

Un hogar sólido: the tomb where life reigns more than death.*Un hogar sólido: el sepulcro donde reina la vida más que la muerte.*

DOI: 10.32870/revistaargos.v12.n30.9.25b

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CE: valleangeles88@gmail.comiD <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-4221-5608>This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).**Received:** 03/26/2025**Reviewed:** 03/18/2025**Accepted:** 05/05/2025**Abstract:**

The purpose of this paper is to analyze and interpret the dramatic work *Un hogar sólido* (*A Solid Home*) by Mexican writer Elena Garro (1916-1998). The playwright, novelist, short story writer, screenwriter, poet and journalist emerged on the stage in the mid-twentieth century with an absolutely innovative theater, with an extraordinary poetic and metaphorical language, and printing in it dreamlike aspects and an abrupt irruption of conventional time and space. In this research, the element of space, the categories of death, loneliness, nostalgia and memories are particularly highlighted. The analysis and interpretation of this piece are theoretically supported by some principles of the book *The Poetics of Space* by the philosopher Gaston Bachelard, the appendix *The Dialectic of Solitude* included in the book *The Labyrinth of Solitude* by Octavio Paz and the book *Death: A Dawn* by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross.

Key words: Death. Loneliness. Nostalgia. Hope. Freedom.**Resumen:**

El presente trabajo tiene como finalidad analizar e interpretar la obra dramática *Un hogar sólido* de la escritora mexicana Elena Garro (1916-1998). La dramaturga, novelista, cuentista, guionista, poeta y periodista emerge a la luz escénica a mediados del siglo XX con un teatro absolutamente innovador, con un extraordinario lenguaje poético y metafórico, e imprimiendo en él aspectos oníricos y una abrupta irrupción del tiempo y el espacio convencionales. En esta investigación se destaca particularmente el elemento del espacio, las categorías de la muerte, la soledad, la nostalgia y los recuerdos. El análisis y la interpretación de esta pieza están sostenidos teóricamente por algunos principios del libro *La poética del espacio* del filósofo Gastón Bachelard, el apéndice *La*

dialéctica de la soledad incluido en el libro *El laberinto de la soledad* de Octavio Paz y el libro *La muerte: un amanecer* de Elisabeth Kübler-Ross.

Palabras clave: Muerte. Soledad. Nostalgia. Esperanza. Libertad.

".... imagination is the power of man to project the truth and get
out of this world of shadows and incomplete acts."

Felipe Ángeles

Elena Garro

The most successful play in the fourth program of Poesía en Voz Alta¹ that took place at the Teatro Moderno in Mexico City on July 19, 1957, was *Un hogar sólido* by Elena Garro. A short play consisting of one act and one scene, it was presented together with the plays *Andarse por las ramas* and *Los pilares de Doña Blanca* by the same author. The work that concerns us here belongs to the line of magical realism, whose poetic register is concentrated as in no other of her plays. The magazine *Mañana!* published it for the first time in 1957 and the Universidad Veracruzana, along with five other short plays by the poblana playwright, in 1958. In 1967 Jorge Luis Borges, Silvina Ocampo and Adolfo Bioy Casares included *Un hogar sólido* in the second edition of the *Antología de la literatura fantástica*, this being one of the greatest literary recognitions abroad of Elena Garro in the 20th century. Enrique Olmos points out, "*Un hogar sólido* is one of Garro's emblematic works and being her first publication it is also the first modern play disseminated on a large scale by a woman in Mexico." (*Tierra adentro*, p. 16).

The purpose of this paper is to analyze and interpret the play *Un hogar sólido* highlighting the element of space, as well as the categories of death, loneliness, nostalgia and memories. The analysis and interpretation of this play are theoretically supported by some principles of the book *The Poetics of Space*

¹ Poesía en Voz Alta was a theatrical movement founded in 1956 by Octavio Paz, Juan José Arreola, Héctor Mendoza and the painters Juan Soriano and Leonora Carrington, and it was on this stage that Elena Garro appeared for the first time as a playwright. The main objective of this group was to present an eminently poetic theater with the coexistence of artistic expressions such as poetry, music, dance and painting; this was an experimental laboratory of innovative scenic creations sponsored by the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

by the philosopher Gaston Bachelard, the appendix *The Dialectic of Solitude* included in the book *The Labyrinth of Solitude* by Octavio Paz and the book *Death: A Dawn* by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross.

