit from a lecherous storekeeper and his son steals from the poor box in church. Before Cristancho receives his first pay check, his wife has aborted the child she was carrying, his son has been jailed and his daughter assaulted. After a week in Timbalí, the Cristanchos are worse off than when they arrived and

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9Ibid., p. 440. The reader should remember that Siervo sin tierra was published only a short time after the ouster of Laureano Gómez and while Gen. Rojas Pinilla still enjoyed almost universal support.
Rudecindo is part of the desperation that will explode in a strike.

The workers want a union. The company refuses to listen and punishes the workers. Instead of eight hours of slave labor under the lash of relentless foremen, they will be required to work nine hours with no extra pay. The miners refuse and police are brought in to drive them into the mines. As the "gringos" sit in offices pinching the secretaries and making hundreds of pesos a day, Cristancho and his comrades are driven at gun point to dig out the fetid bodies of miners who have been crushed in a cave-in. When the whistle blows and they stagger out to vomit, they vow never to return. That night, with the arrival of the police, the town explodes in fear and hatred. The enraged miners trample the police, destroy the mines and burn the foreign colony. As the red flames spread over Timbalí, Rudecindo Cristancho is shot dead—a martyr to a just cause.

Zapata Olivella has a similar vision of the inevitability of violent revolution but he also sees the importance of a dedicated vanguard. Otherwise, there is only violence and then renewed oppression. Consequently, the presence or absence of effective leadership plays an important part in his novels.

La calle 10, for example, is divided into two parts. In the first part, an omniscient author recreates the hunger, cruelty, filth and injustice of life on the sidewalks behind
the central market. This is a world the rich have created and the poor have inherited because they have nowhere else to go. Their pleas for food or justice go unheeded because the rich will not listen. Through their newspaper, La Voz del Pueblo, the "poet", an intellectual, and Mamatoco, a popular black boxer, arouse the people and denounce a capitalism based on the prostitution of the masses. The newspaper is a success but soon the government, trembling before its righteous wrath, retaliates. Mamatoco, now seen as a dangerous leader of the masses, is stabbed and left to die on the street.¹⁰ When the body is found and the people see that the government responds to their needs with murder, their anger rises from the depths of their oppression and they revolt.

La ira movía los más sepultados resentimientos. Como si de improviso la rígida ley de la sociedad que mantenía oprimidos los nervios, hambrientos los estómagos, paralizados los músculos, sucios los ojos, dejara por un instante de oprimir y sueltas las furias, tomaran rumbos imprevistos.¹¹

In the second part of the novel, society harvests the hatred it has sown. An army of living corpses forces the government to negotiate. However, the people are

¹⁰ Although Zapata Olivella relates this incident to the Gaitán murder, Mamatoco was actually killed in 1943. His death was apparently ordered by a high police official in a Liberal administration. John D. Martz, Colombia; a contemporary political survey (Chapel Hill, North Carolina; 1962), pp. 39-40.

¹¹ Manuel Zapata Olivella, La calle 10 (Bogotá; 1962), p. 38.
unprepared for victory. They are betrayed by their leaders——men who have made political careers of demagoguery and opportunism but who now, in the moment of truth, counsel rectitude and moderation. Betrayed by false prophets at the very start of the revolution, unable to find new champions in the midst of the violence, the people lose their direction and cohesion and dissipate their frustration in senseless looting and pillaging. To those who had hoped for more, this defeat is bitterly disillusioning; but out of the despair rises a new determination to try again, and next time they will be prepared to go all the way.

In Chambacú, also by Zapata Olivella, the leader is ready but the people are not. The novel begins with the pounding of boots and the conscription of troops among the poor to fight in Korea. "Las trincheras reclamaban a los pobres, acostumbrados a vivir en fosos angostos."¹² "La Cotena" fights to keep her sons from a war that is not theirs. Medialuna, a boxer, escapes being conscripted because he is in the ring fighting when the press gang raids the back-benches. Crispulo, a cock fighter, sneaks back into Cartagena after the round up of unwilling conscripts. Máximo, Zapata Olivella's alter ego and a man who fights for justice, is conscripted but then thrown in jail because he refuses to fight for the Americans. José Raquel, however,

volunteers to go to Korea in order to escape arrest for smuggling.

The first part ends with José Raquel's departure; the second begins with his return. He has, in a rather unconvincing way, profited from the dead soldiers in Korea. Thus, he reenters Cartagena riding a new motorcycle with a beautiful Swedish girl, Inge, behind him. His triumph turns bitter, it mocks him, as he leaves the paved streets of Cartagena and carries his motorcycle into the wallows of Chambacú. Once home, he spends his time with the local whores, drinking and smoking marihuana, while his wife slowly and painfully absorbs and embraces the misery around her. José Raquel will soon harvest the fruits of his degeneracy and Inge will meet the man she should have loved.

The last part of the novel begins with Máximo's return home. He is skin and bones and spirit. He is the spirit of a race that has been subjected for centuries but that now demands justice. Máximo is the antithesis of José Raquel. He gives himself to the people while his brother, degenerate and beguiled by the material bribes of a frightened establishment, sells himself to the exploiters and becomes the instrument of his brother's death. However, in the confrontation between the two at the bridge separating Chambacú from Cartagena, the black people see the enemy. At Máximo's wake, an old lady can now sew his eyes shut because he has opened many others.
In En Chimá nace un santo, Zapata Olivella builds a revolution around a new mystique. Like most religions, it flourishes on man's ability to believe almost anything if he wants to and if the leadership knows how to exploit his gullibility.

Domingo Vidal, twisted, stunted and paralytic, is rescued from a burning hut. Although the hut was enclosed in flame, Domingo was not touched by the flames. It is a miracle. A few days later one of his sisters thrusts a pencil into his hand and Dominguito, who had been completely paralyzed for 33 years, scribbles a line or two. His sister declares that he has drawn the Virgin Mary. One miracle leads to another. A barren woman becomes pregnant after placing one of Domingo's virgins on her stomach. An old man engenders a child the same way. Domingo brings the rain and stops the flood. All of this is hard on Domingo. In the flood he is almost drowned and in the drought he is stood on his head as if he were a statue of San Isidoro. When the rains come or when they stop, he is paraded through the village. His frail body cannot resist the fervor of his followers and he dies of pneumonia. But saints do not die if they are properly managed.

Fortunately for the cult, Dominguito has a prophet. He is Jeremías the village sexton who, since Fr. Berrocal lives in Lórica, is the Church's permanent representative in Chimá. Jeremías is greedy and knows enough religion to
impress the people with meaningless Latin and extravagant ritual. Through him the cult grows as do the donations which Jeremías tirelessly collects to finance the canonization process in Rome, the construction of a shrine or the erection of a statue.

The heresy gains momentum and the mayor of Lórica, personally leads an expedition to Chimá. Jeremías, now a prisoner of his own role as prophet, opposes the mayor's entry. In the battle that follows Jeremías is killed but the mayor retreats because he senses the rumblings of a mass explosion. "Comprenden que el pueblo tiene necesidad de un pretexto para luchar y con aquellos machetes y escopetas serían capaces de realizar mayores portentos que todos los atribuidos a Domingo Vidal."\(^{13}\)

A popular movement, inspired by an indigenous faith, led by common men and accompanied by violence is as far as the sociological novel goes. It does not venture beyond confrontation to victory—possibly because the masses are not yet prepared for victory, or because the novelists have no idea what it might or should entail.

The Humanistic Novel

The humanistic novel differs from the sociological novel in that while there may be social conflict it is subordinate to a more fundamental vision of man as an individual. In contrast to both the sociological and entropic approach, humanism as a philosophical position antedates the novel as a literary genre. Nurtured in the Greco-Christian concept of man and emphasizing individual responsibility, the humanist vision is now seriously threatened by theories that tend to deemphasize man's ontological importance and his psychic autonomy. Nevertheless, partially in response to this challenge, possibly in fear of the implications of a non-humanistic view, many Colombian novelists continue to assert the preeminence of man. However, their novels reflect a shift from the "man as sufficient unto himself" concept of traditional humanism to a more romantic, religious and even humble view of man as either nature's finest animal or God's most dubious experiment. It is in this latter capacity that man meets his neighbor and confronts the process of modernization--without encouraging results.

J. M. Prado Sarmiento, in Guayacán, makes the most encouraging statement, but then he bases it on the most favorable circumstances. Don Pedro Almeida, the main character, is a patrón in the best sense of the term. In fact, except for a nebulous, indifferent bunch of politicians far off in Bogotá, everybody in Don Pedro's world
is marvelous. The first half of the novel recreates the joy and fullness of their lives: a tobacco harvest with all hands joyfully participating, a family reunion at Christmas time, acts of charity among the campesinos.

Unfortunately, because the government does not provide educational opportunities in the countryside, Don Pedro is forced to move his family to Bucaramanga. He buys a house in the city and begins to divide his time between the farm and the city. On one of his trips back to the farm, his horse stumbles and falls and he is left paralyzed from the waist down. Don Pedro tries to accept the tragedy that has befallen him; but, as the weeks drag into months and he sits helplessly in a wheelchair, he becomes depressed. He sees himself as a parasite in a world that would be better off without him. Like Job, he asks why God has punished him; but, instead of accepting his fate, he begins to withdraw.

Withdrawal thus becomes the real crisis. In desperation, his wife seeks the aid of a psychiatrist who does what he can, but Don Pedro does not want to return to life. Finally, at the psychiatrist's advice, his wife provokes an explosion. At first Don Pedro ignores her, but then he reacts violently—he experiences catharsis and breaks the chains that were pulling him into darkness. Drawing upon his inner strength and his faith in God, he begins to live again. Don Pedro, symbol of traditional Colombian values, has been tested and found as strong as the durable guayacán
that grows only on Hispanic soil. In contrast to those who see their Hispanic heritage as an obstacle to modernization, Prado Sarmiento disregards modernization but sees the traditional Hispanic values as a source of strength and adherence to these values as the only way for a nation of Don Pedros to confront their fate.

In _La picúa cebá_, Lucy Barco de Valderrama explicitly rejects the reality of modernization. In a rather picturesque setting, strong men fish in a sea full of wonders. Everyday is an adventure. One day it is a lucky catch or a night of love and fun; the next brings a fight with the wind and the sea, another, the discovery of a sunken island or an island full of birds; but one day it is death. A killer barracuda, one that for years has plagued the divers of the coastal islands, kills one of the men as the others seek to rescue him from an angry sea. To the veteran fishermen, this tragedy is a natural fact of life and accepted as such. However, one of the men is not a professional fisherman. The "Docto" is an escapee from the city. To him the barracuda is a monstrous aberration in an otherwise beautiful world. He encourages the others to hunt and kill the man eating fish. This they do, well and bravely. These men, free from the debilitating influences of the city, are beautiful. The "Docto", meanwhile, realizes that his concepts of good and evil do not fit in this natural world and returns to the city. He leaves his black friends and the black girl he has loved
behind. He also leaves, in the girl's womb, a son who will belong to a simple and better world in which a man can be a man.

In the city, in Al final de la calle by Oscar Hernández Monsalve, nature does not sustain man, and the children of nature feed off of each other. Like the lives of the characters, the novel is unstructured. There is no plot or denouement. "Una lenta procesión de arrependidos, de cansados, se movía en el barrio en busca del sustento. Daba la sensación de un rebaño extraviado en sus propias tierras agobiado por las prolongadas sequías."14 In terms of the sociological novel, these people are victims of progress. Oscar Hernández does not deny it; he accuses society of having created the corner, but he holds the people who live there responsible for the exaggerated ugliness of their existence. However, in the midst of the ugliness, he discovers human beings capable of love and compassion.

Héctor Rojas, in El noviembre llega el arzobispo, offers compassion as man's reward for a life in which ugliness is elevated to the level of tragedy. Curiously, the same setting which exhilarates Lucy Barco de Valderrama depresses Héctor Rojas because its very magnificence accentuates the rhythm of life and death.

14Oscar Hernández Monsalve, Al final de la calle (Bogotá; 1965), p. 63.
Leocadio Mendieta, the central figure in the novel, is one of life's least innocent victims. "Mendieta no sólo es el culpable de todo lo malo que ocurre en este pueblo sino que también es el mismísimo diablo." He has bought, killed, corrupted, raped and humiliated his fellow men and women. He has fulfilled a destiny that was written before he was born. He did not create himself; he did not make himself a bastard; he was born a bastard, a victim of vengeance and lust from the moment of his conception. Once he sought to forgive the woman who bore him but she rejected him. Now, at death, alone behind the bars of his pajamas, he pleads for forgiveness from his wife whom he has beaten and humiliated throughout their married life. He proclaims his existential innocence and by inference that of all those who have never known love. And from the depths of her humanity, his wife has compassion on the man she has feared and hated. She responds to his plea with a small sign of love. Almost obscured by the superabundance of vulgar detail and extravagant imagery, a sign of human compassion redeems mankind and sustains one man in his senseless but glorious fight with death.

Eduardo Caballero Calderón, in El Cristo de espaldas, creates a character who seeks to extend the act of compassion beyond the isolated instance to a general code of conduct. His novel pits a young priest against an ignorant

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15 Héctor Rojas Herazo, En noviembre llega el arzobispo (Bogotá; 1967), p. 95.
mob led by ignorant and venal men. Liberals and Conservatives use the violencia for their own sinister purposes and the town, lost in the cold mists of the páramo, is condemned to death because it does not respect life.

The night the priest arrives, the local cacique is murdered. The town accuses the cacique's disinherited son, but he is innocent. In order to cover up their own guilt, the mayor and the notary want the son hanged immediately and manipulate the situation toward this end. A mob forms, fires are lit and the suspect is dragged out for public trial. The people call for blood but the good priest throws his body before the condemned man and saves his life. However, in so doing, he has defied the civil authorities. They complain of his intervention in a civil affair and he is reprimanded and relieved by his bishop. The conspiracy against Christianity is complete and Christ's prophecy as recorded in the Gospel of St. Matthew, Chapter X, verses 16-22, and cited in the prologue is fulfilled.

En aquel tiempo: Dijo Jesús a sus discípulos: Mirad que yo os envíó como ovejas en medio de lobos; por tanto habéis de ser prudentes como serpientes, y sencillos como palomas. Recatad, empero, de los tales hombres; pues os delatarán a los tribunales, y os azotarán en sus sinagogas; y por mi causa seréis conducidos ante los gobernadores y los reyes para dar testimonio de mi a ellos y a las naciones... Entonces un hermano entregará a su hermano a la muerte, y el padre al hijo; y los hijos se levantarán contra los padres, y los harán morir. Y vosotros vendréis a ser odiados de todos por causa de mi nombre; pero quien perseverase hasta el fin, éste se salvará.
Manuel Mejía Vallejo, in *El día señalado*, commits another priest to the dream of extending Christ's message to another dying town. "La eterna oscilación . . . El mal y el Bien . . . ¿Cuáles sus límites? ¿Dónde empieza la sombra y dónde acaba la luz, en qué parte mueren los sonidos y nace el silencio?" In Tambo, at the foot of a volcano on the other side of Hell. When Father Barrios arrives, violence has drained the life out of Tambo. It is a monster that feeds on itself. The only man with calluses in Tambo is a crazed grave digger. Father Barrios begins a lonely struggle to bring the town back to life, to keep it alive in the midst of violence. He cannot stop the soldiers from killing the guerrillas; they have their orders. He cannot stop the guerrillas from killing the soldiers; they have their memories. Instead, he works in the no man's land between the soldiers and the guerrillas. In Tambo this means the church, the whorehouse and the "Gallo Rojo," a combination bar and cockpit. Here, as everywhere, the struggle is between God and the Devil.

Father Azuaje, the last priest, had waged a defensive war against the Devil. At the head of a small contingent of righteous matrons, armed with prayers and the fear of the Lord, he had driven the Devil from the streets of Tambo. Otilia, the town whore could not cross the plaza in broad daylight. Father Barrios changes the strategy and loses the pharisees. He is priest to a forgiving God, not

a vengeful one. Christ died for all, saints and sinners, but the latter were his prime concern. In Tambo, almost everybody is a sinner. In the midst of the brutality that engulfs them, the people have become cynical, apathetic and fearful. To be saved they must begin to live again. They must plant trees and crops. Otilia, the whore, must renounce Pedro Canales—symbol of violence and lust. Heraclio Chútez, the local cacique, must give back the lands he has stolen. He must turn from the law of the jungle to Christ's message of love. Father Barrios leads his flock a little way down the road to salvation; but, as the war between the guerrillas and the soldiers draws closer to Tambo, he is left alone to weep for the dead.

Woven into the priest's struggle against evil and despair, is the more personal story of a young man's search for vengeance. Here the perspective is more consistent, the author disappears and the young man tells his story. In a sense, his life is a microcosm of the larger struggle. He is the product of one man's violence upon one woman. The man disappeared after promising he would return. The woman waited and the boy grew up hating a father he never knew. He has spent twelve years looking for this man and now he has found him in Tambo. Heraclio Chútez is his father. At the "Gallo Rojo", a la hora señalada, as the guerrillas enter town, these two men face their private destiny. The priest enters; he asks for help to bury the dead, but in the "Gallo Rojo" violence comes before
compassion. The men of Tambo stay to watch two men play with death. First they attack one another through the fighting cocks, then as one cock buries its beak in the other's throat, the young man grasps his knife and prepares to sink it in his father's heart. Then, instead of the father he hated, he sees the eyes of another frightened man. The young man loosens his grip on the knife, picks up his bird still bloody from victory, and walks out of town. He passes Marta, a girl who gave him her love in Tambo, and—like his father—promises to return. He knows he will not and he knows that no man has the right to condemn another sinner.

In a world of sinners, one must either accommodate oneself to the world, convert it or renounce it. Eduardo Caballero Calderón believes that modern society tends to overwhelm the individual and twists accommodation into conformity. Not surprisingly, therefore, his novels always focus on some aspect of the man-society syndrome. In his first two novels the system predominated. Then, in Manuel Pacho, he created a sub-human character who, in a brief moment of freedom, fulfilled himself.

Somewhere in the llanos, bandits assaulted an isolated ranch. Hidden in a tree, trembling with terror, Manuel Pacho watched as the bandits ran the cattle off, burned the ranch and killed his mother and father. Alive and alone, he did not fully perceive the disaster, but he reacted intuitively. His father, son of the priest who
had opened the land, must be buried by a priest. For three
days and two nights Manuel Pacho carried the corpse toward
the nearest town. The stench increased as he went, vultures
came to feed on the corpse, the body got heavier, Manuel
cut the arms off to distract the vultures and staggered on.
Scenes of the past flashed before his eyes: his mother
stroking his hair, the students and teachers laughing at
him in school, his Dulcinea on the road from Duitama to
Tunja, cattle running wild on the pampa, his father.

On the second night he was suddenly seized by the
full anguish of his loss. He yelled, scratched the earth,
bit it, shook his fist at the moon, but the world was in-
different. Manuel finally realized that he was alone and
he fell down exhausted. When he woke up, he picked up his
horrible load and walked on into Cucú. He had done what
he set out to do and it meant nothing; but it was something.

In _El buen salvaje_, also by Eduardo Caballero
Calderón, the main character does nothing. Instead of
confronting reality, he evades it. Instead of fighting
the frustrating battle to escape middle class poverty at
home, he has escaped to Paris. Letters from his sister
pleading for him to come home after his father's death are
like letters from a forgotten world. In Paris he has built
an entirely different world for himself. His father was
not an obscure bureaucrat but a large landowner and states-
man. His home was not a second rate apartment but a
mansion. He is not a phony student with a facile imagination but a novelist on the threshold of a brilliant career.

Except for a few superficial and shabby relationships, he is alone in a great masquerade. In Paris everybody wears a mask and it is difficult to distinguish the living and the dead. Nameless, he wanders the streets of the city collecting ideas for the great novel he dreams of writing. Sometimes, in endless dialogues with his dreams, he comes face to face with reality and he seeks escape in a woman or in alcohol. Money is a constant problem. He has lost his scholarship and leads a hand to mouth existence translating fringe literature, teaching Spanish, enticing strangers to dingy bars and borrowing.

