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THE SPANISH HISTORICAL NOVEL

1870-1970

A study of ten Spanish novelists, and their  
treatment of the «episodio nacional»

TAMESIS BOOKS LIMITED  
LONDON

## THE EPISODIO NACIONAL: AN APPROACH TO THE GENRE

### CHAPTER I

Spanish literature in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has developed a new genre, the *episodio nacional*, or the historical novel of the recent past, of which two types may be discerned: (1) the novel of a recent historical period prior to the writer's experience and (2) the novel of historical events contemporary with the writer's own lifetime. The fact that prominent critics have disputed the term «historical novel» as applied to Galdós' *Episodios* and have seen a fundamental similarity between the *Episodios* and Galdós' other novels opens up the question of genre which we shall try to clarify briefly. Amado Alonso, «Lo español y lo universal en Galdós», in his *Materia y forma en poesía* (Madrid: Gredos, 1955), referring to the real life origin of some of the characters in the *Novelas contemporáneas*, notes that real life characters and invented ones and real historical circumstances and fictional ones are present in both the *Episodios nacionales* and the *Novelas contemporáneas*. He also points out that novels which deal with the periculum of the author's own lifetime are not generally called historical novel. Joaquín Casalduero in his definitive book, *Vida y obra de Galdós* (Buenos Aires: Losada, 1943), p. 41, states the fundamental similarity between the *Episodios* and Galdós' other novels:

«Por último, *Episodios nacionales* es título con que Galdó agrupaba en colección una serie de obras que fundamentalmente en nada se diferencian del resto de sus novelas.»

The Marxist critic George Lukács in his general study *The Historic Novel*, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), pp. 241-42, points to this lack of differentiation as a general phenomenon, concluding that the best novels of each type (the realistic novel of contemporary society and the realistic historical novel) are precisely those in which the characteristics of the two genres are mingled.

Having said this much, we must insist that the *Episodios* do fulfill a different function from Galdós' other novels. Initially, Galdós intended them to teach the Spanish people of their history, and indeed, the *Episodios* reached a wider audience than the other novels and sold more copies. The more pedestrian tone of the opinions in the first *Episodios* (especially Series I) as contrasted to the other novels written in the same period show that Galdós was consciously addressing himself to this wider audience, using his powers of persuasion as well as of artistic judgment in the selection of his material. Contrasting *Episodios* I and II with *Doña Perfecta* for example, we see that Galdós is careful not to offend religious sentiment in the *Episodios*. The type of pious moralizing which he puts in the mouths of his two domestic females who are made to triumph over the revolutionary character in each series, Inés in Series I who verges on smugness in her advice to her dying father, the revolutionary Santorcz (see Chapter II, note 5) and Soledad in Series II who gives lessons in Christian charity to the revolutionary Pedro Sarmiento and even lectures Monsalud, shows not only Galdós' desire at that period for moderation but also the submission of his own views (more like those of the liberal heroes) to the prevailing views of the average Spanish middle class individual (represented by the women). Joaquín Casalduero (*Vida y obra*, pp. 54-55) contrasts the symbolic value of Salvador Monsalud with that of Pepe Rey, noting that while Pepe Rey represents the philosophical-religious aspect of the struggle, Monsalud is only concerned with the political world. This is an important difference between the other novels and the *Episodios*. It is the concrete practical aspect of the national problem which comes to the fore in Galdós' *Episodios* rather than philosophical-religious theorizing. In the works of the novelists who followed Galdós in writing *episodios* we can find a strong politico-didactic element and a tendency to focus on historically significant public events occurring in the recent past or even in the author's own life time. These characteristics make it possible to differentiate the *episodio nacional* from the novel of contemporary society.

I distinguish the *episodio nacional* from the historical novel of the distant past (the traditional historical novel) only on the basis of subject matter. There is no noteworthy difference in form between the two genres as such. They differ only in content, that is, in the nature of the historical subject matter itself. Recent national history (the province of the *episodio nacional*) exerts a stronger emotional pull on the author than remoter history does and makes the author reveal his political beliefs and his expectations for the future of his country. Recent history is more alive for him, more emotionally charged than events of the distant past. Because the historical period which he describes is

recent, he automatically understands many of its customs, ideas, and preoccupations and thereby avoids some of the pitfalls confronting the author of the historical novel of the distant past.

An example illustrating the difference between the *episodio nacional* and the traditional historical novel can be taken from the work of Ramón Sender, who wrote historical novels of both kinds. *Mister Witt en el cantón*, Sender's *episodio* written about the Spanish revolutionary experiment of Cartagena in 1873, reflects the emotional warmth of his current preoccupation with the contemporary revolutionary situation of Spain in 1934, and the similarities between the two situations deepen his understanding of the past. On the other hand, his five or six traditional historical novels are colder, and in them Sender's treatment of the historical subject matter, with which he is less directly acquainted, is less convincing.

In the present study, formalistic developments in the style of an author are seen to reflect changes in the attitude of the author toward his subject matter. Of course this is an oversimplification of the complex relationship between form and content, but it is intended as a challenge to habits of critical thought which have been working mechanically on the basis of formalistic assumptions. The nature of this experimental point of view can be seen most clearly in the chapter on Valle-Inclán, because, of all the writers discussed, he is the most concerned with style and the most inventive and fecund in stylistic innovation. An examination of Valle-Inclán's work reveals four major phases: (1) the *Sonatas*, (2) the *Comedias bárbaras*, (3) the last two novels of the Carlist trilogy, and (4) the *Ruedo ibérico*. Each of these four phases is characterized by a change in historical perspective and a parallel change in stylistic expression.

In the historical novels discussed here, the content often seems to impose a form. There is a shape to content, to the extent even that one may ask whether style and content in the historical novel are not practically the same thing. For example, in Unamuno's *Paz en la guerra* the paradoxical nature of the philosophical content makes for discontinuity in style. Unamuno's basic ideas, in this novel as elsewhere, are paradoxical aphorisms metaphorically combining several different levels of experience, as can be seen in Chapter IV below, where the two ideas contained in the title *Paz en la guerra*, "peace in war", are analyzed.

When Unamuno's paradoxical ideas are extended and magnified in a realistic novel, their lack of coherence tends to separate elements of dialogue, realistic description, philosophical generalization, historical information, and so on. In spite of being related to the same subject matter, these elements do not cast light on each other. Indeed

they often seem to be in contradiction. In Unamuno's work the ideas that «fighting leads to love and mutual comprehension» or that «the conflict between regionalism and centralism leads eventually to a peaceful internationalism», often contradict the experience of the fictional characters or the concrete historical events described. Elements which are interesting in themselves are forced into false relationships with other elements for the sake of the philosophical unity represented in the title.

The genre of the *episodio nacional* was initiated by the greatest Spanish novelist of the nineteenth century, Benito Pérez Galdós. In his *Episodios nacionales*, which are the first and most extensive example of the genre, there are two slightly different categories of recent history. Series I and II and part of Series III reconstruct the period of his parents' and grandparents' generation and thus belong to the first type of *episodio nacional* mentioned above. Part of Series III and Series IV and V deal with the history of Spain during Galdós' own lifetime and cannot be totally separated from his own personal reminiscences, or even perhaps from his view of contemporary society in his *Novelas contemporáneas*. Accordingly, these novels belong to the second type of *episodio*.

Corresponding to Galdós' first *Episodios* —that is, recent but not contemporary history— are Baroja's *Memorias de un hombre de acción*, Valle-Inclán's *Ruedo ibérico* (one would also tend to include his trilogy on the second Carlist war, since it took place when he was only seven years old), Unamuno's *Paz en la guerra* (he was nine at the time of the same war), Sender's *Mister Witt en el cantón*, and Juan Goytisolo's *Senías de identidad*. Some of these novels attempt to understand the present in historical context or to draw the lessons of the past for the future; others represent a flight from the present to a more congenial past.