It is worth mentioning that the play in question has, more than any other in Garro's dramaturgy, an autobiographical character, since each of the characters represents a member of Elena Garro's nuclear family.² The play is set in a post-revolutionary era between 1920 and 1930, although as we will see later, the time will be ambivalent, since it is not subject to a conventional chronology.

The play presents eight characters: Don Clemente (60 years old), Doña Gertrudis (40 years old), Mamá Jesusita (80 years old), Catita (5 years old), Vicente Mejía (23 years old), Muni (28 years old), Eva, a foreigner (20 years old) and Lidia (32 years old). The place where the play takes place is a family crypt whose members belong to different generations. All of them are dead -and alive-, except for Lidia. The anecdote begins when Doña Gertrudis hears footsteps coming from outside, but Don Clemente, her husband, does not believe her until Catita also hears them and gladly says: "They are many feet!" Meanwhile, Don Clemente has lost his metacarpals and asks Gertrudis to help him look for them. Vicente Mejía and Mamá Jesusita, mother of Gertrudis, appear, who also becomes attentive to hear the footsteps outside. The noises from outside increase. Immediately the grandmother asks Catita, Jesusita's sister, to polish her forehead so that it shines like the polar star. From this moment on, the memories of the characters, who are more alive than dead, begin to surface. The evocation of when they were alive girded their spirits with nostalgia, because their memory is filled with events of essential transcendence, says Mama Jesusita: "Do you remember Gertrudis? That was living! Surrounded by my children stiff and clean as slates." Gertrudis continues in conversation with Mama Jesusita, recalling the most pleasant moments in her life, as well as the ephemeral character of existence; the dialogue is abruptly interrupted by the frivolous intervention of Clemente who has now lost his femur, but Vicente appears saying that he saw Catita playing with the bone at the trumpet. While Catita plays with her little sugar cornet, Gertrudis remembers the day the girl lost her broken collarbone, while the noises from outside are now heard

² Guillermo Schmidhuber de la Mora points out in his text "Teatro garroista" that the characters in *Un hogar sólido* are "inspired by the author's family tree". And he mentions each of them and their respective family relationship: "Catita is Sofía, Elena's older sister, [...] Vicente Mejía is the grandfather Tranquilino Navarro Díaz, who was a Juarista general [...] Doña Gertrudis is the grandmother Josefa Melendreras, an Asturian who died in Mexico. Clemente Bonifacio Garro Melendreras, Elena's uncle, [...] Mamá Jesusita is grandmother Francisca Benítez. Muni is Bonifacio Garro Velasco, Elena's cousin, [...] Eva is Esperanza Velasco de Garro, Spanish, Bonifacio's wife and Boni's mother. Lidia is Elena, the author herself, who always sought a solid home." The Jalisco playwright mentions that these data come from Jesús Garro Velázquez, Elena Garro's nephew, and to whom the author confessed this information. Schmidhuber, Guillermo, "Teatro garroista", in: Garro, Elena, *Teatro completo*. FCE, 2016, pp. XX and XXI.

louder. Vicente says that undoubtedly someone is arriving and that they will have guests, and, in fact, Catita is the one who sees the light filtering through the slot where some deceased relative must be arriving. Gertrudis calls Muni, her nephew and Eva's son, and announces to him that someone is arriving and perhaps it will be one of her cousins with whom she can play and laugh to see if this will take away her sadness. Eva, hearing the knocking from outside, remembers with nostalgia and longing the distant house of her childhood.

EVA: (...) Muni, sonny! Do you hear that thump? That's how the sea beats against the rocks of my house... none of you knew it... it was on a rock, high, like a wave. Whipped by the winds that lulled us at night, swirls of salt covered its panes of sea stars, the lime in the kitchen was gilded by my father's solar hands... at night the creatures of wind, water, fire, salt, entered through the chimney, huddled in the flames, sang in the drop of the sinks... (p. 25).