One day, he meets Rosemarie. She is beautiful, rich and real. About the same time he also receives a check from home to pay for his return ticket. With this money he courts Rosemarie and draws her into his illusions. She is the essence of his dreams and she loves the man he has fabricated for her benefit. The pressure becomes unbearable and, rather than face inevitable exposure, he simply disappears into the depths of Paris.

Finally, he collapses in a charity canteen and is taken to a hospital. He does not know whether he is alive and being killed or dead and being resurrected. He has a new idea for a novel—a Goyesque world of living and dead characters wandering in the Paris subway. Reality and fantasy, death and life, are blurred and interwoven.
Pitied and rejected, emptied of illusions and hope, the erstwhile student is shipped home. There, as he observes, even illusions are impossible. "Allá no voy a encontrar sino realidades opacas y deprimentes... Aun sin un franco en el bolsillo, en París puedo imaginariamente ser lo que se me antoja."\(^{17}\) El buen salvaje personifies the dilemma facing many young people and particularly those who hold but cannot afford upper class values. Born into the middle class, educated to reject their class, afraid to fall backward and unable to move forward, they seek to fulfill themselves through escape.

One of the themes that the nameless student in El buen salvaje toyed with was that of Cain and Abel. In his most recent novel, Caín, Eduardo Caballero Calderón develops the idea. Abel personified the qualities that society appreciates. He was legitimate, handsome and educated. Martín, his half brother, was neither legitimate, handsome nor educated. Thus, while Abel basked in the glow of his father's love, Martín worked with the laborers in the fields. Martín reminded his father, Don Polo Rodríguez, of what he had been and Abel reminded him of what he had become.

Polo began his career as overseer of "El Paraíso." However, since the owner preferred the luxuries of Paris

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to the simplicity of the countryside, he slowly sold his lands and Polo surreptitiously bought them and the political power that went with the land. Now, Don Polo is a landowner and a senator and the scars of his humble beginnings barely show—just a couple of gold teeth and an urge to humiliate those whom he has dispossessed. Although there are only two old maids and a niece left of this once proud family, their ultimate humiliation will certify his position. Thus, when, through the priest, they suggested that Margarita, the niece, and Abel marry, Don Polo said Abel could make a better marriage and that Martín would be good enough for Margarita. The old ladies were destitute and Margarita was married to Martín. Martín, for his part, had always loved her as if she were a beautiful and unattainable goddess but she loathed him. The combination was impossible; and, after two weeks, Margarita ran off with Abel.

None of this is known to the reader the night that Martín murders Abel and carries Margarita off into the hills. The antecedents are woven into the search for Martín on the one hand and his escape on the other. The army is brought into the search for Martín who has sought refuge with a guerrilla outfit in the hills. Don Polo offers a large reward and the guerrillas become more interested in the money than in their new comrade. In the meantime, Margarita has given birth to a son and realized that Martín is the only man who can save her and her child in
an essentially hostile environment. Consequently, in the confrontation with the guerrillas, she helps Martín kill the leader and together they escape from both the bandits and the army. Martín, rejected by society, has defied society and won. 18

Such victories, however, are bitter. They involve a condemnation of man as much as affirmation of the individual. The truly heroic figures in the humanistic novel are not those who retreat or escape but those who accept the fallibility of man and seek to alleviate the wounds he inflicts upon himself and others. In this context, compassion emerges not as an exercise in vicarious self-pity but as the first step toward salvation and those who take it as sufficient proof of the potential beauty of man. The point, however, is weakened by the excessive differentiation of the characters. The truly human character is more of a combination of the recluse, the misanthrope and the saint. Such a man, if he could find a novel, might be able to accommodate himself to the world without capitulating, and elevate his neighbor without exposing him.

18 According to classical interpretation, Cain symbolizes the City of Man and Abel the City of God. The substitution of an earthly father for a celestial father completely changes the implications of this Biblical event. Curiously, regardless of one's perspective, Cain is a renegade; but now, in a godless world, he is on the side of the angels.
The Entropic Novel

The fashionable contemporary posture is entropic. The baroque period followed the Renaissance and alienation follows the industrial revolution. Ironically, in an age that bombards man's consciousness with human achievements, many believe that the complexity and impersonality of the twentieth century have preempted man's freedom and accentuated his relative insignificance. Escape, or even apathy, is a sin and a mistake in a world that impinges so directly upon one's most fundamental hopes and fears; yet commitment is impossible for men whose capacity for faith—receptivity to a new vision—has been undermined by their premonition of cosmological insignificance. In this atmosphere of ennui, despair and disorientation, many modern novelists simply relate the deterioration of the world. For them, modernization is a bourgeois illusion perpetrated upon man by a mongrel class. It has captivated man by its promises and frustrated him by its lies.

*El despertar de los demonios* is a combination of social and personal frustration. Víctor Aragón, the author, attempts to relate them but his material is too superficial on the one hand and too exotic on the other.

The novel, as the title implies, is about the awakening of the demons that haunt certain people and certain societies. It begins with Julián, the narrator and principal witness, visiting an empty house. The house is full of memories—of ghosts. These memories are part of his
life. They are the part that has passed to the other
side of existence.

Julián remembers the first Christmas vacation he
spent in the big house. Laurita, Susana and Adelaida were
all alive. They were beautiful and libidinous. In this
context, libidinous means more than just excessive sensu-
ality: it is an exquisite combination of love of life
and fascination with death. Julián loved all three of
these beautiful women and his complicated amorous activities
sustain the plot in the first volume of this two volume
novel. The reader's interest, however, is held by the
fascinating discussions Julián has with the "doctor" and
others about life, death and demons. In these discussions,
the "doctor" quotes ancient and modern mystics in support
of his contention that some men transcend the material
limits of this life and sense the spiritual essence that
engulfs us. These bewitched individuals live in a nether
region amidst reality, sensuality and spirituality. Their
existence is a struggle between the forces of life and
death. As the weight of death and memory grows heavier,
they slowly withdraw from life; but, since their withdrawal
is premature, they remain to haunt other libidinous souls.
These reflections foretell the destiny of the women Julián
loves.

Their destiny is accelerated, however, by their
relationship with the larger society of the unlibidinous.
Thus the focus shifts from a struggle between the forces of
life and death within these women to a struggle between those who love and defend them and those who hate and persecute them. It becomes a struggle between the free thinkers and the rabble, the anti-clericalists and the fanatical clericalists, the progressive university elements and the reactionary, the Liberals and the Conservatives, the artisans and aristocrats against the bourgeoisie. In short, a complex theme degenerates into a struggle between "good guys" and "bad guys".

Sinister winds from Bogotá fan the flames and the struggle becomes part of the Violencia. There are strikes and demonstrations, the university is closed, martial law is declared, the countryside is ravaged by an enraged priest; and, lost in the confusion, Susana and Adelaida commit suicide and Laurita just expires. The forces of death are clearly in the ascendancy. A fearful mob, manipulated by sinister forces, runs amok in the vacuum of change. The private and public demons have been awakened. Julián senses that tragedy is not an interruption in the course of one's destiny but rather it is man's destiny.

Yo siempre temí esa fatalidad, como si presintiera la amenaza de un castigo, pues, aunque se crea que es cosa de hechicerías y de absurda creencias mágicas, existen predestinaciones, que van llevando una vaga adivinación del porvenir. Predestinaciones para las personas, pero también para las familias, para las colectividades, para las ciudades.19

In Los años de asfixia, José Stevenson explores from within the deadly tyranny of middle class conformity. He captures the capitulation of his characters in four brief episodes. The first starts with a drunken layover in Cartagena and ends in New York, the metropolis of democracy, where nobody really exists. There the protagonist meets the enigmatic specter of his dead ideals. He stands on the threshold of reality; death is one step away from resignation.

The next piece, part of the past which sustains the disillusion of the present, is the moment when youth was irrevocably lost. The protagonist, Víctor, sometimes as "I" and sometimes as "he", is a student in the faculty of medicine. He floats in a world of books, boredom, cadavers, football, girls and student politics. Then, in a student demonstration, the police kill a student and this ephemeral world degenerates into the reality of more manifestations, more tear gas, more death and more talk.20 In the midst of the violence, Víctor loses his dreams and his illusions. "Ya no quiero ideales, escupo en el entabla-dó la baba amarga de todas las mentiras, de todas las ilu-siones que se licúan como cera; este país de mierda;"
A third scene from the past is the year of Víctor's graduation from high school. Reality is still an abstraction that can be fervently discussed, diagnosed and cured. The young men are still innocent; but there will come a time, only a few short years away, when they will be unable to distinguish between the faces of vice and virtue.

The last piece of life recreates the inanity of reality. Víctor has returned to Bogotá. Through an old friend, who even in high school had no illusions as to what life was about, he has secured a position as a company doctor. However, he is now beholden to his friend. From party to cocktail lounge to board room, Víctor follows his patron until he is critically injured in an automobile accident. As Víctor waits to learn whether his friend will live or die, he takes a walk and reviews memories of his youth, memories of only ten years ago, that seem as if they were from another century. And the novel ends because even the memories of the illusions are gone. Víctor is asfixiated—his soul is dead.

Oh flaming youth! que te agotas antes de nacer, que recibes presiones por encima y por debajo, que tienes que ser vidente y responder por tu pasado. Tú, que afloraste demasiado tarde en un temprano continente, sin remembranzas, atontado por el brillo de los oropelos vanos. Fue todo el tiempo, no el presente, ni el pasado, ni el futuro, sino el fastidioso condicional, quien melló tus sentidos electivos.22

22Ibid.
In *El terremoto* by Germán Pinzón, man is not only asfixiated, but, in a typically *nadaísta* metaphor, reduced to dried spit. Spittle is fluid and resistent; but, if put to the test—if salt is poured on it—liquifies, divides, contorts and is finally reduced to its essential condition.

Thus begins the novel in one of several similar allusions to Jorge, the spineless protagonist. When he was a young man, he lacked the strength to avoid marriage. Now, he smells the stale odors of married life. Daily he joins the joyless parade of grey flannel suits. He sneaks through the day and at night he drowns himself in self-pity and whiskey. These are Jorge's great moments. He is a witness to life, he is a tragedy. Occasionally he threatens suicide but only to convince himself that he is still alive. However, if life walked up to Jorge, if a beautiful woman opened her arms to him, he would wilt before the challenge.

One afternoon, the hero returns home and sees the new maid. The maid, Graciela, is a victim of the *violencia*. She has seen her mother and father killed, she has been raped by twenty animals and she is alone. She does not frighten Jorge. When he gives her a little love, she responds hungrily. Then Jorge's wife opens the door, Jorge feigns drunkenness and his wife fires the girl. Graciela gets another job and the affair continues until she becomes pregnant. A few months later, Jorge reads of Graciela's
death in the newspaper. He is shocked but he recovers and goes out to face a new day. In the bright sun we see only his silhouette outlined like a decal on a window. Then the window breaks and the decal walks into the light. Jorge is alive because he has no soul; he has traded it for a mask of middle class respectability.

Hypocrisy or incandescent lunacy are the only options open to modern man. Héctor Sánchez, in Las causas supremas, opts for the latter. He morbidly plays with a world functioning on the edge of collapse. He introduces a collection of small town caricatures to make life miserable for each other and then submits them to a hard winter of incessant rain. Their agony is prolonged for some 500 pages as the author follows his words with brutal humor from one image to another. Finally, as the rains wash the town away, and as the protagonist avenges the injustices perpetrated against him and his family, the pieces of time close upon eternity. "No era más, por eso afirmo que esta vida es bien jodida." 23

Like the 1969 ESSO winner, Mateo el flautista, by Alberto Duque López, is a collection of grotesque images. The images are supposedly associated with the memory of Mateo; but, at the end of the novel, the reader discovers that it was all a hoax. Mateo never existed, he was just

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a pretext to write until the words began to smell. Clearly
the medium is the message but the subliminal invocation is
one of despair rather than community.\textsuperscript{24}

Man apparently plays his part in this tragic comedy
because he is sustained by his illusions. The Colonel in
El colonel no tiene quien le escriba by García Márquez is
a perfect example of the phenomenon. Since the end of the
civil wars, the Colonel has done nothing but wait and hope:
first for the political victory of his party and then for
the fulfillment of electoral promises. For the last twenty
years he has waited for his legitimate, but unfunded, pen-
sion. Through all the years he has retained his pride.

The reader joins him one October and waits with
him through part of December. These few months are the
same as the last fifty-six years except that now it is
harder to wait. The Colonel's son, Agustín, was recently
killed at the annual cockfights and the Colonel and his wife
are orphans. However, although their only son is dead and
they have nothing left to sell or mortgage, the Colonel has
a new illusion to add to the old ones. He is going to train
his dead son's fighting cock and win the fights in January.
In order to feed themselves and the rooster, his long suf-
ferring wife tries to borrow money but Father Angel refuses

\textsuperscript{24} Marshall Mc Luhan, while deploring the tyranny
of the media, suggests that they may engender a kind of
tribal consciousness that will engulf the world. See The
Medium is the Massage, New York, 1967.
to lend her any saying it is a sin to borrow against her wedding ring. She tries to sell an old clock but everybody is buying clocks with luminous dials now. She cannot sell an old picture either because everyone has one like it. When she tells the Colonel of her efforts, he is humiliated. Now everyone will know that they are dying of hunger. The situation is critical. They have no money and no food; but, as we leave the Colonel in December, he is prepared to eat mierda in order to conserve his illusions. Who can tell, the cock might win in January.

In La hojarasca by the same author, another old man stands between the past and the future but now the future does not just ignore him, it threatens to overwhelm him. The novel begins with three people, grandfather, mother and son around a dead body with a hostile town outside. It ends a half hour later with the same three people preparing to accompany the same dead body through the same hostile town. The people, the body and the town have been juxtaposed by an inexorable destiny--that bitter fatality that has destroyed Macondo. The grandfather is there because he loved and pitied the dead man and had vowed to see him buried decently. The mother is there because the grandfather brought her and the son because his mother brought him. The dead man is there because he finally stopped dying. For twenty-five years he had fought a hopeless battle to free himself from a lonely past. The town is outside waiting because they never knew the man
and because they hated the man that loneliness and rumor had created.

The memories by which the author impregnates the scene with significance are about to coalesce into one collective reality. Soon, very soon, all will smell death. Soon all the ravens will sing. The novel ends and the tension is unbearable—disaster is imminent.

Gabriel García Márquez sees no escape. In _La mala hora_, the reality of violence is preferable to the fear of it. As the lie of a phony armistice slowly unravels, an anonymous lampoonist robs the good citizens of their sleep with the threat of the truth. The mayor, at first is unconcerned, he even profits from certain exposures; but, as the tension becomes unbearable, he injects the full power of his authority. He acts, or rather, in the absence of any effective check on his activities, he overacts. He declares a state of siege, recruits a vigilante group to patrol the town, and captures one Pepe Amador. Pepe is a none too bright distributor of clandestine materials through whom the mayor hopes to learn more about the guerrillas and the lampoonist. The interrogation is rigorous and Pepe dies. The mayor tries to hide the death but the town has a sixth sense for death. A blind old lady senses the end of the world, birds hit notes so high they cannot be heard, there is a smell of autumn in the air. Nobody believes the mayor's story that Pepe escaped. So, as Father Angel rings the bells on another sunny morning,
he discovers that the fragile armistice between the town and the mayor dissolved itself in gunfire while he slept. The jail is once again full and those young men who are not in jail have fled to the mountains to join the guerrillas. Meanwhile, as if on a different level of social and personal decay, another lampoon has been nailed to another door. After the violence, after the repression, after the hypocrisy and the corruption, there is a perverse sense of elation, of victory. Nobody really expected any change in the fundamental sequence. Revolt, repression, promises, failure and revolt follow one another as death follows birth.

Man is marked by a fatal flaw and, in Cien años de soledad Gabriel García Márquez captures the whole tragic history of the race. It all began when that uncaused cause of a buccaneer, Sir Francis Drake, raided Richacha thus causing the Iguaránas to flee and settle near the Buendías. Since then, the two families had often intermarried. As a result of one such marriage, a child was born with a tail. Ursula Iguarán, brought up to fear similar consequences if she should marry a Buendía, remained a virgin after her marriage to José Arcadio Buendía. That is, she remained so until José Arcadio killed Prudencio Aguilar for suggesting he was impotent. At the point of a lance, and to put an end to the rumors that had made such an insult possible, José Arcadio claimed his marital rights. Shortly thereafter, Prudencio began to haunt the
young couple and, to get away from him, they left to found a new town. They founded it on the exact spot where José Arcadio dreamed of a town built of mirrors called Macondo. This was a new world, even the rivers had no names; but, José Arcadio and Ursula carried within themselves, within their seed, a potentiality for incest and disaster. In this town of mirrors, the Buendías could not escape from themselves.

At first, except for a near fatal attack of insomnia complicated by total amnesia, all goes well. The early years are legendary years. They are the years Melquíades and the gypsies came introducing the wonders of a world outside of Macondo. José Arcadio greets each scientific wonder with the enthusiasm and exuberance of renaissance man. With the magnet he searches for gold; with the magnifying glass he constructs the ultimate war machine; with the camera he tries to photograph God; and with the pendulum he attempts to construct an all purpose perpetual motion machine. In the midst of his excitement over the possibilities of this last discovery, Prudencio Aguilar reappears. With Prudencio's reappearance, the past and the present become one, and for José Arcadio Buendía the world's time machine is broken. Life becomes meaningless and he is reduced to babbling the truth in Latin. Nobody understands him so he is tied to a tree behind the house. Thus Macondo's classical age comes to an end.
With Aureliano, one of José Arcadio's sons who subsequently becomes a kind of 19th century caudillo, Macondo joins the rest of Colombia in a generation of futile civil war. At the end there are no more ideals, there are no more really big men; the town and the country are irremediably in the hands of distant, faceless men. Aureliano will spend the rest of his life in an honorable pact with solitude while his sons, all illegitimate, will be killed by the faceless men.

Shortly after the end of the civil wars, the technological revolution hits Macondo and the macondinos are dumbfounded. There is a train to Macondo, there are movies, gramaphones, telephones, and bananas. There always had been bananas; but, until Mr. Herbert discovered the banana, nobody thought much about them. Before the macondinos knew what had happened, they were in the middle of a banana boom.

Sharing the town's prosperity, although through the prodigious fecundity of his mistress' cattle rather than bananas, another Buendía finances an extended orgy that attracts the biggest gluttons from all along the coast. However, in the midst of this capitalistic paradise, there are those who remain hungry—the workers on the banana plantations. They strike but an army of Indians is sent to break the strike and 3,000 workers are left dead in the
town square. The macondinos, like everyone else, try to ignore the massacre, but the very heavens avenge the dead. For four years it rains in Macondo; and, during the storm, the banana company simply disappears. After the deluge, Macondo is another relic on the road to economic progress and, like other such towns, it draws in upon itself.

As the town slowly dies, Aureliano Babilonia, an illegitimate and unrecognized Buendía, is deciphering the scrolls in which Melquíades, the wandering gypsy, recorded the family's fate. Before he breaks the code, however, he falls in love with his aunt, Amaranta Ursula. When Pilar Ternera, whore and mother to all Buendías, dies, the last Buendía is in Amaranta's womb. Unknowingly, but inevitably, Amaranta Ursula and Aureliano Babilonia have fulfilled the family's incestuous destiny. Their son is born with a tail; and, as Amaranta hemorrhages after the birth, the last Buendía is eaten by the ants. Aureliano, now all alone, but with the bitter knowledge of the past and the present, returns to the scrolls to read the future as the wind blows Macondo and himself from the memory of man. The destiny of the town (or of the world?), remains in- exorably tied to that of the Buendías. In the land of mirrors, man and all his works are fatally marked by egotism.

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25 This incident, of course, is based on the 1928 strike against United Fruit.
It seems incredible that man's infatuation with himself should bring him to the point of self-destruction. One wonders if it is not his quest for originality that has brought him to this dismal prophecy. Admittedly, the one may be a manifestation of the other; but, if so, this underlines the power of connotative manipulation and affirms man's sovereign ambivalence. Are not the entropic novelists themselves, in their effusive probing of the intricacies of language, searching for relief from their own conclusions? With the romantics from time immemorial, one can only hope that whether the words emanate from God, the libido or the race they will help man find an answer to his existential dilemma. That the search should encounter moments of despair is to be expected; but that these moments should endlessly repeat themselves contradicts the whole history of human creativity, ingenuity, pride, ambition, egotism or what ever keeps us spinning. Be it an ivory tower, Norman Mailer's parapet,²⁶ or some other alternative that the dynamics of originality dictate, neither man nor the novelists are yet dead.

