

An Archetypal Study of Three Women in  
La casa de los espíritus by Isabel Allende

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## I. Introduction

When one reads Isabel Allende's first novel La casa de los espíritus, one is reading a wonderful mixture of historical fact and imaginative fiction. On the one hand there is the semi-autobiographical story of three generations of the Trueba family, and on the other is the social and political history of Chile. While it is normal to find in contemporary Latin American fiction images of women as mothers, virgins, and whores, they are almost never portrayed as the hero of the story. Allende breaks with this mode of fiction and gives us not one but three images of women as heroes. Allende describes them thus: "Todas las mujeres de mi libro son feministas a su modo, es decir, abogan por ser personas libres y completas, por realizarse, por no depender del hombre. Cada una lucha de acuerdo a su carácter y a la época en que le tocó vivir" (qtd. in Agosín 47). La casa de los espíritus is a woman-centered history of the Trueba family. It is the story of Clara, the "nucleus" of the Trueba family; of Blanca, her daughter; and then of Alba, her granddaughter. These are not ordinary Latin American female stereotypes, as portrayed in Latin American literature, because each has, in her own way, a strength and a power all her own. Each one is a hero in her own right: Clara in her wise innocence, Blanca in her role as a self-effacing martyr, and Alba in her headstrong role as a "warrior." Allende, in her interview with Marjorie Agosín, goes on to describe these three women in the following way:

. . . elegí mujeres extraordinarias que simbolizaran mi visión de lo femenino, del destino de las mujeres en América Latina. Todas ellas escapan de alguna manera a la rutina, a las limitaciones impuestas a su sexo. Clara encuentra su realización en el mundo espiritual y la ayuda al prójimo, la caridad. Blanca se salva de la mediocridad por ese gran amor que ella vive como una tragedia y que marca todos sus pasos. Alba pertenece a la generación más joven y está proyectada hacia afuera, hacia el trabajo, la política, la preocupación social. (46)

These three women are aspects of the new Latin American female stereotypes. They represent part of a change in both Latin America and in the author, as Allende told Douglas Foster in a recent interview: "When you write about other people you write about yourself. Why do you choose those characters? Those anecdotes? It's because they're meaningful to you. While writing the books I learned a lot about myself . . . " (44).

This study is based on the principle that life is a journey and all human beings go through phases and stages while on this journey. Each stage has a developmental task embedded within itself. Through the study of literature and myth, and by careful observation of the characters in them, the reader can come to an understanding of these phases and stages. This study will focus on the developmental stages of

Clara, Blanca, and Alba, using the archetypes which they symbolize. They embody historical awareness and intuitive understanding. Light is hope and freedom, and the luminous names of the three women are clearly symbolic.

## **II. Overview of The Hero Within.**

In this study I will be using some words and terms from Jungian psychology. Therefore, in order to understand more fully the discussion in this study, it is necessary for the reader to be familiar with some basic terminology and concepts that will be used. In this regard, I will be making use of Carol Pearson's landmark work The Hero Within: Six Archetypes We Live By.

The principal Jungian concept used in this study is that of "Archetypes." For Carl Jung, Archetypes "are deep and abiding patterns in the human psyche that remain powerful and present over time" (Pearson xxi). There are any number of Archetypes, and these primordial symbols are found in many forms. This concept is true especially in dreams, in art, in literature, and, most of all, in those myths that are profound or moving and in some cases universal. Archetypes for the most part transcend culture, but in The Hero Within Carol Pearson describes those Archetypes which are most active in the conscious lives of our Western culture (xxi-xxiv).