The second group of novels in this category, those which correspond to Galdós' later *Episodios* (that is, novels dealing with national history during the writer's own lifetime), includes novels written about the Civil War of 1936-39 by men who took part in the conflict as adults, among them Ramón Sender (*Los cinco libros de Ariadna*), José María Gironella (*Los cipreses crecen en Dios, Un millón de muertos, Ha estallado la paz*), Max Aub (*Campo cerrado, Campo abierto, Campo de sangre, Campo francés, Campo del moro, Campo de los almendros*), and Camilo José Cela (*San Camilo*, 1936). In writing about the war, none of these Spanish novelists has the exalted and poetic vision of Hemingway and other foreigners, because the foreign writers see the Spanish war as a crusade, and it is the symbolic role of Spain in the international conflict which determines their emotional attitude.

Rather than deal with every historical novel written between 1870 and 1970, I have taken the historical novels written by the major literary figures —Pérez Galdós and the Generation of '98— and confined my study of contemporary Spanish writers to those who have written about the Spanish Civil War. I have written a separate chapter on Ramón Sender, because I believe that he has been unjustly neglected by the critics. Since I consider only those contemporaries who write about the Civil War, I have omitted the *Episodios nacionales contemporáneos* of Ricardo Fernández de la Reguera and Susana March, who have written eight novels<sup>1</sup> (as yet none on the subject of the Spanish Civil War), and historical novels like Ramón Solís' *Un siglo llama a la puerta*<sup>2</sup>, which is an interesting reconstruction of Cadiz at the time of the Cortes.

One of the few general comments which can be made about so many historical novels written over the course of a century has to do with the relationship between the author's political hopes and ideals and the historical events at the time the author is writing as reflected in his style. The reader of these chapters will notice the importance given to style as it is related to the historical content of the novels and the way in which the authors' own historical context influences both style and historical content. The similarities between the Galdós of the later series of *Episodios* and the Generation of '98 suggest the power of the historical environment (the Restoration in this case) to change an author's style, to awaken certain sensibilities and deaden others. We have a suggestion of some kind of rule governing these transformations in the novels of Galdós and Sender, where, in both cases, the frustration of the author's political hopes appears to cause a break with his realistic style in the creation of characters who personify ideals which the author cannot present in a realistic description of a society in which he has, at least momentarily, lost faith. For Galdós in the final series of *Episodios*, Mariclio, the Muse of History, provides a voice of hope and consolation for the future; for Sender in *Crónica del alba*, three medieval ghosts — saint, poet, and warrior — are a symbolic expression of the positive qualities eternal to his race.

<sup>1</sup> Héroes de Cuba (*Los héroes del desastre*) (Barcelona: Planeta, 1963); Héroes de Filipinas (*Los héroes del desastre*) (1963); *Fin de una regencia* (1964); *La boda de Alfonso III* (1965); *La semana trágica* (1966); *España neutral, 1944-1948* (1967); *El desastre de Anual* (1968); and *La dictadura, 1: El Directorio militar: 1923-1925* (1969).

Fernández de la Reguera's approach to military history draws on his personal war experience and his sympathy for the front-line soldier expressed in *Cuerpo a tierra*.

<sup>2</sup> Solís writes about the problem of combining original historical research and novelistic creation in a long essay, *Genesis de una novela histórica* (Ceuta: Aula Magna, 1964).

In the development of the genre, there is an important element provided by the history of Spain itself. It is not an accident that all these historical novels are polarized around the same continuous conflicts. The civil wars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have provided the subject matter for historical novels which naturally contain types who can represent the various elements in conflict. The similarities between Aub, Agustí, and Gironella in this respect are not more striking than the similarities between the three of them and Galdós in his first *Episodios*. The Falangist, the anarchist, the Republican, and the like, in Gironella, Aub, and Agustí correspond to the absoluist, the Carlist, and the republican in Galdós' first *Episodios* which, like these novels about the 1936-39 War, are structured by representative characters outlining a conflict.

Valle-Inclán in his Carlist trilogy and Unamuno in *Paz en la guerra* write about the second Carlist war from the vantage-point of the Restoration. With only childhood memories of this mild war, they are not appreciative of the achievement of Cánoyas' system in preserving the peace, and they are influenced by what they regard as the frivolity and falsehood of the Restoration to view the period of the war in contrast to it as an exciting and moving spectacle. Even Galdós, who in his first and second series of *Episodios* abhors the violence of civil war, writing in 1902 after more than a quarter of a century of peace, acknowledges that the history of the wars is more interesting than the political history of Spain during peacetime:

«The history of Spain in wartime is a history which makes the hair stand on end, but the history that these fellows are writing now in peacetime doesn't disturb the hair because it's a bald history wearing a wig. For my part, what would you have me say, between one and the other I prefer the first...Fake hair disgusts me.»

It is perhaps the influence of the peaceful period of the Restoration on Baroja, Valle-Inclán, and even Unamuno which enables them to write some of their best and most colorful pages describing battles, while neither Aub nor Gironella nor Sender nor Cela nor Goyrisolo find the visual spectacle of the fighting during the Civil War of 1936-39 to be of special literary interest, and Galdós in his first and second series of *Episodios* confines his vivid description to the battles (of the regular army) and sieges during the War of Independence. Our theory is borne out by the observation of Pío Baroja's nephew, Julio Baroja, that after the 1936-39 Civil War, his uncle refused to renew

<sup>1</sup> Benito Pérez Galdós, *Narrativa*, in *Obras completas*, Vol. II (Madrid: Aguilar, 1963), p. 1517.

his interest in the great library of nineteenth-century books on the Carlist wars which he had gotten together to write the *Memorias de un hombre de acción* because of his distaste for violence once he had seen it in the flesh.<sup>4</sup>

The influence of present historical circumstance upon the author's view of the past is evident in many different respects. For example, the change in historical point of view between Galdós (the Generation of '68 and the Generation of '98 is evident in their views on the War of Independence and the Carlist wars. Galdós sees the resistance to Napoleon as the expression of the awakening of a patriotic Spanish nationalism, while Valle-Inclán sees it as the last act of traditional Spain, the historical defender of the Catholic faith. Galdós, as a typical nineteenth-century liberal anti-clerical, sees the Carlist uprisings as the expression of reaction and obscurantism facing a central government which represents a more liberal patriotic nationalism. Valle-Inclán, Unamuno, and to a lesser extent Baroja, who are no longer unconditionally committed to defending nineteenth-century liberal ideology, which they associate with the corrupted parliamentary system of the Restoration, are interested by the popular aspect of Carlism. As a result, in their novels, Valle-Inclán, Baroja, and Unamuno show Carlist sentiment rooted at the very base of society in the lives of the common people.

Georg Lukács' emphasis on external historical influences in the discussion of this type of historical literature can be quite fruitful.<sup>5</sup> The present writer confesses that she has succumbed to the temptation to apply his general hypothesis about social classes in an attempt to clarify certain aspects of the material, since in many of these historical novels it seems clear that the view of the past is colored by the class identification of the author. The position of his social class and its prospects for advancement at the moment he writes make Galdós hopeful in the first series of *Episodios* and Baroja pessimistic in the *Memorias de un hombre de acción*. Many obvious influences of a class loyalty are to be found in the historical interpretations of the Civil-War novels, especially those of Agustí and Gironella. But perhaps more interesting from an artistic point of view are the escapist class identifications of Baroja and Valle-Inclán, where the unsatisfactory nature of their present situation leads them to highly imaginative reconstructions of a glamorous past for the class with which they identify themselves.

<sup>4</sup> Julio Caro Baroja, «Recuerdos valleinclanesco-baroianos», *Revista de Occidente*, Año IV, Serie 2, Nos. 44-45 (Nov.-Dec. 1966), p. 312.

<sup>5</sup> See my article, «Galdós in the Light of Georg Lukács' "Historical Novel"», *Anales Galdosianos*, Año 1, No. 1 (1966), pp. 101-105.

In all the novelists, loyalty to a region or a social class influences the different attitudes of hope or despair aroused by the recent history of Spain.

