

INFLUENCES OF MATERIALISTIC IDEAS IN THE  
NOVELS OF BLASCO IBÁÑEZ

by

Verne Vogt

A.B., 1949, George Pepperdine College  
M.A., 1954, Mexico City College

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The second half of the nineteenth century was one of the great periods in the history of the Spanish novel. Realism was then the prevailing tendency in literature, and the novelists attempted generally to create an image of life as it was in real places and in definite periods of history. They nearly always chose settings with which they were thoroughly familiar, and the events in their works were usually of recent occurrence. In the 1880's, a new influence began to be felt in Spanish realism. The age was one of great enthusiasm for science; and a few years before, there had begun in France a movement to make fiction serve scientific purposes. The chief theorist and foremost novelist of this Naturalism, as it came to be known, was the French writer Emile Zola (1840-1902). In explaining the motive behind his "experimental" novels, Zola actually defined the utilitarian ideal of Naturalism in general: literature was to point out the determining causes of human behavior, so that some day, men might learn to control them.<sup>1</sup> From the esthetic standpoint, the consequences of this ideal were revolutionary; for in view of what might be termed Naturalism's clinical purposes, its adherents felt justified in making frank portrayals of scenes and events which writers previously had felt obliged to avoid. The ideological implications of the movement were perhaps more serious. In reality, Naturalism was thoroughly materialistic in a philosophical sense, for it viewed man as a mere physical creature, whose conduct is governed entirely by the non-providential forces of a material universe.

In Spain the influence of Naturalism became strong around 1883, when

Emilia Pardo Bazán undertook to defend it in La cuestión palpitante. By 1898 or before, it had given way to new tendencies.<sup>2</sup> Four major novelists of Spanish realism wrote their first important works during this period, the oldest among them being Emilia Pardo Bazán (1851-1920), Leopoldo Alas (1852-1901), and Armando Palacio Valdés (1853-1938). Although Vicente Blasco Ibáñez (1867-1928) was considerably younger than the other members of this group, he is regarded generally as belonging ideologically to it rather than to the Generation of 1898.<sup>3</sup> He wrote most of his best known novels after Naturalism had already begun to wane, but he is of all Spanish novelists probably the one most often described as a Naturalist.

Blasco was a native of the city of Valencia. His family was a conservative, middle class one;<sup>4</sup> but at an early age he absorbed liberal and even revolutionary ideas. At twenty-two, as a result of his participation in an attempted revolution, he was obliged to take refuge in France and to remain there for over a year. On returning to Spain in 1891, he resumed his activities as a political agitator, this time with more serious consequences. First, he had to flee to Italy and remain there a few months; and later he spent more than a year in a Spanish prison. With the exception of the two periods of exile, he lived mainly in Valencia until he was about thirty.

Before 1894, Blasco wrote several now little known novels which he became unwilling in later years to have republished.<sup>5</sup> I have read them in preparation for this study, but I have found them to offer little of interest to it. I shall deal almost exclusively, therefore, with the "authorized" novels, that is, with those written beginning in 1894. The first six of these are usually described as "Valencian." This is appropriate, for they are Blasco's only novels which have their setting almost entirely in Valencia. It should be observed, however, that his attachment to his native region never

ceased completely to influence his work. Some of the historical personages whom he sought to revindicate in his last novels were of Valencian origin; and a descriptive passage which he believed to be among his best is one of a Valencian rural scene in El papa del mar, written in 1925.<sup>6</sup>

The Valencian novels are rather brief; their action is intense; and their endings are more or less tragic. The novelist's awareness of unsatisfactory social conditions sometimes becomes evident; but on the whole, he shows little desire to make propaganda in favor of social reform. His chief purpose in these works, evidently, is to entertain and to furnish authentic accounts of life in his native region. In general, his thorough knowledge of the scenes and people is obvious; and the descriptions are usually very vivid. One of these novels, La barraca, has probably received more favorable comment from serious critics than any other of his works.

#### Outline of the Valencian Period

Title	Year of Publication	Setting	Main Theme
<u>Arroz y tartana</u>	1894	City of Valencia	The love of ostentation and luxury ruins a bourgeois family.
<u>Flor de mayo</u>	1895	A fishing village near Valencia	A tale of marital infidelity and revenge among fisherfolk ends in tragedy.
<u>La barraca</u>	1898	The huerta near Valencia	A peasant family is persecuted by its neighbors and driven away for breaking a boycott against greedy landlords.
<u>Entre naranjos</u>	1901	Alcira, a town in Valencia	Love between a glamorous, cosmopolitan woman and a bourgeois man ends in inevitable failure.