Pearson discusses only six Archetypes in The Hero

Within, those that she sees as important to the Hero's journey: the Innocent, the Orphan, the Martyr, the Wanderer, the Warrior, and the Magician. In the introduction to her book, she characterizes the Hero's journey in this way: "The journey described here is more circular and spiral than linear. It begins with the complete trust of the Innocent, moves on to the longing for safety of the Orphan, the self-sacrifice of the Martyr, the exploring of the Wanderer, the competition and triumph of the Warrior, and then the authenticity and wholeness of the Magician" (xxii). I will summarize these Archetypes and characterize their goals, fears, works, and tasks on this journey. We will be dealing only with the three that are symbolized by the three women referred to earlier from Allende's novel, La casa de los espíritus, that is, Clara, Blanca, and Alba. We will look at Clara as the image/Archetype of the Innocent. We will also look at Blanca as the image/Archetype of the Martyr. Finally, we will look at Alba as the image/Archetype of the Warrior.

The Archetype of the Innocent is that of the child living in Eden before the Fall. To the Innocent, the world is good, and they are safe and cared for in it. For them, all problems are nothing but illusions, and, like a child, they expect the people they meet to be trustworthy. In adulthood, the Innocent is the dreamer, the idealist. This is not to say that the Innocent is simply a fool, because

they can be, at times, in touch with the basic truths of the world. Pearson, in her chapter on the Innocent and the Orphan says, "Like Don Quixote and other 'wise fools,' the Innocent can be in touch with a world beyond that of consensus reality" (49). The Innocent, therefore, is seen as not truly having goals, fears, and tasks, unlike the other five Archetypes found in The Hero Within (25-50). In this study, we will see that Clara is a dreamer, an idealist, and one of these "wise fools."

The Archetype of the Martyr is that of the person for whom loving is the most important thing, and they frequently give to others more than they receive back, all for the sake of this real or imagined love. They work hard, but do not often expect to be rewarded or appreciated for it. For the Martyr Archetype, we see that they want to make whatever contribution they can; they will do whatever is required of them to receive the love they need. The goals for the Archetype of the Martyr are goodness and responsibility, and they fear being in any way selfish or callous (Pearson 98-115). The Martyr sees work as something hard and unpleasant but necessary. As Pearson explains, the mission of the Martyr is "to love as fully as we can, even though we know that doing so opens us up to pain and sorrow; to live our vocational purpose, to do our work, even though we risk failure, poverty, or receiving little or no appreciation; and ultimately to die, for that is the price we pay for having

lived" (114). In this study, we will see that Blanca is just such a person.

The next Archetype that we will examine is that of the Warrior. Warriors push hard to prove themselves, and their greatest need is to succeed. They are highly competitive and enjoy winning. When Warriors are challenged, they stand up and fight for themselves, if necessary. They work hard for a cause, an idea, or a value in which they believe; they want to leave their mark on the world. The goal of a person who is at the Warrior stage in his development is to claim his or her strength and not to be ineffective or passive. The Warrior fears being weak and ineffectual. The task of a Warrior is to learn the lessons of assertiveness, confidence, and courage (Pearson 74-97). In today's world, men are socialized from birth to play the role of the Warrior, where, on the other hand, women are not. Pearson puts it this way: "For women, the issue is whether they will have the audacity even to enter a contest culturally defined as male, and, if they do, whether they will learn to speak in their own voices, to express their own wisdom" (85). In this study, we will see in Alba a woman who does have this audacity. With these basic images/Archetypes in mind, we will now look at each of the Archetypical characters.

### III. The Innocent.

The first character that the reader encounters in La

casa de los espíritus is Clara del Valle or, as she is also called, Clara "la clarividente." She is the youngest daughter of Severo and Nivea del Valle. She is a little girl of ten and the narrator describes her thus: "Clara era muy precoz y tenía la desbordante imaginación que heredaron todas las mujeres de su familia por vía materna" (11). At first, the reader will come to believe that Clara is a person who is completely detached from the world and her family. But in reality, Clara simply perceives the world differently from what is considered normal by most. In her Innocent state, she is able to cut through the illusion that we embrace as reality to the true reality beyond that illusion. She is the Archetype of the Innocent. As stated above, she, like other "wise fools" as an Innocent, is in touch with a world beyond that of consensus reality. Father Restrepo, the priest of the family parish church, on the other hand, takes a very different view of Clara's insights into the world. For example, he accuses Clara of being possessed by the devil when she interrupts him during Mass on Holy Thursday with the following: "¡Psst! ¡Padre Restrepo! Si el cuento del infierno fuera pura mentira, nos chingamos todos . . ." (14).