Galdós, in his *Episodios*, describes Castile and particularly Madrid, and his social and political vision is restricted to that area, as Vicente Llorens has pointed out:

"It is surprising...that at the moment in which the industrial bourgeoisie of Catalonia and Vizcaya was beginning to acquire solidity, Galdós did not even mention it. This is without doubt one of the limitations of the *Episodios nacionales* as a novelistic interpretation of Spanish history in the present century. Although the geography of the *Episodios* extends at times to various parts of Spain, it is certain that the political and social environment is confined to Madrid."<sup>4</sup>

It is a well-recognized fact that by the turn of the century the peripheral regions, especially the Basque provinces and Catalonia, had outrun Castile in economic and social development and were moving into the twentieth century ahead of the central region. The Generation of '98 were all from peripheral regions of Spain. The fact of coming to Madrid from a less pretentious but often more economically vital society may have had something to do with their alienation from the central government in Madrid and from the values of the majority of the leaders of Restoration Spain. This alienation, so often explicitly stated, is implicit in many of the artistic motifs common to the Generation of '98. For example, the Castilian landscape which is evoked with great emotion in the writings of all the members of the generation, can be explained as a replacement for the official national symbols (king, army, flag, and the like). The landscape as a surrogate patriotic symbol is unconnected with the central government. On the other hand, the Castilian landscape is in the geographic center of Spain, which is also the historic region that long directed Spanish national life; hence love of this landscape stands for patriotic emotion. These writers from the peripheral regions of Spain make a kind of national shrine of the landscape of the central region, as Unamuno does for example in "En Gredos", his poem to the Gredos mountain range (which is in the center of Castile, visible from Madrid):

This is your heart of firm rock  
—altar of the holy temple! —  
guts of our land.

<sup>4</sup> Vicente Llorens, "Galdós y la burguesía," *Anales Galdosianos*, Año III, No. 3 (1968), p. 57.

This is your heart which touches the sky,  
your bare heart, my eternal Spain seeking the sun?

The evasion of traditional patriotic symbols through the symbolic use of landscape is only one artistic expression of '98's alienation from the central government and the official organization of Spanish society. The regionalist tendency in their novels of the Carlist war is another important expression of this alienation—since the problem of regionalism itself can be seen as the problem of the deficiency or inadequacy of the central government.

If we compare the Generation of '98 with Pérez Galdós in their treatment of the Carlist wars, we see that Galdós is uncompromisingly hostile to the Carlists—remember narrow and embittered Carlos Navarro and the bestial Zugarramundi of *Episodios II*—while Unamuno, Valle-Inclán, and even Baroja are far more positive, even, in the case of Unamuno and Valle-Inclán, pro-Carlist. But it must be emphasized that their pro-Carlist sentiment is not based on approval of Carlism's theocratic and reactionary ideology but rather upon their understanding of Carlism as a popular regionalist movement. In this respect, it is significant that Valle-Inclán does not fully understand Carlism nor do his novels come alive until after he has visited the region and talked to the people, that is, after he has already written *Los cruzados de la causa*. While Galdós saw Carlism negatively, from its purely ideological aspect, the Generation of '98 see it much more positively as an expression of the spirit of the people of the northern region.

Unlike Galdós too, in dealing with the second Carlist war, Unamuno and Valle-Inclán do not see Republicanism and Carlism as polar opposites, even though the declaration of the First Spanish Republic was the sign for the second Carlist uprising. In the *Ruedo ibérico*, Valle-Inclán has Carlist and Republican united against the corrupt court of Isabel II. In *En torno al casticismo* Unamuno states his intuition about this similarity:

"Right after our 'Gloriosa,' so typically Spanish, say what you will, so deeply characteristic, there rose up, seemingly to counter it but in reality to complete and extend it, the people of the countryside, and today we have still not understood that tidal wave."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *Obras completas* (Madrid: Afrodísio Agudo, 1958), Vol. XIII, p. 834.  
<sup>6</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *En torno al casticismo* (Madrid: Fernando Flecha, 1902), p. 207.

Any inclination to dismiss this quickly as ignorance or love of paradox should be checked by a verification of the military maps of the 1936-39 war, in which this Carlist-Republican territory is essentially that which remained on the side of the Second Spanish Republic.

The idea that literary style depends in some measure upon the development of a society permits us to understand the tardy development of the Spanish novel. José F. Montesinos<sup>9</sup> has pointed out that Galdós was writing novels of a sort no longer produced in the rest of Europe in the second half of the century. The late development of the novel, I believe, corresponds to the late development of a Spanish middle-class society.

Juan Luis Alborg has made a similar observation in connection with the most recent Spanish novel, pointing with some disapproval to the stylistic conservatism of a number of contemporary Spanish novelists who employ a novelistic style like that of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writers instead of following the present North European and American literary trends.<sup>10</sup> This stylistic conservatism, exemplified by the novels of Agustí and Gironella to be discussed in Chapter VII, seems to express the state of mind of a society which has not yet undergone the transformations produced by the twentieth century in Northern Europe and the United States.

## CHAPTER II GALDOS

Benito Pérez Galdós is the first major figure in the development of the genre of the *episodio nacional* — the Spanish historical novel of the recent past. Galdós' *Episodios nacionales*,<sup>1</sup> a monumental work of forty-five novels, concerns the history of nineteenth-century Spain from the Napoleonic wars to the Restoration. The *Episodios nacionales* set the mold of the genre so that following generations of Spanish novelists, even those lacking Galdós' intrinsically historical interests, were attracted to it and tried their hand.

Galdós was born in 1843 and wrote his historical novels in two periods: the first at the very beginning of his career from 1873 to 1879. After twenty years he undertook the third, fourth, and fifth series from 1898 to 1912. The importance of the historical incentive in his development as a novelist is evident from his first novels: *La Fontana de oro*, which he wrote in 1868 describing the three-year period of the liberal government (1821-23), and *El audaz*, which is situated in the first years of the nineteenth century.

In Galdós' *Episodios* the method by which historical material is incorporated into the novel is determined by a basic aspect of the author's style. Galdós' best writing is inseparable from his creation of character. We remember a multitude of secondary characters: a gesture, an article of clothing, a tic — in a flash the whole person. The historical message of the *Episodios* is incorporated in these fictional characters. Of course Galdós introduces isolated historical facts by many obvious tricks, even drags them in by the hair,<sup>2</sup> but the literarily

<sup>1</sup> Benito Pérez Galdós, *Obras completas*, 6th ed. (Madrid: Aguilar, 1962-63), Vols. I-III.

<sup>2</sup> See the list of these stratagems in Hans Hinterhäuser, «La conexión de historia y novela» in his *Los «Episodios nacionales» de Benito Pérez Galdós*, trans. José Escobar (Madrid: Círculo, 1963), pp. 233-248. This book is organized according to the author's thematic approach which considers the *Episodios* under three headings: «The *Episodios nacionales* as

• José F. Montesinos, *Introducción a una historia de la novela en España en el siglo XIX* (Valencia: Castalia, 1955), D. XV  
• Juan Luis Alborg, *Hora actual de la novela española* (Madrid: Taurus, 1958-62), Vol. I, pp. 55, 63, 121, 143, 144, etc.

enormous interests inseparable from this crushing social machinery. You, who can't transcend the physiological limits of human existence, you will not see realized the federalist ideal in all its purity; I who am old and eternal expect to see one day, triumphant and blessed, the Spanish Federation...» (*OC*, III, 1164.)

But for the present, Galdós is conscious of Spain's problematical condition: the old order (aristocracy and agricultural economy) which does not really die out, while the new order (middle class and commercial-industrial economy) is never fully established. This is a thought which he returns to again and again in the last *Episodios*, often in metaphor:

«Our existence is in a certain way transitory, something that can not be easily defined. I see it as if the national being were dying and being born at the same time. It neither dies nor finishes being born.» (*OC*, III, 54.)

The continual struggle and civil war to which this dual national personality gives rise wrings from Galdós a cry of anguish:

«Oh Spain! What are you doing, thinking, imagining? You weave and unravel your existence. Your destiny is to run stumbling and to live dying.» (*OC*, III, 1097.)

This exposition of the stylistic trajectory of the *Episodios nacionales* has indicated the close connection between the formal aspects of the novels and Galdós' reaction to historical events occurring at the time he was writing. In this sense much of what has been said about the *Episodios* applies equally to his other novels.

The deep political and moral concern for Spain evident in Galdós first novels continues to motivate him throughout his career. This concern first influences him to seek lessons for the present in the past conflicts which he outlines with representative characters in Series I and II. Twenty years later he criticizes contemporary defects in the context of the past in Series III and symbolizes the positive characteristics of the eternal Spain of the *intrahistoria* made fashionable by the Generation of '98 in the allegorical Ansúrez family in Series IV. Finally, he presents both the bitterness and the hope of this lifelong concern in the satire and the allegory of Series V.