Returning from the presumptive heights of this brief disquisition, one must recognize that regardless of

²⁶See Tony Tanner, City of Words (New York, 1971) for a discussion of the concept of entropy as it applies to American literature.
the novelistic perspective—sociological, humanistic or entropic—the Colombian novelists view the reality of their situation with less than unrestrained enthusiasm. Furthermore, modernization does not seem to have relieved the situation. In fact, the premium it places on material progress has exacerbated the problems of a world in which scarcity, absolute or relative, appears to be inescapable. And the individual, bewitched by the lure of modernization, can neither realize its promise nor ignore it.
CHAPTER IV

THE SITUATION AS A FUNCTION OF THE LITERARY ENVIRONMENT

From the time of the conquest, the land and people of America have fascinated writers and readers alike. At first it was a marvelous and incredible tabla rasa and now it is a huge collage of centuries and cultures. However, now as then, the setting tends to dominate the novel. The Colombian novel is no exception and, in this chapter, theme and situation will be explored within the context of the literary environment.

The novelists of the last twenty years project the setting through a new range of sensory and psychic impressions. Eduardo Caballero Calderón has revealed rural Colombia through sensory imagery. His characters feel, smell and hear the land as much as they see it. Manuel Mejía Vallejo has infused the dismal realities of rural and urban Colombia with poetic substance. Gabriel García Márquez has captured both the subjective and objective features of Colombia in the magic reality of Macondo. Héctor Rojas Herazo has filled the hot days of Tolú with the mundane details that make it human. Germán Pinzón has twisted reality to create a surrealistic setting, a kind
of caricaturization of reality. Because it is changing, the setting intrudes more vividly upon the consciousness of the novelists. Anachronisms, incongruities and inanities combine to project a complex picture of modern Colombia. This burst of innovation is probably the most significant development in recent years. However, this is not a technical but a substantive analysis. Therefore, the chapter on setting will be divided according to traditional substantive criteria: i.e., urban-rural, middle class-upper class, coastal-Andean.

The Rural Novel

Except for El buen salvaje, all of the novels included in this study are set in Colombia and most of them in rural Colombia which is interpreted to include small towns in which traditional values and styles predominate. This reflects the fact that Colombia remains basically an agrarian society and, as Mejía Vallejo points out, those Colombians who have recently migrated to the cities retain the rural point of view.¹ Furthermore, many of the novelists prefer a rural setting because, as Caballero Calderón suggests, man is more real when he is in contact with the fundamental forces of life. The growing cycle reminds him of the miracle of creation and the inevitability of life

¹Gildardo, loc. cit.
and death while the noise and confusion of the cities distract him. In the rural areas, interpersonal relationships are not superficial but impregnated with past and collateral associations. These associations, both personal and physical, are inescapable. Thus, in the patios of the small towns of Colombia, Héctor Rojas Herazo finds the people almost strangled in the dense vegetation of personal relationships. Here are found envy, bitterness, hatred, hope and compassion in their purest forms. In this context, the rural novel is neither a disparate collection of bromides and anecdotes nor is it overburdened with telluric or polemical implications. With only a few exceptions, the rural novel of the last twenty years seeks to recreate or evoke the total existential envelope.

Of the seventeen novels that can be classified as rural for purposes of this study, eight are situated in the interior or Andean provinces and nine in the coastal provinces. Within these divisions, the novels are arranged thematically because there seems to be a significant relationship between the theme and the setting. In fact, the nature of the relationship between theme and setting is one of the distinguishing features between the interior and coastal novels. Theme tends to dominate setting in the interior novel and setting tends to dominate theme in the coastal novel.

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Interior Setting

La rebelión de las retas by Fernando Soto Aparicio, exemplifies a setting influenced by theme. Timbalí is a new town someplace in the interior. Before coal was discovered in the valley, everything was peaceful and simple. Twelve or fifteen families farmed the land and a man could wander in any direction and find a friend. After the discovery of coal, strangers arrived promising wealth and progress. They bought the land and the farmers disappeared. They brought in machines to cut down the trees and open the mountains and hordes of hungry desperate men to dig out the minerals. Attracted by the relatively high wages, the men did not realize that money evaporates in places like Timbalí. Once there, they were captured. Huddled together in tin shacks, they sullenly contemplated the beautiful homes and manicured gardens of the foreigners who exploited them. The only escape was alcohol. Thus, as the bosses anesthetized themselves in their clubs, the workers brutalized themselves in the cheap bars that fed on their misery. It was inevitable that the seeds of injustice should reap a harvest of violence and that, under a distant blue sky, red flames would destroy Timbalí. The town was an aberration and did not belong in the valley.

In El Cristo de espaldas, Eduardo Caballero Calderón recreates a more traditional conflict situation but an equally bizarre setting. The town has no name because it
is a symbol not a town. From a distance it looks clean and luminous with the church tower thrusting up to the sky. Lost in the mountains of Boyacá, enveloped in the cold dampness of the páramo, the town is dominated by a local cacique. In the dark nights, their faces lit by candles or lanterns, men plot to dispossess, embarrass or betray their adversaries. For purposes of long-range hostility, they are divided into Liberals and Conservatives; but, since the Liberals have been run out of town, the Conservatives have been left to plot against each other.

The church stands, or leans, at one end of this hermetic world. Its broken windows, filthy statues and tattered linens attest to the spiritual mould that eats at the town. The sacristan and caretaker, is a deformed murderer and the maid is an idiot. Out of habit, boredom and superstition, the people go through religious motions but there is no faith. There is no hope nor beauty to sustain it. There is not even a town whore. The town has turned its back on life and against Christ. The grotesque setting precipitates and accentuates the struggle between good and evil.

Tambo, the setting for Mejía Vallejo's novel El día señalado, is another town that has turned its back on Christ. It is on the edge of Hell at the foot of a volcano. At dawn, throughout the day, at night, waves of heat beat upon the town. In the sun, nailed to the cross on top of the church, Christ looks tired of holding his arms open.
Here time is not measured by the calendar or the clock but by the heat and the dust. Humans and things rot in the stifling heat.

Many men have left Tambo. In the women, young and old, one can see the emptiness of lonely lives. The men have escaped to the mountains or the cities. Those that are left are demoralized, filled with hate and fear, without the will to live or die. They seek, as if compelled, to lose themselves in the brutal diversions the town offers but the strident music of the juke boxes cannot drown out the real music in Tambo. The beat of a distant drum and the rumble of the volcano mark the heartbeat of a dying town. The people are lost because they respected the power of brute force more than the ideals of Christianity. Might makes right in Tambo and the town deserves its fear.

Irrationality and disorientation seem to pervade the rural setting. In *Las causas supremas* by Héctor Sánchez, the children of the Sacred Heart are now children of the unholy heart. They venerate, at five cents a ticket, a spurious virgin from Bolivia. Everyone formulates his own morality and disregards the rights of others. The doors are locked and the chickens hidden under the beds. The people, isolated in their lonely cells, cannot communicate with each other because their language has become a set of meaningless formulae.

Aquí todos teníamos semejanzas, y las casas también eran muy parecidas entre sí, cuarto y sala, cocina y cuarto, nos acostumbramos a ser parecidos
y a callar. Callar es una forma de entender, porque hablamos como pudimos, y nos referimos los unos a los otros como lo aprendimos de tanto oír. Majadero y pendejo, vale lo mismo cuando se trata de alguien, a menos que ese alguien no nos importe, y es difícil decir eso aquí.  

Even inside the houses, within the family, there is no communication. In fact, there are no homes in any part of this miserable country. But, in the hot humid nights in the nameless town, boys dream of escaping to the big cities where the lights burn all night.

To live in this town is to die a slow death. A big event is the passage of the town crier with his news of wakes and liquidations; and, once a year, the town drunks solemnly compete for the drinking championship. There was a basketball game once; but, when the police lost, the referee was accused of shooting the police chief in the rear and was thrown into jail with the rest of the innocents. Some say he was shot trying to escape. In this town, nobody will tell the truth and strange things can happen to a man who irritates the establishment. From the mayor's point of view, however, the people are the problem. He has decreed that all houses be painted and all garbage picked up but nothing happens. The people have no money, no work and no energy. In fact, there is no point in living—unless one can laugh as the town and people are washed away. But then, perhaps those who laugh have lost all hope. They,

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from the height of their cynicism, are the real victims of a society that seems determined to destroy itself.

Most rural novels are set in small towns probably because most of the novelists are from such towns. However, in *Siervo sin tierra*, Manuel Pacho and *Cain*, Eduardo Caballero Calderón writes about the men who live outside the towns and work the land. In *Siervo sin tierra*, he describes the man-land relationship. In brief, there are too many people and not enough land. Here, again, the conflict is basically existential. For centuries, large landlords have owned the land and the campesinos have farmed it. Calling themselves Liberals or Conservatives, the landlords have fought among themselves for political and economic power. The campesinos are born into allegiance to either one side or the other.

If the Liberals are in power, they make life impossible for the Conservatives and vice versa. Most recently, the Conservatives have ravaged the valley: stealing crops, burning farms, painting everything blue. However, this time the violence has been particularly unrestrained. The landlords have not controlled the situation as effectively as they did in the past because they no longer hold the power they once did. With the opening of the roads and the diffusion of transistor radios, outside influences are beginning to corrupt and destabilize the social system and the large haciendas has become more of a liability than an asset. Consequently, the patrones have been selling their
holdings, abandoning the campesino to his fate, and a new breed of landlords—smaller but even more avaricious—has emerged. These men, with the right connections and financed by governmental credit institutions, are buying the good lands and depriving their neighbors of water. With land, water and the money for seeds and fertilizers, they are raising cash crops while men like Siervo Joya are still compelled to raise whatever they are told. Locked into their poverty, harassed and cheated, the campesinos are slowly squeezed off the land they have worked for centuries. In this context, the Violencia simply accelerates the demise of the old order and the advent of the new. And, as always, the victims are the campesinos.

Rostros famélicos y amarillos por el insomnio y el hambre, ojos agrandados por el espanto, manos temblorosas que no pudieron sellar los párpados de sus difuntos, cuerpos semi-desnudos, y que lloraban de rabia, fue lo que Siervo vio en los patios y los corredores de la casa grande. Centenares de desgraciados, miles de refugiados se habían acogido a la protección de sus aleros, pero no tardaron en salir de allí empujados por el terror de que regresaran los chulavitas y tirados por el hambre hacia otras tierras mas misericordiosas.

Guayasamín, by J. M. Prada Sarmiento, gives a different picture of the situation in the campo. The scene is the Chicamocha valley in Santander. It is the same rugged remote land that Eduardo Caballero Calderón has described, but Prada Sarmiento looks at the scene from a traditional rather than

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a transitional point of view. He points out that the valley was first settled by a strong race of people. However, over the centuries, these original settlers have left the region and most of those who now live in the valley are newcomers. Nevertheless, the old values and traditions persist. The church is strong, the family—at least the patron's family—is strong and the pattern of land usage remains essentially the same. At "Guayacán," Don Pedro and his wife take care of the peons who in turn work happily for them. The pattern of land ownership is not the problem in the countryside. The problem is emigration.

According to Prada, such demographic shifts are natural but also lamentable. Many leave in search of better opportunities, better education for their children or an easier life for themselves; but, if the government would take steps to improve the conditions of life in the country, many people would stay on the land and the world would be a better place. Society, religion and family would remain inviolate and there would not be a plague of alienated vagrants clamoring against family values that are in grave jeopardy, a religion that has forgotten God and a society that has become overly permissive.

On Don Pedro's hacienda the world remains as it should be. Unfortunately, the good landlord abandons the land. Paradoxically, and unintentionally, Guayacán thus reflects the fundamental weakness of the latifundia. Even
good landlords are primarily motivated by personal interest and not social responsibility. As in *Siervo sin tierra*, the *patrón* sells the land and the *campesinos* are left to fend for themselves. Thus change imposes itself in rural Colombia and those who lose in the reshuffle move to the cities to weaken further traditional institutions and values.

Caballero Calderón describes an entirely different situation in *Manuel Pacho*. In the prairies of eastern Colombia, there are vast open stretches of land and a man, even a Manuel Pacho, can be free. Under a sun that burns like a ball of fire, a boy learns to herd cattle and break horses and he does not need to know Latin to become a man. This is a free world and a dangerous one. Bandits and wild game roam the open range. The animals feed on the grasses and each other and the bandits feed on the ranches that are too weak to defend themselves. Nevertheless, there are men who cannot live any place else because they are overwhelmed by towns. Manuel Pacho, for example, never felt so lonely as when he was surrounded by people.

In the *llanos* there are no connections, no protected individuals, no pretensions. In the *llanos* a man does not lose himself in the midst of meaningless superficialities; rather, he must find and prove himself if he is to survive.
Coastal Setting

In novels situated in the interior provinces, there is a cause and effect relationship between personal and social conflicts and the setting. In the coastal novels, as previously suggested, the setting dominates the personal and social conflicts. This is particularly true in Héctor Rojas' En noviembre llega el arzobisbo.

Tolú is timeless. Time sits like a dead weight upon the living. There are occasional vague references to the passage of time, a specific date or two, the arrival of a bus from Sincelejo, the dust stirred up by Leocadio Mendieta's car; but, whether it is 1870 or 1950, life in Tolú does not change. Regardless of the year, the dusty forgotten streets all lead to the cemetery. Everything is run down and stays that way. The mayor's desk leans on one leg. The official typewriter is clogged with dirt. The town smells like a tired burp. Even in the church an odor of cat droppings envelopes the statues and rises from the rotten vestments.

There are negroes, zambos, mulattoes and a few families with a drop or two of English blood. Although the rather stiff Gen. Limógenes may hope that some day the good people of Tolú will teach some respect to the blacks and zambos, that day will never arrive because they are slowly infiltrating even the best families. Thus the good folk of Tolú are a mixture of various races. However, at the fringes of this miscegination, one glimpses a more
exotic society of blacks living in what, from a romantic focus, appears to be less despair and in greater harmony with the environment than the inhabitants of the author's world who have too little to do and too much time in which to do it.

It is very hot in Tolu and the people sit under the thatched roofs or in the patios they share with the pigs and the chickens and slowly die of tuberculosis and boredom. To fill this existential void, they urinate, defecate and slander one another. The children masturbate out of fear and the women as if asking for forgiveness. Men and women fornicate with the ferocity of animals. Héctor Rojas Herazo frequently reminds us of man's similarity to other animals. Nevertheless, in the years of silence and abuse, there are flashes of passion and occasionally, beyond the fear, the prejudice and the absurdities, there is a word of love.

Now and then a stray acrobat or archbishop stops in Tolu and becomes a monument in time. Normally, however, there are very few diversions. Some of the citizens find escape from the boredom and emptiness through religious fervor. Most do no more than occupy their family pews on Sunday. Debauchery is popular and so are the cock fights in which lands and cattle can be won or lost. And of course, everybody enjoys a good wake. The wakes pull all the elements together and the town celebrates its mortality. Thus, in the final analysis, Tolu is a society, the people
who live there belong; and, in spite of the filth and hypocrisy, they intend to stay. One old lady loudly proclaims her hatred of the town but in the same breath vows never to leave. "Maldito pueblo, te odio, te odio con todo lo que soy, pero de aquí no me sacan ni muerta." 6

Therein lies the glory of the town and the people and the justification for an occasional act of compassion.

In En noviembre llega el arzobispo, Tolú emerges as a kind of purgatory on earth while in La picúa cebá, it emerges as a kind of paradise. Some of the difference can be attributed to familiarity. Héctor Rojas describes a Tolú of which he personally was a part, while Lucy Barco de Valderama describes a Tolú that she has seen and admired. Nevertheless, aside from the distortions attributable to either too much or too little familiarity with the real situation, both visions are essentially valid. Nature abundantly provides the necessities of life but tends to destroy everything else. Consequently, it fills some lives and frustrates others.

The Tolú of the blacks in La picúa cebá is not the stifling town of the whites and near whites in En noviembre llega el arzobispo. It is a land blessed by nature—a place where a man can build a hut anywhere he wants, where the beaches and the sea belong to all, where the climate is

benign and there is always something to eat. Here people are only peripherally part of the money economy. Sometimes the people of Tolué and the coastal islands envy the rich tourists who come to buy a few days in the sun. Sometimes they talk of going to the interior to make money, but they rarely go. Something holds them to the land and the sea.

The author constantly contrasts the apparent beauty and dignity of this simple existence with the artificial world of the cities where pollution hides the sun and leaves man with a view of stone and steel, possessed by fears that he himself has created. Let this sick world come to Tolué where black girls, sleek and beautiful, await the blond stranger with his pockets full of money. Sin, Church, Shame and Continence are not part of Tolué. If death comes in the midst of life, so be it. In the meantime, let there be life!

Whether preoccupied with death or captivated by life, Tolué impresses the visitor as a community that will persist in gloom or joy. Such is not the impression left by the other coastal novels.

Macondo, the mythical prototype of all towns in the coastal region began as an illusion. In his first novel, *La hojarasca*, Gabriel García Márquez introduces the town. It was founded by families fleeing the reality of the civil wars and was for them a promised land of peace and bounty. With the banana boom the illusion became, for a moment, a reality. However, with prosperity came new
people, a rabble that fed upon itself, exploiting and contaminating. When the bubble burst, the rabble left. They did not have the will to build or rebuild but only appetites to consume now that which prudence would conserve. Thus they drained Macondo and left the town demoralized.

Habría bastado con salir a los campos estragados por la compañía bañanera; limpiarlos de maleza y comenzar otra vez por el principio. Pero a la hojarasca la habían enseñado a ser impaciente; a no creer en el pasado ni en el futuro. La habían enseñado a creer en el momento actual y a saciar en el la voracidad de sus apetitos.7

Desolate and dying, the town awaits its destiny in the suffocating heat in which nothing is heard but the mutterings of those who hate one another. Except for an occasional meaningless and violent political spasm, the present and the future are a void filled with memories and habits. The people live an habitual, collectively perceptible, present while at the same time floating at different levels of the void depending upon which memories they find themselves reliving.

Cepeda Samudio's conception of the emergence of mass man, and hence the threat of cultural collapse, is relieved by a certain ambiguity. Consequently, while the physical setting is very similar to the towns García Márquez has immortalized, the psychic setting is somewhat different. The town in _La casa grande_ is, like all the other coastal towns, hot, isolated and poor. It lies between the railroad

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station and the sea. On one side of the tracks are the
whorehouses made of wood and covered with rusty sheets of
zinc. The women dance and laugh all night but their houses
are sad. They have no time to plant any flowers. They
simply come one day and leave on another. The worker's
shacks are on the other side of the tracks. They also are
of wood and covered with rusty sheets of zinc, but they
are painted. The workers do not stay long either. They
work hard, drink hard and then leave. Beyond the tracks
the streets slowly broaden as one approaches the plaza.
It is surrounded by the church, the jail, a tavern and the
three big houses of the three big landowning families.
Over the years these families have intermarried, each
death bringing a new division of lands and new hatreds.
Slowly the estates have disappeared and the big houses
now stand alone and defenseless. From the railroad to the
plaza to the sea everything is now covered with layers of
decay and salt. Through the decay, an anonymous company
moves its bananas across town to a dirty sea. There the
bananas disappear.

The movement of the train to and from the sea im-
poses an illusion of stability and function upon the town.
The illusion collapses, however, before the psychic reali-
ties. The town pulsates to the rhythm of hatreds that are
part of its past, present and future. Time seems to engulf
it from all sides and to drag everyone toward destruction.
The workers strike the banana company and in the chaos the
people kill the last symbol of the traditional elite. Ultimately the strike is broken but, although it leaves its aftermath of hate and division within the town, it also leaves a memory of the potential of mass power. Whether the people will use their power, whether they will use it to destroy or to build, are questions the author leaves unanswered.