## Outline of the Valencian Period (cont.)

Title	Year of Publication	Setting	Main Theme
<u>Sónnica la cortesana</u>	1901	Ancient Sagunto, a short distance north of Valencia	Blasco develops a tale of love and jealousy in a classical setting.
<u>Cañas y barro</u>	1902	The Albufera Lake region in Valencia	A tragic conflict involving greed and love occurs among peasants.

In 1898, Blasco was elected diputado, that is representative to the Spanish parliament; and during the next eleven years, he was reelected repeatedly. In was during this period that he produced his last works on Valencian themes and then, in 1903, turned rather abruptly to writing novels of social protest. In a letter to Cejador y Frauca in 1918, he referred to the years 1903-1909 as his "segunda época." He appropriately described La catedral and the three novels which followed it--El intruso, La bodega, and La horda --as being "de tendencia," and explained that he wrote them in an attempt to awaken his country after the disaster of 1898. He declared that three other novels of the period--La maja desnuda, Sangre y arena and Los muertos mandan--form a group apart; but he did not actually classify them.<sup>7</sup> Elements of thesis are rather prominent in two of these novels. In Sangre y arena, there is considerable propaganda against bullfighting; and in Los muertos mandan, the novelist reveals his opposition to race and class prejudice. La maja desnuda treats personal problems rather than national ones and is perhaps best described as a psychological novel. The same is true of La voluntad de vivir, a work which remained unpublished during Blasco's lifetime, and which he did not mention in his classification.<sup>8</sup>

The thesis novels have their settings in parts of Spain other than

Valencia. This change to relatively unfamiliar scenes evidently caused Blasco's writing to lose some of its former intensity. More serious still, from the artistic standpoint, is the tendency toward digression. Long passages on science, religion, and history frequently interrupt the plots and break their unity. These novels are of interest especially for the serious criticism of social problems to be found in them. Among those who have appreciated them is Salvador de Madariaga, who has commented favorably on Blasco's description of the bad agrarian situation in Andalusia.<sup>9</sup>

#### Outline of the Thesis Period

##### Predominantly Thesis Novels

Title	Year of Publication	Setting	Main Theme
<u>La catedral</u>	1903	Toledo	An ex-seminarian becomes a liberal and commits a fatal error by arousing the ignorant and the vicious. He sets forth the novelist's materialistic philosophy.
<u>El intruso</u>	1904	Bilbao and nearby areas	Religious fanaticism and clerical influence upset family life.
<u>La bodega</u>	1905	Jerez and nearby areas	Alcoholism and economic oppression plague rural Andalusia; a rebellion against the landlords fails.
<u>La horda</u>	1905	Madrid	Poverty destroys happiness and erodes ideals among the underprivileged of the city.
<u>Sangre y arena</u>	1908	Seville and rural Andalusia	A bullfighter becomes demoralized and is finally killed in an attempt to prove his valor.

## Outline of the Thesis Period (cont.)

Title	Year of Publication	Setting	Main Theme
<u>Los muertos mandan</u>	1909	The Balearic Islands	A modern man finds that old, unreasonable prejudices still make interracial and inter-class marriage impossible in two remote communities.
Predominantly Psychological Novels			
<u>La maja desnuda</u>	1906	Spain, Italy	Conflicting standards destroy the happy marriage of a talented painter and his puritanical and bourgeois wife.
<u>La voluntad de vivir</u>	Written in 1903, published in 1953.		Love comes late in life to an erudite man and destroys him.

Between 1910 and 1914, Blasco was engaged mainly in an attempt to establish a colony in Patagonia. The first novel which he wrote after this period of literary inactivity was Los argonautas, a long work which was intended as an introduction to a series on Spanish America. Returning to Europe in 1914, he went to France and remained there throughout the First World War. Abandoning temporarily his plan to write on American themes, he produced three novels in support of the Allied cause. These war novels, and especially the first one, Los cuatro jinetes del Apocalipsis, were very popular for some time; and they brought their author wealth and international fame. In general, however, critics have not rated them highly. They have tended to esteem them mainly for certain descriptive passages, and to regard their success as having been largely the result of their timeliness and propaganda value.<sup>10</sup>

After the war, Blasco continued to reside in France, where he died in



1928, at the age of sixty-one. His novels of this period are a miscellaneous group. Some of them deal mainly with love among wealthy and sophisticated modern people; and others treat serious, historical subjects. In two of them, El papa del mar and A los pies de Venus, he used the device of a double plot to combine modern and historical elements. During the last years, he was still a propagandist, his endeavors in this respect now being directed toward the revindication of certain historical personages. At the close of his life, he was planning more novels of this type, and also one to be entitled La juventud del mundo. This work was to set forth his ideal, which was that sometime in the future, man would learn to live "con la mayor suma de bienes y la menor de dolores..."<sup>11</sup>

#### Outline of the War and Postwar Periods

##### War Novels

Title	Year of Publication	Setting	Main Theme
<u>Los cuatro jinetes del Apocalipsis</u>	1916	Argentina France	A youthful Spanish American becomes a supporter of the Allied cause and dies in battle.
<u>Mare Nostrum</u>	1918	Valencia Naples The Mediterranean	A Valencian seaman becomes a supporter of the Allied cause and dies when a submarine sinks his ship.
<u>Los enemigos de la mujer</u>	1919	Paris Montecarlo	A wealthy egoist becomes a supporter of the Allied cause.