### CHAPTER III BAROJA

«Galdós turned to history because of his inclination for it; I have turned to history because of curiosity about a character.»<sup>1</sup>

Baroja's interest in history is closely connected with his fascination for a real historical character, the liberal adventurer Eugenio de Aviraneta e Ibargoyen (1792-1872). While Baroja's twenty-two novels under the collected title *Memorias de un hombre de acción* attest to the power of this fascination with Aviraneta, critics have been struck by how little Baroja in fact keeps to the image of the man given by Aviraneta's own writings.<sup>2</sup> Eugenio de Aviraneta left a record of his doings with the firm imprint of his personal quirks and habits, so that Baroja had enough material to give us the vivid biographical portrait which the critics find lacking.<sup>3</sup> Since Baroja never seems able to bring Aviraneta to life either as a convincing historical figure or as a novelistic personality, the central question becomes Aviraneta's fictional role in the *Memorias de un hombre de acción* and what it reveals about Baroja's outlook on history.

The relationship of the adventure hero of Baroja's novels to the

<sup>1</sup> Pío Baroja, *Páginas escogidas: Selección, prólogo y notas del autor* (Madrid: R. Caro Raggio, 1918), p. 371.

<sup>2</sup> José Luis Castillo Puche, *Memorias íntimas de Aviraneta o manual del conspirador (Replica a Baroja)* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1952), makes an especially thorough and interesting study of the discrepancy between Aviraneta's autobiographical writings and Baroja's novels, investigating the character of the real historical personality.

<sup>3</sup> Eugenio G. de Nora, *La novela española contemporánea 1898-1927*, 2nd ed., Vol. I (Madrid: Gredos, 1963), p. 189, states the common complaint: «...el tipo se espara, se desdibuja, desaparece casi en la intrincada selva de incidentes, aventuras y acontecimientos, incluso cuando es sujeto activo y prepondérante de los mismos. Después de leer los 22 volúmenes de 'memorias' de Aviraneta o en torno suyo, no sabemos casi nada de él, no sabemos quién es realmente; incluso en el alud de violencias, tramas, argucias y conspiraciones que es enteramente su vida, ignoramos casi del todo cómo y por qué obra, qué es lo que de verdad persigue o quiere.»

author's own personality has been analyzed many times. Critics have noticed the element of escapism in the adventures of *Paradox Rey*, *Shanti Andía*, *Zalacafán*, and *Aviraneta*, an insight often reduced to the well worn accusation of *cotilletoísmo*. The critics have pointed out the contradiction between Baroja's theory and practice in that this self-avowedly sedentary and contemplative author uses his fictional heroes to illustrate the philosophy of action for its own sake and of emotional health through constant exertion of the will.<sup>4</sup> The critics have explained Baroja's adventure heroes as the mirror opposites of the *abulia*-ridden protagonists of his other novels,<sup>5</sup> or as a kind of wish fulfillment.<sup>6</sup> These insights about Baroja's relationship to his adventure heroes in general can also be applied to his relationship to his historical protagonist *Aviraneta*.

Certainly the most important sentimental motive behind Baroja's interest in *Aviraneta* is nostalgia: the small bourgeois looking back to the first half of the nineteenth century as the heroic period of his class. And indeed Baroja has said that he conceives of the adventure hero as an essentially early-nineteenth-century phenomenon.<sup>7</sup> From the vantage-point of Baroja and his generation trapped in a solidifying class structure, the early nineteenth century seemed a period of opportunity for the individual. In the War of Independence, enrolled in the Milicia Nacional or fighting with the central government in the campaigns against Don Carlos, the middle class — the same middle class

<sup>4</sup> Azorín gently draws attention to this point: «Mas Baroja, intelectual, removedor de prejuicios, impulsador —en más o menos escala— de deseos y de iniciativas (todo ello acción), se encuentra seducido, hechizado por la otra acción: por las idas y venidas, el atumoso tráilago, las agitaciones populares, las empresas industriales, los largos viajes. De aquí que, desde su mesa de trabajo, cada vez que se sienta a escribir, ponga su pensamiento en aventureros, gentes erráticas, cabezillas, vagabundos, bohemios; hombres, en fin, que se mueven continuamente y que hacen cosas.» —Azorín, «Baroja, Historiador», in *Baroja y su mundo*, ed. F. Baera, Vol. II (Madrid: Ediciones Arion, 1961), p. 56 (first published in ABC, 1913).

<sup>5</sup> Doris King de Arjona, «*De Volumed and Abulia in Contemporary Spanish Ideology*, *Revue Hispanique*, Vol. 74, No. 166 (Dec. 1928), pp. 573-667.

<sup>6</sup> «Por otra parte, yo creo que algo de si mismo puso Baroja en la interpretación del carácter de Aviraneta; algo quizás de lo que él hubiera querido ser...» —Melchor Fernández Almagro, «Pío Baroja», in *Baroja y su mundo*, Vol. II, p. 321.

<sup>7</sup> Writing of «el Héroe y el aventurero» in *La virina minoreca*, Baroja develops this point: «El medio social del comienzo del siglo xix daba el ambiente, permitía la existencia del aventurero y la posibilidad de convertirlo en héroe. Había, o parecía haber, flexibilidad individual y social, que el escritor aprovechó a su modo.

<sup>8</sup> Esta flexibilidad se pierde cuando: lo gaseoso se convierte en líquido,

y lo líquido, en sólido. Todo tiende hoy a quedar reglamentado, estable y clasificado.» —Baroja, *Obra completa*, Vol. V (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1948), p. 779.

as that celebrated by Galdós — had moments of heroic grandeur. They attained not only military glory; they were also able to rise in the ranks to positions of great political power.

The plight of Baroja's generation is in extreme contrast to the social mobility of the first part of the nineteenth century, exemplified in careers like that of Espartero<sup>8</sup> and el Empedrado. Baroja mentions again and again in his essays and memoirs the closed doors which Restoration society presented to the young men of his class.<sup>9</sup> Baroja even found himself losing the fight for personal economic independence.<sup>10</sup> As he saw it, without special influence or private means, the sons of middle-class parents were excluded not only from the sources of power and government sinecures but practically from earning a livelihood. It is from this reduced estate that Baroja sees Aviraneta as a representative of the great period of Spanish liberalism and of the middle class, the more so because the difficult personal situation of Baroja and his friends coincided with the economic crisis of the commercial middle class as a whole. This traditionally liberal section of Spanish society was caught in a conflict of economic interests. Opposing them were the powerful landowning class and their allies the industrialists, who were in favor of high protectionist tariffs. In 1892 the high tariffs won, with a disastrous effect on Spanish commerce and on the commercial middle class.<sup>11</sup>

Needless to say, their position as outsiders in an oligarchical society did not encourage the young men of '98 to think that any ideas which they might have had concerning better government or better administration of the economic and social resources of the country would have

<sup>8</sup> Espartero's official biographer José Segundo Flórez says of him: «Era su padre un pobre labrador y artesano, dedicado la construcción de carruajes; y fue aquí su mayor gloria y su más grande honra: de tan humilde cuna haberse alzado a un puesto de tanta elevación.» —José Segundo Flórez, ed. *Espartero*, 2nd ed., Vol. I (Madrid: W. Ayguals de Izco, 1844), p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> «En este mundo estrecho y sin salidas ya tuve el agravimiento, como otros muchos jóvenes, de querer abrirme camino libremente y de vivir con independencia. Era una locura. *Divagaciones apasionadas* (*Obras completas*, Vol. V, 2nd ed., Vol. I (Madrid: W. Ayguals de Izco, 1844), p. 3).

<sup>10</sup> Miguel de Unamuno expressed the same thought in *En torno al casticismo* (Madrid: Biblioteca Moderna de Ciencias Sociales, 1902), p. 194:

<sup>11</sup> «Vivimos en un país pobre, y donde no hay harina todo es molina. La pobreza económica explica nuestra anemia mental; las fuerzas más frescas y juveniles se agotan en establecerse, en la lucha por el destino. Pocas verdades más honda que la de que en la jerarquía de los fenómenos sociales, los económicos son los primeros principios, los elementos.»

