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## **Spatiality and Psychology in Miguel Delibes' *La sombra del ciprés es alargada***

**Mark J. Mascia**  
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Miguel Delibes' first novel, *La sombra del ciprés es alargada* (1947), has most often received critical consideration as an existential Postwar Spanish novel. The constant preoccupation with death and the absurdity of life on the part of Pedro, the protagonist, is the central thematic element uniting the various stages of the novel. At the same time, however, certain spatial references become pivotal not only in the development of the action but also in Pedro's personal development and in the articulation of existential concepts. This study will examine how spatiality structures the psyche and the ideology of the protagonist, as seen in his internal monologues and his relations with others. Physical space occupies a key, though less frequently examined, role in this novel by Delibes. Whereas spaces often associated with urban environments (in this novel, primarily Avila) psychologically affect the protagonist in more negative ways, and are more associated with death, rural and maritime spaces affect him more positively and thus receive the implicit favor of the author as more ideal places for people. The ways in which human existence is viewed change dramatically between different types of spaces.

The first particular place which the reader encounters in this novel is the walled city of Avila, in Castile. This singular city encompasses the action for the entire first half of the work, and provides the key locus for Pedro's growth and maturation from childhood to early adulthood. Brought to the city by a relative and left to another family for education and permanent boarding, Pedro wastes no time in starting a trend noted throughout the novel, that of observation of the surrounding world and reflection on inner feelings. Such observation focuses keenly on places and on memories associated therein. Immediately, Avila acquires the characteristics of a town rich in history and eternally dependent upon its past; it is clearly seen as a city that Gonzalo Sobejano has characterized as "la ciudad mística por excelencia" (166). Avila will also provide an environment conducive to the protagonist's speculations on life and death. The physical element of nature in Castile is dominated initially by man-made artifice, as an unnamed stone house represents the silent history contained within Avila's walls; the building "hablaba de hombres y tiempos remotos; hombres y tiemposidos, pero cuya historia perduraba amarrada a aquellas piedras milenarias" (13-14). As time passes, Pedro begins to visualize the city as the living representation of History itself, as Avila "[t]enia sus raíces clavadas en la

Historia... La Historia la vigorizaba en su secuela moderna, le proporcionaba su substancia vital, la coloreaba con un matiz especial, con la verde e impresionante pátina del tiempo" (57). Undeniably, this becomes a special place for Pedro, not only as it commands his respect but also as it will become the locus of key events and thoughts along the course of his life.

While in Avila, Pedro befriends another resident of his new home, Alfredo. During the course of his friendship, Pedro explores the city from time to time and gives himself to philosophical speculation, something also to which his guardian, don Mateo Lesmes, is often given. On one occasion, Pedro observes a young widower during a funeral procession, and is forced to seriously consider facing death, even at such a young age. Don Mateo, upon observing the same scene, describes the cemetery as "el lugar más sano del mundo," and even proclaims that "hasta los muertos de Avila son más sanos que los vivos del resto del mundo" (80). Such a superficially positive statement fills Pedro with more uncertainty about existence, as the thought of death becomes a constant obsession with the protagonist thenceforth.<sup>1</sup> Pedro begins to believe that life's demands "privaban en cierto modo al hombre de su albedrío" (82), and that as death rules man's existence, one must practice the philosophy of *desasimiento*, or detachment, of oneself from death, as well as of oneself from emotional attachment to others for fear of losing them.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, Avila epitomizes death after Alfredo's own tragic passing and subsequent funeral. Pedro is forced to contemplate the past he spent with his companion, a past which acquires a continuous presence as he thinks of Alfredo's previous desires to "liberarse de la opresión de aquellos muros". (121) Avila is now a symbol of all things hermetic and of something which restricts individual freedom, as the cast of characters is held in death's thrall. It has become death's physical location for Pedro, in spite of individual life-affirming elements such as the spring, which Pedro likens to "un muerto resucitado" (48) and which Jesús Rodríguez characterizes as "un verdadero renacer de la vida" (*El sentimiento del miedo* 25). Avila's history and physical attributes have a lasting effect on Pedro, as Sheryl Lynn Postman has observed. In this instance, the older, enclosed world of Avila contrasts with outside society, and such a distinction merges with Pedro's psychological makeup:

En *La sombra del ciprés es alargada*, la acción está concentrada en la ciudad de Avila, una ciudad amurallada y que según el protagonista, la razón por la cual éste sufre de una angustia psicológica, personal, tremenda. Es en aquella ciudad donde Pedro empieza a crear sus propias murallas personales alrededor de sí mismo para no dejar

penetrar en su universo el contacto humano. Sin embargo, la muralla de Avila llega a ser un símbolo anacrónico en un mundo contemporáneo. Y aquí queda el problema de Pedro, de no poder ni separar ni coexistir en estos dos mundos. (224)<sup>3</sup>

Within this topographical setting for death and psychological enclosure, Delibes makes use of two key arboreal metaphors to portray the juxtaposition of life with death. In this case, the cypress and pine trees occupy center stage as the reminders of death and life, respectively. In spite of this opposition, the pines in the cemetery are "en fraternal camaradería con los cipreses" (75), indicating the interdependency of life and death. Alfredo founds fear of the cypress trees in Pedro, as he states that they "parecen espectros" (77). Yet after Alfredo's death, Pedro sees the pine trees as constant reminders of Alfredo's living spirit and as life-affirming entities in the face of death; the pine "resguardaba su cuerpo" and made Pedro feel "más cerca de Alfredo y de su espíritu" (123) while providing much-needed shade and tranquility.<sup>4</sup> Still, Pedro's concern with death's inevitability is obvious when he states, "Sabía que la sombra del ciprés es alargada y corta como un cuchillo" (133), as the cypress becomes the grim reaper figure for the protagonist. Maria Isabel Butler describes the tree in a similar vein: "El ciprés -como el hombre pesimista y hermético que representa- proyecta una sombra alargada, inhóspita" (593).<sup>5</sup> The image of the cypress also makes Pedro consider the paramount importance of physical location in man's life, as man is autochthonously rooted in earth and thus is obliged to cede himself to it at the point of death: "el hombre, físicamente, es como una planta que nace de la tierra y acaba en ella" (134). Avila is etched in Pedro's psyche even after leaving the city, as its indelible association with death affects him for years to come. Indeed, as Janet Diaz observes, Avila's "penetrating barrenness and frigidity, combined with emotional deprivation, impregnate the heart of the youthful protagonist with a chill which many years and miles do not suffice to dispel" ("Miguel Delibes' Vision of Castilla" 59).

However, in spite of these effects on Pedro, a discursive and topographical shift occurs in the second half of the novel. Pedro narrates his story now as a mature adult and from different loci, and introduces new meanings to space in this novel. Specifically, it is the two principal spaces of the sea and the countryside which become the backdrop for this part of the novel and which further develop the protagonist and his psychology. Pedro leaves his adoptive family and pursues the life of a merchant mariner. Although still keenly aware of the inevitability of death, Pedro's self-achieved uprooting from Avila and subsequent displacement to the sea allow him to



focus less intently on death and more on free will. As Pedro notes, "En el fondo tenía esperanzas de sanar por dentro; de que el tiempo y la naturaleza fuesen debilitando las profundas roderas que en mi ánimo imprimiese el carro de la muerte" (146). This new and open space provides Pedro with a radical shift from his previous residence in the more fixed and hermetic Avila, as his consciousness becomes infused with a sense of inner peace which he was not able to acquire earlier: "el océano traía consigo la paz de los espíritus. Una paz sedante y fácil, que sólo puede dar lo que no ofrece limite ni barrera en el espacio ni en el tiempo" (143). At the same time that Pedro achieves this inner peace, he practices his acquired theory of *desasimiento*, detaching himself from the concerns of fixed objects and people, as Agawu-Kakraba explains:

By detaching himself from society and becoming a sailor, he hopes to attain two objectives. First, he looks to nature, manifested in the form of the sea, as a possible refuge through which his detachment can become a reality. His decision reveals a rather cynical attitude of attachment to detachment.

Second, he believes that the sea's immensity and beauty can help assuage the deep impression death has made on his mind. (55)

Although Pedro practices detachment from Avila and the people he had known, however, the sea also offers him new opportunities for expanding personal relationships beyond the physical walls of Avila and the figurative walls of childhood. While at sea, Pedro befriends Luis Bolea, and maintains intellectual conversations with his new interlocutor. It is also at sea that Pedro is able to confess his lifelong fear of death and receive advice and commentary from his friend. Echoes of Francisco de Quevedo's conception of death as beginning at birth resonate in Bolea's statement: "Puede entenderse como una misma cosa; la muerte no es más que una circunstancia de la vida colocada en su último extremo" (195). Immediately after Pedro asks what life is, Bolea again echoes Quevedo by stating that it is "La gestación de la muerte" (195). These conversations indeed point to a fear and almost fascination with death on Pedro's part - fears which Delibes himself actually had, according to his own public statements - but at the same time they are fundamental in his maturation and understanding of the life cycle as an adult in the open world. The sea also paradoxically acts as a separator of people at the same time that it brings them together; without his voyages on the open sea, Pedro would never have met