##### Miscellaneous and Postwar Novels

<u>Los argonautas</u>	1914	A ship crossing the Atlantic to America	The novelist describes numerous characters as an introduction to a projected series of novels on American themes.
<u>La tierra de todos</u>	1922	Paris Patagonia	In a "Gulliver in Lilliput" tale Blasco satirizes rule by women.

## Outline of the War and Postwar Periods (cont.)

## Miscellaneous and Postwar Novels (cont.)

Title	Year of Publication	Setting	Main Theme
<u>La reina Calafia</u>	1923	Spain France California	A mature woman falls in love with a youth and finally sacrifices her love to a girl of his age. Legends and Spanish American history are blended with the main theme.
<u>El papa del mar</u>	1925	France Spain Italy	In <u>El papa del mar</u> Blasco combines a modern love story with a historical narration about Pedro de Luna. In <u>A los pies de Venus</u> he continues the same modern plot and combines it with a revindication of the Borgia family.
<u>A los pies de Venus</u>			
<u>En busca del Gran Kan</u>	1929	Spain The Caribbean region	Blasco recounts the discovery of America and exalts Martín Alonso at the expense of Christopher Columbus. The youthful lovers Fernando and Lucero add human interest.
<u>El caballero de la Virgen</u>	1929	The Caribbean region	Blasco combines his account of Alonso Ojeda's explorations with the adult life of Fernando and Lucero of the preceding novel.
<u>El fantasma de las alas de oro</u>	1929	Montecarlo	Parental selfishness and neglect drive a poor girl to an unhappy marriage with a wealthy man.

Blasco's fiction has already been analyzed from several points of view, the most detailed studies already completed being those which treat his labor as a social reformer and propagandist, his regional costumbrismo, his production of short stories, his realistic techniques, and his relationship to several other authors, especially certain writers of the Naturalistic school.<sup>12</sup> Stated broadly, my purpose in this dissertation is to contribute to an under-

standing of Blasco's view of human life and society as it is revealed in his novels. More specifically, I shall deal mainly with aspects of his work which, as far as I have been able to ascertain, have not been studied in detail, namely, his ideas and attitudes concerning religion and the supernatural, and science and the theory of determinism. Although my purpose is not primarily to study Blasco's novels from the standpoint of Naturalism, I shall inevitably be concerned to a considerable extent with his position with respect to the philosophically materialistic, science-oriented world view which was prevalent in his early years and which was at the heart of the Naturalist movement in literature. It should be observed that in this study I use the terms materialism and materialistic only in their philosophical and scientific meaning, and not, as in common usage, to imply a lack of ideals and a tendency to overemphasize material well-being and pleasure. In my view, Blasco was quite definitely a humanitarian and idealist rather than a materialist in the latter sense.

Blasco made few references to thinkers and writers who might have affected his thought. One whom he did mention repeatedly in his novels was the German zoologist and philosopher Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919). While definite evidence of this individual's influence on the novelist is rather limited, his thought was clearly of the type which contributed greatly to Blasco's intellectual formation. It will be appropriate, therefore, to conclude this introductory chapter with a brief survey of some of Haeckel's principal ideas as they are summarized in The Riddle of the Universe, a work which appeared around 1900, and which Blasco probably read.<sup>13</sup> The Riddle of the Universe might well be described as a layman's guide to the general philosophy held by many men of science in the late 1800's. In his introduction, the aging author remarked appropriately that he was "wholly a child of the nineteenth century."<sup>14</sup>

Aside from his insistence on biological evolution, Haeckel's physical theories were similar in general to those of earlier materialists. He held everything to be explainable in terms of matter and motion, and he regarded the phenomena of consciousness and mental activity as absolutely dependent on physical factors.<sup>15</sup> In keeping with the spirit of his time, he displayed unbounded confidence in the power of science to explain eventually all human phenomena, those of a "spiritual" nature included.<sup>16</sup>

Like the earlier materialists, Haeckel came into conflict with traditional religion. He maintained that there was a natural and inevitable opposition between science and all religions holding "mystic views which would subdue reason under the yoke of an alleged revelation...",<sup>17</sup> and that it was necessary to defend "science and reason against the Christian Church and its vast army..."<sup>18</sup> He did make two considerable concessions to Christianity, one a statement of personal admiration for Christ<sup>19</sup> and the other an admission that he agreed to some extent with primitive Christian ethics:

...the idea of the good, which we call virtue...coincides with the Christian idea of virtue. We are speaking, naturally, of the primitive and pure Christianity of the first three centuries...The best of Christian morality, to which we firmly adhere, is represented by the humanist precepts of charity and toleration, compassion and assistance.<sup>20</sup>

He qualified these concessions, however, by his contention that the Christian teachings with which he agreed did not originate with Christianity, but with earlier religions and philosophies.<sup>21</sup>

Haeckel objected to Christianity not only on the grounds of its alleged conflict with science, but also because he believed it to be excessively ascetic and indifferent to beauty. He thought primitive Christianity "turned scornfully away" not only from "all earthly parade and glamour," but even from "all material beauty and art," and that as an inevitable result, "contempt for nature" and "rejection of every kind of fine art" became Christian

duties.<sup>22</sup> Although he admitted the splendor of Christian art, he affirmed that it had nothing to do with "pure Christianity," and he even held that it had been fostered in a deliberate attempt to divert men's minds from observations which would lead to "independent science."<sup>23</sup>

Another one of Haeckel's objections to Christianity involved the Golden Rule. He declared himself to be in complete agreement with the command "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,"<sup>24</sup> but he maintained that actually Christian ethics run directly counter to the Golden Rule in that they attack and despise egoism in principle."<sup>25</sup> The Biblical passage which he cited as evidence of this was Matthew 5:44:

Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.

Haeckel described this precept as "very ideal" but "as useless in practice as it is unnatural."<sup>26</sup> He believed that an enlightened egoism is the basis not only of self-preservation but even of altruism, "for nothing great or elevated has ever taken place without egoism, and without the passion that urges us to great sacrifices. It is only the excesses of the impulse that are injurious."<sup>27</sup>

In addition to being opposed to religions claiming divine revelation, Haeckel rejected the concept of Providence and "the phantom of a mystic vital force" in nature.<sup>28</sup> He recognized, nevertheless, a human need for religious expression and undertook to develop a religion compatible with his views on science. His endeavors in this respect are somewhat similar to those of Auguste Comte (1798-1857), the founder of Positivism. In Comte's rather elaborately developed religion, love for humanity replaced the supernatural; and there was provision for a priesthood of philosophers, forms of worship, and even prayer.<sup>29</sup>

Haeckel named his religion monism because it was based on his belief

that "there are not two different, separate worlds -- the one physical and material, and the other moral and immaterial."<sup>30</sup> He declared monism to be the same as pantheism and identified both with complete unbelief in any "personal, extramundane entity."<sup>31</sup> He believed that objections to this view would "only be destroyed when, in the twentieth century, the prevalent superstition gives place to rational knowledge and to a monistic conception of God and the world."<sup>32</sup>

Ideally, monistic worship was to consist of the contemplation of nature. Romantic enjoyment of natural beauty had a place in this worship; but so did observation of a more practical, scientific variety: the object of contemplation could be a drop of water under a microscope as well as a sublime landscape.<sup>33</sup> Haeckel conceded, however, that even in enlightened times, not all men would be satisfied with direct worship of nature. Such persons, he predicted, would carry on their devotions in temples, some of which would be church buildings which would pass over to "free societies of monists," just as Catholic Churches passed over to the Protestants in the sixteenth century.<sup>34</sup> He did not concern himself with the details of this formal worship, probably because he was neither interested in it nor opposed to it, provided that it produced no opposition to science.

The foregoing survey of Haeckel's ideas provides a background especially for the following two chapters in which I point out elements of philosophical materialism and attitudes toward religion in Blasco's novels. In the third chapter, I shall refer again to Haeckel and note in some detail his view of determinism.