Eva interrupts the evocation of her memories to point with her arm to the stream of light that enters the crypt when the first tile is removed. The annotation reads: "*(The room is flooded with sunshine. Everyone's fancy suits are dusty and faces pale.)*" Catita is happy because someone new arrives, she wonders if it will be Dona Difteria or San Miguel who brings him, because she was brought by Dona Difteria before going to school, before learning the syllabary. Meanwhile, above, through the piece of vault open to the sky, the feet of a woman "suspended in a circle of light" are seen. Gertrude joyfully says to Clemente: "Clemente! Clemente! They are Lidia's feet: how nice, little daughter, how nice that you died so soon!" Silently begins the descent of Lidia, who is wearing a white dress and her eyes are closed. Catita asks who Lidia is since she did not know her, to which Muni responds by telling her that she is the daughter of Gertrudis and Clemente. Lidia stands in the middle of everyone and opens her eyes. A sudden joy spreads in the space. "LIDIA: Papa! (She hugs him.) Mama! Muni! (She hugs them.) GERTRUDIS: I see you very well, daughter." (p. 26). Lidia greets and recognizes her deceased relatives. Above, from the circle of light, a man's voice is heard addressing words of farewell to Lidia. Catita remembers that it was she who first arrived at the crypt and then Vicente with his open wounds from the flashes that killed him. At the end of the farewell sermon upstairs, the slabs are placed and everything is dark. Lidia is happy to see them all, but especially Muni, her cousin, the favorite, who committed suicide with cyanide at the age of twenty-eight. The young man comments that he decided to die because he no longer wanted to walk the sidewalks like a dog "looking for

bones in the butcher shops full of flies," instead he wanted a happy city, a solid city like the house he had as a child. Lidia responds with enthusiasm and longing because she too wanted a happy and joyful life. Lidia, Muni and Eva express with nostalgia what they would have liked to be and what they left behind as children, like the bell tower in the sky that counted the hours left to play. As adults they only reached the disillusionment of life. However, Clemente encourages Lidia by telling her that now, now dead, she can be everything she wants and longs for: "CLEMENTE: Lili, aren't you happy? Now your house is the center of the sun, the heart of every star, the root of every herb, the most solid point of every stone."

The members of the family comment on how it is that in death one learns to be all things. Like Mama Jesusita who was frightened when she herself was the worm that went in and out of his mouth, or Vicente who was the worst thing for him was to have been the murderer's dagger. "It's scary to learn to be all things," says Clemente. "Especially that in the world one hardly ever learns to be a man," Gertrudis replies. Lidia aspires to be a pine tree with a nest of spiders and build a solid home. After learning to be all things, God will call them to his bosom and "the spear of St. Michael, center of the universe, will appear, and in its light the divine hosts of angels will arise, and we will enter the heavenly order." There will no longer be a world because all that everyone wants to be will be after the Last Judgment. Catita, who died at the age of five, asks herself: "There will be no more world? And when will I see it? I didn't see anything, I didn't even learn the syllabary. I want there to be a world." Jesusita thinks she hears the trumpet of the Last Judgment, which is where they hope to arrive after being what each one wants to be, however, it is not what she thinks she hears, but the curfew heard outside in the barracks next to the pantheon. Upon hearing the curfew, each one begins to be what they want to be and they disappear.

The crypt: a dream home, a solid home

The piece *Un hogar sólido* presents three fundamental spaces: the crypt, which responds to the home of a family house; the house where the characters lived when they were still alive but which in essence was not a home; and the childhood home, which for some of the characters represents a dream house. Elena Garro introduces us to the interior of a crypt that is not really a house, but a home where the dead live more than the living. A mortuary dwelling where dreams, desires and imagination possess a more human character than those possessed by humans outside. This interior space preserves a unity of integration that is

generated by the family coexistence and the affective bonds between each of the characters, for example, Catita who is happy for the arrival of a new member of the family to the crypt or Mamá Jesusita who asks the girl to polish her forehead so that it shines like a polar star; solidarity is a motive for coexistence and dialogue, and this responds to the primary virtues of the function of inhabiting and how the living space is inhabited, how it is rooted in a corner of the world, as Bachelard points out. The crypt in this sense constitutes that intimate room of well-being, a small universe that shelters and protects.

But this solid home acquires even more solidity in remembrances, memories, nostalgia and melancholy. After Catita hears the first footsteps coming from outer space and Don Clemente asks for help to find her metacarpals, Mamá Jesusita, the grandmother, who complains about sleeping so much because she was buried in her nightgown and lace bonnet, begins the remembrances and memories of a happy past.