his mate, Jane, in Providence, Rhode Island. However, inevitably it forces him to part with her for periods of time, and Pedro is forced to think of the larger issues of death and detachment which have come to affect his life since childhood. Pedro still waxes existential when he thinks of "La muerte soplando los candiles de nuestros incipientes entusiasmos. La marcha de Alfredo para no volver; el dolor de la separación; el peso póstumo de su cuerpo gravitando sobre mi aplanada existencia" (267).

As can be seen throughout the novel, the sea has a dualistic nature: it can both allow for peace of mind and a continuous fascination with death. Gemma Roberts examines this dualism with respect to Pedro's psyche, as the sea brings him in close contact with nature and peacefulness at the same time that he continues to contemplate death. She notes that "la navegación de los mares inmensos, ofrece el mejor paliativo frente a la náusea que produce la contingencia del mundo humano y finito... Irónicamente, sin embargo, es el mismo océano el que se encarga de devolverle la visión de la finitud y de la muerte, resistuyéndole a la náusea" (225). Such thoughts about death are spurred on in part by observation of a seagull picking at the remains of a cadaver, and of news of war.<sup>6</sup> In this instance, Pedro's witnessing of war's carnage resulting from an unspecified naval battle adds more nuance to the significance of the sea for him:

[T]he sea, which up to this point has served as his emotional retreat, reveals one of its hidden attributes. Pedro's innocence is shattered when the sea becomes an agent and instrument of death... The "desamor" he experienced in his adolescence is magnified in the destruction of property and human life. The distressing description of the floating bodies on the sea, which serve as food for the sea gulls, is shocking and forces both the protagonist and the reader to confront the realities and violence of war. (Agawu-Kakraba 56)

Nevertheless, the sea still affords Pedro a type of solitude which the philosopher Kierkegaard, as Roberts mentions, sees as "una de las características de este estado de introversión, indicadora de un más alto grado de espiritualidad, de una naturaleza más profunda" (229). With his new life of a commercial sailor, Pedro's construction of self revolves around a combination of solitude and awareness of life's finitude, as well as togetherness with the other.

This figure of the other is seen in two key characters in the second half of the novel: Luis Bolea, Pedro's aforementioned platonic friend, and Jane,

Pedro's American wife. Through his relationships with these characters, Pedro is put in touch with new spaces as well, separated by several thousand miles of ocean. With Bolea, Pedro comes to know the rural countryside of Spain; and with Jane, Pedro becomes familiar with the city of Providence as well as rural Appalachia. Through the figure of the other, Pedro begins to understand the distinctions between rural and urban life, and their consequent effects on his worldview. After first arriving at Bolea's *finca*, Pedro is enveloped in the serenity of the rural atmosphere in Spain. It has the psychological effect of a *locus amoenus*, upon his awakening the following day: "Me despertó un ruiseñor cantando alocadamente a dos metros de mis oídos, dejándose bañar su manojo de plumas por los primeros rayos de sol del nuevo día" (219). In a shady grove of trees, with the birds singing, Pedro finds a "no sé qué de armonía perfecta" (223), something not attained previously in Avila, a city largely associated with death and tension. Also unlike Avila, the countryside offers Pedro an open space as well as a harmonious one, in contrast with the hermetism of the walled city. Even the very trees seem more gentle and less menacing than some of those contained within Avila, above all the cypresses, as Pedro calmly states: "La majestad de los árboles a mi lado incrementaba mi impresión de insignificancia... Los árboles son unos buenos compañeros" (226). At this moment, Pedro is at once alone and surrounded by many others: alone in the wilderness yet accompanied by its living entities.