## Footnotes

1. Emile Zola, Le roman expérimental, Nouvelle Edition (Paris: 1905), p. 22.
2. The prevalence of Naturalist tendencies in the 1880's and their decline thereafter may be observed, for example, in the work of the greatest Spanish novelist of the nineteenth century, Benito Pérez Galdós (1843-1920). Perhaps the one of his "contemporary" novels of the 1880's which best exemplifies the influence of Naturalism is Fortunata y Jacinta (1887). This work contains detailed descriptions of squalor and low life, and one of the main characters, Maxi, is clearly affected by physical weaknesses which determine his conduct. In the 1890's, in such works as Nazarín (1895) and Halma (1895), the novelist begins to concern himself mainly with psychological and spiritual problems.
3. Joaquín Ortega, for example, says that Blasco "está casi desligado del movimiento de renovación artística que se inició en España a raíz del desastre colonial del '98..." See Joaquín Ortega, "Vicente Blasco Ibáñez," University of Wisconsin Studies, No. 20 (Madison: 1923), p. 214. César Barja is perhaps the only major critic who believes that in writing his novels of social reform, Blasco was probably influenced by the Generation of 1898. See César Barja, Libros y autores modernos (Los Angeles: 1933), p. 406.
4. Ramón Martínez de la Riva, Blasco Ibáñez, su vida, su obra, su muerte, sus mejores páginas (Madrid: 1929), pp. 17-19.
5. For a description of these works, and for information concerning Blasco's unwillingness to have them republished, see the following sources: James O. Swain, Vicente Blasco Ibáñez: Realistic Techniques (Knoxville: 1959), pp. 119-120, and Emilio Gascó Contell, Genio y figura de Vicente Blasco Ibáñez: Agitador, aventurero, novelista (Madrid: 1957), pp. 44-45.
6. Ramón Martínez de la Riva, Blasco Ibáñez, su vida, su obra, su muerte, sus mejores páginas, p. 173.
7. Julio Cejador y Frauca, Historia de la literatura castellana, vol. IX (Madrid: 1918), p. 476.
8. According to two of Blasco's biographers, La voluntad de vivir was written and printed in 1907. When it was about to be displayed for sale, the novelist decided or was persuaded to destroy the printed copies because one or more of the characters bore too close a resemblance to certain well known persons living at the time. One or more copies evidently were spared, however; and the novel was finally published again in 1953. See Emilio Gascó Contell, Genio y figura de Vicente Blasco Ibáñez: Agitador, aventurero, novelista (Madrid: 1957), pp. 44-45,

- 51, 55; and Camille Pitollet, Vicente Blasco Ibáñez: Sus novelas y la novela de su vida, Versión española de Tulio Moncada (Valencia; 1921), pp. 112-113.
9. Salvador de Madariaga, España: Ensayo de historia contemporánea (Madrid; 1931), p. 77.
  10. Although Blasco's war novels made him internationally famous, serious critics were unimpressed by popular opinion and preferred his works of the Valencian period. They tended to esteem the war novels mainly for certain descriptive passages. For example, in an article entitled "Ibáñez" in The New Republic (November 26, 1919), Hayward Keniston declares uncritical praise of Los cuatro jinetes del Apocalipsis to be unfounded. After pointing out certain defects of the novel, he identifies its real merits: "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse... is not a masterpiece. Its plot is without distinction, its leading characters are weak...There are...certain elements of real power and appeal in the work. The descriptive passages of the novel are of tremendous vigor, particularly the picture of life in Argentina, with its portrait of the old centaur, Madariaga....The battle of the Marne is done in brilliant colors with a power of visualization of detail and a breadth of tone that only Blasco Ibáñez possesses." (pp. 12-13) In his article "Vicente Blasco Ibáñez," published in The Dial (November 18, 1918), Isaac Goldberg indicates that he too esteems the war novels chiefly for their descriptive passages. Speaking of Los cuatro jinetes del Apocalipsis, he says: "...take away the marvelous pages of description, and the story is not only trite but ill managed...if the reader wishes to know the best that Ibáñez has done in the modern novel, let him turn, after pursuing the great descriptive passages of these latest works, to such a tale as The Cabin or Cañas y barro." (pp. 416-417). Concerning descriptive passages in the second war novel, Walter Starkie says that "Mare Nostrum, though it is written around a sensational story, contains beautiful descriptions of the sea which suggest early novels such as Flor de Mayo. In fact, so powerful is the author's description of the sea, that it becomes the true hero of the book..." ("Blasco Ibáñez, 1867-1928", The Nineteenth Century, April, 1928, p. 558. The third war novel, Los enemigos de la mujer, has attracted relatively little attention. Perhaps the most noteworthy tribute to this work is the fact that the description of Clorinda, la Generala, found in the fourth chapter, appears in Martínez de la Riva's collection of Blasco's eight best passages. (Blasco Ibáñez, su vida, su obra, su muerte, sus mejores páginas [Madrid; 1929]), pp. 255-265.
  11. Gascó Contell, Genio y figura de Blasco Ibáñez, pp. 190-191.
  12. See the bibliography for studies on Blasco y Curry, Betoret, Dalbor, Swain, Edel, and Greiner.
  13. See pages 19-20 of this study. For references to Haeckel in addition to the one found in La catedral, see the following pages in Blasco's novels: La horda, in Obras completas (Madrid: 1958), I, 1446; and Los