Clara also has the mental abilities of clairvoyance and telekinesis. She is able to predict earthquakes and move saltcellars and other objects about on the dinner table and the rooms of the Del Valle home. The Del Valle family thinks almost nothing of her strange abilities; for them, it is just



another characteristic of their daughter. They simply stop the movements of the saltcellar and other objects before a visitor might see it and listen to her prophecies as one might listen to a weather report. They keep it all within the family because they do not want Clara to become the subject of the whispers in the gatherings of the local ladies.

Nana, the faithful housekeeper to the Del Valle family, reassures Señora Del Valle. Allende writes:

En esa ocasión Nívea se inquietó, pero la Nana le devolvió la tranquilidad diciendo que hay muchos niños que vuelan como las moscas, que adivinan los sueños y hablan con las ánimas, pero a todos se les pasa cuando pierden la inocencia. "Ninguno llega a grande en ese estado," explicó. "Espere que a la niña le venga la demostración y va a ver que se le quita la maña de andar moviendo los muebles y anunciando desgracias." (15)

Clara's abilities to move objects and make predictions, however, do not disappear with the coming of menstruation, as Nana predicts, but become even more prominent than before. She now is able to play beautiful music on the piano, "con la tapa cerrada." But the Del Valles take it and all the many things that Clara does as just another part of their loving daughter.

She does not lose her abilities, simply because she does

not lose her innocence. She remains the Archetype of the Innocent. Unlike others, who must lose their innocence and travel through the other Archetypes to achieve the wisdom and power of the Archetype of the Magician, Clara achieves this wisdom while remaining an Innocent. After the mysterious death of her sister, Rosa the Beautiful, Clara is silent for a period of nine years. She is silent only because she does not wish to speak, not because she is unable to speak. It is during this time that Clara begins to write profusely in her "cuadernos de anotar la vida" about everything that happens in her eccentric family. Clara's notebooks are not arranged chronologically but according to the importance of events. Even after many attempts by Severo, Nivea, and Nana to make her speak, she remains in her silence. This characteristic, too, becomes accepted as just another trait of Clara's personality. Only Nana continues with different strategies to frighten Clara into breaking her silence.

It is during this period of silence that Clara's abilities not only continue, but increase. It is through her silence that she is able to bypass confronting the "dragons" on the Hero's journey and retain her illusion-shattering wisdom and mental abilities. It is through this silence that she is able to learn the lessons from the other Archetypes, without losing her open innocence.

In her adolescence, Clara is spoiled by her family. It becomes a preoccupation with her mother that Clara should

have a happy childhood. Nívea realizes that Clara is never invited to others' homes and that Clara's own cousins avoid her. Nívea and Clara spend many afternoons together in the sewing room, with Nívea telling stories and anecdotes about the family as she is sewing. It is because of these experiences that Clara looks back on her childhood as a luminous part of her life:

Clara habitaba un universo inventado para ella, protegida de la inclemencias de la vida, donde se confundían la verdad prosaica de las cosas materiales con la verdad tumultuosa de los sueños, donde no siempre funcionaban las leyes de la física o la lógica. Clara vivió ese período ocupada en sus fantasías, acompañada por los espíritus del aire, del agua y de la tierra, tan feliz, que no sintió la necesidad de hablar en nueve años. (78-79)

It is only on her nineteenth birthday that she finally breaks her nine years of silence, as seen in the following passage where she announces her decision to marry: "'Pronto me voy a casar,' dijo. '¿Con quién?' preguntó Severo. 'Con el novio de Rosa,' respondió ella" (79). She predicts to her family that she will marry the former fiancé of her dead sister Rosa, Esteban Trueba. But in hearing her speak for the first time in nine years, they forget about her prediction until Esteban arrives to ask for her hand.