In *El colonel no tiene quien le escriba*, García Márquez reimposes his unambiguous vision of communities condemned to destroy themselves. The Colonel's town, although much like Macondo, belongs to another generation of dying towns that are suffering the effects of political violence and opportunism. The party that previously enjoyed political office and political favor has been violently replaced by another. Violence is frequently part of the political process because the parties are extensive and personalistic and changes in the locus of power involve a fundamental restructuring of personal relationships and privileges. The Colonel's son died in the most recent upheaval. Many others have been shot, forced to leave or denounced. Now the town lives in fear; there is a curfew which obliges all citizens to be in their homes by eleven o'clock. The funeral procession for the first man to die a natural death in years is not permitted to pass by the police barracks because the new mayor is afraid the friends of the dead man will stage an insurrection. The police raid the billiard parlor for no apparent reason. Clandestine circulars
pass from pocket to pocket because the newspapers have been censored for the last ten years. Now only European news appears in the newspapers.

The young men of the town work at "dead end" jobs, gamble, plot and wait because there is nothing else to do. Friends of the Colonel's dead son help him feed his fighting cock because they see it as a symbol of their opposition. The approaching cockfight thus is more than one man's illusion--it is a whole town's illusion. One senses that these illusions are sterile but fraught with potential disaster.

La mala hora is set in the same unnamed town. In both novels the town exists in a kind of limbo; but in La mala hora the natural, moral, social and political aspects of this limbo are far more explicit. The town, with its bamboo walls and thatched roofs, with monkeys watching its women and rats in its holy water could easily slide back into the jungle because man barely has enough energy to maintain an uneasy stalemate. In this town, where the women are alone while the men roam the back country, Father Angel wages an uninspired war against immoral movies, whoreshouses and infidelity. Meanwhile, his flock, the most conscientious congregation in the whole prefecture according to the good father, sneaks in a back door of the boxed-in weed and popcorn patch that serves as a theatre, lie to him in the confessional and by word and deed abuse one another unmercifully. The previous judge
was shot by three policemen while seated at his desk; and his replacement, sent to establish order but arriving eleven months late, finds his secretary, a dirty old man in slippers, plucking a chicken. Here the post office does not have stamps and the mayor consults a fortune teller. Above all, this is a town where everyone lives convinced that he will someday be killed.

Everybody who can is leaving town, fleeing from the fear which began when the present mayor arrived with three paid killers to establish law and order. However, there is really no place to which to flee. At one point, one of the characters proclaims that the whole country is held together in a cobweb. As the web unravels and the government must once again resort to crude force; there is a perverse sense of elation because violence is part of the natural order. "Había mas bien una sensación de victoria colectiva por la confirmación de lo que estaba en la conciencia de todos: las cosas no habían cambiado."8

Although disaster is foreordained in García Márquez' world, a few basic values remain to forestall the inevitable. Alberto Duque, however, goes one step further and creates a situation devoid of all values. In Mateo el flautista the ambience, both psychic and physical, is the novel. There is not even the suggestion of a plot. Alberto Duque

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simply juxtaposes a collection of grotesque images that negate life and hope. Furthermore, unlike Héctor Rojas Herazo, not even a ray of human persistence or compassion illuminates his vision. In one of the author's more lucid passages, he summarizes the physical setting:

Puerto tiene un muelle en donde llegan los barcos que no entran a Barranquilla y tiene una Iglesia y una plaza y tiene tres calles que mueren en la plaza y del otro lado el sanatorio que queda junto a la plaza y por eso los enfermos salen por la tarde, amarrados; a buscar cangrejos para la comida y tiene un cine y tiene dos casas de putas: a) de 10 pesos; b) de 20 pesos: pero el culo es el mismo porque las mujeres se pasan de una casa a la otra: son del mismo dueño y Puerto tiene como 5,000 habitantes sin contar los soldados que se están huevoneando todo el santo día.

In other passages, the author fills this brief description with odors, filth and brutality because, apparently, these are the only impressions that remain of a childhood spent in Puerto.

The bases and inadequacy of society are denounced throughout the Colombian novel. In an environment so torn by extremes and enervated by despair, a consensus—-a legitimate mandate for action—seems inconceivable. However, the system's very inefficacy may provide hope. In *En Chima nace un santo*, Manuel Zapata Olivella creates a scenario in which a new religion spreads beyond the reach of the authorities.

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Chimá is perched precariously on a small piece of land in the middle of a vast swamp. Here a mestizo race confronts the malevolence of nature. Fevers incubate in the swamp and in the evening giant mosquitos penetrate the huts and suck and poison the blood. Meanwhile, the river eats away at its dry banks and the incessant rains flood the land. When the rains stop and the floods recede, the people emerge from the mud and mould, return to their fields and begin again; but then a perverse nature begins to burn the soil. To complete the endless cycle, the vultures return to circle the land invoking once again the blessed scourge of rain.

In this timeless struggle, man does what he can—and he waits and he hopes. His beliefs give resilience to his stoicism. Superstition and religion are to some extent two contradictions that complement each other. One is a perversion of the other which may be a refinement of the first. In any event, for the chimaleros it is all the same and real. This reality sustains them, constrains them and unites them. Chimá is too poor to generate great social differences and so far from civilization that those who are less poor share the same beliefs and life style as their neighbors. For better or for worse, in ignorance, poverty and isolation, Chimá is a community. To reject the beliefs of one's neighbors is to exclude one's self from the community. Thus popular fantasy becomes reality; and, as candles flicker against damp white tombs and scraps
of purple and black paper flutter from wooden crosses like giant flies, the chimaleros venerate and perpetuate a new reality. They will defy the formal authorities and spread the cult of their saint throughout the backlands.

This is the magic reality of Latin America that Alejo Carpentier would conceptualize and Gabriel García Márquez would popularize. With the publication of Cien años de soledad the concept would become part of reality and Macondo would symbolize the fantastic tragedy that awaits a people that cannot escape itself.

In Cien años de soledad, we see the beginning, the middle and the end of Macondo. In the beginning the land was new. There was not enough wealth to separate people and the birds sang in every patio. Then José Arcadio Buendía began to dream about breaking out of this isolated pristine world to discover the world of progress. Instead, the world discovered Macondo. First a mayor arrived with an order that all houses be painted blue. He had been appointed corregidor by a distant government and, although José Arcadio Buendía informed him that there was nothing in the town that needed correcting, he stayed and Macondo was soon infected with politics. Then a priest arrived and, although José Arcadio professed no need for a priest in a town that had forgotten sin, he stayed to teach the evils thereof. In Macondo, where previously men had not perceived the possibilities for fundamental disagreement, there were now good people and bad people, Liberals and
Conservatives, believers and non-believers. Therefore, when civil war came, Macondo was ready.

The town had been drained and scarred by the wars. A whole generation was killed, wounded or disillusioned. Homes and buildings, after having been painted blue, then red, then blue, then red, then blue, finally acquired a kind of nondescript color. After the revolutionary ideals of land reform, ecclesiastical disestablishment and equal rights for illegitimate children had been betrayed by those seeking personal advantage and power, after the Peace of Neerlandia, there were a few years of tranquility--too few to permit recuperation--and then the technological revolution came to Macondo bringing the railroad which in turn brought Mr. Herbert and the banana boom. Before the astounded macondinos could ask what had happened, the town filled with wooden shacks and strange men.

Some of the strangers, Mr. Herbert and the gringos who came after him, built for themselves a separate section away from the shacks, the rabble, the whores and the bars and surrounded themselves with a high electrified wire fence. In the bright summer mornings the fence was black with scorched swallows. The strangers changed everything. They modified the rains, accelerated the harvests and moved the river. To insure continued progress and to protect themselves and their company, they brought their own politicians, and the barefoot policemen armed with billy-clubs were replaced by professional killers. When the inevitable
strike came, even the army was brought in on the side of the banana company. After the death of some 3,000 strikers and after a tentative agreement to resume work was signed, the endless rains came and the banana company just disappeared.

Macondo was in ruins. Pieces of furniture and dead animals floated in the muddy streets. Junk was all that was left in the wake of the rabble that had invaded the town. All the progress, all the wealth and all the strangers were gone; but the macondinos were happy to have recovered their town. However, the town is dead and it will ultimately just blow away.

Since Macondo is dead, there is nothing real about it; but one suspects that there are other Macondos in various stages of death, possibly a whole nation, maybe a whole civilization of them. The same Macondian cycle of beginning, illusion, disillusion, exploitation, decay and death constantly repeating itself suggests a pathological defect in man or in society.

The Urban Novel

While Colombian novelists prefer a rural setting, the cities cannot be ignored. Furthermore, although many Colombians may retain an essentially rural mentality, many of them now live in the cities and their perspectives are changing. The cities, far more effectively than the rural areas, divide people into classes. Given the separation
between rich and poor, the enormous differences in life styles and the great numbers of people involved, there is a great middle sector in the cities that is occupied by a fairly numerous middle class. Therefore, aside from the obvious differences between urban and rural settings, the most distinctive feature of the urban novel is the separation and isolation of the several social classes.

El despertar de los demonios by Víctor Aragón is a good point at which to begin to trace this phenomenon. The locale is Popayán in the late forties and early fifties. The road to Cali was not yet paved and the city just tottered on the edge of the 20th century.

Mas era una ciudad, con todos los atributos que tenían las ciudades medievales europeas. Se levantaba rotunda en el corazón de un amable paisaje con sus recias construcciones de cantera y ladrillo, con sus cúpulas negras de tiempo y sus anchas calles cuidadosamente empedradas.

In this pleasant atmosphere, life moved slowly and people had time to enjoy it. Nobody seemed to feel the pressure of a job. The women, except the libidinous, were duly sheltered and the men moved between romantic trysts in secluded patios and profound discussions in discreet cafes. There were processions, masses, parties and an occasional unrestrained fling in the whorehouses on the outskirts of town. The brothels attracted men from all social classes and were the most democratic institutions in the town.

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As in a medieval town, a few aristocratic families—or their surrogates—governed Popayán. There were two parties and the spoils of political office passed back and forth. Whether the Liberals or Conservatives were in power made little difference because both represented the oligarchy. Nevertheless, there were divisions within the aristocracy that transcended and confused the political divisions. Men were born Liberals or Conservatives but they soon identified their own self interests and pursued them regardless of party ideology.

Curiously, in a society that placed particular emphasis upon subtlety and dissimulation, political maneuvering and rumor mongering assumed outlandish proportions. When open conflict erupted, the rhetoric became excessive and the action incredibly exaggerated. The battle for control of the university—the city's proudest institution—began over a minor incident but soon the students and faculty were militantly divided among themselves. The narrator was thus disillusioned as he saw the supposedly unanimous commitment of the university to free intellectual inquiry disintegrate.

Pero allí quedó en claro que la aparente unidad de nuestra generación, hasta entonces tan alegranente fraternal y despreocupada, encubría irreconciliables posiciones intelectuales acerca de los conceptos básicos de la vida. De parte nuestra estaban las mentes abiertas, los corazones ajenos al perjuicio ancestral, las voluntades generosas. En la otra
parte se aglutinaban el fanatismo y los instintos exclusivistas y perversos, que en nuestras semirazas latinas se encierran siempre bajo el manto del dogmatismo.\textsuperscript{11}

The confrontation between these two groups produced strikes and counterstrikes, marches and processions, violence and death.

El despertar de los demonios is written from the perspective of an intellectual aristocrat which, implicitly, is the only aristocracy. The relationship of landlords to intellectuals is somewhat blurred because land is the foundation of that which sustains both groups. The rest of the people are either middle class or artisans. Suspended below the best families, the middle class desperately struggles to maintain itself. Clerics, some professionals, many professors and local politicians and many widows and old maids—the men have left in search of better opportunities—belong to the middle class. At an entirely different level the artisans practice their crafts with the same dedication and skill as they have for centuries. The narrator remembers (with nostalgia) the stability and order of this society as he recreates its disintegration, placing the blame on the middle class, in alliance with the clergy, for the collapse of civilized society. Like a cancerous scab, these social climbers fester on the body politic and eventually poison it with their own narrow-mindedness.

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., p. 110.
Although the elite in *El despertar de los demonios* do not share the values of the middle class and although the issues that divide the two classes are more reminiscent of the 19th century than the 20th, the fact that there is conflict suggests that there are numerous points of contact between the two classes. The intellectual aristocracy of Popayán is an integral, albeit more liberal, part of society. This is not the case in *Los elegidos* by López Michelson.

La Cabrera, a wealthy residential suburb of Bogotá, is not part of Colombia but a colony of the Anglo-Saxon world. It looks as if it were built by a British developer and the inhabitants, lacking any fundamental sense of their own identity, try to speak, look and act like Anglo-Saxon prototypes. The American embassy rules La Cabrera through the black list it maintains. In a society in which one's connections are more important than one's abilities, the black list is a terrible thing to contemplate and it effectively enforces Anglofilia in La Cabrera. Thus, although the economic, political and social institutions of Colombia are manipulated from La Cabrera, those who manipulate them have little or no allegiance to the larger Colombia. In fact, the denizens of the upper class suburbs are obsessed by the vision of a wave of European immigration and capital that will transform Colombia into another United States.

Throughout the novel, the isolated Anglicized elite of Colombia reminds the exile from Nazi Germany of
the decadent gallicized aristocracies of Central Europe. The euphoria of the Colombian elite during the easy money war years reminds him of the mood of the petty Balkan aristocracies prior to the holocaust of World War II. Neither open nor closed, capitalist nor socialist, Anglo-Saxon nor Latin, Catholic nor Protestant, La Cabrera combines the worst of all alternatives. The elite absorbs those who threaten its predominance but it ignores those who do not. Capitalism hides behind protective tariffs and oligopolistic trade arrangements. An Anglo-Saxon political façade gives free rein to the Latin penchant for empty rhetoric, demagoguery, dogmatic intolerance and irresponsible individualism. In the Congress and in the streets, everybody goes in a different noisy direction. Finally, Catholicism sustains the dream of a miracle, a gift of grace, salvation, a winning number in the lottery and Calvinism sustains the illusion that the elite are the elect and that they will always win. López Michelson suggests that the ambivalence of its position will eventually destroy La Cabrera.

As previously mentioned, the distance between rich and poor is particularly evident in the urban novel. For example, the setting in Al final de la calle by Oscar Hernández contrasts markedly from that of Los elegidos. As the title implies, Al final de la calle is about life on the edge of a big city. The municipal cemetery lies on one side of the street and on the other a few shops and
shacks struggle to live. The people inside these miserable structures suffer from all kinds of diseases of the human spirit; with no where else to go they infect one another with their misery and depravity. However, dead-end streets like this one perform an important function. They absorb the vices and failures of our great cities. Someday those who live on the edge of the cities will demand payment. They are no longer innocent campesinos seeking refuge; they are sons of the city and they will multiply; they will live off the city and they will destroy it.

Se iniciaba el despertar de los jóvenes que descendían de las cebollas. La tierra fue olvidada y ahora librarian el combate contra el asfalto. Por aquel tiempo la ciudad imaginó que crecería sin pagar sus cuotas, sus diezmos de sangre; y no fue así, porque aquel ejército de gentes que buscaban la vida, la buscaban aun al precio de la muerte.\textsuperscript{12}

Manuel Zapata Olivella describes a similar, but more sensational, street behind the main market in Bogotá. La calle 10 belongs to the lower classes, to the poor of all races, who have fled the violence of the villages but lost themselves in the misery and filth of the cities. During the day the street is a confusion of men pushing, carrying and driving produce to and from the market. Street vendors deposit their merchandise on the sidewalks and in the street. Busses arrive disgorging loads of shoppers. Children filter through the crowds begging, stealing and

\textsuperscript{12}Oscar Hernández Monsalve, \textit{Al final de la calle} (Bogotá, 1965), p. 49.
searching for scraps of food. The permanent residents of the street furtively await another night, late at night, when the street and the garbage will be theirs. As they wait, they beg, and steal and prostitute themselves. If they are lucky, they get drunk in the small dirty taverns or in the cheap dance halls where the daughters and mothers of the street display their deformed bodies.

One man sees his wife die on the street with a sick infant sucking at her breast. Another sees his son cut in two by a truck and shortly thereafter watches his wife, haggard and filthy, fall to the sidewalk and give birth to another child. In the confusion and indifference, these human tragedies are simply part of the confusion, there is no room for human dignity here. Behind the market, the victims of violence, injustice and ignorance, men of all races, are reduced to the same brutishness.

In La calle 10 the poor do not segregate themselves. In Chambacú, however, Zapata Olivella shifts the locus of poverty from Bogotá to Cartagena where race is an important factor in the total picture of social injustice. Chambacú is a black and poor suburb of the city. It lies in the filth between the water and the land. All kinds of buzzing, crawling, scurrying life feeds on the filth. At night the tide rises beneath the wooden shacks, during the day the sun burns into this humid world and all the time there is the smell of poverty and old urine. Only black people, "the black cancer," live here. Chambacú is their land
because the sweat and blood and bones of their ancestors lie below the crust of rice husks and sawdust. The living do not know who the dead men were; in Chambacú men exist without a past. "Solo nos dejan," says one of the characters, "el derecho de tener hijos como a las bestias, pero nada mas . . . Estamos condenados a dispersarnos, a no saber nunca donde moriremos." Without a past even Máximo, the first in his generation to learn to read, has only a tenuous grasp on his own identity and the same fears and sense of inferiority as a frog frightened by the light. This complex, dating from when the first black was cast into the depths of an alien and hard world, is the dominant reality of Chambacú. The absence of schools, electricity, and sewers simply reinforces, by reaffirming the Negro's peripheral social and personal status, the age-old complex.

For many, the only escape from the reality of Chambacú and this crisis of identity is through rum and the wild music of the drum. They kill the smell of decay. They chisel the heat into blocks of ice. They deaden the fear and free the vital juices locked in the black libido. A few men, with the sporadic cooperation of the frustrated but apathetic majority, are struggling to direct this vital energy into more productive channels. Who is to say where delusion lies? In any event, there is movement in Chambacú.

In *La calle 10* and *Chambacú*, Zapata Olivella focuses almost exclusively upon one segment of society—the poor. The rich exist mainly by implication and innuendo. In *Detrás del rostro*, he attempts to draw several segments of society into the picture and his point of view is more diffused but equally distressing. The scene is modern Bogotá. It is a city where the clocks push each other. Automobiles, frenetic machines that breed anxiety, race down narrow streets. Men in worn *ruanas* come to the city to escape the violence of the countryside only to discover that here the people have no time for them nor time to wonder why a small boy lies inert on the sidewalk. The city relies on professionals to handle those who do not fit in or cannot keep up with everybody else. The professionals, the bureaucratic authorities, go about their impersonal business in big ugly buildings. In these buildings, the mothers and wives of those who have fallen into the hands of the authorities clamor before the impenetrable walls and impassive faces of the bureaucracy. Finally, hidden in their separate worlds, there are children who are pampered and spoiled and thousands more who are homeless and hungry.

Like *Al final de la calle*, *Al pie de la ciudad* is about a slum on the outskirts of a big city. However, as in *Detrás del rostro*, it also reveals the antiseptic comfort of life in the city among the fairly well-to-do.
Thus, Mejía Vallejo contrasts the two worlds for maximum effect.

"Los Barrancos" is where the refugees from the city meet the refugees from the country. It could be outside of any big city in Latin America. It is an ugly disgrace that will not disappear. "Los Barrancos" sends beggars, thieves, prostitutes to the city. They wander about buying and selling junk, stealing and cheating in order not to die completely. The good people of the city are scandalized by their existence but cannot ignore them. Consequently, they send priests to "Los Barrancos" to renounce violence and promise eternal rewards. Bureaucrats and politicians pass through when necessary to talk about improvements. Journalists come to document the misery and tourists come to see how picturesque it is. Finally, day in and day out, the city sends its sewage through "Los Barrancos."

Life in the city is an endless struggle to keep up or to stay ahead. In the process, one loses one's soul. In contrast, life in "Los Barrancos" destroys both body and soul. One sees the same ignorance, sickness, idleness and drunkenness everyday. The children absorb this environment, it is the only education they receive. Paradoxically, in such dehumanizing promiscuity, life is terribly lonely. In the depths of their misery and shame, people do not talk to one another and cannot console one another. However,
one silent passion unites them—they want revenge; they are waiting for the revolution.