While in rural Spain, Pedro converses with a member of Bolea's household, doña Soledad. In his conversations with doña Sole, as she is affectionately called, Pedro learns to try and find balance in life, in spite of his recurring obsession with death. At this point, he can more easily accept life's vicissitudes and the presence of other people, while moving away from the practice of *desasimiento* (Agawu-Kakraba 59). Doña Sole warns him of becoming a pessimist and of focusing disproportionately on death, using the example of a pessimist whom she used to know and who had committed suicide. For doña Sole, the excessive fear of death can lead to a lack of faith as well (Pauk 124-125). In her advice to Pedro, doña Sole raises the time-honored theme of *desengaño*, popular since the Golden Age, as Pedro must learn to accept life (in its positive aspects) as much as death: "-Desengáñese, Pedro -me dijo-, ésta es la vida" (232). By this point in the novel, some clear differences between urban and rural spaces become evident. Karl Kohut reviews Delibes' overall view of the rural-urban distinction in the following manner: "Tenemos aquí el antiguo topos de la 'alabanza de la aldea'... Delibes prefiere sin duda alguna el campo, la aldea, al paisaje artificial de la ciudad" (211). Pedro's acquaintance with Luis Bolea and doña Sole, while he is immersed in the more tranquil lifestyle of the Castilian countryside, allows him to think differently (and generally



more positively) about his place in life, a definite change from his previous life in Avila. Rodríguez adds an additional perspective to this treatment of Castile and the country, stating that "[t]al vez tuviese aquí Delibes en mente la exaltación de Castilla llevada a cabo por los noventayochistas que transforman el paisaje castellano en símbolo ideal de esa España mítica de tiempos pasados" ("Idealización y realidad" 541). In any event, Pedro remains psychologically rooted in the physical places which he has come to know. Nature penetrates Pedro's innermost core, and the reader can see more easily how his character is intimately shaped by his surroundings: "El paisaje se ha ido convirtiendo en un trasunto del alma y es ésta la que se identifica con su propia circunstancia" (Alvar 20).

Pedro also spends considerable time on the other side of the Atlantic, and his views on human existence are influenced further still. In Providence, after entering into a romantic relationship with Jane, he is allowed to feel even less the obsessive weight of death and the ephemerality of existence. Pedro candidly observes, "No me torturaba en estos días la angustia de sentirme bajo el asfixiante patrocinio de la sombra alargada y negra de un ciprés... Sentí con esto mitigarse mi temor hacia la muerte rondadora" (242). These are statements he assuredly would not have made had he been forced to stay in Avila for the rest of his life. It is in Providence that Pedro also learns to put to practice the advice of doña Sole and to find harmony in his life: "todo debe fundarse en el criterio de la proporción y del equilibrio" (243). Ultimately, it is Jane, the consummate figure of the other, through whom Pedro achieves balance. Though he had previously avoided an intimate relationship with anyone for fear of losing them through death, Pedro marries Jane and spends his honeymoon with her in the Appalachians. While in the American countryside, Pedro further distinguishes rural from urban settings, and is infused with more tranquility: "No era el silencio lo que añoraba, era la ausencia de la humanidad; esta soledad sin ruidos monótonos de civilización... y me percataba, más que nada, de que el hombre, frente a la Naturaleza, está más cerca que nunca de Dios" (247)<sup>7</sup>.

Just as Pedro is becoming more settled into married life, however, his state of serenity is abruptly broken by the untimely death of Jane off the docks at Providence. The death is all the more brutal as Jane was pregnant with their child at the time. As a result of this terrible occurrence, Pedro feels compelled to return to the city of his childhood, and rediscovers it from the perspective of a mature adult and survivor of hardship. The return prompts particular occasions of topocentrism as childhood memories of place are activated. For example, Pedro returns to the area of Cuatro Postes and searches for the cross constructed on top of the hill "para extraer de ella un jugo vital que avivase la morosa corriente de mi historia." (275)



also returns to the cemetery, not to lose himself completely in pessimism over one's existence but rather to recapture the inner peace after Jane's death. In so doing, he places himself in the cemetery through a bridge between life and death, as he contemplates, "—Mi o está aquí... entre los vivos y mis muertos, actuando de intercesor.—" (277) Death is personalized through the use of the possessive "mis", referring to the deaths of Alfredo and Jane, separated by thousands of miles but linked affectively. In spite of the personal tragedy of these deaths, however, Pedro rejects the idea of suicide as an affront to God; in this respect, Delibes stands in distinction to those who might see suicide as the supreme affirmation of human free will. In this same respect, Pedro fits ideologically within the Christian worldview, as he accepts Avila's surroundings<sup>8</sup> again at the novel's conclusion and professes his faith in God as a permanent other: "Y por encima de mí me quedaba Dios" (278). The novel has come full circle for the protagonist, in a process that involved breaking away from a staid Avila, discovering more mobility on the ocean, finding serenity in nature and through other people, and ultimately returning to an Avila viewed differently and without so much bitter cynicism.<sup>9</sup> Pauk considers Pedro's new attitude to be one of synthesis and balance, an attitude not without some existentialism and uncertainty but still clearly inscribed within Christian theology: "Al final de la novela, hemos llegado a una síntesis, que es un equilibrio entre el miedo y la esperanza, entre la vida y la muerte. Es un existencialismo cristiano el de Delibes, en una novela en que el escritor vive a través del personaje un conflicto base" (33).