MOM JESUSTICE: (...) Happy the time when I ran through the house like a sparkle, sweeping, shaking the dust that fell on the piano, in deceptive torrents of gold, and then, when everything shone like a comet, I broke the ice of my buckets left at night, and bathed in the water full of winter stars. (p. 22).

Like Clara in Elena Garro's *La señora en su balcón*, who shakes the dust off the furniture and its solar effect represents a pure diamond that spins and dances in the living room, Mamá Jesusita poetically resolves the tedium of household chores, putting the monotony of everyday life at the service of the imagination; the grandmother, when evoking that happy time, has flashes of reverie that illuminate the memory of idyllic images that foster well-being in her house of yesteryear: "In this distant region, memory and imagination do not allow themselves to be dissociated. One and the other work in their mutual deepening. One and the other constitute, in the order of values, a community of memory and image." (Bachelard, 2020, p. 42).

Unforgettable memories are treasured in the new home. They are remembrances that come from their distant family abode, whose inhabitants now evoke with joy and happiness, with nostalgia and melancholy. This is the case of Eva, who died at the tender age of twenty and now remembers her birthplace as the den of her childhood; but beyond memories, she brings to mind images that touch deeply

because the evocation comes from imagination and reverie. Eva, like the other inhabitants of this solid home reaches "to the poetic depths of the space of the house." (Bachelard, 2020, p. 43).

EVA: (...) Muni, sonny! Do you hear that thump? That's how the sea beats against the rocks of my house... none of you knew it... it was on a rock, high, like a wave. Beaten by the winds that lulled us at night, swirls of salt covered its panes of sea stars; the lime in the kitchen was gilded by my father's solar hands... at night the creatures of wind, of water, of fire, of salt, entered through the chimney, huddled in the flames, (...) And iodine spread through the house like sleep... The tail of a glowing dolphin announced the day to us. So, with this light of scales and corals! (p. 25).

Eva evokes fixations of happiness and is comforted by reliving them as if through a space that provides her with protection, security and harmony. The house of yesteryear, she inhabited it through reverie and now, in her new dwelling, she restores it in a new one. Bachelard points out that a great number of memories find refuge and one returns to them all one's life through dreaming images: "The dwellings of the past are imperishable in us because the memories of former dwellings are revived as reveries." (2020, p. 43) The memories of the natal home come from the intimacy belonging to the psychic region and safeguard the values of refuge that are deeply rooted in the unconscious and are manifested through evocation and not through a thorough objective description:

For example, what would be the use of giving the plan of the room that was really *my* room, of describing the small room at the *back* of a barn, of saying that from the window, through a crack in the ceiling, one could see the hill? I alone, in my memories of another century, can open the deep cupboard that still preserves for me only the unique aroma, the smell of grapes drying on the wattle. (...) to perceive it, one must have a great imagination (Bachelard, 2020, p. 52).

In that hidden place of the unconscious where the most distant memories are fixed the primitive pleasure manifests itself through evocations and imagination until it reaches a physical state of profound sensations; that is why the natal house becomes unforgettable and we inhabit it as in a dream: "The natal house is more than a dwelling body: it is a dream body." (Bachelard, 2020, p. 53).

Eva's beautiful evocation is suspended when she raises an arm and points to the stream of light entering the crypt, for it is the moment when a new member is about to step into the new dwelling. Now

the reverie belongs to the real time of the crypt for at this moment "The room is flooded with sunshine" and a piece of the vault is open to the sky as a woman's feet are seen suspended in a circle of light. It is Lidia, the daughter of Clemente and Gertrudis, who descends with her eyes closed and a white dress. Everyone shows joy when they see her and she begins to recognize each of her deceased relatives, except for Catita, her aunt, who died at the age of five. Lidia manifests a special joy when she sees Muni, her favorite cousin, who committed suicide with cyanide at the age of twenty-eight, and he, like Eva and Mama Jesusita, recalls with nostalgia the happy times of his childhood and the fractured dreams that life as an adult gave him:

MUNI: (...) I wanted a cheerful city, full of suns and moons, a solid city, like the house we had as children, with a sun for every door, a moon for every window and wandering stars in the rooms. A solid city, like the house we had as children, with a sun at every door, a moon for every window and wandering stars in the rooms. Do you remember them, Lili? It had a labyrinth of laughter. Her kitchen was a crossroads; her garden, the source of all the rivers; and she was the birth of all the towns..." (p. 28).