Whereas Mejía Vallejo contrasts two extremes, Clemente Airó fills in the space between the extremes and remembers a time when the differences, if not less noticeable, were possibly less objectionable.

Not very long ago, Bogotá was a small city. A man could walk from one end of town to the other in an hour. A beggar remembers the old days with nostalgia. Then life was tranquil. The gentlemen were gentlemen and the ladies, ladies. Now a man cannot drive from one end of town to the other in an hour and the gentlemen and ladies have turned into vulgar materialists. The daughters of Jewish, Polish or Syrian shopkeepers are joining the social clubs. Money and a fair skin are the only prerequisites. In these clubs the girls meet marriageable men, men who are 10 or 15 years older and who have proven themselves in the struggle for survival. Love is not necessarily part of the mating process.

In an age in which traditional values have become empty slogans and a new value system has yet to emerge, money fills the vacuum. With money one can buy things the value of which is then ascribed to the owner of the things. In the process, the world has been filled with useless trash. Man's values, his social mores, cannot keep up with the pace of material change. The politicians maintain an illusion by incessantly talking about the need for social
readjustments. However, when it is time for action they only serve those on top. In the midst of all the things, all the talk, all the new buildings, the broad avenues and the progress, young beggars sleep in the streets of Bogotá. On the outskirts, shanty towns cling to slopes that become mud slides during the winter rains. Still the people pour into these slums faster that the rains wash them away. Countless thousands have been robbed of their land and they have nowhere else to go.

It is not good manners to talk about La Violencia among the decent people of Bogotá. This is a society that has learned to delay action and thus evade problems. But the rich are as guilty of dispossessing these thousands of refugees that crowd into the city as the local cacique, the local bandit or the local police chief. Their money sustains the market for lands stolen or bought at miserable prices from peasants who have been terrorized or taxed off the land. Guilt, individual and collective, direct and indirect, is part of the environment in Bogotá. Only a new generation, educated in new and better universities, inculcated with humanistic values, can expiate this guilt. The country depends upon this new generation of professionals for the revolution that has to come. In short, it depends upon a modernizing middle class.

In Los años de la asfixia by José Stevenson, however, the new generation gives up after a very brief and meaningless struggle. At first, full of enthusiasm, the
students unite in defense of university autonomy and against governmental meddling with student bus fares and entrance requirements. However, the government breaks the demonstration with machine-gun fire and the students flee never to regroup again. Instead, at least for those in the novel, the disaster serves to justify subsequent cynicism. After a brief moment of honor and illusions, reality is the public relations man who says that the aspirations of man is not his concern. Rather, the investigation of market conditions based on scientifically proven social facts is what interests him. He looks upon aspirations as part of the input in his market analysis. Here is the voice of the times: you have to know the facts not to change them but to take advantage of them.

Daily La Violencia claims new victims. Women still wash clothes in the river and the poor continue to crowd into the outlying slums. Good looking secretaries have a brighter future than good students. Poor students from good families succeed while good students from poor families do not. Street vendors, beggars and revolutionaries dominate the downtown streets. In the middle class suburbs, however, the streets are quiet because the bourgeoisie are locked in their own little worlds with their own little problems. Young professionals can afford parties and booze but they do not seem to be in a position to consider marriage. These are facts. In the bars and cafes the erstwhile students lament these facts. As they go from party to
party in taxis or cars, they contemplate the people of Bogotá scurrying about in the rain. While they look for theoretical solutions, they do absolutely nothing.

Aquí todo es artificial, y mientras buscamos una salida, sólo tenemos la alternativa de llenarnos la panza de alcohol, escandalizar beatas con el sexo y hablar y hablar en todos los cafés de lo bello que sería este país si nuestra generación suplantara a todos los vejetes que creen que esto es Grecia. 11

El terremoto by Germán Pinzón is the only novel explicitly set in a middle class home. In Colombia the middle class is particularly vulnerable since it is neither the dominant nor the most numerous class. A slip in class standing could be disastrous. Not many years ago a man could not ride a new municipal bus if he wore overalls or a ruana. Consequently, a middle class family has to be careful about appearances. Even the dogs have to be watched because they too, by an intricate association of ideas, could blemish the honor of a middle class home. Behind this façade of respectability, life is quite barren. Squabbles over money are a constant theme around the family table. Job insecurity and dissatisfaction add to the tension. Still, somehow or other, the children are sent to private schools and the family employs— at a subsistence wage—a maid. These two symbols help sustain the family's social position. The home, however, is an empty shell.

11 José Stevenson, Los años de asfixia (Buenos Aires; 1969), p. 15.
Pinzón, obviously, does not see these middle class homes as positive factors in the modernizing process.

Upon reflection, the home, whether lower, middle or upper class, rarely emerges as a vital institution in any of the novels. Except for Guayacán and possibly Manuel Pacho, the family is not a source of spiritual and moral strength. On the contrary, for the wealthy it is a name to be perpetuated and for the poor it is a mirror of their misery. Funerals far outnumber weddings, birthdays or holidays. Infidelity and petty bickering outweigh love and compassion. Nevertheless, a perverse concept of family honor can drive men to murder.

The weaknesses of the primary social unit extend throughout society. There really is no source of spiritual or moral strength. The Church, either because of convenience or necessity, has chosen the easy road and only an occasional priest dares to preach love. The economic institutions, often only dimly outlined, are predatory oligopolies frequently dominated from abroad. They inspire no hope nor do they seem to be relevant to the developmental process. The emphasis in most of the novels is on the division rather than the creation of wealth. Unfortunately, the only alternative—the public sector—offers less hope. From drunken judges in their mouldy offices through corrupt mayors in equally disreputable circumstances through a distant pack of congressmen and bureaucrats to the ultimate
arbiter of the national will—the army, the political institutions are riddled with incompetence and corruption. Although governmental inefficiency could conceivably foster self-initiative or at least not stifle it, the centralization of the system seems to frustrate individual responsibility.

The impression grows that this may be the natural order of things. Possibly the heat, the rain, the altitude, the perpetual summer or the perpetual autumn impose a preordained stagnation upon society. In this atmosphere, change is not constructive or relevant, it simply confounds the fundamental process of decomposition. This would account for the frequent confusion in temporal relationships—the fact that many characters sense that the world is either standing still or going around in circles. At a subsistence level, nature may appear somewhat prodigal as in La picúa cebá. Or, in a comfortable 19th century setting, it may appear bucolic as in El despertar de los demonios. In the modern world, however, beauty has been obliterated as in Timbalí and only hostile elements remain constantly to repeat themselves.

In such an environment, the individual is alone. The natural and social forces do not encourage him to build but to abuse and destroy. Such a situation inevitably involves violence. Is the individual guilty, is society guilty or is God guilty? The question recalls the three basic thematic approaches discussed previously.
CHAPTER V

CHARACTERS AS CLASS AND FUNCTIONAL SYMBOLS

In most of the novels under consideration, man confronts a cruel world. Frequently the confrontation is motivated by thematic considerations; sometimes the setting dominates the author's vision; only rarely does the individual character emerge as the dominant factor. Nevertheless, only man breathes life into the situation and the setting. Weak, tragic, cruel or comic, he demands recognition. Whether flat or round, whether free or chained to an inexorable determinism, he remains the dynamic factor.

A few characters--those that exist beyond their social position or function--have already been introduced and, insofar as they dominate the novels in which they appear, they have been analyzed. However, like the cast in a morality play, most of the characters exist in terms of their roles in society. They carry heavy signs that tell the reader who they are, what they are and whether they are good or bad. In fact, with a few minor changes, many of them appear in novel after novel as if there were an almost classical limitation upon the cast of characters. Because of their fundamental simplicity, some of them make a strong, straightforward impression upon the reader. They emerge as
prototypes and in this chapter they will be analyzed accordingly; that is, as representative rather than unique. In this context, the most meaningful classifications are social and functional. The latter emerge in brief glimpses throughout the literature but social distinctions and conflicts are most clearly revealed within the separate novels.

Characters as Class Symbols

In Los elegidos, López Michelson introduces a broad collection of wealthy characters. They are all "good people" and all on the make. They have to be because La Cabrera is open to all who play the money game. The best people date their fortunes, and hence their position in the plutocracy, back to the 19th century exploitation of gold or cinchona. Then come those who made money in coffee, next those who bought the government's monopoly of the liquor industry and, most recently, the textile people and the merchants. The reader meets one of these newcomers, a Señor Castañeda, heir to a toilet fixture empire but unfortunately involved in a sensational squabble for control of the family patrimony.

The "good people" play a kind of musical chairs, moving from party to party, country home to country home, club to club, in a frenetic effort to consolidate and improve their social position. They feed on whiskey, rumors, connections and deals. Now, in the midst of the Second World War, the speculators and manipulators are having
their day. Diego Láynez, an affable stockbroker, ready to help a friend but also ready to drop one if necessary, wheels and deals in stocks and proxies. Pérez, a shrewd and ambitious young lawyer, uses his political connections to corner the market in essential commodities. Money captivates these men while it alienates their wives. Pérez' wife, Mercedes, threatens to take a lover unless her husband buys her a horse. She probably has a lover already but she also gets a horse for appearances sake. In a country without divorce, one has to adjust to the circumstances. The young girls, on the other hand, fascinated by material comfort and position, throw themselves at the "gringos". Unfortunately, both the men and the women are totally absorbed by the exotic world they have created for themselves. They live in blissful ignorance of, or indifference to, the misery and poverty on the fringes of the city. They are blind because they refuse to see. Since they have total power, they are totally responsible for the misery, cupidity and injustice that prevails.

In Al final de la calle, Oscar Hernández contemplates the victims of man's social irresponsibility. Unlike the ladies and gentlemen of La Cabrera whose animal instincts are camouflaged by several layers of sophistication, the denizens of the deadend streets snap at the world in dumb anger. Like rats, the young men are greedy and sly.¹

¹Oscar Hernández Monsalve, Al final de la calle (Bogotá, 1965), p. 22.
They live in filth, are sleek and agile, steal at night and have no compassion. They have been fighting to stay alive since childhood. They work at night and spend the day swapping holy medals, defecating, fornicating, smoking, drinking.

The old men are like solemn old fish. They hide from the sun and are wall-eyed with alcohol. Alcohol for old men, dope for the young. Anesthetics to deaden the pain of emptiness, failure and death. No longer able to violate the young girls on their way to school or the factory, the patriarchs of violence drink. Surfeited with brutal pleasures, they contemplate the world through bloodshot eyes.

Women are things to these men, good for sex when young and for peeling potatoes when old. To the storekeeper, a man living in a timeless gloom between tomatoes and a cash register, all women look bad and smell like soiled bedding. To Daniel, the cynical pawnbroker, everybody looks and smells bad—including himself. They all live like dogs and should eat like dogs. He does and likes it. There are a few exceptions. Ana, the wife of a ruined tailor, is a good woman. She still has the capacity to love people. Tipimoti, Ana's nephew, is innocent. He sings and works. He accepts what he needs and nothing more. Tortuga is another good man. He is a son of God and lives for his God. These exceptions, idiots in a crazy environment, symbolize the potential dignity of man. Like the others on this forgotten corner, they have no future;
but unlike them, they have inner resources of faith and esthetic sensitivity to sustain them. However, the problem for Oscar Hernández is not that there are so few saints—there always will be only a few—but that there are so many corners spawning so many losers.

Zapata Olivella does not merely denounce the rich or bemoan the ugliness of poverty; he calls for a revolution. In his novel, *La calle 10*, the saints are revolutionaries, not Christians. It is difficult to be virtuous in the jungle behind the market. It is a cruel and indifferent world, but the poor are not responsible for the system that created and perpetuates the cruelty. The mothers who throw their daughters to the wolves are only victims of the rich who have imposed upon them a yoke of hunger. The priests who teach the people how to pray but not how to read, who insist upon the respect of the poor, who from the church towers fire upon the masses clamoring for justice, are responsible. The officer who, confronted by the heroic determination of the people, gives the order to fire on the rabble and then forces the conscripts to obey at the point of a gun is responsible. The police inspector who protects the rich from the disgusting sight of the poor, who robs the poor of the bodies of their dead in order to supply the medical school with cadavers, who suspects the poor of every crime and the rich of none, is responsible. The manager of the central market who drains the peddlers and concessionaires with taxes but provides no service,
who does not have the strength to impose some kind of order and justice in the market, who has no sense of personal responsibility, is guilty. The señorito who sneaks down to La calle 10 for some cheap love, although he wants it washed before he buys it, is responsible for the whore who sells herself while hating him for his phony manners and pretty smells. The politicians who call themselves defenders of the poor but who are afraid to give them power, who betray the people and leave them leaderless, are responsible. Even the librarian, a type Zapata Olivella must have encountered quite frequently when he—like one of the characters in the novel—was a poor student unable to buy his textbooks and dependent upon the library, is responsible for the unnecessary inflexibility of her domain. Like the rest of the middle class, she hides behind her petty job; but, when the revolution comes fear will shatter her arrogance and she will proclaim herself one of the poor.

¡Ah, ratas miserables! ¿Cuándo serán capaces de robar valerosamente? Usted es de los que se esconden detrás de una oficina para robarnos, para dejarnos morir de hambre y en una ocasión como esta, dicen llenos de miedo: 'yo soy de los de abajo'.

The only people not responsible for the system are those most victimized by it. Consequently, if there is to be a revolution, the poor will have to make it. Children, like the one born on the sidewalk and named after the slain

\[2\text{Manuel Zapata Olivella, La calle 10 (Bogotá, } \sqrt{?} \text{), p. 104.}\]
Mamatoco, will inspire their fathers to fight harder. Men like the poet Tamaya will seriously prepare for the revolution rather than just play at denouncing the system. Men like Rengifo, the ex-policeman who discovered that first of all he is a son of the poor, will lead others to join their brethren. Laboriel, the poor medical student, will treat the wounded. Some of the poor, like the ex-whore Rosita, will die in the struggle; but many of the characters in *La calle 10* are prepared to do just that.

In *Detrás del rostro*, Zapata Olivella looks at the gap between rich and poor from a different angle but sees the same bridgeless void. On one side are the abandoned children—grotesque little clowns in baggy tattered clothes. Barefoot and hungry, orphans of violence, escapees from the pathological cruelty of desperate parents, rejects from the charity wards or dupes to Hollywood's lure to wanderlust, they live on what they can steal or on what people give, and each day they give less. These homeless waifs constitute a problem and society has delegated its responsibility to a grossly inadequate bureaucracy.

The bureaucrats simply forget that people exist as individuals. They are deaf to a doctor's pleas for medicine for the children in the juvenile prison. They do not hear the mothers begging them to have mercy on their sons. They are blind to the sexual abuses committed upon the younger prisoners by the older ones. Nevertheless, when the reader
comes face to face with a particular bureaucrat, he finds that he, too, is a victim of indifference and injustice. Solanito, a prison guard, is sadistic because he himself has been wounded deeply by society.

Occasionally, the comfortable burgher stumbles upon misery; but, as in the case of the wealthy lawyer, Octavio Guzmán, when the victim does not respond as expected to his benefactor's clumsy charity, the good burgher abandons him. Love might have saved the nameless boy in Detrás del rostro, but vengeance will surely eliminate the problem. In Al pie de la ciudad, Manuel Mejía Vallejo suggests that there is no other solution because both rich and poor are conditioned by their environments and branded by their roles.

In the slums, life begins with a flash of passion, a brief escape and ends with another mouth to feed. Between the city and the slums, the beginning is a rape, a few pesos or a dream, and then life without a father. In the city, it begins with an alliance between an established doctor and a woman whose negotiating position is about to deteriorate. The children that are born of these alliances are expected; the others are mistakes.

Among the poor, innocence is very fragile. "Los niños aprenden del amor en bruto, de la procacidad, de los vicios. No los asusta la muerte, nada los asusta. Ni siquiera la vida." A father's silent, helpless love

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3 Manuel Mejía Vallejo, Al pie de la ciudad (Buenos Aires, 1958), p. 27.
symbolizes the real agony of poverty. He knows the options open to his son. He can join the roaming bands of homeless, hungry boys. He may grow up to be another derelict like the beaten men who blind themselves with alcohol so as not to see their children's swollen stomachs. Perhaps he will grow up and learn to fight back only to be killed by the men the city employs to execute its implacable justice. A little girl faces a similar range of possibilities. Now she is a professional first communicant in search of gullible sponsors but soon she will grow out of that role. If she is pretty, she will seek the world of the dime romances and, warped by the contradictions between her dreams and her opportunities, she will destroy herself. Probably, like most of the women in her world, however, she will couple with some derelict and condemn herself to a life without hope. Her spirit will be imprisoned by poverty and ultimately die in the daily search for bread.

In the city, in Dr. Arenas' house, the alternatives are more pleasant but equally inescapable. The rich are in a cage built of their own pretensions. Dr. Arenas proclaims his decency as if it were a birth defect. His life is routine and his soul is dead. His wife, on the other hand, is sustained by the struggle to maintain her virtue; but, as her beauty fades, she finds the struggle meaningless and gives up. She has an affair to save her husband's political reputation and, closer to the truth, to feel like a woman. However, the doctor and his wife do not have the
resilience of the poor. They cannot carry on after their routine has been shattered. Whereas the poor are defeated, the rich simply lose. Meanwhile, the potentates of the world, those who wrote the rules, who built the slums and the gilded cages, complacently contemplate their handiwork. Nothing can stop progress.

In the city the confrontation is impersonal and the question of guilt somewhat complicated. In the smaller towns, however, the separation is less great and the problem of identifying the enemy not so involved. In La rebelión de las ratas, Fernando Soto Aparicio describes the confrontation as it applies to a small mining town.

Men like Rudecindo Cristancho, dirty and haggard, have immigrated to the town in search of a dream—a decent living for himself and his family. Cristancho, as the name implies, is a good man. He loves his family, he works hard, he deprives himself to provide for them, and suffers deeply the misery of their lives. The spectre of their misery forces him into the mines. In the dark shafts, where the air strangles a man and the foremen drive him beyond endurance, he hopes to earn enough to climb out of the poverty he has known all his life. However, he soon realizes that as a miner he has even less chance to exist like a human being than he had as a peon. The patrón at least knew him and spoke his language, but now he is a number and the "gringos" yell at him in a foreign tongue. More to the point, in the country a man could always find something to
eat, while in Timbali a man and his family can starve to death. Money, always a problem, now becomes an obsession. The rich give too little and ask too much. Fat, happy and rude, the "gringos" slowly drive Rudecindo Cristancho to despair, rebellion and death. Still he hates them less than his fellow Colombians who help the foreigners exploit him. The foremen are sadistic renegades, the mayor is a corrupt lackey, the storekeeper is a lecherous old man who trades on Cristancho's poverty to abuse his daughter. Thus in Timbali, Cristancho knows the enemy, they have faces and names, he can touch them and he can destroy them. This knowledge and the possibility of acting in concert with others is what differentiates Rudecindo Cristancho from Siervo Joya.

Siervo Joya is a campesino. He loves the land but owns none. He accepts without question his position at the bottom of the rural pyramid because that is precisely where he has always been. From here, Siervo can understand his neighbor's hunger and accept the consequences. Dumb, gullible and basically decent, Siervo is convinced of his own inferiority. He was born an indio mugroso and wherever he goes he is called a filthy Indian. When he was in the army, he thought that the officers had the right to shoot dumb Indians like himself. In contemporary sociological terms, Siervo has been niggerized. Consequently, he does not ask for much and his wife, Tránsito, asks for even less.
Eduardo Caballero Calderón does not belabor the question of guilt. He lets the politicians, patrón, priest and all the others who take advantage of Siervo act for themselves, which is to say, as if Siervo did not really exist. The landlord is interested either in making money off the land or selling it, the priest is only concerned that Siervo conform to the formalities of the mating process, the politicians use Siervo as cannon fodder in the local political battles and the whole community abuses Siervo's good will, gullibility and servility. Consequently, the Siervos of the countryside are being slowly pushed off the land they love. Like Rudecindo Cristancho, they are drifting to the cities and a new breed of campesino, personified by Don Floro, is beginning to emerge.