- cuatro jinetes del Apocalipsis, in Obras completas (Madrid: 1958), II, p. 866.
14. Ernst Haeckel, The Riddle of the Universe at the Close of the Nineteenth Century, translated by Joseph McCabe (New York: 1901), p. ix.
  15. Ibid., pp. 186, 216, 263-264.
  16. Haeckel's belief that the natural sciences can explain even those human phenomena which are described commonly as "spiritual" is evident especially in these chapters of The Riddle of the Universe: "The Phylogeny of the Soul," pp. 148-169, "Consciousness," pp. 170-197, and "The Immortality of the Soul," pp. 188-210.
  17. Ibid., p. 308.
  18. Ibid., p. 310.
  19. In his chapter entitled "Science and Christianity," Haeckel refers to Christ as "the noble prophet and enthusiast, so full of the love of humanity..." Ibid., p. 311.
  20. Ibid., pp. 338.
  21. Ibid., pp. 338, 351-352.
  22. Ibid., pp. 339-340.
  23. Ibid.
  24. Ibid., p. 351.
  25. Ibid., p. 353.
  26. Ibid.
  27. Ibid.
  28. Chapter sixteen of The Riddle of the Universe is entitled "God and the World." In it Haeckel studies various religions and makes it clear that he believes in none of their supernatural claims. At a later point, he remarks that "we must, in accordance with the arguments of our sixteenth chapter, reject what is called 'revelation,' the poetry of faith, that affirms the discovery of truth in a supernatural fashion, without the assistance of reason." His rejection of Providence is evident in his contention that "purposive contrivances" are produced in the universe "by purely mechanical processes without design." He regards the concept of a "mystic vital force" in the universe as an "ancient Phantom" which does not even "call for serious scientific refutation today." Ibid., pp. 337, 263, 264.
  29. Auguste Comte, A General View of Positivism, translated by J. H. Bridges (London: 1908?), pp. 365, 367, 379-388, 391.

30. Haeckel, The Riddle of the Universe, p. 347.
31. Ibid., pp. 290-291.
32. Ibid., p. 344.
33. Ibid., pp. 345-346.
34. Ibid.

## CHAPTER II

### ELEMENTS OF MATERIALISTIC PHILOSOPHY IN BLASCO'S NOVELS

#### The Theories: La catedral

In his first thesis novel, La catedral (1903), Blasco sets forth the fundamental philosophy which underlies most of his major works.<sup>1</sup> The action is nearly contemporary with the time of writing,<sup>2</sup> and the author's attitude is clearly one of acute concern for the social and intellectual problems of his nation. Perhaps the part which deserves most careful attention is the account of young Gabriel Luna's progress from obscurantism to enlightenment.

As a poor but exceptionally bright youngster, Gabriel attracted the attention of the clergy and was granted a scholarship to study for the priesthood. In 1868, convinced that for the moment the Church needed armed defenders more than scholars, he interrupted his studies and became a soldier. Studious by nature but thoroughly indoctrinated with reactionary ideas, he rejoiced to see how rustic soldiers destroyed scientific equipment in the Institute of Cuenca. He believed that the glory of Spain rested on its religious tradition, and that this was being threatened by positive and natural sciences. After the war, he emigrated to France, supposedly on account of dissatisfaction with the government, but really to satisfy a curiosity awakened by new contacts. Dazzled by the material progress of the French nation, he found his former belligerent patriotism dissolving. The attempts of the French Church to reconcile religion and modern science excited his curiosity further and stimulated him to read. His old fondness for history reasserted itself. Now he read not the "intrincada maraña de

prodigios de los cricones leídos en la niñez," but what Blasco describes as "la historia, la verdadera historia..."<sup>3</sup> Engrossed in his pursuit of knowledge, Gabriel devoted two years to books. Presumably he read widely during this period of intellectual evolution; but the only author mentioned specifically is Ernest Renan, who became his "ídolo."<sup>4</sup> The effect of all this learning was that he lost his faith in religious systems and became filled with admiration for the sciences which formerly he had scorned.

For some time Gabriel continued to maintain faith in "la idea de un Dios Creador."<sup>5</sup> In the description of how scientific knowledge eroded this remaining faith, the naive nature of his early beliefs becomes evident. When he began to study astronomy, he was disconcerted to learn that the infinite reaches of space were filled with millions of worlds. Previously he had believed them to be an area in which angels fluttered about, and through which the Virgin passed in her descents to Earth. Even as an adult, he had believed the Supreme Being to be associated necessarily with a material, corporeal form:

El Dios de Gabriel, al perder la forma corporal que le  
habían dado las religiones y difundirse en la creación,  
perdía todos sus atributos.<sup>6</sup>

Gabriel does not seem to have seen any possibility of reconciling his new, scientific knowledge with his old belief in a personal God. For example, on becoming aware of the immensity of the universe, he persisted in the assumption that religion necessarily holds the Earth to be the most important part of all creation, and that it assigns to other planets no other function than that of shedding light on the one inhabited by man. The resulting conflict between science and religion increased his doubts concerning the Supreme Being.