In sum, nature and culture together play key roles in Pedro's character development as well as in the dénouement of the novel.<sup>10</sup> In retrospect, it is nature which receives the more positive treatment from Delibes, as it serves as a faithful companion and as a psychologically structuring agent. Nature more closely approximates the state of innocence one associates normally with childhood, as Pauk has observed (152). Nature also can be seen as a physical environment more conducive to living a fulfilling life, as Roberts has shown. Like other critics, she is aware of Delibes' tendency to favor nature as "un fenómeno más autóctono que la vida social y civilizada" (226). Such a tendency began with this novel and evolved in later works, as Delibes became more deeply concerned with the natural environment (including ecological concerns) and the advance of modern progress. Pedro's development mirrors much of Delibes' own esthetic development, and to a degree evinces what has been termed "una preocupación, la de la amenaza de la civilización sobre la identidad del hombre." (Barrero Pérez 223) It is the rural spaces in which Delibes' character truly finds himself, although the importance of certain urban spaces must also be underscored, as Pedro carries his desire for balance to a physically unchanged yet spiritually dif-

ferent Avila.<sup>11</sup> In conclusion, Pedro's —and Delibes'— philosophy is one in which the individual is intimately shaped by place, and differently so in contrasting spaces. Spatiality influences one's interaction with others and one's inner contemplation, as no individual is ever an island. The author's preferred location for human existence and spiritual reflection can ultimately be found in the tranquil and bucolic environment of Pedro's, and Delibes', native Castilla.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Some critics have suggested that death itself is really the intended protagonist of the novel. For example, Stephen Hart has claimed that "*dans La sombra del ciprés es alargada, la mort peut être considérée comme le protagoniste du roman.*" (11) Similarly, Manuel Muñoz Cortés has affirmed that "*la oculta protagonista de la obra es la muerte.*" (213) Observations such as these imply that death is so persistent in its presence that it acquires the characteristics of a literary personage and becomes actualized. It is in places such as Avila that death is found to be so firmly rooted, as shall be demonstrated.
- <sup>2</sup> Yaw Agawu-Kakraba offers a socio-historical contextualization of the concept of *desasimiento* as it is presented in this novel, beyond its philosophical and emotional aspects. For him, the frequent use of *desasimiento* reflects Spain's post-Civil War isolation: "The Francoists' programs of 'vertical' syndicates and 'autarquía' and the failure of those ideas correlate to Pedro's assimilation and implementation of his mentor's mythical discourse of 'desasimiento,' which he later jettisons because of its spurious and incongruous nature. Pedro's anguish, isolation, detachment and nonengagement run parallel to Spain's historical realities of the post-Civil War era." (44)
- <sup>3</sup> Additionally, Pedro's reaction to Avila and his attempt at living out a philosophy of *desasimiento* are, in essence, the creation of an artificial and internal "arcadia", as Torres Nebrera observes: "Pedro... necesitó crearse su personal arcadia (en lo que el espacio mítico tiene de espacio cerrado, amurallado, como la ciudad castellana que simboliza la circundada morada interior del personaje), y la creó para defenderse de lo que podía dañarle en lo más hondo. El alumno de don Mateo Lesmes buscaba en su formulación del <<desasimiento>> el escudo que le defendiera, más que de la muerte, del vacío desestabilizador que esa muerte -del ser ajeno, del ser próximo, de la mujer amada, del hijo anunciado- causaba en la arcadia artificial que le exigía inventar su desequilibrio emocional." (37-38)
- <sup>4</sup> Janet Diaz adds further commentary on the symbolism of pine and cypress trees with respect to perceived personality types: "For the purposes of the book, the pine's shadow is considered to be spherical, round, and emblematic of plenitude, while the shadow of the cypress is elongated, needlelike, and inseparably linked with pessimism, melancholy, withdrawal, and nothingness. A parallel symbolism attributes similar qualities to the shadows of men: those of opti-

mists are round, and those of pessimists, like that of the cypress,' (Miguel Delibes 42)

- <sup>5</sup> Other scholars have viewed the cypress' symbolism in much the same light, as a metaphor for death itself (Hart 18), for instance. Edgar Pauk also sees this symbolism and its accompanying focus on death as autobiographical for Delibes (122), as per statements that the novelist had once made.