Don Floro is far smarter, and far less charitable, than Siervo. He has risen in local politics to the point where he can get a government loan. As a man who delivers votes and grows a lot of tobacco, he receives special consideration from the landlord concerning land and water rights. Don Floro, in short, is a man on the move. To mark his progress, he has cultivated a sparse mustache and decorated his mouth with two gold teeth. Thus while the patrón may not be all white and Siervo may not be all Indian, Don Floro is definitely neither.

In Caín, Caballero Calderón gives a more fully developed example of the species. Don Polo Rodríguez is a wealthy Don Floro. He also is a somewhat disillusioned
old man. All his life he has sought the power and wealth that he so admired as a young man. Now, wealthy and powerful, he finds that he still cannot impress those whom he has dispossessed. They were on top when there were fewer on top and when those down below knew their places. Now, the world he sought to conquer, the world of the patrón, seems about to disappear and Don Polo is oppressed by the suspicion that he arrived too late. Nevertheless, and for the time being, "El Paraíso" belongs to him.  

The old families are disintegrating. In La casa grande, the Padre symbolizes the last of the old patrones. At sixty, he is still hard and strong. He still dominates his family, the women he buys and the people who serve him. "Cuando hable la voz del Padre será espera, autoritaría, hecha de dar órdenes siempre. No hay ternura en el Padre. Pero tampoco hay torpeza. Es implacable pero no hay venganza ni amargura en él."  


However, his power was based on false premises.

No pudo resistir cuando sopló un viento fuerte y acre y podrido y extranjero—que no resistió porque no estaba construido sobre valores perfectamente establecidos sino sobre tradiciones débiles y cansados—había que reconstruir.6

When the Padre is killed, the illusion is broken. The family does not have the vitality to reassert itself nor the flexibility to adapt.

The collapse of the old order is a recurrent theme in several of García Márquez' novels. In La hojarasca, one old man is left to restrain the rabble. In El colonel no tiene quien le escriba, another old man slowly starves to death in mute testimony to the demise of an older morality.

Cien años de soledad is, at one level, a history of the rise and deterioration of a patriarchal family. Nostalgia may have somewhat blurred the image of the patrón but with his disappearance, there is no longer any restraint upon the cacique.

In a few novels, lost in the wasteland between the rich and the poor, a classless mass of men and women face the land of the rich, follow the rules and walk an endless treadmill. Clemente Airó describes the obstacles they face. Smooth, tactful men like Don Ricardo control all the power and they are very careful. They use ambitious politicians like Pedro Bermúdez to divert the masses and unscrupulous men like Armando to fan the flames of violence in the

6Ibid., p. 53.
countryside and then buy up abandoned farms. It is a dan-
gerous game and Don Ricardo senses that he is beginning to
lose control, that he has unleashed forces that can no
longer be contained. But, his people are still in power
and he still knows what strings to pull when the young men
he uses become too greedy. His daughter, Patricia, is just
like her father. Her beauty, wealth and amorality attract
men and she enjoys them. For a husband, however, she picks
a man who can keep her on top and whom she can control.

Armando, nursing the bitterness of a bastard child-
hood would sell his mother to get on top. As he says, he
has not come to cry about honor; he has come to avenge him-
self. Ramón, on the other hand, has recently graduated in
engineering and wants to build. If he does not get a chance,
and soon, Carlos Camacho thinks he will fight. One suspects,
however, that Ramón will be easily diverted and compromised
if and when he does find a job. Some young men sense that
the search itself is a capitulation and simply drop out of
sight or marry someone like Leonor, the wife of a middle
aged dropout, who will keep them from falling into the abyss
of total poverty.

Leonor and her husband Vicente epitomize the tragic
dilemma of the middle class--conformity or alienation.
Vicente refused to conform but he had no alternative direc-
tion to follow. Consequently, he punished himself with
alcohol and the world with cheap cynicism. Then, for one
brief moment, in the midst of a mass demonstration, he
sensed a ray of hope. The people were ready for a revolution. He joined them and in joy marched and yelled until he was trampled to death when the police opened fire. Leonor reached the end along a different road. She was an artist and felt that her talent would ultimately be recognized. It never was, however. As she slowly slid into fourth rate musical groups and lessons for the daughters of the wealthy, as she buried her inspiration in the daily struggle to maintain her home, she realized that she never had a chance. After Vicente’s death, she emigrated to the United States. Flying over Bogotá, she marveled at the insignificance of her battlefield. The struggle had not been worth the effort.

Curiously, alienation extends into the upper class as well. They too must conform or rebel. Carlos Camacho, son of one of the best families, was forced to marry wealth in order to sustain the family position. Now, in expiation and comfort, he refuses to play the power game his position permits. Instead, he teaches young men the importance of truth, beauty, freedom and love. He believes that, firmly committed to these concepts, the new generation will break the chains of conformity that bind all Colombians and open the doors to self-fulfillment. Whether the revolution be peaceful or violent, he believes that it is inevitable. Frankly, however, except for Ramón, who is far from militant, one doubts whether sufficient evidence has been provided to substantiate the belief that young
professionals will lead the revolution. The impression is left that the anonymous mass of people, goaded by injustice rather than inspired by visions of truth and beauty, will overwhelm the system. In the street demonstration, Vicente sensed the power of the people. Eventually, they will assume their responsibility. Until they do, they must share the guilt.

Where Clemente Airó sees hope in the young professionals, José Stevenson finds total alienation. As if addressing Airó, the principal character in *Los años de asfixia* cries, "Y abajo ese mismo cielo azul, verás desfilar, con toda su furia contenida, a los ángeles frustrados y reconocerás a más de uno que has amado." Camilo sells his loyalty to one firm and then to another. Nestor opts for Venezuela where the dollars come more easily. Higinio, the fiery student politician is part of the government now. And the hero, Víctor, exists on his transcendental disillusion. He also shortchanges the whores. Another generation has succumbed to reality.

Víctor is the only character explored from within. The rest are only seen and heard occasionally. The young girls seem nice, some even pretend to understand. The whores are wiser, they know that life is a pigpen. The older women, like the men, are hypocritical. They pander

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their virtue and their friendship. Hypocrisy, artificiality and servility permeate the society. The politicians, even the opposition, are creatures of the dictatorship and of their own ambitions. They all plead for peace and restraint while the government's assassins run wild. The leaders of the business world are just as bad. The men who sit in the board rooms are robots, standing and bowing to the man with the dollars, cultivating connections or women in the dimly lit bars and decrying the disorderliness and slovenliness of their fellow Colombians.

In *El terremoto*, a middle class Colombian emerges with particular clarity. Outwardly Jorge exemplifies the qualities of good citizenship but inwardly he is very dis-orderly and slovenly. In fact, Jorge's lack of character is the plot. As far as the narrator is concerned, Jorge belongs to a race of dead men, in drab grey suits, marching the streets of Bogotá, too weak to live or die. Jorge himself probably agrees with this assessment but he evades personal responsibility for the shape he is in. He says that he never had a chance to live because his act was predetermined long before he came upon the scene. Then it was just a question of learning the part that society had prepared for him. First he learned about fear. From childhood, he remembers he has always been afraid. Little by little, day by day, he has taken his doses of fear until he is now half dead. Through fear he learned to conform, to speak softly, to smile at the right time, to
marry to protect a girl's honor. Occasionally he dreamed of escaping his fate, of doing something remarkable, but fear and conformity always held him back. Through marriage, his wife has become the guardian of his failure, like the others of her species, she is built like a trap and he, like the others of his species, fell in. Thus, before he escaped from the prison of his childhood, he was locked into another. Now, each day, he is destined to carry his load of fear, failure and family on his back and each day it is harder to stand up straight. He cannot even complain with vigor but whimpers and affects a brave smile. In grandiloquent self-pity, he calls upon the world to contemplate the man it has made.

Jorge's wife, Helena, also suffers as she watches him drag his way through life, confronting each day with a conviction of failure. She knows that he blames her but she wonders what she has done to him. She nurses his failure, she makes a home for him, she puts up with the odors of his hang-overs and tries to touch him, to show some compassion, but he rejects her. It has been three months since they have copulated and then only as strangers. Each day she knows she is getting older, uglier and more lonely.

Jorge, in the meantime, is involved in a sordid little affair with the family's ex-maid, Graciela. She is a perfectly defenseless pet and he takes complete advantage of her. However, in the tradition of the heroic victim, she is the strongest character in the novel. Faced with a
world that does not know love, abused since she can remem-
ber, too poor to provide for the son Jorge gave her, she
has the strength to commit suicide. Jorge and Helena, on
the other hand, just continue to exist not because they
persevere but because they are too weak to do otherwise.

In the anonymity of the large cities, Jorge and
Helena can escape responsibility. However, in the small
cities, where the class boundaries have not yet been clearly
established, one sees that the middle class, the petty
bourgeois mentality, has played a very important part in
forging the chains of conformity and fear.

In _El despertar de los demonios_, Víctor Aragón
captures a city on the threshold of middle class tyranny.
In the beginning, a kind of intellectual aristocracy con-
trols the city. With the "doctor" as their mentor, they
endlessly discuss questions of such great social signifi-
cance as the transmigration of souls, the evolution of a
priestly caste, clairvoyance and various other topics of a
mystical nature. Comfortable, secure and condescending,
they are firmly committed, in theory, to the concept of
free thought. However, as they promote the institutions,
concepts and prejudices inherent in the free thought
syndrome, they arouse forces that do not share their opin-
ions and values.

As one might suspect, the challenge to the cultural
dominance of the intellectual elite comes from the middle
class. For generations they have sacrificed to mimic
elitist values and now they refuse to accept elitist dictated changes. Thus, at a crucial point in the evolution of the city, the forces of fear and conformity, spearheaded by an absurd collection of narrow old spinsters and incredibly inept priests, win control. This is a significant moment in what seems to be a trend toward ever greater popular participation but all Víctor Aragón sees are the stupid, vulgar, narrow, outlandish middle class matrons pushing their way into his world.

Gabriel García Márquez sees much the same thing but he calls the emerging characters a rabble. In La hojarasca, they are crowded outside ready to pounce on one old man—a colonel—who aspires to a higher sense of values. Fear and hate unite the rabble in a faceless and nameless mass of people locked within themselves; each element of the mob is both blind and invisible. Isabel, the old man's daughter, prays that her son will be a human being but in vain because within him flows his father's blood and his father was just a shadow who appeared and then disappeared.

In Cien años de soledad, García Márquez does not juxtapose good and bad characters, instead, he contemplates the fundamental problem—man. In Macondo, a land of mirrors, man's first sin is egotism. There is only one escape from the loneliness man imposes upon himself. Only through love can he begin to escape. Through the Buendía's, García Márquez portrays man's difficulty in breaking out of
himself, finding himself more completely and recreating himself.

Col. Aureliano Buendía gave all the love he had to Remedios. When she died, his love died. The countless women he subsequently met in the desert of love were simply a dull memory the following day. The sons he had from these couplings barely existed. Amaranta, the Buendía most able to love and most tempted by incest, died unfulfilled in a tremendous battle between her boundless passions and her invincible fear. José Arcadio, with tremendous sexual qualifications, sold himself to the highest bidder. The Buendías begot children out of whores, but, for a century, since the incestuous marriage of José Arcadio Buendía and Ursula Iguarán, love itself has been fruitless. Finally, once again through incestuous love, a baby is born. Apparently incest, the relationship closest to self love, is the most complete love of which man is capable. It is also ultimately fatal.

Loneliness, egotism, irreconcilable passions, condition man's struggle with life and slowly wear him down. Pilar Ternera, Macondo's first and last substitute for love, was a whore, fortune teller and Celestina to five generations of Buendías. There was no mystery in the heart of a Buendía that was impenetrable for her. A century of cards and experiences had taught her that the history of the family was a series of irreparable repetitions, a
spinning wheel that would turn until eternity if it were not for the progressive deterioration of the axis.  

Manuel Mejía Vallejo shares García Márquez' conviction that the fundamental problem is man. However, without returning to the simplistic dichotomies of the social militants, he has created a few characters who are struggling toward a solution. Father Barrios is a good man and was raised by good people. His parents were a point of reference throughout his life. Work, decency, the quiet fulfillment of one's duty. Few words, correct actions, sobriety in happiness and suffering. It disturbs Father Barrios that people call him a saint. Sanctity comes from a terrible struggle within oneself and he has never known temptation. Pedro Canales, on the other hand, is a bad man. He is a man of the flesh and calls to the flesh. A devil-man, he can lead a soul to damnation. Black boots, black hat, black horse, what is not black in Pedro Canales? He is a rebel not because he hates injustice but because he loves violence. The town without Canales was dead, with him life was a threat, a complete surrender like suicide. These are the two extremes. The rest of the characters, without the inhuman strength to be all good or bad, fall somewhere between these two extremes.

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8 García Márquez, Cien años, p. 334.
and allow themselves to be captured by the world around them.

A child, even Daniel who has seen violence, dreams good dreams; but, the doors that open for him and the resounding phrases that bombard him will frustrate those dreams and yet leave him free to destroy himself. Father Barrios foresees his fate.

Y le parecieron injustas las respuestas que se le daban, los caminos que se le abrían, las sentencias que se le pronunciaban, la libertad a que tenía derecho, aquella horrosa libertad que dan la carencia de responsabilidades, el ocio, el mando sin escrúpulos, la obediencia sin fe, el general fracaso: una libertad extenuada y cruel.9

The child grows up, in desperation he finds a role, an anchor, a false identity, and he loses his dream. The institutions flatten men instead of helping them to discover themselves; they confuse them with the function they perform or the role they are assigned.

Nevertheless, a few characters have not surrendered completely. They maintain, however weakly, the tension between moral integrity or perversity and spiritual death. Curiously, society gives the overt sinner greater freedom to redeem himself, or less opportunity to delude himself. Otilia is a prostitute, not because she was forced to be one but because she chose to be. She is alive to sin and guilt. To be saved one must first be lost and Otilia

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is on the way back. One surrenders oneself to rest, to love, to die. Now that the exuberance of youth is gone, Otilia does it to humiliate herself. Faced with self-destruction, she must muster the strength to save herself. Don Heraclio Chútz, "el Cojo", is the man behind the government in Tambo—the local cacique—but, like those he victimizes, he is also a victim of the system. Hostage to a brutal ethic of survival of the fittest, "el Cojo" has hardened himself and renounced his humanity. As a boy, he swore to be strong so that he would never have to ask favors. Otherwise, he says, one spends one's life thanking others for their charity and that is the worst fate that can befall a man. Now, after fighting his way to the top, he is in a position to do favors. Maybe he will; in fact, he probably will, but he will have to do more to save his soul—he will have to love and that is hard for a lonely man.

The most enigmatic figure in *El día señalado* is Don Heraclio's son—a young man who comes to Tambo in pursuit of his own personal vengeance. Like the journalist in *Al pie de la ciudad*, he is stoically melodramatic. However, in this case, Mejía Vallejo relieves the intensity of the image when, through Father Barrios' eyes, we see a young man with a silly face emerge from a corner as if rehearsing a mysterious role. Nevertheless, except for this brief glimpse, the young man sustains his part as the inflexibly calm, cool and deadly serious instrument of
justice until the end. Thus his final compassion, his escape from his role, is all the more compelling.

Curiously, the nameless young cock fighter is unique in the novels under consideration. He is a surprise. In a cast of characters dominated one way or another by role, function and environment, he neither capitulates nor rebels; he forgives and thus declares his freedom. However, given the author's evocative style, the young man seems more allegorical than real. In contrast, those who conform to their roles or functions often seem quite real. Their position vis-à-vis society; victims, villians, rebels, sustains them. Jeremías in *En Chimá nace un santo*, the young student in *El buen salvaje*, Jorge in *El terremoto*, the priest in *El Cristo de espaldas*, maybe one or two others, enjoy a certain ambiguity; but most of the characters suffer acute psychological simplicity. The weight of social determinism inevitably crushes the occasional dream or twinge of conscience. Even *El buen salvaje* is not a story of inner conflict but a case study of a hollow man. Only a few old men are left to remind the world of a day when each man marched to the beat of his own conscience. A rabble has inherited Macondo. Man no longer struggles to dominate his world or to fulfill himself. Like the characters in *El arzobisbo llega en noviembre*, he merely perseveres in his obstinacy to prolong death; or, like the class stereotypes presented above, he finds his position on the social scale and functions accordingly. However
although one might lament the flatness of the characters, insofar as social implications are concerned, the tendency toward caricaturization gives the reader considerable insight into the perceptions Colombian novelists have, or seek to project, of their compatriots.

**Characters as Functional Symbols**

Albert O. Hirschman, commenting upon a recently published analysis by John Payne of the Colombian political system, bemoans Payne's blanket indictment of Colombian politicians. According to Payne's analysis, they are selfish, ambitious, unscrupulous, unprincipled and demagogic. They are motivated by status considerations and are always ready to betray one another. This analysis, unfortunately by a North American, reminds Hirschman of an age of self-incrimination when it was fashionable for Latin American intellectuals to bombard their confreres with gloom. Hirschman says the age has largely passed. However, based on the characters in the novels under consideration, it would be difficult to sustain that position. In fact, without exception, the fictional politicians resemble perfectly Payne's stereotype; and the novelists go beyond the politicians to indict the entire establishment except, possibly for dialectical reasons, an occasional priest.

Normally, the politicians lurk in the background

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of the novel. They are part of the byzantine world that stifles life. As far as Siervo is concerned, they all—Liberals and Conservatives—have bloated faces with four hairs above the upper lip in search of a mustache. They visit the countryside and the slums before elections, mesmerize the people with fine phrases and then return to the capital to bargain away the promises they made. B. K., the German exile in *Los elegidos*, hears them proclaiming their sacrifices and dedication as though singing popular boleros to the masses and then sees them trading the hopes of the people for membership in La Cabrera. Pedro Bermúdez, in *La ciudad y el viento*, typifies the smooth young man with the right connections who elects a career in politics because it is the easiest road to power and wealth. However, he is both victim and villain. He uses the people to secure a power base, the government uses him to restrain the people. When the people discover that their hero was a tool, the government sacrifices him. Thus Pedro joins the ministerial shuffle. He knows that if he just waits, plays the game, his turn will come again. Polo Rodríguez represents the local strongman who slowly consolidates his position. Then, with full control of the local party machine, he maintains himself in power not because he is the peoples choice but because he is the only choice the people have.
The strongman, or cacique, appears in many novels. The number and nature of the strongmen depends on the size and sophistication of the community. They struggle among themselves for political and economic hegemony. Justo, in *Causas supremas*, wonders how Demóstenes Cárdenas became so rich and powerful. Some say he won his lands with a pair of loaded dice, others that he cuckolded the previous cacique who then killed himself, and there are those who claim he enriched himself rustling cattle. In any event, it makes no difference because one cacique is the same as another. Like "el Cojo" in *El día señalado*, Roque Piragua in *El Cristo de espaldas* or Leocadio Mendieta in *En noviembre llega el arzobispo*, they are all Darwinian characters captivated by the process of robbing one another and everybody else. In fact, some are convicted criminals. For example, Don Arsenio, in *Siervo sin tierra*, is an ex-convict and looks the part.

Era bajo de cuerpo, rechoncho, de piernas gruesas y cortas calzadas con tocasas botas de montar, de esas que usa la nueva policía. Se cubría la cabeza con un fieltro de alas muy anchas bajo las cuales se entreveía el rostro hinchado y patibulario. . . . Tenía terciado al hombro un fusil ametralladora, y al cinto dos revólveres de cañón largo, y una cartuchera de cinco dedos de anchura escuñría de la barriga. El hombre era un arsenal.11

As masters of the men and women who work their lands, the caciques have political power and they build on their captured votes to control local party machinery. Through

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11 *Caballero Calderón*, Obras, p. 431.
either of the two political parties, they dominate lesser politicians because they control the electoral process. The notary, in El Cristo de espaldas, swallows the shame of Don Roque's affair with his daughter because he has political ambitions and needs the cacique's support. This same notary, after buying Don Roque's death, delivers a preposterous funeral oration in which he compares the dead leader to Julius Caesar and the miserable little town lost in the mountains to the center of the universe.

The cacique rarely holds a formal position in the power structure. Instead, he manipulates those who do. His principle tool is frequently the mayor and, while there seems to be some perverse respect for the strongmen, everyone of them has a name at least, there is absolutely none for the mayors. Víctor Aragón, in El despertar de los demonios, derides the mayors of Popayán more for their weakness than their corruption. They panic easily and, rather than lead, they allow themselves to be led. Zapata Olivella draws a slightly different picture of the mayor of Lórica.