¿Dónde estaba en este infinito el Dios que fabricara la  
Tierra en seis días, que se irritaba por el capricho de

dos seres inocentes sacados del barro y hechos carne de un soplo, y hacía surgir de la nada el sol y tantos millones de mundos sin más objeto que alumbrar este planeta, triste molécula de polvo de la inmensidad?<sup>7</sup>

The next step in the process of Gabriel's enlightenment came when he read about natural creation in the works of Darwin and of the Germans, Buchner and Haeckel. In his description of what the young man learned on this subject, Blasco reveals his own belief in the evolution of the Earth and of man.<sup>8</sup> His brief account of the process is dramatic but not detailed, the stress being mainly on the vastness of the periods of time involved, the immensity of the cataclysms, and the awe-inspiring "ciega tenacidad que anima a la Naturaleza."<sup>9</sup> He does not cite specific works which Gabriel read at this stage; but it is fairly clear that as he wrote, his own thinking must have been influenced by Ernst Haeckel's then recently published work, The Riddle of the Universe. In one instance, in fact, he coincides almost exactly with one of Haeckel's statements. This occurs when, in summarizing Gabriel's thought, he says that "el panteísmo, como decía Schopenhauer, equivale a licenciar a Dios por inútil."<sup>10</sup> A less obvious but probable example of Haeckel's influence may be seen in Gabriel's rejection of the concept of an anthropomorphic deity.<sup>11</sup>

The result of Gabriel's studies was that he became an unbeliever: "Luna se despidió de Dios como de un fantasma consolador que se interpone entre el hombre y la Naturaleza."<sup>12</sup> Years later, in setting forth his views on religion, Gabriel expressed himself in terms which reveal his agreement with Haeckel's pantheistic monism,<sup>13</sup> and also with the latter's belief that the human mind is a product of evolution.<sup>14</sup>

---Dios somos nosotros y todo lo que nos rodea. Es la vida con sus asombrosas transformaciones siempre muriendo en apariencia y renovándose hasta lo infinito. Es esa inmensidad que nos espanta con su grandeza y no cabe en nuestro pensamiento. Es la materia que vive, animada por la fuerza que

reside en ella con absoluta unidad, sin separación ni dualidades. El hombre es Dios; el mundo es Dios también... ---Pero si me preguntáis por el Dios personal inventado por las religiones, a semejanza del hombre que saca el mundo de la nada, dirige vuestras acciones, guarda las almas clasificándolas por sus méritos y comisiona hijos para que bajen a la Tierra y la rediman, buscando en esa inmensidad, ved donde oculta su pequeñez. Aunque fueseis inmortales pasaríais millones de siglos saltando de astro en astro, sin dar jamás con el rincón que oculta su majestad de despota destronado... Ese Dios vengativo y caprichoso surgió del cerebro del hombre, y el cerebro es el órgano más reciente del ser humano, el último en desarrollarse... Cuando inventaron a Dios, la Tierra existía ya desde millones de años.<sup>15</sup>

Blasco's chief accomplishment in writing La catedral was that of making a simple presentation of the implications which his materialistic beliefs had for religion. Aware probably of the effect of positive suggestion, he increased the propaganda value of the work by having Gabriel's listeners display a receptive attitude when he applied his scientific theories to religion. The propagandist's only serious disagreements were with the extreme reactionary Don Antolín, who attempted to defend a conservative version of Church history, and with the individuals whose low cultural and moral level caused them to interpret his teachings as license for crime.

Gabriel offered his audiences no hope of a hereafter, or even the consolation of being able to believe themselves to be of any lasting importance. When he lectured on the immensity of the universe and the relative smallness of the Earth, some of his humble listeners asked him, in effect, whether this did not signify that man and all his affairs are utterly insignificant in the total scheme of things. He replied that such was the case.<sup>16</sup> He offered no suggestion as to what converts to this view might do to avoid demoralization, but his example suggests that he simply relied on activity to save himself from despair. He took for granted that man should seek happiness, and he emphasized that the present life affords the only opportunity to do so:

El hombre debía buscar la felicidad únicamente en este mundo. Tras de la muerte existía la vida infinita de la materia, con sus innumerable combinaciones; pero el ser humano anulábase como la planeta o la bestia irracional: caía en la nada al caer en la tumba...Sólo en la vida podía encontrarse el cielo del hombre.<sup>17</sup>

In the late nineteenth century, a strong anarchist movement provided an outlet for the energies of many rebels against authority. The events of La catedral belong to the period when anarchist terrorists were a serious threat to the lives of rulers and high-ranking officials. By 1903, anarchists had made an attempt on the life of Emperor William I of Germany (1878), and had succeeded in assassinating Tsar Alexander II of Russia (1881), President M. F. Sadi Carnot of France (1894), Spanish Prime Minister Antonio Cánovas del Castillo (1897), Empress Elizabeth of Austria (1898), King Humbert I of Italy (1900), and President McKinley of the United States (1901). Since Blasco closes two of his novels, La horda and La bodega, with predictions of coming revolution,<sup>18</sup> it is of interest to consider how radical a revolt he would countenance. La catedral provides at least a partial answer to this question, for in it he gives a warning against allowing the materialist ideology to lead to any association with anarchism.