Clara does not love Esteban because love has nothing to

do with this marriage. Esteban is a stern man, is given to fits of rage, and is subject to furniture-smashing tantrums, but he has a passion for Clara that he never loses. Esteban Trueba pampers Clara and regales her with luxuries. They move into the house he builds for her, a house that everyone calls "la gran casa de la esquina." Clara soon fills the house with her spiritualist friends, the artists she sponsors, and the charity cases in which she takes an interest from time to time. She brings into the house life and light.

Another example of the fact that Clara remains an Innocent is the fact that her powers to predict the future never leave her, even when she is a grown woman and is pregnant. Clara is able to give the sex and the name of her children before they are born: "'Es una niña y se llama Blanca,' dijo Clara desde el primer día que anunció su embarazo" (94). She repeats this ability a second time before the birth of her twin sons when she says: "Los mellizos se llamarán Jaime y Nicolás respectivamente" (107).

Clara, as the Innocent, expects everyone that she meets to be as sincere and as honest as she is herself. At one point in the novel, when Clara's son Nicolás gets his girlfriend Amanda pregnant, he turns to his brother Jaime, a medical student, to give her an abortion. When the abortion is completed, Jaime takes Amanda to Clara to be taken care of for a few days because it is better for Amanda not to be

alone at this time. Clara welcomes Amanda into her home just as she does everyone. The narrator explains:

En la gran casa de la esquina los recibió Clara sin hacer preguntas, o tal vez se las hizo directamente a los naipes o a los espíritus. Tuvieron que despertarla, porque estaba amaneciendo y nadie se había levantado aún.

"Mamá, ayude a Amanda," pidió Jaime con la seguridad que daba la larga complicidad que tenían en esos asuntos. "Está enferma y se quedará aquí unos días."

"¿Y Miguelito?" preguntó Amanda.

"Yo iré a buscarlo," dijo Nicolás y salió.

Prepararon uno de los cuartos de huéspedes y Amanda se acostó. Jaime le tomó la temperatura y dijo que debía descansar. Hizo ademán de retirarse, pero se quedó parado en el umbral de la puerta, indeciso. En eso volvió Clara con una bandeja con café para los tres.

"Supongo que le debemos una explicación, mamá," murmuró Jaime.

"No, hijo," respondió Clara alegrement. "Si es pecado, prefiero que no me lo cuenten. Vamos a aprovechar para regalinear un poco a Amanda, que mucha falta le hace." (215-16)

Clara is also very much the dreamer, the idealist. When she

tries to teach feminist ideas to the peasant women of Las Tres Mariás, the women listen with smiles, "para no disgustar a la patrona." The only affect Clara's words have on the peasant women is to make them laugh and tell her the following:

"Nunca se ha visto que un hombre no pueda golpear a su propia mujer, si no le pega es que no la quiere o que no es bien hombre; dónde se ha visto que lo que gana un hombre o lo que produce la tierra o ponen las gallinas, sea de los dos, si el que manda es él; dónde se ha visto que una mujer pueda hacer las mismas cosas que un hombre, si ella nació con marraqueta y sin cojones, pues doña Clarita," alegaban. Clara desesperaba. Ellas se codeaban y sonreían tímidas, con sus bocas desdentadas y sus ojos llenos de arrugas, curtidas por el sol y la mala vida, sabiendo de antemano que si tenían la peregrina idea de poner en práctica los consejos de la patrona, sus maridos les daban una zurra. (99)

But unabashed, Clara continues with her meetings, even after Esteban goes into one of his tantrums when he finds out about these meetings and the ideas Clara is trying to teach the women.