El alcalde, don Cipriano Botero no es oriundo del Sinú. La catolicidad militante le viene de su estirpe antioqueño, donde se dan mayores pruebas de fervor religioso . . . A don Cipriano, además, lo empuja un atávico sentido de empresa . . . Siempre justificó sus repetidos fracasos con nuevas ilusiones . . . Finalmente, palúdico pero no derrotado encontró en Santa Cruz de Lórica una husca inesperada en los maduros granos de arroz que compraba a bajos precios en tiempos de cosecha y que almacenados, colmaban sus bolsillos de dinero en época de hambrunas."12

12Manuel Zapata Olivella, En Chimá nace un santo (Barcelona, 1963), p. 14. This description is especially interesting because it suggests some prejudice regarding Antioqueños.
The mayor of Tambo has become accustomed to violence and hides behind cynicism as the cacique steals everything including the mayor's own wife. Justo, in *Causas supremas*, hates the mayor not because he is inept but because he is a frustrated tyrant. Don Rosas apparently dreams of national prominence but the collection of reprobates and delinquents he governs refuse to cooperate. Consequently, he squanders the authority of his position harassing helpless citizens and humiliating his wife. Given the ambiguity of their position and their inherent weakness, the mayors oscillate between impotence and arrogance. The mayor in *El Cristo de espaldas*, powerless while Don Roque lived, after his death threatens to kill the priest to prove that he is mayor. The mayor in *En noviembre llega el arzobisbo*, marches his pomposity back and forth across the town plaza; but, when a crisis develops, he contributes to the confusion. He cannot act without direction from the cacique.

In contrast to the comic cowardice and petty venality of the others, the mayor in *La mala hora* suggests García Márquez' interest in the lonely tyrant. A man incapable of love, the mayor is strong, cruel and fundamentally corrupt. While he appears to help one moment, as when he directs

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13 In his dialogue with Mario Vargas Llosa, García Márquez mentioned that he was working on a novel, *El otoño del patriarca*, in which he hoped to develop a prototype of the Latin American dictator. See García Márquez and Vargas Llosa, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
victims of a flood to occupy town land, he steals the next, by arranging to sell that same land—actually his land—to the town at a high price. Every step he takes, as he marches through the moral decay of his town, reveals his drive for power. However, unrestrained by his position or simple compassion, and as the town grows increasingly restless, he over-reacts and destroys even the semblance of legitimacy.

When the first mayor arrived in Macondo, José Arcadio Buendía told him that the town did not need a mayor and ran him out of town. However, he returned and he and José Arcadio reached an agreement that the mayor would not bother anybody. Until the banana boom, except for a few military interventions during the civil wars, Macondo had a series of ineffective mayors. With the bananas, however, came the foreigners who brought their own mayors, who in turn brought their own police, and Macondo knew what it was to have order and stability. However, when the mayor worked for the gringos, he was their mayor. He lived with them and drank with them. In La rebelión de las ratas, Don Ricardo García, eagle-beaked mayor of Timbali, even died with them. In fact, he was the first to die because, although the people hated the foreigners, they abhorred a tool and a renegade. As can be deduced from the foregoing, the mayor is not an attractive character in the Colombian novel.
Behind the politicians, on the very fringes of a few novels, one senses an army of bureaucrats. Zapata Olivella sees them in grey stone buildings, isolated from the people behind mountains of paperwork and formalities. Manuel Mejía Vallejo knows that they are promoted for efficiency rather than compassion. Most bureaucrats are represented as being fat and ugly. The manager of a local office of the Caja Agraria in Siervo sin tierra is a good example. "El gerente era un hombre de mediana estatura, todavía joven, de rostro feo salpicado de manchas amarillas. Apestaba a cerveza y tenía los ojos vagos y húmedos ..."  14

In the same novel, the director of a jail enriches himself by diverting funds destined for the prisoners. One day, just before the arrival of a congressional commission, the convicts clean up the filth they normally live in, they build shelves to display the food they never eat, they unpack the toilet that had been stored in the director's office and they place it in an appropriate corner just as if it were connected to the plumbing.

In Macondo, as his cause collapses, Col. Aureliano has a vision of bureaucrats in alliance with the ubiquitous lawyers dressed in black, whispering and plotting in dimly lit bars. Years later, a veteran of the civil wars slowly starves as bureaucrats and lawyers shuffle his case from one

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14 Caballero Calderón, Obras, p. 412.
office to another. Only rarely and briefly does a bureaucrat or lawyer emerge from anonymity or irrelevance. Curiously, given the gap between law and reality, this irrelevance extends to the judiciary. The reader meets only four judges in the novels under consideration. One is the notary in El Cristo de espaldas who, as we have seen, is a despicable, hypocritical character. Another is the judge in La mala hora who, without missing a stroke in his thrice nightly display of virility, helps the mayor camouflage his land manipulations with the proper legal formalities. Then there is the supreme court judge in El terremoto who provokes his brother into a barroom brawl. The fourth judge, a Zapata Olivella character in Detrás del rostro, is the least disreputable. He is inflexible and cruel but has to be because society has passed cruel laws and given him nothing but a jail to which to send the offenders. He has sought alternatives but has been rejected by professional do-gooders. In a system that appears to be basically unjust and indifferent, judges simply serve to perpetuate the system.

While the judicial system is basically a formality, the policeman and the soldier are vitally important in the maintenance of the status quo. Consequently, ipso facto, they are bad characters. In Las causas supremas, Corporal Romelic, an "uniformicated" slice of stone illuminated by dull malice, struts around town with his artillery between his legs. The corporal has nothing to do except impress
the girls with his war stories and terrorize everyone else. Sgt. Landínez, in _El Cristo de espaldas_, heavy, smooth-faced with narrow protruding eyes indifferently sets fire to a group of huts with women and children inside. The sergeant's martial manner fascinates the notary's daughter. Zapata Olivella likens the military to an enormous octopus that strangles Chambacú while press gangs round up young blacks and ship them off to Korea. In a sense, however, conscription mitigates responsibility. The soldiers shipped to the coast to break the banana workers strike in _La casa grande_ do not know what they are doing. A few might wonder why they are called upon to kill the workers but the majority are simply happy to escape the boredom of garrison duty.

Three regiments arrive in Macondo to break the strike. The soldiers are short, stolid brutes. Taciturn and impenetrable men from the interior, they sweat and smell like rotten meat. Like automatons, the soldiers fulfill their deadly responsibilities on the coast, in the countryside, in Timbálf, Popayán and Bogotá.

Whereas the army is called upon for mass violence, the police are constantly involved in limited engagements against the people. A police van in _El terremoto_ vomits police upon the street in society's sporadic war against whores and beggars. Another contingent appears in "Los Barrancos", in _Al pie de la ciudad_, to dispossess the squatters. In Bogotá, in _Los años de asfixia_, the police persecute students; and, in _El despertar de los demonios_,
the police—led by a turncoat Conservative with cold blue eyes stuck in a pallid face—torture and kill students with names like Caldas and Cervantes. In Siervo sin tierra, Siervo's runaway son joins the police in order to loot and kill with impunity. In Cien años de soledad, Gabriel García Márquez recalls a time when the police were comic barefoot characters but times have changed. They are now hungry, angry men imported from the interior and paid to kill. Thus the establishment uses the poor to harass and kill their own flesh and blood. Rengifo, however, a policeman in La calle 10, realizes this and joins the revolution. In the context of good and bad, Rengifo is the only good policeman in the Colombian novel.¹⁵

There are a few law and order characters who fall between and beyond these basic distinctions. Sergeant Mataya, in El día señalado, is a professional soldier. He has been sent to pacify Tambo and he does his duty. Death is the inevitable consequence but still, in the absence of any word from God to the contrary, he persists. Major Cancino, in Caín, is a professional officer but not a professional soldier. Fat and affable, he symbolizes the soft, self-indulgent officer who languishes year after year in the tedium of garrison duty. He smokes, sweats and has

¹⁵The defection of the police during the Bogotazo is a matter of historical record. John D. Martz, Colombia, a contemporary political survey (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1962), p. 56.
a natural aptitude for the peculiar combination of camaraderie and circumspection that characterizes military life. Nevertheless, although somewhat distracted by his affair with a plump Italian, the major does his duty. Someday, after giving his life to his country, but still alive and kicking, he will be retired and probably, like the commander in En noviembre llega el arzobisbo, he will stiffly decry the lack of discipline and decorum among the citizenry while surreptitiously philandering among the local fish mongers and fruit peddlers. General Limógenes, another Héctor Rojas background character, carries his retirement with greater dignity. His testicles are swollen and lie tenderly in a sling. In contrast, General Bello, in Los elegidos, is still an active warrior. A tin soldier in an army that has never fought, General Bello enjoys the protection of the elite and consequently conspires against the government with impunity.

Far away from the intrigues of the generals in the capital, in the García Márquez novels, a few mythical old colonels, who fought against the government and lost, symbolize the promise of a forgotten cause. In El colonel no tiene quien le escriba, an idealistic veteran of the civil wars maintains his dignity in the face of poverty. Another old man, also a colonel, stands as the last guardian of civilized values in La hojarasca. And, in Cien años de soledad, the erstwhile leader of the Liberal armies, Col. Aureliano Buendía, hides from the world in mute testimony
to the futility and vanity of rebellion. It would seem that what little respect the military enjoys is nostalgi-
cally reserved for those who fought against the government.

The same anti-establishment bias conditions the characterization of the priestly caste. A traditional hierarchy collaborates with the establishment in El Cristo de espaldas and thus, by default, perpetuates injustice. A fat Italian archbishop, in En noviembre llega el arzobispo, brings the beatific pomposity of the institutional Church to Tolú and flatulates in the midst of the ceremonies. The real war against sin is waged by the local priests.

Father Policarpo Barrientos, a mulatto from Antioquia in El despertar de los demonios, fights to gain the temporal wealth of the libidincus for the Church and to consolidate the power of the clergy in villages where the chickens are fat. A street fighter, Father Barrientos leads an array of narrow fanatics against atheistic liberalism. Meanwhile, Father Aristeguieta, a Spanish Jesuit, wields the ponderous logic of the Church militant in the battle of words and ideas. Whereas Policarpo succeeds in his campaign of violence, Father Aristeguieta is inevitably confounded by the priest-baiting skepticism of his free-thinking adversaries. Furthermore, many of the priests seem confused as to the nature of the enemy. In Las causas supremas, a lecherous old priest, Father Ticora, recklessly wields the power of ex-communication in a sterile battle
with the civil authorities in behalf of ecclesiastical privilege.

In most cases, however, the enemy is never really met and the local priest must fight the battle against sin in a vacuum. Father Nicanor Reyna, in _Cien años de soledad_, combatted the indifference of the macondinos with minor miracles of levitation stimulated by heavy doses of hot chocolate. These activities attract larger donations and soon Father Nicanor builds a magnificent temple in which to shelter the image of Christ. Jorge, the spineless hero in _El terremoto_ remembers the priests of his childhood pounding the pulpit and denouncing lipstick, sleeveless blouses, short skirts and indecent movies. In _La mala hora_, Father Angel sacrifices his health in a lonely, hopeless struggle to contain basic human instincts. As the community drifts toward decay, Father Angel fights harder. Still, at night, as he tosses sleeplessly, he has a vague sense of defeat as he remembers the exaggerated inflexibility and superficiality of his struggle. In _El colonel no tiene quien le escriba_, a more narrow and indolent Father Angel renounces the substance of Christianity in apparent preference for formalities and his own comfort. When the Colonel's wife asks him to lend her money against her wedding ring he refuses on the pretext that it is a sin to borrow money secured by a wedding ring. In a similar vain, Father Hoyos, in _Caín_, alone and frightened, realizes that the virtues he preaches: modesty, gentleness, obedience
and patience, are virtues that he himself despises but preaches in order to humiliate others. However, the virtue of patience has a much more practical appeal to the establishment. In the face of injustice, in the shadow of rebellion, a priest exhorts Rudecindo Cristancho, the hungry miner in La rebelión de las ratas, to be patient. And then there are the priests in La calle 10 who teach the poor to pray but not how to read. They insist on obedience and respect but then, hidden in the church towers, shoot at their dumb angry flock. By a strange twist of fate, rather than proclaiming Christ's message of love, these priests, whether out of ignorance, greed or perversion, are sowing the seeds of hatred.

However, the message of Christ illuminates some of the strongest characters in the novels under consideration. Father Escardo, in En noviembre llega el arzobisbo, has spent a lifetime looking for God and sometimes wishing to defy him in order to free himself for an instant. With little faith in the mystery of the Mass but with conviction and passion for the message of Jesus Christ, he exhorts his congregation to wake up and kill guilt, to love themselves and each other. Father Barrios in El día señalado, personifies love. Full of compassion, committed to life, untempted by the Devil, he humbly seeks to bring rebirth to the people of Tambo. A simple man, he sees God in trees and crops and hears Him in the songs of the birds but fear, vengeance, egotism and ignorance have drained the life out
of Tambo and the good priest is like a man lost in a desert. In *El Cristo de espaldas*, a young priest fights these deadly vices in a futile effort to bring life to a remote village in the mountains. His mistake was that he sought to be a shepherd rather than a swineherd. Surrounded by ugliness, he tries to see man through the eyes of Christ on the cross. From this perspective, but unable completely to escape himself, he enjoys moments of elation and then pangs of guilt for momentarily confusing himself with Christ. However, as man crucified the Saviour 2,000 years ago, they soon reject the young priest. Even the Church deserts him because, as the bishop reminds him, the Church—being a wise institution and therefore prudent—frequently accedes to momentary irregularities rather than alienate the people. Priests like Father Azuaje, who share the people's prejudices and condone their vices, may not elevate their spirits but they maintain the Church's physical presence whereas idealistic young priests endanger the institutionalized Church. Manuel Pacho's grandfather, a Spanish priest, brought cattle and the Cross to the llanos and thus symbolizes the spiritual and temporal duality of the clergy in an untamed land. "El Cachorro", in *La hojarasca*, is both priest and realist. He was also a colonel in the civil wars which is the ultimate recommendation for a García Márquez character. With the power of his presence, he restrains his congregation and thus preserves their humanity.
El Cachorro los tenía sometidos a una disciplina férrea. Incluso después de que murió el sacerdote . . . se manifestó esa disciplina en la manera apasionada como todo el mundo arrancó las flores y los arbustos de su huerta y los llevó a la tumba, a rendirle a El Cachorro en tributo final.\textsuperscript{16}

To survive, the Church must be all things to all men. In \textit{El despertar de los demonios}, the elite patronize Father Caicedo because he satisfies their taste for ritual without undue commitment. Those who believe in the supernatural, for whom mystery is part of life and death is part of the mystery, seek the ministry of Father Canencio who can exorcise devils. Meanwhile, the pharisees march behind Father Barrientos who brandishes the cross like a weapon with which to exterminate alien spirits. Curiously, Father Barrientos, standard bearer for orthodoxy, is a symbol of the Church's death agony. Religion thrives on passion and mystery but not on superstitious habit. Manuel Zapata Olivella captures this fundamental feature of religion in \textit{En Chimá nace un santo}.

Two priests confront each other. Father Berrocal is the village priest. He was born in a village much like Chimá and understood the people's troubles and their joys. As a child, he believed the same superstitions they believed; but now, as a disciple of Christ, he defends orthodoxy with the dogmas of the Church, the image of St. Emigdio and the ageless prestige of his priestly vocation. In

\textsuperscript{16}García Márquez, \textit{La hojarasca}, p. 123.
contrast, Jeremías is the village sacristan who seeks power and wealth as the prophet of a local heresy. His weapons are the people's ignorance and his own evangelistic aptitudes nurtured in the superficialities of church ritual. Of the two characters, Jeremías is the more complex. As the heresy progresses and as he adapts to his role, he comes to believe what he preaches. Through his conversion, Zapata Olivella subordinates the moral differences between the two men, transcends the centuries of theology that sustain Father Berrocal and asserts the essential identity of the two. They are both cause and effect of an environment burdened by irrational symbols. They both assuage and manipulate the fear and ignorance of the chimaleros. They both interpret the magic reality of Chimá. This is probably the priest's fundamental function and, in a world that is still mystical to most of the people, the priest remains a very powerful figure. He is neither an anachronism nor a caricature but a very complex character who must be reckoned with in contemporary Colombia.

Doctors, lawyers, teachers and journalists all appear but with lesser frequency and impact than do priests. However, the same fundamental dichotomy applies to them as to the other characters. They are either part of the system or part of the opposition. A compañía doctor distributes worthless white pills in Macondo but another García Márquez doctor, part of the rebel underground, commiserates with the Colonel in El colonel no tiene quien le escriba and
good-naturedly humors Father Angel in La mala hora. The
dentist in La mala hora is a central figure in the opposi-
tion and consequently lives in constant fear. Still, he
refuses to modify his position and only attends the mayor
because he is a dentist and the mayor a human being in
pain. In contrast, Dr. Arenas, in Al pie de la ciudad,
withholds adequate medical treatment for the poor because
such treatment would strain his budget and jeopardize his
image as an efficient hospital director. Meanwhile, in
Chambacú, a shabby black doctor tends the sick without the
aid of modern facilities. With the witch doctor who helped
him through medical school he does the best he can. In
Tolú, another good doctor, a relic of the days when any
man could hang up a shingle, is considered a saint. He,
however, sensitive to the suffering he has inflicted upon
those he loved but was unable to cure, feels like a butcher
posturing as a patriarch. There are some doctors, however,
who are more interested in their professional reputations
than in their patients. In Detrás del rostro, a doctor
experiments with a young boy's life to prove the accuracy
of his diagnosis. Even Dr. Juéregui, Zapata Olivella's
surrogate in the same novel, has moments when he feels
himself withdrawing into medical objectivity. However,
like Laboriel, in La calle 10, or like Zapata Olivella
himself, a man who learns medicine among the poor cannot
insulate himself against the tragedy of sickness. Such
men do not lose themselves as do the young middle class
doctors in Los años de asfixia who do not know what to do with their lives. There is plenty of work for dedicated doctors among the poor. It is merely a question of choosing sides.

There is also a need for lawyers among the poor but not one lawyer grasps the opportunity to help. Instead, dimly seen on the edges of some novels, they exploit the complex inefficiency of the system. The Colonel's pension, Siervo's freedom, the claims of the dispossessed, all feed the lawyers. And then there is the apolitical Mr. Carmichael in La mala hora who faithfully and righteously conserves the lands his client stole from others in the political turmoil that periodically provides such excellent opportunities for enrichment. Vicente, in La ciudad y el viento, refuses to swallow the lies and hypocrisy that success entails. Given what he knows, he should be a revolutionist but he has chosen to anesthetize himself with alcohol rather than fight. The system is too pervasive and he is too weak.

The same discrepancy plagues the press. In La calle 10 Mamatoco and Tamaya demonstrate the power of truth but their paper is destroyed and Mamatoco is killed. Successful journalists, on the other hand, spread the official word and verify the birthdays, marriages and comings and goings of the elite. In Detrás del rostro, the press enlivens this material with sensational details of murders and in Siervo sin tierra it fans the flames of sectarian
hatred but does not denounce fundamental inequities. One lone journalist in _Al pie de la ciudad_ comes close to exposing the establishment but his story is squelched. Thus, with reason, the priest in _El Cristo de espaldas_ warns the people that newspapers tell lies three ways: by omission, exaggeration and misrepresentation. It makes no difference to his flock, however, because they only believe what they want to. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that the Colonel to whom nobody writes laments the fact that he has not read any news in the local newspapers for over 10 years.

Desde que hay censura los periódicos no hablan sino de Europa, ... Lo mejor será que los europeos se vengan para acá y que nosotros nos vayamos para Europa. Así sabrá todo el mundo lo que pasa en su respectivo país.\(^{17}\)

In several novels, anonymous handbills appear to fill the informational gap. Like the engineers in Macando who, blind to the fundamental causes of poverty, demonstrate how to utilize outhouses more effectively, journalists are irrelevant in a society that cries for the truth.