<sup>12</sup> «Después de dos años de médico de pueblo, de seis u ocho de industrial, no había podido resolver la manera de vivir.» *Rapsodías* (*Obras completas*, Vol. V, p. 859).  
" Antonio Ramos Oliveira, *Politics, Economics, and Men of Modern Spain*, trans. Teener Hall (London: Victor Gollancz, 1946), pp. 130-135.

any chance of being put into practice.<sup>12</sup> The first stirrings of political protest soon turned into skepticism and apathy. Discouragements and frustrations turned Baroja and the members of the Generation of '98 from practical reality to literature, and for over a decade from the time he first started writing, Baroja was content to explore a private artistic world. Most of his early novels are essentially the reflexion of his surroundings on an extremely sensitive consciousness; as a novelistic technique, the environment comprehended by a single observer; the others are pure novels of adventure, although *Zalacain et aventurero* (1909) is certainly a forerunner of the historical novels on Aviraneta in view of Zalacain's involvement in the second Carlist war.

The historical interest which, as we have seen, awoke in Galdós as a result of the instability of the political situation in 1868-78 is brought forth in like manner in Baroja, but at a later stage in his career. Baroja was born in 1872, so that the Restoration was consolidated when he was still a child, and his formative years witness a stable and ordered political atmosphere. His complete lack of interest in history during these early years is well documented in his *Memorias*. As a medical student he was politically indifferent:

«I had neither sympathy nor antipathy for Cánoyas and watched it all with indifference. I didn't know what he was as a politician, because I didn't have any curiosity about political history until much later.»<sup>13</sup>

He also speaks of finding a tremendous library of historical material when he was a country doctor in Cestona:

«At that time I was not attracted by this type of writing, which years later I would read with pleasure and use for my novels of the civil struggles of the nineteenth century.»<sup>14</sup>

After the assassination of Cánoyas and the death of Sagasta, the Restoration system of two-party rotation in office which had been in effect ever since Baroja could remember showed signs of decay. The political order of the Restoration was coming apart under the stress

«Baroja speaks of the deadening effect of initial failure on the political efforts of the Generation of '98: «[La Generación] pretendió conocer lo que era España, lo que era Europa, y pretendió sanear el país. Si al intento hubiera podido un comienzo de realización, hubiese sido de esas generaciones salvadoras de una patria. La cosa era difícil, imposible.» *Obras completas*, Vol. V, p. 574.

«Pío Baroja, *Memorias* (Madrid: Ediciones Minotauro, 1955), p. 124.

<sup>12</sup> *Memorias*, p. 219.

of the social question and the issue of Catalan regionalism.<sup>15</sup> The basic politico-historical questions to which this kind of political instability gives rise may have stimulated Baroja's interest in history, because in 1913 he wrote the first novel of his series on Aviraneta. Like the young Galdós, Baroja became interested in the historical background of the present. But Baroja's meditation on his historical situation took a different direction from the optimism with which Galdós viewed the imminent disintegration of Queen Isabel's government fifty years earlier. The difficult position of Baroja's class, pressed by both the workers and the oligarchy, resulted in a generally pessimistic outlook which colored his historical predictions and imposed in his novels a historical adventure hero rather than revolutionary future-directed heroes like those of Galdós' first *Episodios*. Then too, in this increasingly troubled period Baroja was not an impressionable youth but a man in his thirties. Perhaps as a result, the historical preoccupation in his novels is neither so deep nor so formative as in those of Galdós.

Baroja's first novels are not concerned with history. The historical theme is introduced in the novels of the second stage of his literary development, which begins with the *Memorias de un hombre de acción*.<sup>16</sup> In this series, the novels which have the highest political content and the most generalizations about history are those written from 1913 to 1923. After 1923 (the first year of the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera) the historical interest in the novels gives way to individual love and adventure stories with several different protagonists; Aviraneta comes to occupy a very small role; and the reworking of themes and characters from the early novels is particularly noticeable, starting with *Las figuras de cera* (1924).<sup>17</sup> Perhaps this diminished

<sup>15</sup> «The history of the decade from the death of Sagasta in 1903 to the assassination of Canalejas in 1913 is that of the decline and collapse of the two-party system whose leaders failed to adjust it to conflicting social interests.» Harold Livermore, *A History of Spain* (New York: Grove Press, 1950), p. 405.

<sup>16</sup> For an explanation of the division of Baroja's work, see Eugenio de Nora, *La novela española contemporánea*, Vol. I, pp. 129-135.

<sup>17</sup> For example, the second-hand dealer, Chipiteguy, a kindly grandfather figure who appears in this novel set in Bayonne at the time of the first Carlist war, is an expansion of Señor Custodio in *La busca*, who treats Manuel so kindly. The relationship between Manuel and Justa in *La busca* is also duplicated in the administration of the young assistant Alvarito for Chipiteguy's granddaughter Manon. In both stories the spoiled darling of the house fails to respond to the young man's affections and the initial pattern of relationships between all the characters is the same.

In many of the details of description and minor characters are found echoes of previous novels and ultimately of Baroja's childhood memories. The merry-go-round he played with when he was seven years old (*Memorias*, p. 33) appears in *La busca* in Custodio's junk pile and in *Las figuras de cera* (*Obras completas*, Vol. V, pp. 247-8), where it is combined with the fair in Pamplona, and the

historical content can be explained by the exhaustion of the historical theme suggested by Aviraneta in that most of the major adventures of Aviraneta's life have already been recounted in the previous novels; but perhaps also Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, in momentarily stabilizing the political situation, made Spain's historical dilemma less of a compelling question for Baroja. With *El humano enigma* (1928), historical interest of a purely anecdotal nature is introduced, centering around the story of the Conde de España and especially the conflict within the Carlist forces between the Junta of Berga and the Conde de España ending in the count's assassination.

Baroja classified himself and his fellow writers of '98 as small bourgeois,<sup>18</sup> and indeed, his own experience as the owner of a bakery struggling with unionized workers makes him an almost classical example of the small bourgeois. Because of his individualism and his love of personal liberty, he was not attracted to socialism or communism on the one hand<sup>19</sup> or monarchism or fascism on the other. He inclined toward anarchism, although his experience with life at the most practical level made him reject the utopian dream, recognizing the economic and social realities behind the political structure.<sup>20</sup>

One aspect of Baroja's individualist outlook is his skeptical attitude toward grand theories of historical change. While Galdós sees the history of the nineteenth century as motion and development, Baroja sees continuity and concentrates on the similarities between his own epoch and the time of Aviraneta.<sup>21</sup> In this he conforms to the concept wax figures themselves (*Memorias*, p. 66). The carnival girl makes friends with Alvaro (*Obras completas*, Vol. IV, p. 247), paralleling the relationship between Zafacán and Linda the girl of the traveling side show (*Obras completas*, Vol. I, p. 183). The office of Don Pollicarpio in *Los confidencieros andantes* (*Obras completas*, Vol. IV, pp. 827-828) where López del Castillo is employed resembles the office of Mingote, Manuel's employer in *Mala hierba*. There are many more details like these, trivial points which are recognizable repetitions.

<sup>18</sup> "Fue una generación excepcionalmente libreña. No supo, ni pudo, vivir con cierta amplitud, porque era difícil en el ambiente mezquino en que se encontraba. En general sus individuos pertenecían, en su casi totalidad, a la pequeña burguesía, con pocos medios de fortuna." *Memorias*, p. 275.

<sup>19</sup> Baroja quotes his reaction to the arguments of a young communist in Paris: "Yo pienso, quizás como dice usted, en pequeño burgués; creo que somos perdiendo demasiado; además, no veo otra cosa." *Obras completas*, Vol. V, p. 1131.

<sup>20</sup> "Verdad de hoy y probablemente verdad de siempre. No hay pueblo que pueda tener un gobierno de hombres justos. Tendrá que haber un medio social sano, cuerdo, en perfecto equilibrio. Es decir, que para sostener una utopía habría que inventarla." *Obras completas*, Vol. III, p. 613.

<sup>21</sup> "Galdós da la impresión de que la España de la guerra de la Independencia está muy lejos de la actual, yo casi encuentro la misma que hoy: sobre todo en el campo." *Obras completas*, Vol. III, p. 1024.