For Clara, the world is a good and safe place where she is always cared for; she has no fears or concerns. Nothing seems to disrupt this world of Clara's, not even the bizarre

and tragic deaths of her parents in an automobile accident in which Nívea is decapitated. When Nívea's head is not found even after searching for it with bloodhounds, Clara, very pregnant with the twins, goes to find her mother's head. Of course she finds it, but the only effect it seems to have on her is to bring on the birth of the twins. Clara reacts this way through the whole of her life. Even when she knows that she is soon to die, she is filled with the same simple open love and joy that she has always had. Clara is not afraid to face her own death, as she tells Alba, her granddaughter:

"Igual que en el momento de venir al mundo, al morir tenemos miedo de lo desconocido. Pero el miedo es algo interior que no tiene nada que ver con la realidad. Morir es como nacer: sólo un cambio" (256).

While this discussion of Clara is by no means exhaustive, nor does it try to be, it does present Clara as a complex and important character. This study has simply tried to examine her as an image/Archetype of the Innocent. We will now examine Clara's daughter, Blanca, as the Archetype of the Martyr.

#### **IV. The Martyr**

As stated above, the Archetype of the Martyr is that of the person for whom loving is the most important thing. This statement is very true of the next character to be examined in this study, Clara's daughter Blanca. The Archetype of the

Martyr is the one Archetype closest to the Latin American stereotype of females. In the more traditional mind set of Latin Americans, a woman stereotypically is to be long-suffering and loyal to her lover or husband, no matter how much he may mistreat or use her. Also, as stated above, it is clear that Allende breaks with the stereotype because she presents this Archetype as a heroic one. When the reader first encounters Blanca, she does not appear to be a heroic figure, but rather a tragic one. In this section of the study, some of the subtler aspects of the hero in the Archetype of the Martyr will be examined.

Blanca's childhood in the Trueba household passes by as normally as any in that house can. Blanca attends a convent school during the school year and spends her summers on the family hacienda, Las Tres Marías. Blanca acts as if she is two different people when at school and when in the country. When young Blanca is on the family hacienda, she is transformed as if she were waking from a long hibernation. This transformation is described in this way: "Sólo en el campo, con la piel dorada por el sol y la barriga llena de fruta tibia, corriendo con Pedro Tercero por los potreros, era risueña y alegre" (130).

This Pedro Tercero is the same Pedro Tercero who was Blanca's childhood playmate and the son of the foreman. He will also become her lover and the father of her daughter, Alba. Love or marriage between the daughter of the patrón and



the son of a peasant worker is imposible and unthinkable because Latin American society would condemn her. Mario A. Rojas has the following to say about this in his article on Allende's novel:

El rol que le asigna Allende a este personaje, más que el social, lucha personal de la mujer por terminar con la discriminación sexual, tan marcada en Latinoamérica en que el preludio sexual es parte del crecimiento natural del hombre, en cambio en la mujer es visto como una gran calamidad que afecta la honra de toda la familia. (209)

But for now they are but two children playing in wild contentment. Nana disapproves of the children playing together, but Clara tells her, "Déjalos, Nana, son niños y se quieren." (126).

Each year Blanca eagerly awaits the trip to the country and the moment of seeing Pedro Tercero again. However, Blanca and Pedro Tercero are growing up; they are no longer children but a maturing man and woman. Blanca at the age of thirteen is taken by Nana to get her first corset, her first pair of silk stockings, and her first grown-up dress. Blanca is becoming a young lady; she is beginning to develop breasts and to menstruate. Blanca and Pedro Tercero can no longer play together the innocent games of childhood with the same wild and open abandonment that they did as children. As a result, long years of secret meetings at the river begin, at

the spot where they have met so many times before. Every night, Blanca locks the door to her room, opens the window to jump to the ground below, and goes to meet Pedro Tercero at the river. It is this spot where their love for one another grows to a burning intensity and is consummated.