The imagination of memory and longing are founded primarily in childhood. Childhood, says Bachelard, is greater than reality and the attachment or bond one has with one's birthplace is due to the power of the dreams and reveries that were lived in those first years of life and also to the power of the unconscious that fixes the most distant memories: "Childhood remains in us alive and poetically useful on the plane of reverie and not on the plane of facts. By this permanent childhood we preserve the poetry of the past." (Bachelard, 2020, p. 55).

Remembrances, memories and nostalgia, reveries of the present and the past, is what emerges substantially in Elena Garro's work. The intimacy of a brief space that extends to the unfathomable through fantasy and reverie; the life of the dead that extends beyond illusion and hope. Just as the luminosity of past years is forged in this new home, so too the desires and dreams of the present make the crypt a resplendent space where love, solidarity and life are gestated.

A solid loneliness

The native house, says Bachelard, constitutes a center of reverie but also a center of tedium and a center of solitude. The evocations and memories we have of the house are not always stable fixations of happiness that are stored in immovable images but are oscillating in spatial and temporal movements that emit flashes of light but also reflections of darkness and when this happens the room becomes a center of melancholy and solitude: "...however cosmic the solitary house becomes illuminated by the star of its lamp, it always imposes itself as solitude." (Bachelard, 2020, p. 79). While, the inhabitants of the *solid home* have dreamlike and dreamlike remembrances of their childhood home that provides them with happiness and nostalgia, they also have evocations of the spaces and moments of loneliness and hostility. A *solid home* contains moments and spaces of light but also of darkness; they are spaces of loneliness rather than solitude. Catita, whose death surprised her at the age of five, was the first to arrive at the family crypt and there she remained alone, frightened, crying until Vicente, the second of the family to die, arrived: "CATITA: (...) When they brought me in, he said: A little angel flew! And it wasn't true. I was down here, alone, very scared, wasn't I, Vicente? Another character who suffered in life a painful and irreparable loneliness was Muni, Lidia's dearest cousin; feeling like a lonely, hungry and street dog, as well as being fed up with the daily monotony and a meaningless life led him to suicide. Lidia, upon arriving at the crypt, asks him why, why he decided to die and Muni answers her:

MUNI: Why, cousin Lili, haven't you seen the stray dogs walking and walking sidewalks, looking for bones in the butcher's shops full of flies, and the butcher with his fingers soaked in blood from the force of butchering? Well, I no longer wanted to walk atrocious sidewalks looking for a bone among the blood, nor to see the corners, support of drunks, dog pissing places". (p. 28).

The images and acts of Garre's dramatic characters are distinguished by symbolic and allegorical language. Thus, the attributes and features that the playwright gives to the character of Muni, turning him into a hungry stray dog, denote the loneliness, unhappiness and weariness in which Lidia's cousin found himself before dying. On the other hand, the joy shown by the inhabitants when they receive Lidia in the mortuary takes a melancholic turn when she exposes to them the suffocation in which she was before she died. Loneliness is here another motif of evocations that will permeate the family atmosphere

with the arrival of Lidia. The new tenant remembers and evokes the collapse of dreams and desires she had when she got married, nothing of what she had hoped for came true, she wished to find a solid home.

LIDIA: A solid home, Muni! That's what I wanted... and you know, they took me to a strange house. And in it I found nothing but clocks and eyes without eyelids, which looked at me for years... I polished the floors, so as not to see the thousands of dead words that the maids swept up in the mornings. I polished the mirrors to ward off hostile glances... (p. 28).³