<sup>22</sup> "Baroja seems to have used Borrow's *The Bible in Spain* (New York: Putnam, preface dated 1892) for the basic situation of *La ruta del aventurero*, in which the English Protestant Major Thompson travels through Spain making many of the same observations. The incident in which it is suspected that the

of the unchanging or "eternal" Spain which has been ascribed to the Generation of '98 as a whole.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps this predisposition to see the unchanging side of Spain indicates a rejection of change, either from an aesthetic motive,<sup>23</sup> or as an expression of the middle-class liberal's nostalgic backward look at the early nineteenth century which Baroja often compares with his own epoch to the latter's disadvantage.<sup>24</sup>

The choice of Aviraneta as a central character is a significant revelation of Baroja's view of history. Baroja is not interested in portraying mass movements in his historical novels, because neither of the two historical developments which set the tone of the twentieth century in Spain (the consolidation of the oligarchy and the syndicalist movement) are congenial to him. While Galdós' use of the representative character shows his interest in the historical conflict of groups within society, Baroja's use of Aviraneta concentrates on the historical significance of particular details. Instead of characters representing whole classes, we have a single individual, Aviraneta, who is represented as larger than life size.

The scope of Baroja's portrayal of history in the novel is limited by the biographical framework. Although Aviraneta is sometimes replaced by other protagonists (J. H. Thompson in *La ruta del aventurero*,<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Especially by Pedro Laín Entralgo, *La Generación del noventa y ocho* (Madrid: Diana, 1945), pp. 293-297 (referring to Baroja).

<sup>23</sup> "Recorriendo este pueblo y luego visitando otros, me expliqué que en España la gente de inclinaciones estéticas no sea muy entusiasta del progreso: lo viejo tiene aquí su hermosura y su nobleza; en cambio lo nuevo es de una mezquindad que asombra por su sordidez, por sordidez trágica y completa."

<sup>24</sup> "For example: 'No eran los hombres del final de nuestro siglo parecidos a los del principio, con sus tipos valientes, desgarrados y trágicos, como el Emperador, Mina, Cabriera y los demás guerrilleros de la Independencia y de la guerra civil,'

<sup>25</sup> "Era un momento de frialdad y de cizquierda en que todo el mundo iba a suyo,"

*Obras completas*, Vol. V, p. 890.

<sup>26</sup> There is an interesting comparison to be made between *La ruta del aventurero* and the account of George Borrow, an evangelical Englishman traveling in the peninsula in the 1830's selling bibles. Baroja mentions this man by name: "Jorge Borrow comprendió en parte el carácter de Madrid como ningún otro escritor nacional o extranjero, y notó su absurdo atractivo. Borrow sintió la extrañeza de Madrid mejor que Larra, que hizo la crítica un poco mezquina del señorito que se cree superior porque ha estado en París; sintió Madrid muchísimo mejor que Mesonero Romanos, que pintó el cuadro de costumbres vulgar y rampón, imitando a los costumbristas franceses del tipo anodino de Jouty."

*Obras completas*, Vol. III, p. 1024.

<sup>27</sup> Baroja seems to have used Borrow's *The Bible in Spain* (New York: Putnam, preface dated 1892) for the basic situation of *La ruta del aventurero*, in which the English Protestant Major Thompson travels through Spain making many of the same observations. The incident in which it is suspected that the

López del Castillo in *Los confidentes audaces*) or by sub-plots (as in *Las figuras de cera*, *La nave de los locos*, and *Las mascaradas sangrientas*), the historical content of the novels is very closely connected to the description of the events in which Aviraneta took part, except for the description of the events leading up to the death of the Conde de España in *El humano enigma* and *La senda dolorosa*. The consequence of this narrowed biographical focus is that the details of events, particular circumstances, and personalities, appear to have a decisive historical role. The wide view of the historical development of Spain expressed in representative characters which forms the substance of Galdós' *Episodios* is not to be found in Baroja's historical novels.

Baroja is quite aware that his aversion for great theories of historical causality is somewhat willful and arbitrary, hence his exposition of an alternative theory of small causes under the heading of humor. *La caverna del humorismo*:

«Great causes, Providence, progress, the materialist conception of history are the motors which drag the heavy historical machinery fabricated in the universities...

»...there is the history of particular events, written by the nonprofessional, and here appear humor, contrasts, little causes acting as the motive for transcendental events.» (Italics mine.) (OC, V, 473-74).

And what could be a more perfect illustration of Baroja's theory of small causes producing great events than Aviraneta's claim that his Simancas letters brought about the *Convenio de Vergara*? Baroja's theory of history fits well with Aviraneta's own exaggerated estimation of his efficacy as a conspirator.

The Marxist critic George Lukács attributes the emphasis on the exotic, the violent, the colorful aspects of the past in the post-1848 European historical novel to a desire on the part of bourgeois writers to escape the «ugliness and sordid triviality of their capitalist present». This judgment can be applied in large measure to Baroja. We have already mentioned the escapist element in Baroja's novels of adventure, and indeed Aviraneta as an adventure hero overcomes every obstacle, imprisonment, guerrilla fighters' ambushes and snares, and at a pace

Englishman is not a Catholic is often repeated, for example, *Obras completas*, Vol. III, p. 745, and Borrow, p. 93. The observations about the Spaniards' contempt for money (*Obras completas*, Vol. III, p. 738; Borrow, p. 90), the encounter with Spaniards with very Jewish physiognomies (*Obras completas*, Vol. III, p. 743; Borrow, pp. 55-6), and the character of the protagonist Borrow/Thompson are distinct similarities.

» Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, p. 183.

which would do credit to Superman. But the *Memorias de un hombre de acción*, unlike many other novels in a historical setting (*Quo Vadis*, *Salammbô*, for example) has more than a purely negative, escapist relationship to the present, insofar as the *Memorias* are a return to the cherished memory of the early nineteenth century with what that period necessarily represents for middle-class liberal ideology.

Like Galdós, Baroja criticizes the liberals and the liberal ideology of the time in his novels on Aviraneta, a criticism to be expected in view of the failure of the liberal movement. What is missing in Baroja's novel is any hope for the eventual success of the liberal revolution. Galdós' criticism is oriented towards the future and based on a desire to avoid repetition of the same errors. Baroja's criticism reflects a feeling of hopelessness, for example:

«The Spanish revolution was like a heavy cart pulled by a butterfly: it could not go forward.» (OC, III, 463).

—A hopelessness which is also reflected in the very substance of Aviraneta's fictional personality, as we shall see.

Baroja depicts the Spanish people as alienated from the liberals from the very beginning. Speaking of the army sent out to meet the Duke of Angoulême in 1823, he emphasizes this point:

«The middle class gave the greatest contingent of volunteer soldiers; the poor, in general, hated the liberals as tyrants are hated; they didn't regard them as being of the people but rather as aristocrats with foreign ways, the enemies of everything popular.

»There were, in addition to causes of spiritual sympathy, other more material ones to explain the hatred of the traditionalist masses for the liberals: the liberal in that epoch ruled; the royalist obeyed; the militia man was well dressed; on the other hand, the soldier of the Faith went in rags and tatters. The traditionalist wanted to exchange his ripped and dirty shirt for the warm coat of the audacious regicide and the impious monk-killer.» (OC, III, 581).

Perhaps because of his Basque origins Baroja is far more sophisticated than Galdós in his understanding of the regionalist opposition to the central government and the populist elements in the Carlist cause. But Baroja criticizes the rigid attitudes of both liberal and absolutist parties, seeing in their manner of opposing one another a pointless fanaticism. He tends to attribute national troubles to moral causes, to the cultural values of the Spanish people rather than to economic motives. In this, his view of history is perhaps shallower

than that of Galdós, although it is in accord with statements by modern historians.<sup>27</sup>

«The fanatical dogmatism came from the lack of benevolence and elasticity of the Spaniard, from envy among the men of the masses, from the histrionic life of the heroes of the democratic masses and the cult of force, from the conviction that words and arguments do not have value for anyone except those who are already convinced.» (*OC*, III, 465).