Blanca and Pedro Tercero's happiness is short-lived because Pedro Tercero García is fired for spreading socialist ideas among the peasants of the hacienda. Esteban Trueba gives Pedro Tercero the warning that he is not to set foot on the property again. Pedro Tercero, however, does not let this order stop him from visiting the haciendas in the area or from seeing Blanca. A tramp pulling a burro, a mailman on a bicycle, a Protestant preacher, or other such inoffensive characters would arrive on the grounds of the hacienda, all being none other than Pedro Tercero in disguise. Blanca would always recognize him by his pitch-black eyes. Their meetings together at the river become more and more infrequent and therefore more intense and more precious. Blanca, being the true Martyr, accepts this as part of her lot in life: "En esos años, ella se acostumbró al sobresalto y a la espera, se resignó a la idea de que siempre se amarían a escondidas y dejó de alimentar el sueño de casarse y vivir en una de las casitas de ladrillo de su padre. A menudo pasaban semanas sin que supiera de él . . ." (156).

Blanca does everything in her power not to be sent back to school and to stay on the hacienda to see Pedro Tercero on

one of his infrequent visits, even to the point of faking having various illnesses. She drinks hot brine to make herself nauseated, she gives herself diarrhea by eating green plumbs, and uses other such methods to get the reputation of being sickly. The narrator explains: "Tan bien imitaba los síntomas de las más diversas enfermedades, que hubiera podido engañar a una junta de médicos y ella misma llegó a convencerse de que era muy enfermiza" (155).

During this period of time, much begins to happen to Blanca. For example, Count Jean de Satigny arrives in the area. He is looking for some rich young heiress to marry and his eyes fall on Blanca, whom he begins to woo. The Count becomes an honored guest on the Trueba's hacienda and, while there, discovers Blanca's nocturnal visits to the river to see Pedro Tercero. Seeing a chance to get Blanca's hand, he tells Esteban of these visits. As a result, Esteban flies into one of his rages. He beats Blanca with a whip, nearly killing her, and even turns his rage on Clara, knocking out several of her teeth. Because of these beatings, Clara and Blanca leave the hacienda for the house in the city. While in the city, it soon becomes apparent that Blanca is pregnant. Esteban, upon hearing of it on the hacienda, again becomes enraged and forces Blanca to marry the Count to avert any scandal. Their marriage is never consummated, not to Blanca's disappointment. The Count tells Blanca that "no tenía ninguna inclinación especial por el matrimonio . . . y

que, por lo tanto, no intentaba molestarla con requerimientos de marido . . ." (220). Later, however, Blanca discovers that her new husband is sexually deviant and leaves him to return to live with Clara at the Trueba house in the city.

Meanwhile, Pedro Tercero García continues to compose songs and is invited to appear on a radio program. His songs are of life, friendship, love, and revolution. Soon, his name and his music become very popular. During this time, he has many adolescent girls force themselves into his life and his bed. He thrives on these many short-lived love affairs. Nevertheless, when he is in bed with one of them, it is Blanca about whom he thinks. He returns to Blanca time and time again. For Blanca, there is only Pedro Tercero:

El único hombre de su vida era Pedro Tercero, pues tenía vocación para un solo amor. La fuerza de ese inmovible sentimiento la salvó de la mediocridad y de la tristeza de su destino. Permanecía fiel aun en los momentos en que él se perdía detrás de algunas ninfas de pelo lacio y huesos largos, sin amarlo menos por ello. Al principio creía morir cada vez que se alejaba, pero pronto se dio cuenta de que sus ausencias duraban lo que un suspiro y que invariablemente regresaba más enamorado y más dulce.

(275-76)

It is this strong love of Blanca's that saves Pedro Tercero and herself after the assassination of the Socialist

President. The strong love of the Martyr, as shown in Blanca, is in truth heroic. Blanca is able to love as fully as she can, even though she knows that doing so opens her up to the reality of pain, poverty, and sorrow. For example, while in the Trueba house after she has left the Count, she never asks her father for anything. She lives as a very poor woman, having money only when Clara gives her some or when she sells one of the crèches that she makes to earn an income. She also has to see to the house, the servants, the shopping, the classes she gives to young ladies, and the class she gives to the mongoloid children. Blanca is the only stable person in the big house on the corner after Clara's death. She fights to keep house and family together and she is able to do so only because she has learned the lessons of the Martyr Archetype. She learns to love, to commit, and to let go. Blanca instills the importance of an education in Alba because she feels the consequences of an inadequate education in facing the world. She tells her daughter the following: "No quiero que seas pobre como yo, ni que tengas que depender de un hombre para que te mantenga" (267). Although Blanca's rewards are not material wealth or power in the world, her genuine sacrifices transform her into a woman of great love and caring, who daily makes the world a better place. The Hero in the Martyr is indeed subtle, but is very much here in the person of Blanca. This study will now turn to examine Blanca's daughter Alba, who emerges as a

Warrior figure in the novel.