For more on Delibes' own preoccupation with death, see Cecilia Silva's interview with Miguel Delibes, originally conducted in 1977, not long after the end of the Franco dictatorship. In this interview, Delibes talks about his fear and anguish with respect to death, and also about his desire to believe in an afterlife (130). On a different note, though, in the same interview, he appears to imply that *La sombra del ciprés es alargada* was not one of his better novels and that he would not recommend it as reading for American college students (131).

- <sup>6</sup> On the surface, the war inserted into this novel is presumed to be the First World War. However, it can also be considered a cover for the Spanish Civil War, owing to the fact that the censorship prevalent during the early years of the Franco regime would likely have not allowed the Civil War to be used overtly in a context such as this. See Rodríguez, *El sentimiento del miedo* 14-15.

Delibes himself comments on the literary effects of censorship under the Franco regime in another interview, conducted by Pilar Concejo. Though by no means does Delibes condone censorship or any other aspect of the Franco regime, he notes that it forced him to develop a more metaphoric and subtle style of writing, something which he believes had then disappeared in writing generally once the official censorship ceased (620). He refers specifically to *Cinco horas con Mario* and the implied political discourse within the novel. Additionally, Delibes adds a note of confusion and uncertainty as to how Spanish authors would develop, as the nation at the time was in the process of transition to democracy and free speech.

- <sup>7</sup> Generally, it is held that Delibes maintained a positive appreciation of nature - especially within the context of rural Spain, in addition to the American countryside seen here - throughout his literary career. However, Delibes' narrative is not without some observation of problems in rural areas, such as poverty. This novel occasionally raises that topic as well, as in one instance when Cristián, a farmer's son, moves to the city to escape poverty and stagnation, and to search of a better life (Elizalde 287). It should be remembered, however, that the aforementioned example of rural poverty in Spain and subsequent migration into urban areas fits within the context of Postwar Spain, as many people (especially the younger generations) left old, less economically viable towns for life in Spanish cities or in cities abroad.

- <sup>8</sup> Pauk characterizes Pedro's final acceptance of Avila as a return to one's roots, much the same way a tree is physically rooted in the natural environment (151). He also believes that Pedro's effective return to nature is "casi oriental"



(150), an unexplained but possible reference to the "part-whole" relationship between nature and humanity in Chinese, and more generally East Asian, philosophy. This way of thinking stands in distinction to the worldview (more common in the West) which supports the notion of humankind as the highest achievement of the natural world and as the master of the physical environment.

<sup>9</sup> There is some disagreement among the critics regarding Pedro's final attitude towards Avila. See, for instance, Agawu-Kakraba 61 for an explanation of some of the different viewpoints surrounding this issue. Some, although not necessarily most, scholars have viewed the novel's ending and Pedro's overall attitude to be completely pessimistic and devoid of genuinely positive reflection, thus allegedly lending the novel a negative tone from start to finish.

<sup>10</sup> It should be added that Delibes has often maintained a critical stance towards "civilization" or "progress" as defined by technological change and evolution. Similarly, Delibes has often maintained the same critical or questioning attitude towards life in large urban agglomerations, as opposed to life in the countryside. This stance on "civilization" and nature can be seen in *La sombra del ciprés es alargada* and onward, as Torres Nebrera articulates (34). Pedro's sense of fear includes, to a degree, humankind's destructive forces in trying to forge "civilization", whereas nature is much more a source of tranquility and life, and only an arbitrary and unintentional harbinger of possible destruction. The example of the sea and the sight of dead bodies mentioned earlier is an example of this: nature (the sea, in this case) would only carry a negative or death-centered connotation because it is, in fact, people who bring their own self-destruction into the natural environment.

<sup>11</sup> In portraying his characters as intimately linked to physical spaces, whether urban or rural, Delibes expands on visions of land and people seen in the literature of the Generation of 1898. As Alvar observes, "Lo que hace Delibes es superar la visión que teníamos de Castilla fundiendo tierras y hombres; es decir, fundiendo unos ámbitos que no son insolidarios sino complementarios. Yo diría que aunando las visiones terruñeras de Unamuno y Azorín con los paisajes urbanos de Baroja. Porque Delibes ha hecho que sus personajes sean criaturas arraigadas en la tierra o en la ciudad, con lo que sus andanzas y visiones resultan como la cara y el envés de una hoja." (21) This relationship between people and place is interiorized as well, rather than dispassionately objectivist (Alvar 23).

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