Baroja shows this sectarian spirit in action in his description (largely fictitious) of Aviraneta's brief rule in the town of Aranda de Duero in 1821. To emphasize the artificial nature of the liberal government of the time, Baroja has Aviraneta, a stranger, sent from outside by the guerrilla leader «El Empecinado» to govern the town (in fact a document from the archives of the Inquisition shows that he had been a resident of Aranda as early as 1817).<sup>28</sup> In *Con la pluma y con el sable* Baroja describes Aviraneta's experience as governor of Aranda as little more than a pitched battle between him and the townsfolk. His assistant, Diamante, is a rigid and hostile individual, but Aviraneta does not remove him from his post. The attitude of the people of Aranda is explained to Aviraneta by the wife of a local judge who had been friendly with him when he first arrived:

«'No, I am not going to oblige you to believe in the Faith. But, as I tell you, you compromise us. My husband as a judge cannot side with either the whites or the blacks. The people can't stand you. You are on their backs. You watch them, spy on them, insult them, and they have a great hatred for the Milicia Nacional and its mobile company, and the day they can, they will avenge themselves on you.'

»'Bah!'

«'Yes; because even if you don't believe it, the people love Merino and the monks, and they hate you, 'Empecinado', and your friend Diamante.'

<sup>27</sup> Jaime Vicens Vives, *Manual de historia económica de España* (Barcelona: Vicens Vives, 1965), p. 552, concurs with Baroja on this point: «Esta autenticidad del siglo xix es lo que despierta en nosotros cierto sentimiento de timidez al contemplarlo, porque es de una sinceridad brutal, en sus pasiones y en sus choques. La intolerancia y el dogmatismo, el orgullo y el espíritu de Secta, provocaron una continua atmósfera de guerra civil, que desde 1808 a 1876 devoró el país y paralizó su desarrollo económico. Evidentemente España sería otra cosa en el concierto mundial si durante estos setenta años en lugar de pelear hubiera podido trabajar.» See Baroja, *Obras completas*, Vol. III, p. 465.

<sup>28</sup> Marcel Bataillon, «Para la biografía de un héroe de novela: Eugenio de Aviraneta», *Revista de filología española*, Vol. 18 (1931), pp. 255-258.

»I don't believe it.'

»'Yes, yes, believe it; in Madrid you may have partisans, but, as for the towns, not a one.'» (*OC*, III, 443).

Aviraneta's bitterness after the liberal defeat of 1823 is expressed in a surprising passage. The vindictiveness, the hatred which he feels toward the mob who torment him as he walks with a chain of prisoners is almost demonic, showing the alienation of the liberals from society and the accumulated bitterness of long frustration.

«He felt the hatred of all concentrated on him. If for one moment the situation could have changed, in that instant with ten thousand men and some batteries of cannons on the bridge, what a slaughter! Women, old crones, children, old men, houses, churches... He would have swept all away with the hail of fire. He would have made Collet d'Herbois and Carrier seem small time.» (*OC*, III, 638-39).

This is Baroja's early view of Aviraneta as the representative of the liberal spirit of the time. In later novels, Baroja comes up against the real Aviraneta. Starting with the novels which deal with the Carlist war, his description runs parallel to source materials, the pamphlets and articles written by Aviraneta himself, and Baroja becomes uncomfortable with his protagonist, beginning to doubt his early image. The real Aviraneta is less liberal than Baroja originally represents him. He makes enemies with Mendizábal and with Espartero and works for Queen María Cristina as a spy. Baroja accepts some of the characteristics of the real Aviraneta and incorporates them into his portrait but then stops, baffled, to question the veracity of some of Aviraneta's statements, especially the pamphlet *Mina y los proscritos*.<sup>29</sup> In *El amor, el dandismo y la intriga*, Baroja is conscious of having deviated from strict historical truth in his exposition of Aviraneta's adventures in view of the discrepancy between the real and the fictional Aviraneta, and he renounces the intention of writing history.<sup>30</sup> In his last novel Baroja attempts to make the portrait more coherent, showing a repentant Aviraneta admitting some of his faults, especially

<sup>29</sup> *Obras completas*, Vol. III, pp. 1250-51.

<sup>30</sup> »Podría haber escrito una historia con pretensiones de seria de algunos sucesos, porque muchos de mis datos son nuevos y desconocidos, pero desconfío de la historia que se tiene por seria.

»La historia es siempre una fantasía sin base científica, y cuando se pretende levantar un tinglado invulnerable y colocar sobre él una consecuencia, se corre el peligro de que un dato cambie y se venga abajo toda la armazón histórica. Creyéndolo así, casi vale más afirmar las consecuencias sin los datos.» *Obras completas*, Vol. IV, p. 13.

his lack of patience and his failure to cooperate with the other liberals of his day, giving in too often to personal animosities.<sup>31</sup>

Baroja justifies his interest in the past, not in terms of lessons to be learned for the future, but as a kind of stoic admiration of Aviraneta for its own sake which is reflected in his description of Aviraneta's character. In his entrance speech to the Spanish Academy, Baroja declared his patriotic pride in the brave and unhappy struggles of the nineteenth century.

«In order to feel patriotism, I at least have not needed to find out about the brilliant epochs of the history of Spain. It has sufficed for me to know the first times of the nineteenth century, of commotions and pains, because in historical actions I have been more enthused by impetus than by success and more by merit than by good fortune.» (*OC*, V, 895).

In Baroja's rejection of the common idea that success is the measure of historical effort lies his tribute to the still-born Spanish middle-class revolution. He might wish to return to the circumstances and ideals of the nineteenth century, but without believing it likely or even possible. Baroja feels that his form of liberalism with its strong individualist free-trade bias is out of fashion in a world in which fascism, communism, and imperialism are increasingly powerful.<sup>32</sup> Baroja's sort of liberalism faced both the still unresolved struggle with traditionalism and the church and the new totalitarian development of the twentieth century. Hence Baroja's often expressed feeling that his ideals had gone out of date before their time had come, going from green to rotten.<sup>33</sup>

Baroja's reverence for past liberal efforts in the face of pessimism<sup>34</sup> For example, «Comprendo que molesta a muchos el tono de suficiencia que tomé yo en varias ocasiones. Hoy no lo tomaría. Algo se aprende en la vida»,

*Obras completas*, Vol. IV, p. 1129.  
In his essay «Romanticismo y carlismo», he defines «liberalism» as the political aspect of romanticism, having first defined himself as a romantic: «El liberalismo, en un sentido político y restringido, fue la indisciplina del siglo xix que pretendió con su crítica ir mermando las facultades de la Corona y de la Iglesia para dar libertad y medios de actuar a las gentes capaces e intelligentes. El liberalismo estuvo siempre aliado con la tendencia individualista, y en economía con el libre cambio.

«Contra la tendencia liberal comenzaron, a principios del siglo xix, la imperialista y la demente —después comunista—, primero recañándose; después, ya mostrando francamente su fondo autoritario. En nuestro tiempo, estas tendencias han dominado el mundo en casi todos los países, dándose distintos nombres.»

*Obras completas*, Vol. V, p. 1302.

and even despair about the future of liberalism is responsible for his fictional Aviraneta's contradictory psychological attributes. Baroja puts together a collection of historicophilosophical traits which fails to make a convincing fictional character, even leaving aside for the moment the question of biographical or historical accuracy — because the effort to motivate Aviraneta's actions is undercut by the pervasive pessimism of Baroja's historical perspective. In Baroja's admiration for his hero he does not permit him to be taken in by the enthusiasm and mistaken hopes of the liberals of his day; so, much like Galdós' character Salvador Monsalud, Aviraneta appears prematurely and inexplicably discouraged.