Lidia's melancholic evocations are sustained in a reverie different from the longing and happy evocation of the birthplace we saw before. Although it is a reverie that comes from the poetic imagination and memory, it comes from a sad abode of frustration, anguish and, above all, loneliness. The space it evokes is one of hostility and uprootedness, a space of daily discomfort and just as Titina and Clara, the protagonists of the pieces *Andarse por las ramas* and *La señora en su balcón*, respectively, who save their turbulent conjugal stay through imagination, Lidia also resorts to it to resist her inescapable destiny. As an adult, the intimacy of her native home now becomes a hostile house of fear and insecurity. And like Clara, it was not enough for Lidia to escape from reality, nor was it enough for her to undertake ventures that would relieve her anguish and loneliness, such as opening "books, to open avenues to that circular hell" or "embroidering napkins, with initials linked together, to find the magical, unbreakable thread that makes two names one...". Nothing she did in the conjugal home helped her to achieve happiness and satisfaction. And just like the eight-year-old Clarita, for whom the world was beautiful because there were golden oranges, round and flattened with golden columns and whose illusions kept her with the certainty of reaching Nineveh, the silver city; so Lidia, if only she could find what made her happy in her childhood and grasp the illusion of her life in the house of her birth, if only she could unravel again the magic that polished her childhood, if only she could find the invisible thread that binds things together; but no, fate left her alone, sitting facing the wall, waiting:

LIDIA: (...) If I could find the spider that lived in my house -I would say to myself, with the invisible thread that unites the flower to the light, the apple to the perfume, the woman to the man, I would

³ According to the autobiographical character of the work, it could be affirmed that Lidia represents Elena Garro and this is how she conceived her marriage to Octavio Paz (*The Murder of Elena Garro*, p. 320).

sew loving eyelids that would close the eyes that look at me, and this house would enter the solar order. Each balcony would be a different homeland; its furniture would bloom: from its canopies would sprout jets; from the sheets, magic carpets to travel to the dream; from the hands of my children castles, flags and battles... but I did not find the thread, Muni... (p. 28).

Just as Clara dreamed of reaching Nineveh, Lidia wishes to find the invisible thread that binds things together. That enigmatic alliance that provides magic and mystery to the union of things in common life but that gives a sense of enchantment and enchantment to everyday life. Here again Elena Garro refers us to the blissful house of joy and happiness, because Lidia poetically evokes the house of childhood; however, childhood expired, hope too, and dreams were left floating in a pool of frustration and the impossibility of what could have been. Only loneliness and nostalgia remained in her: "The feeling of loneliness, nostalgia for a body from which we were torn away, is nostalgia for space." (Paz, 1995, p. 226).

Death is to be all things

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (1926-2004), in her book *Death: A Dawn*, points out that death is a transition from one state to another and likens it to the process that the caterpillar goes through when it becomes a butterfly. Death is nothing more than the abandonment of the physical body, in the same way that the butterfly leaves its silk cocoon. In this way he sustains the thesis that when we die we only abandon the physical body and the soul transcends and there, on the other side, a better life awaits us, when we arrive at this new paradise, a brilliant and resplendent light awaits us to provide us with immeasurable love and a happy life. Arriving at this new abode, the deceased will meet those people he loved and died before him; death, says Kübler-Ross, is a new state of consciousness: "Death is the passage to a new state of consciousness in which one continues to experience, to see, to hear, to understand, to laugh, and in which one has the possibility of continuing to grow." (Kübler-Ross, 2014, p. 57). Octavio Paz agrees when he says that when we are expelled from the maternal cloister we initiate a mortal leap that leads us to death and this represents a state similar to prenatal life. The poet wonders:

Will dying be to return there, to the life before life? Will it be to live again that prenatal life in which rest and movement, day and night, time and eternity, cease to oppose each other? Will dying

be to cease to be and, definitively, to be? Perhaps death is true life? Perhaps to be born is to die and to die, to be born? (Paz, p. 213).

Evidently, Elena Garro had a conception of death similar to that of the previous authors. The playwright conceives death as a way of life where everything is possible, where time is abolished and space takes on a magical dimension beyond the earthly, for let us remember that each of the characters in *Un hogar sólido* preserves the age at which they were buried and not all of them got to know each other when they were alive, only in death did they manage to meet each other.