Carlos Camacho, in _La ciudad y el viento_, knows the power of the truth and devotes himself to teaching students the concepts and values they will need to build a better world. They listen and he is content to prepare for the revolution rather than lead it. The same is true for an old spinster teacher in _Chambacú_. Her ancestors were

\(^{17}\)García Márquez, _El colonel_, p. 34.
among the first blacks to build Chambacú and now she teaches other blacks to dream of a better life. These two teachers, the one a university professor and the other the only teacher in a community of poor blacks, reinforce the popular conception of the teacher's traditional role. They stimulate progress from the sidelines. Even the good professors in Popayán only take to the streets after they have been driven out of the university. Professor Garavito, on the other hand, in Los años de asfixia, has worn the stripes off the seat of his pants teaching history year after year and only earned the animosity of his students. Culture, packaged and delivered like the mail, inevitably becomes a stale contradiction of itself. Dull and tyrannical, Garavito wages an undeclared war with his students. One day he disciplines a boy with family connections and loses his job. Garavito learned that tactics depend upon position and that teachers are in a weak position. However, given real power, he would probably have reacted like Arcadio Buendía in Cien años de soledad. In the unreal world of the classroom, Arcadio had become a fanatic. Consequently, when appointed mayor he was inflexible and cruel. Thus Garavito confines the image of the good teacher and Arcadio revives the suspicion that teachers are best confined to the classroom. It should be observed, however, that when the number of examples is as limited as it is in regard to some of these functional types, undue importance can easily be attached to relationships between function
and character which are purely coincidental.

There are a number of characters who are part of the setting. The most curious of these are the musicians. Characters like Modesto in Causas supremas and Tipinoti in Al final de la calle relieve the total ugliness of the world around them with music. When musicians die as in La mala hora and El día señalado, their deaths seem to presage the advent of violence. Somnolent storekeepers tending their potatoes, pills, pots and pans cynically watch the world go by. Like the Syrian merchant in La mala hora, moral and political problems do not disturb them. Their only allegiance is to themselves. However, as the tavern owner in Tambo discovers, a man who condones terror and buys protection lives in constant fear. On the other hand, in a few novels, truck drivers grab the world and move it. Armando, in La ciudad y el viento, began his climb upward as a truck driver. "El Diablo", in La rebelión de las ratas, imposes his will upon men and women alike. Anacleto, in El Cristo de espaldas, cannot understand how anyone can be alive and not love trucks. In their throbbing machines, truck drivers are bringing change to Siervo Joya's world.

De la época medieval de las romerías pedestres a Chiquinquirá, con peregrinos que cargaban cruces de leño a la espalda y enfermos encaramados en un taburete y protegidos del sol con una sábana; del tiempo de las haciendas que excluían a los campesinos de toda propiedad personal, pues los amos ejercían un poder absoluto sobre arrendatarios y medianeritos a quienes intimidaban con el cepo y el mañequero; de aquella vida primitiva se saltó a una nueva que se caracterizaba por la aparición del chofer. Este se convirtió en el supremo libertador y corruptor de
los campesinos, para quienes la obra más admirable del ingenio humano es el motor de explosión y sobre todo las explosiones que produce el motor cuando un camión trepa roncando por aquellas cuestas.18

Still much remains the same. Tradition continues to tie women to men either legitimately, illegitimately or in absentia. Furthermore, prostitutes and mistresses continue to enjoy greater popularity than wives. Whether skilled in the ageless art of eroticism, stupid or passionate, they have a peculiar claim to virtue. Face to face with reality, they need not resort to hypocrisy. On the edge of society, available to rich and poor, they are part of the system and also part of the revolution.

Given the extent of dissatisfaction indicated by the number of novels that develop social conflict themes, the reader looks for characters that might provide the leadership required to effect change. Since part of the problem is the failure of the system to provide such leadership, characters from outside, strangers and rebels, attract one's attention. A stranger, of course, may also be a rebel but in the Colombian novel most of the strangers have exploited the system and thus contributed to the status quo.

Mr. Herbert discovered the banana in Macondo and mobilized the community to grow bananas. He and others brought in the rabble and built a special colony for

18 Caballero Calderón, Obras, p. 391.
themselves. When the strain they had introduced began to effect the production of bananas, the "gringos" abandoned Macondo. Mercedes, a character in *Los elegidos*, accuses the North Americans of contributing nothing to Colombia. Unlike the Germans who have built factories, developed airlines, married the local women and become part of Colombia, the Americans have come to Colombia as agents of their government or of large corporations to exploit the country and then leave. Mr. Muir, the arrogant embassy official in charge of the black list the "gringos" maintained during the war, personifies the type. His arrogance and influence, of course, are directly proportional to the servility of the Colombian elite. In Timbalí, in *La rebelión de las ratas*, the arrogance of the "gringos" and the servility of the Colombians combine to destroy the land and the people. Plump and ruddy foreigners like Mr. Brown, with the total support of the authorities and the hirelings they buy to enforce their rules, develop a monstrous mine. The hope of a better life attracts poor men to Timbalí and the foreigners feed them to the mine.

Macondo, Timbalí and La Cabrera are unique examples of the impact of foreigners upon Colombia. In most of the novels, foreigners either play no role or are merely attached to the system. Syrians and Turks, composite representatives of the millennial merchant, ply their wares in the coastal towns and in Bogotá their children ultimately join the elite. They, like the gringos, make no contribution
toward changing the system but thrive on it. The behavioral patterns of the foreigners are ignored, denounced or ridiculed just as are those of the two antioqueño characters who assert their vulgar aggressiveness among the citizens of Popayán and Chimá. However, regardless of their reception, the numerical insignificance of outsiders precludes any significant impact upon Colombian values.

Only one foreigner joins the dispossessed. She is Inge, a beautiful Swedish girl, incongruously inserted among the blacks in Chambacú. Unconvincing as her presence is, she more than any other character gives meaning to the novel. Through her the reader who has been conditioned not to see the suffering of the blacks, sees and feels the repugnance of Chambacú. Through her Zapata Olivella mitigates the racial polarization implicit in his novel. When she falls in love with Máximo, a black rebel, she joins the struggle for justice.

Since there is so little justice, there are many rebels in Colombian literature. However, the directions they take vary considerably. Máximo in Chambacú, corral de negros, Mamatoco in La calle 10 and Espinal in La rebelión de las ratas are leaders rather than fighters. Faced with ignorance and fear among the poor, they teach and inspire the masses in the black ghetto, behind the market and in the mine shafts. These men all call for justice, not one preaches violence, but each dies a martyr because the establishment reacts to their demands with force. Dedication
such as theirs, however, is rare. In addition to the false leaders like the politicians, others agitate the masses and then exploit them for sinister purposes. In Macondo, Dr. Noguera, a quack, plots to kill all conservatives—men, women and children—and thus assure himself many years of power. In _La casa grande_ another provocateur, secretly employed by a competing company, organizes a strike and then disappears to let the people face the strike-breakers' guns alone.

The gap between the word and the deed is so great, failure and betrayal are so common, that many potential rebels become cynics. In _Los años de asfixia_, the past, present and future have no claim upon Víctor. His life unravels in a series of tedious suppositions and frustrated possibilities. Condemned to death before birth, he simply bewails his fate. Justo and Vicente in _Las causas supremas_ vent their frustration in a self-destructive war against the caricatures that oppress them. Sometimes the most vicious rebels are those who seek to avenge themselves against society. Leocadio Mendieta in _En noviembre llega el arzobisbo_ fought his way to local power in order to punish the world for having made him a bastard. Armando in _La ciudad y el viento_ admits that he is out to avenge himself. If, in so doing, he destroys others equally as unfortunate as himself, so be it. The difference between those who punish the world and themselves from within the system and those who withdraw and then attack is merely tactical.
The bandit group that destroyed Manuel Pacho's home are not idealists. They pillage and burn indiscriminately without even the pretext of a cause. Blinded by hate or ignorance, they do not distinguish between friend and foe. Consequently, they are bandits rather than guerrillas.

The guerrillas, on the other hand, maintain some allegiance to a cause. The degree of commitment, of course, varies considerably. Pedro Palos, in Caín, fights because he is tired of working for nothing as a campesino. As an army recruit, he saw a different world. He also saw the enemy. Having suffered the inequities of the system, he has a visceral commitment to the cause of social justice. Furthermore, like Demetrio Macías, in Mariano Azuela's Los de abajo, he has a Luis Cervantes, the "Doctorcito", to orient him in his activities. Palos is a popular but uneducated leader, the "Doctorcito" is an educated hypocrite. Eduardo Caballero Calderón exposes the tensions that inevitably develop and traces the disintegration of the band but he does not invest their activities with any particular significance. In contrast, the guerrilla bands that hover in the mountains like an impending scourge in La mala hora and El día señalado are more symbolic than real. As abstractions, they maintain idealistic purity.

García Márquez' Colonel Aureliano, however, the grandfather of all rebels, was not so fortunate. He declared his first war because the Conservatives were a pack of scoundrels; but, after many wars, he became confused.
Power captivated him and, inside the circle he drew around himself, he grew ruthless. Upon discovering that the ideals that had supposedly motivated the struggle had been betrayed, he adopted new ones. On the verge of executing his closest friend, he finally realized the monstrous stupidity of the struggle. However, war has its own momentum and Col. Buendía fought many years just to stop fighting.

The injustices that first motivated Aureliano Buendía still persist and so, apparently, do the human weaknesses that pervert ideals. As abstractions, the guerrillas inspire hope; as men they are only human. Therein lies the problem. In Las causas supremas, Justo observes, "... Clemencia es abominable, pero no más abominable que cualquier otro ser humano, cualquiera que sea." 19 This by no means represents the view of other novelists; it may not reflect that of Héctor Sánchez—they all exhibit considerable compassion for the common man—but it does summarize their collective portrayal of Colombian leadership.

It is abominable. So colossally bad, in fact, that it is incredible. Credibility requires better character development which, in turn, presupposes an appreciation of man's inherent complexity. However, divested of mystical significance, conditioned by his environment and exposed

19Sánchez, Causas, p. 52.
by psychoanalysis, modern man worries and frightens the novelists but he does not fascinate them. The characters in the contemporary Colombian novel personify these fears and preoccupations but they do not emerge as human beings. The problem, as Eduardo Caballero Calderón suggests, may be that the novelists are looking in the wrong places for their characters.

Hombres hay en el país, aunque no se les encuentre sino muy contados en este mundo hechizo y arbitrario que se asoma a las primeras páginas de los periódicos y de las revistas ilustradas. Búsquenlos en las plantaciones de café, en las factorías de minas, en las fundaciones del Llano, en las cátedras de las universidades privadas, en las salas de planta de hospitales, y allí encontrarán. 20

Novels that probe the existence of such men may reveal that the scope of man's autonomy and potentiality is greater than suspected.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

According to John Friedmann, intellectuals contribute to the modernization process three ways: they project a modern value system, they create an adequate self image and they formulate an effective ideology.\(^1\) Friedmann assumes, apparently, that the intellectuals are all attempting to build rather than destroy. This assumption does not necessarily hold. The reader will recall that there is fundamental disagreement among social scientists. Some advocate developing and modifying present political, economic and social structures while others call for their destruction. Although ideological sympathies undoubtedly influence the debate, it is conducted on pragmatic grounds because the ideologies have proven illusory and men hesitate fully to commit themselves again. Thus, no long range vision inspires either alternative.

The confusion concerning the definition and direction of change reflects the image the social scientists have of Colombia and conditions the picture they project. Regardless of their perspective, however, the predominant

impression is negative. Thus, in reference to Friedmann's charge, the social scientists have neither formulated an effective ideology nor have they projected an adequate self image. They have, however, revealed the inconsistency of the old value system with the modernization process. To what extent do the novelists meet Friedmann's challenge?

Before addressing this question, one must consider the extent to which the challenge should apply to novelists which in turn raises the question of the nature of art and the function of the artist. The dictionary defines art as an aesthetically pleasing and meaningful arrangement of elements. While there may be some universal standards of efficiency, balance and expression that apply to all art, the definition ignores the various areas of thematic interest and the multiple levels of aesthetic sensitivity that condition the creation of art and appreciation of art. Herein lies the source of much confusion and material for endless disquisitions. A work of art may seem ingenious to one critic and ingenuous to another, relevant to one and banal to another. The invisible pull of attitudes acquired in infancy, prejudices imposed by social roles and functions, experiences sought and encountered, reinforce individual predispositions and confound consensus. No unifying vision mitigates the confusion and, in the absence of substantive standards, meaning is a very subjective phenomenon. Thus the contemporary conception of art, by force of circumstances, emphasizes the exploratory—both aesthetic and substantive—
rather than the inspirational or mimetic nature of art. The artist is not expected to discover the promised land nor to guide us to it; but in searching, it is hoped that he will suggest where we are and why we are lost. Many of the novelists in this study conform to these expectations. They are less reform oriented and less didactic, more innovative, more professional and more desperate than their predecessors. Insofar as modernization has contributed to their confusion and desperation, Friedmann's challenge is peculiarly irrelevant. Nevertheless, or possibly therefore, the impressions of the process that the novelists project resemble those of the social scientists.

Tension or conflict between the individual and the system is either the dominant theme or conditions the characters' struggle with themselves. In either event, modernization has exacerbated the conflict and the characters normally lose. In the former case, social injustice either prevails or the conflict degenerates into violence. In the latter case the characters either turn their backs on Christ or, with one or two exceptions, withdraw from the struggle. The few exceptions tend to accentuate either the contrasts between the modern world and a simpler one or the gap between the real and the ideal man. In short, through their novels, Colombian novelists project a basically pessimistic message. They not only denounce the status quo, they conclude by rejecting the possibility of peaceful or gradual accommodation. In this respect, they confirm and
comply with the position of those who maintain that the cultural elite is and should be subversive.

Given their general dissatisfaction with the status quo, most of the novelists project a grim image of contemporary Colombia. The formal political institutions are at best irrelevant. In the rural novels, the caciques rob the people and the priests preach to them. The patrons, in the traditional sense, have all disappeared although not without a note of nostalgia. The vacuum has been filled by a materialistic rabble that has no respect for traditional values. In the urban novels, the really powerful are shielded by the bureaucracy and the poor are distracted by demagogues. Substantive issues like rural education, unemployment, housing, land tenure patterns, economic colonialism are occasionally part of the setting. They are presented in toto, like great big rocks, and there is little reason to believe they will ever be moved—much less chipped away—by say, a grid survey to facilitate land redistribution or a tariff reform to rationalize the allocation of the factors of production. Specifics such as these are not the stuff novels are made of. The novel illuminates subjective realities more effectively, and again the total impression conveyed by the Colombian novelists is not encouraging. Shabbiness, fear, loneliness, selfishness, temporal confusion, bizarre irrationalism, heat and tedium permeate the atmosphere and—more eloquently than statistics—testify to the advanced state of social, cultural and
political decay. In terms of the subversion thesis, decay may be a prerequisite for structural change.

Disenchanted with both traditional and modern institutions, unimpressed by any alternative institutional framework, the novelists project an ambiguous value system. Theoretically, a novelist might endow one character with a set of behavioral patterns that reflect traditional values and another with a set that project developmental values. Such a distinction would be significant if it were complemented by the various techniques a writer has at his disposal to enlist the reader's sympathy for one or the other character. Unfortunately, the novels under consideration are ambiguous in this respect. As indicated previously, most of the "good" characters belong to the popular classes and most of the "bad" characters to the middle and upper classes. The poor exhibit far greater sensitivity, compassion and moral integrity than do the rich. Thus the novels suggest an egalitarian bias. However, one could as easily attribute this to the novelists' disenchantment with the upper and middle classes as to his enchantment with the lumpen-proletariat. Furthermore, there is no discernible difference between "good" and "bad" characters in relation to Parsons' behavioral variables. Insofar as the latter actualize non-developmental values,

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the novels denounce these values; but, since the "good" characters follow the same behavioral pattern, the denunciation is considerably weakened. It could be argued that the "good" characters are creatures of the system but such a resort to determinism is contradicted by the autonomous acquisition of "goodness". Therefore, the implications of character behavior are also ambiguous.

Obviously, in literature, as in life, emotional neutrality is a practical impossibility. Life requires some commitment and art some emotion. However, both also require some detachment—some ability to absorb and adjust to new stimuli. In short, art and life involve the ability to escape the constraints of one's emotional prejudices. Interpreted in this way, the Colombian novelists reveal, through their characters, a very low threshold of affective neutrality. Few of the characters absorb or adjust to new facts. They usually confront each other on either side of righteousness or themselves on the wrong side of an immovable Freudian complex. Clearly, the novel requires some shifting rather than simply accentuation of initial positions. Occasionally there is a surprise, but all too frequently the characters fulfill an inexorable destiny. Their adjustment mechanisms are unduly constrained by the iron hand of social determinism.

Given the inflexibility of their positions, both the novelists and the characters tend to assign characteristics rather than discover them. There is little or
no recognition of individual complexities or of the multiplicity of roles a character might play or the problems that might perplex him. Since the characters are born full grown, goal oriented behavior is irrelevant, counterproductive or immoral. The poor who seek to escape poverty fail and the rich who seek greater wealth are denounced. Curiously, in view of this preoccupation with labels and boxes, there is little recognition of specific expertise. Doctors may be an exception but in most cases class and function are related to the illegitimate abuse of power rather than to personal achievement. To the extent that expertise is disregarded, personalistic and subjective standards of judgement prevail. Thus one behavioral pattern complements another to complete the syndrome of underdeveloped behavioral patterns. The magic reality of Macondo is directly related to the irrationality of the value system.

The Colombian novelists' stance in regard to modernization is not unique. The confrontation between intellectuals and modernists is a universally observable phenomenon. Many intellectuals sense, whether correctly or not, that Western civilization is in decline. Furthermore, few share the contemporary fascination with industrial development.\(^3\) The intellectual, in his romantic role as

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 103.
cultural outcast, regards himself as an aristocrat in a vulgar world. Moreover, as a creator, he is automatically suspicious of tradition and may reject it without recognizing how much he depends upon it.④ The intellectual thus approaches his task as social critic from a potentially antagonistic perspective.

Colombian novelists, as we have seen, clearly oppose the traditional institutions. In this respect they are subversive; but, they also oppose modernization—their resort to violent confrontation notwithstanding. Rather than berate the failure of the novelists to contribute—in Friedmann’s context—to the modernization process, however, it might be well to contemplate with them the social costs the process has imposed upon mankind. As many of the novels show, development seems to accentuate the disparity between rich and poor. The emphasis in development has stressed increased output, not better distribution. Modern, technologically oriented production methods are encouraged and rewarded while traditional sectors are ignored. Consequently, the existing cultural dualism in many developing countries is reenforced and aggravated by economic dualism. "This state of affairs is in sharp contrast with the fundamental objective of

④Ibid., p. 130.
economic development—the diminution of poverty and human misery."

Like intellectuals throughout the Western world, the Colombian novelists suggest that the fascination with development, as it is currently understood, has blinded us to the greater need for social justice. They illuminate the cold statistics of change, modernization if you will, with a bright light on their impact upon human beings; and they reveal that we are lost because we have been distracted by an illusion. Modernization, like the other illusions that have been superimposed upon the world and most particularly upon Latin America since the Conquest, is not the solution but rather a significant part of the problem. However, beyond this discovery, one suspects that a new world awaits the literary imagination.

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Daniel J. Ritter graduated from De Pauw University with a major in Economics in 1954. In 1958, following several years military service, he received a Masters Degree in Spanish from Middlebury College. He subsequently taught Spanish at Park Ridge Military Academy and then Political Science at Barat College of the Sacred Heart. In 1960, he joined the United States Information Agency and served as Director of Courses and subsequently Director of the Binational Centers in La Paz and Santa Cruz, Bolivia. Mr. Ritter resigned from USIA in 1964 and enrolled at the University of Illinois in order to study Spanish Linguistics. In June, 1966, he enrolled in the Ibero-American Studies Program at the University of New Mexico. He was granted a Fulbright Lectureship to Colombia in 1968. Returning to the United States in 1969, he accepted a position at St. Norbert College and, in 1971, assumed his present position as a Spanish and History teacher with the Green Bay Board of Education from which he is currently on a leave of absence.