#### V. The Warrior.

The Archetype of the Warrior is the one Archetype most foreign to the Latin American stereotype of the female. Warriors push hard to prove themselves, and, when challenged, they stand up and fight for themselves. Allende gives us this strong image/Archetype of a female Warrior in the character of Alba, Blanca's daughter and Clara's granddaughter. In the novel, Alba learns the Warrior's lessons of assertiveness, confidence, and courage. Alba confronts her own most frightening dragons, either by slaying them or by merely standing up to them. She thereby receives the gift of courage and the corresponding freedom from the bondage to her fears. The manifestations of the Archetype of the Warrior are at times subtle and at other times not so subtle in the character of Alba. With these images in mind, we will look at Alba as the Archetypical image of the Warrior.

Alba's early childhood is a strange and wonderful one. Allende writes: "Alba pasó su infancia entre dietas vegetarianas, artes marciales niponas, danzas del Tibet, respiración yoga, relajación y concentración con el profesor Hausser y muchas otras técnicas interesantes, sin contar los aportes que hicieron a su educación los dos tíos y las tres encantadoras señoritas Mora" (238). Esteban Trueba, however,

enrolls Alba in a British school for young ladies so that she will get a more proper education. Allende, describing his motives, says:

Había acabado por aceptar, vencido por la oleada de los nuevos tiempos, que algunas mujeres no eran del todo idiotas y pensaba que Alba, demasiado insignificante para atraer a un esposo de buena situación, podía adquirir una profesión y acabar ganándose la vida como un hombre. (267)

Alba's home life is so full of eccentrics that her school seems boring and stifling to her. Alba cries to her mother that she does not want to go to school. However, Blanca supports her father's conviction that Alba must get an adequate education. As a result, she is forced to endure going to school for ten more years.

At the age of eighteen, Alba graduates from the school and decides to attend the university to study philosophy and music. It is there that she meets Miguel and falls in love with him. Miguel is a leftist leader and talks about revolution. Out of love for Miguel, Alba becomes active in the leftist political movement on the university campus with him. Allende describes this time:

Como todos los jóvenes que entraron ese año, descubrió el atractivo de las noches insomnes en un café, hablando de los cambios que necesitaba el mundo y contagiándose unos a otros con la pasión

de las ideas. Volvía a su casa tarde en la noche, con la boca amarga y la ropa impregnada de olor a tabaco rancio, con la cabeza caliente de heroísmos, segura de que, llegado el momento, podría dar su vida por una causa justa. (284)

Alba decides not to tell Miguel that she is Senator Trueba's granddaughter, nor does she tell any other of her other fellow students. To hide who she is, she uses Satigny, not Trueba, for her surname. Alba and Miguel soon become lovers, using the abandoned labyrinth of back rooms of the Trueba house for their love-making. As time passes, both become more and more involved in socialist politics. Their simple happiness is short-lived, however, ending when the goverment is overthrown.

As soon as the Socialists win the presidential election, the Conservatives begin a conspiracy to force the president to resign. Shortages of goods become a nightmare; the stores are nearly empty; and women have to stand in long lines to buy diapers, rolls of toilet paper, shoe polish, and other ordinary items which are becoming luxuries. Blanca begins to stockpile food and all kinds of things in the back rooms of the house. Alba makes a hole in one of the walls and secretly removes part of these stores of food. Later, she gives what she steals to Miguel, who distributes it to the poor. With great courage, she even steals from the cache of arms that her grandfather hides in one of the other unused



rooms. Alba and her uncle Jaime hide the arms in the mountains in case they are ever needed to overthrow the military regime.