In the same way, the crypt, a dark and cramped place, was transformed into a universe of infinite possibilities and a luminous space of joy and well-being. The crypt shines with the arrival of Lidia. As she descends, it is as if she herself represents this torrent of light, Catita says: "I saw light! (*A ray of light enters*)" and later Eva points out the stream of light that enters the crypt, she says: "...*The room is flooded with light*". Once the passage from life to death is traversed there is, says Kübler-Ross, a light that shines at the end; that light is of absolute clarity and as one gets closer to that light the dead person feels filled "with the greatest, most indescribable, unconditional love you can imagine." (Kübler-Ross, p. 37) Once one reaches the abode of death there is an immediate encounter with those deceased persons whom one loved in life: "In general you are awaited by the person whom you love most. You will always find her in the first place." When Lidia descends and stands in the midst of her relatives who watch her in silence, she opens her eyes and the first to embrace are her mother Gertrudis, her father Clemente and her cousin Muni: "LIDIA: Dad! (*She hugs him.*) Mom! Muni! (*She hugs them.*)".

In this mortuary abode, unusual things happen that would be impossible to happen on an earthly plane, such as Gertrude's joy when she sees Lydia arrive in this new home: "(...) What a pleasure, my child, what a pleasure that you died so soon!" Or Mama Jesusita, to whom it seems an infamy to appear at the Last Judgment wearing a nightgown and a bonnet: "The worst thing would be, little daughter, to appear like that before God Our Lord. Don't you think it's an infamy? Didn't you think of bringing me a dress? That gray one, with the twists of brocade and the sprig of violets at the neck. Do you remember it?". But the most extraordinary thing is that in this new home the most beautiful things can happen, everything impossible, dreams and longings become present in the new house. Says Kübler-Ross: "To die means, quite

simply, to move to a more beautiful house..." (Kübler-Ross, p. 27). All the characters in the solid home have the amazing possibility of *being* everything they want to be; thus, when Lidia finishes exposing the reasons for sadness and frustration that life destined her Muni tells her not to be sad anymore because now she will find the thread and she will find the spider, and besides, maybe she will not only be able to swim in the Mezcala River but she will be the Mezcala. Likewise, Clemente, her father, tells her: "Lili, aren't you happy? Now your house is the center of the sun, the heart of every star, the root of every herb, the most solid point of every stone." It is inferred that Catita, who has been "living" in the crypt the longest, has been all the things she has wanted to be: "What I like best is to be bonbon in a girl's mouth." However, the inhabitants can also be what they don't necessarily want to be, like Mama Jesusita, who was scared when she was the worm that went in and out of her mouth, or Vicente, for whom the worst thing was to have been the murderer's dagger, so Clemente says: "It's scary to learn to be all the things."

The family is complete and now the dead will be able to be all things and still be in "a much more wonderful, more beautiful and more perfect place" (Kübler-Ross, p. 59), they only await the Last Judgment for God, says Mama Jesusita, will call them to his bosom; after they have learned to be all things "the spear of St. Michael, center of the universe, will appear and in its light the divine hosts of angels will arise, and we will enter the celestial order." The inhabitants manifest what they wish to be: Lidia, for example, wants to be the spider of a pine tree to build a solid home and also the sewing fingers of the Virgin embroidering; Catita wishes to be the index finger of God the Father and a window looking out on the world, because she did not know the world. Once the inhabitants express what they wish to be, the mortuary atmosphere is disrupted by an event that happens outside, with the living, because the sound of a trumpet is heard, but not the sound of the Last Judgment, but the curfew because next to the pantheon there is a barracks. Everyone is what they wish to be after hearing the curfew⁴ and finally disappear.

Finally, it should be said that Elena Garro's poetic imagination presents us with a crypt where life reigns more than death. What is the tomb for us mere mortals if not a gloomy place where darkness reigns, the sinister, absolute silence, fear, the end of life; but for Garro reigns, paradoxically, clarity, the glow of sunlight, it is the center of the universe where everything is possible, where dreams and longings are

⁴ Elena Garro contextualizes the play *Un hogar sólido* in post-revolutionary times in Mexico, approximately in the 1930s, when the curfew was implemented as a restriction measure established by the government in order to guarantee the safety of the inhabitants and minimize confrontations.

fulfilled, where dialogue, coexistence, harmony are allowed. The author closes the work giving her characters the possibility of being everything they want to be and they are; only in death and through it life can be immeasurable and they will be able to reach the essence of their true being. Through the metaphor of the crypt the playwright tells us that the living in life are more dead than the dead. The unhappiness of love and the unattainable dreams of real life lead them irremediably to loneliness and it is necessary to be outside of conventional time and space to reach that other, better form of life. The light that shines at the end of the road is the threshold to that other existence, to a new state of life, to a solid home.

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