«In worse, from the point of view of fictional motivation, he seems to act with the knowledge that his actions are doomed to fail. The reader wonders why Aviraneta risks his life, since he anticipates failure rather than success. Baroja's search for a motivation for Aviraneta consistent with both his historical role and the perfections demanded by the heroic stature with which nostalgia endows him uncovers only a stoic, even narcissistic posture:

«If Aviraneta had been a philosopher and had tried to postulate a kind of puppet, a bloodless illustration of one of Baroja's more existentialist philosophical ideas, which seems to reduce life's choices to either blind action or complete disorientation.<sup>35</sup> As a result of this doctrine of action for its own sake, Aviraneta is not permitted thought. This lack of reflection, a common fault of Baroja's fictional heroes, completes the destruction of his fictional personality by closing his mind off from the reader's. Baroja describes his characteristics rather than letting him define himself in thought and action, as for example:

As a result of this unsatisfactory motivation, Aviraneta becomes a kind of puppet, a bloodless illustration of one of Baroja's more existentialist philosophical ideas, which seems to reduce life's choices to either blind action or complete disorientation.<sup>35</sup> As a result of this doctrine of action for its own sake, Aviraneta is not permitted thought. This lack of reflection, a common fault of Baroja's fictional heroes, completes the destruction of his fictional personality by closing his mind off from the reader's. Baroja describes his characteristics rather than letting him define himself in thought and action, as for example:

«Above all, for Aviraneta the only life was based on finding himself in a hell of difficulties, in a blind whirlwind, which he would try to surmount.

«This tension of the will was the primary thing with him. Ideas, at bottom, I believe bothered him less than he thought. He had a zeal for action for its own sake.» (*OC*, III, 295-6).

«La vida es como un viaje de funámbulo en la cuerda floja y sobre el abismo insospechable. Tiene sentido cuando se ríe por el instinto y por la pasión. Cuando pretende ser completamente consciente es cuando comienza a parecer rota, inconexa y hasta cómica.»

*Obras completas*, Vol. V, p. 869.

From all this description which hides Aviraneta the real person and destroys Aviraneta the fictional person emerges Aviraneta the historical escape hero, who represents the day-dream of the small bourgeois, bringing back the period in which the individual could rise to great heights with the aid of energy and talent alone. Aviraneta needs no cooperation from others to perform his feats, neither influential friends nor a family fortune. The Simancas letters (Baroja accepts the inflated importance which Aviraneta claims for this document in ending the first Carlist war with the truce at Vergara)<sup>35</sup> are a perfect example of

"Aviraneta is given great credit for this turn of events by the historian Antonio Pirala, *Historia de la guerra civil* (Madrid: Imprenta de los señores F. de P. Mellado, 1868-69), Vol. V, pp. 485-491. On the other hand, José Segundo Flórez, Espartero's biographer, who is naturally interested in showing Espartero as the hero, explains the Convenio as a product of military pressure: «Carecían de recursos, de crédito para obtenerlos: hallábanse estacionados, nada progresaban en su empeño: las expediciones al interior habían sido fúnebres. No sólo su acción, sino hasta su pensamiento estaba como reconcentrado, encerrado dentro del estrecho ámbito de aquellas provincias. En situación tan violenta, ¿qué había de suceder? Dar rienda suelta a las recriminaciones mutuas, echarse la culpa recíprocamente, los unos a los otros, de los males que sufrían: dividirse en bandos, crearse partidos. A estas causas naturales, y no otras, debe atribuirse la escisión profunda que llegó a labrarse en las filas rebeldes en los primeros meses del año 39.»

José Segundo Flórez, *Historia de Espartero*, Vol. II, p. 523. Maroto is described as always having been ready to sue for peace. «Más propio para la intriga que para la guerra, abrigando al parecer desde su advenimiento al mando proyectos de terminar ésta por medio de una avenencia o transacción, el nuevo general moderado-carlista constituyó a su ejército en un estado de inacción que alarmaba a la corte de D. Carlos, mucho más cuando se vio que separó de un golpe, valiéndose de la amistad que tenía con el ministro de la Guerra, Valdésplana, 350 oficiales del bando exaltado. Así llegó poco a poco a establecerse una contrariedad grande entre el cuartel general y el cuartel real, que había de tener un fin desastroso.»

Flórez, *Historia de Espartero*, Vol. II, p. 528. This interpretation diminishes Aviraneta's role as mischief maker since it implies that a grave separation of intentions existed between the pretender and Maroto from the beginning. Flórez gives Aviraneta a very reduced role: «Sobre todo, aquellos personajes del bando apostólico que habían sido desterrados a Francia, y que veían confirmados sus prognósticos en el gran libro de los hechos, arrojaron por este tiempo algunas proclamas que hacían circular con profusión en las filas de aquel ejército, acusando de rebeldía y de traición al general Maroto; todo lo cual, unido a algunos otros papeles alarmantes, del mismo género, con los cuales procuraban atizar el fuego de la discordia los conspirados que tenía en la frontera el gobierno de la reina, entre los cuales sobresalía sin duda alguna el llamado Aviraneta, como diremos después; puso en terrible conflicto al mencionado general Maroto.»

Flórez, Vol. II, p. 591. The importance of Aviraneta's role in preparing the ground for the Convenio is not likely to be determined with exactitude in view of these conflicting opinions. Aviraneta himself would claim full credit: «En diciembre último, al destinarme S. M. a Bayona, el estado de la guerra en las cuatro provincias Vascongadas no era nada lisonjero, y al volver de mi comisión en principios de octubre, han quedado ya pacificadas. Si la lectura y examen de esta Memoria justifican, como creo, que he contribuido en mucho o gran parte al logro de

the significant intervention of an individual in history and thus a momentary comfort from the feeling of helplessness which overtook the Spanish middle class in Baroja's generation.

But this is an artificial comfort and not a lasting one. Baroja cannot conceal that Aviraneta's efforts will ultimately be in vain. From Baroja's historical vantage-point the Spanish middle-class revolution has failed and will be supplanted by some form of authoritarianism, either fascism or communism. Baroja expresses this post-defeat, stoic phase of liberalism in the character of Aviraneta, in his acceptance of defeat without complaint. In his last novel on Aviraneta, Baroja uses one of Aviraneta's statements from the very first novel of the series as a chapter heading, showing that whatever the inconsistencies of the portrait of Aviraneta, Baroja intended this stoic acceptance of defeat to be a unifying factor:

«My philosophy, if an adventurer can be permitted to have a philosophy, has always been this: work with enthusiasm to achieve things, and when I haven't achieved them, remain tranquil and give them up without sorrow.» (OC, IV, 1128).

Baroja's admiration for individual action and his distrust of generalized historical theories is typical of the individualistic class to which he belonged. It is this individualism combined with pessimism about the future of the middle class which makes Baroja prefer the story of a nineteenth-century conspirator-arbitrista, who attempted to solve huge national problems with ingenious stratagems, to the amplitude of the class struggle described by Galdós. At the same time, Baroja's sentimental loyalty to the still unrealized dream of the liberal past prevents him from finding only color and drama in history like Valle-Inclán or only philosophical harmony like Unamuno.

la pacificación de mi patria, quedo complacido con haberla hecho este bien a mi Reina.—Madrid 18 de noviembre de 1893.» Eugenio de Aviraneta, *Memoria dirigida al gobierno español* (Madrid: N. Sanchiz, 1844), p. 86.

CHAPTER IV  
UNAMUNO

Unamuno wrote only one historical novel, *Paz en la guerra*. This early novel, published in 1897, is quite unlike his abstract and simplified later novels. In his introduction he calls it an *episodio nacional*, and the novel includes much sociological background and historical information on the forces in conflict in the second Carlist war, which Unamuno sees as a struggle between the liberal commercial seaport, Bibao, and the traditionalist Carlist countryside.

Unamuno uses representative characters to describe this conflict: the Carlist Iturriondo family — the father, Pedro Antonio, a veteran of the first Carlist war, the son, Ignacio, a casualty of the second — and the liberal Arana family, belonging to the well-to-do Bilbao commercial bourgeoisie. The novelistic exposition of the lives of the two families and the description of the war with its economic and ideological background give way at the end of the novel to a metaphysical disquisition in which the 1873 conflict is symbolic of the state of affairs mentioned in the title — «peace in war.» Accepting struggle and civil war as an eternal aspect of human existence whose larger context is unity and peace, Unamuno makes an analogy between war and the eternal conflict between sea and land which produces life:

«History was revealed to him as the enduring struggle of peoples, whose goal, perhaps unachievable, is true unity of the human race, a struggle without truce or rest. And then, delving into the vision of the war, his mind submerged in the infinite idea of peace. Sea and land beneath the blessing of the sky celebrate their fertile union, the generator of life, which the one initiates and the other conserves.»<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *Paz en la guerra* (Madrid: Austral, 1960), p. 247.