Alba shows her real strength after the coup and the death of the President. She even finds the courage and the confidence to stand up to her grandfather, something no one else has ever been able to do. When Senator Trueba opens a bottle of champagne to celebrate the overthrow of the socialist regime, Alba erupts in anger. Allende writes:

"¡Ahora las van a pagar!" exclamó el Senador Trueba alzando la copa. Alba se la arrebató de la mano de un zarpazo y la lanzó contra la pared, haciéndola añicos. Blanca, que nunca había tenido el valor de hacer frente a su padre, sonrió sin disimulo. "¡No vamos a celebrar la muerte del Presidente ni la de otros, abuelo!" dijo Alba. (328)

During the chaos that follows the coup, Alba shows that she is neither weak nor ineffectual by helping to secure asylum for anyone in danger of death. Using her now dead Uncle Jaime's car with bright yellow sunflowers painted on the doors, she drives to an appointed location to pick up people needing to escape from the country. The people needing asylum would see her car with the sunflowers on the doors and motion to her to slow down so that they could jump into the back of the car. She then drives them to one of the more accessible embassies and slips them over the wall behind

the guards' backs. She now takes openly from the hoard of food that her mother has hidden in the house to give to the many hungry children, who have only tea to keep away the pains of hunger. She even begins to sell the unused furniture, paintings, and antique carpets from the abandoned rooms in the house and gives the money to help the poor. These activities continue until Alba is arrested, dragged from the house, and taken to Colonel Esteban García.

Before Esteban Trueba married Clara, he had been in pursuit of every peasant girl in the area of Las Tres Marías, raping them in the fields and impregnating many. Esteban García is Esteban Trueba's natural grandson born of one of the offspring of Pancha García, one of the first of these victims. Esteban García has only his grandfather's first name, a life of poverty, and a growing resentment and great hatred toward the Esteban Trueba family. García reappears a number of times in the novel, and each time his hatred for Esteban Trueba grows and becomes more and more directed toward Alba. After Esteban Trueba helps Esteban García enter the police academy, without knowing that he is his grandson, García rises in the ranks of the police and becomes a colonel in the military government after the coup. Instead of taking his revenge against Trueba in a direct way, he chooses to do so through Alba. In his hands, she undergoes many tortures and is raped over and over. Because of the tortures and rapes, Alba decides to stop eating and drinking in hopes of dying. When

she has almost succeeded, the narrator says that "apareció su abuela Clara, . . . con la ocurrencia de que la gracia no era morir, puesto que eso llegaba de todos modos, sino sobrevivir, que era un milagro" (362). Clara also gives her the idea that instills in her the heroic will to live.

Allende writes:

Clara trajo la idea salvadora de escribir con el pensamiento, sin lápiz ni papel, para mantener la mente ocupada, evadirse de la perrera y vivir. . . . "Tienes mucho que hacer, de modo que deja de compadecerte, toma agua y empieza a escribir," dijo Clara a su nieta antes de desaparecer tal como había llegado. (362-63)

After a time, Alba is, of course, set free. In the Epilogue, Alba tells us in the first-person that it is her grandfather who has the idea of writing down this story. It is here at the end of the novel that we learn that the "me" mentioned in the opening lines of the novel in "sus cuadernos me servirían para rescatar la memoria del pasado y para sobrevivir a mi propio espanto" is Alba (9). It is through writing this story that Alba confronts her own frightening dragons and shows us without question that she is indeed a Warrior.

Clara, Blanca, and Alba are not the only Archetypal characters in this novel, but they are the most important. This study is not the definitive statement in the Archetypal approach to the study of characters in a novel, nor has it

tried to be. But, because of the highly psychological development of characters in Chilean literature, it is an appropriate method of doing so. Allende breaks with the traditional way of portraying women in fiction. In other words, she portrays Clara, Blanca, and Alba not as traditional literary stereotyps, but as Archetypal characters of heroic proportions.

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