Having abandoned religion, Gabriel sought an outlet for his idealistic tendencies and found it in anarchism. His aim in life, henceforth, was to work for the establishment of a Utopia. Like all anarchists, he regarded authority as a source of social ills. Being more moderate than many, however, he believed that before authority could be abolished safely, it would be necessary to create "hombres capaces de subsistir sin amos, sacerdotes y soldados."<sup>19</sup> The process would be a slow one:

...él confiaba en la fuerza de las ideas y en la inocente evolución de la Humanidad. Había que trabajar como los primeros apóstoles del cristianismo, seguros del porvenir, pero sin prisa por ver realizadas sus ideas; puestos los ojos en la labor del día, sin pensar en los años y los siglos que tardaría en dar su fruto.<sup>20</sup>

Blasco was distrustful, evidently, of any and all collaboration with anarchism. Gabriel might preach passive resistance, but in the end it would be seen that he had supported a movement which would inevitably express itself through terrorism:

Aquella elocuencia natural que había causado asombro al iniciarse en el Seminario, se hinchaba y esparcía como un gas embriagador en las reuniones revolucionarias, enardeciendo a la muchedumbre desaharrapada, hambrienta y miserable, que sentía estremecimientos de emoción ante la sociedad descrita por el apóstol; la ciudad celeste de los soñadores de todos los siglos, sin propiedad, sin vicios, sin desigualdades, donde el trabajo sería un placer y no existiría más culto que el de la ciencia y el arte. Algunos oyentes, los mas sombríos, sonreían con gesto compasivo oyendo sus maldiciones a la fuerza y sus himnos a la dulzura y al triunfo por la resistencia pasiva. Era un ideólogo al que había que oír porque servía a la causa. Ellos, que eran los hombres, los luchadores, sabrían en silencio aterrar la sociedad maldita, ya que se mostraba sorda a la voz de la verdad.<sup>21</sup>

Blasco uses a series of ironical developments to emphasize the magnitude of Gabriel's error. When the anarchists committed their first acts of violence in Barcelona, the non-violent Gabriel was the first to go to prison. When he was released from prison, anti-religious though he was, he could find refuge only in the cathedral of Toledo. When his proselytizing zeal led him to expound his views to the lowly employees of the cathedral, some of them interpreted the revolt against authority as a justification for robbery. When these individuals invited him to help steal the Virgin's jewels, he died defending, in a sense, the very institutions of religion and property which he opposed. And finally, although he was one of the most upright of men, the authorities believed him to have been one of the criminals involved in the case. The nature of his error had become clear to him as he faced the robbers:

El, con todas sus lecturas, no había previsto el peligro de enseñar a los ignorantes, en unos cuantos meses, lo que requería toda una vida de reflexión y estudio. Repetíase en pequeño lo que ocurre en los pueblos agitados por la revolución.



Las ideas más nobles se corrompían al pasar por el tamiz de la vulgaridad; las aspiraciones generosas se envenenaban con los sentimientos de la ignorancia y de la miseria...Había sembrado en ellos su pensamiento, queriendo acelerar la cosecha, y como en los cultivos forzados y artificiales que crecen con asombrosa rapidez para no dar más que frutos corrompidos, el resultado de esa propaganda, era la podredumbre moral.<sup>22</sup>

In the last paragraph of La catedral, Blasco makes it clear that although he disapproved of Gabriel's association with the anarchists, he continues to agree with his materialistic philosophy. Speaking as omniscient author, he reveals his own acceptance of an important feature of that philosophy, namely, the concept that man is a mortal creature whose final destiny is merely to return to dust:

El secreto de su muerte lo guardó la tierra, esa madre ceñuda que presencia impasible las luchas de los hombres, sabiendo que grandezas y ambiciones, miserias y locuras, han de pudrirse en sus entrañas, sin otro resultado que fecundar la renovación de la vida.<sup>23</sup>

#### A Negative Effect of Blasco's Materialistic Philosophy

In the last chapter of El intruso (1904), Dr. Aresti dreams of a golden age of human happiness which he knows he will not see in his lifetime, but which he believes will come inevitably in the distant future. Like Gabriel Luna of La catedral, whose views he shares, Dr. Aresti considers the disappearance of traditional religion to be one of the developments essential to the coming of Utopia. In an enlightened age, Aresti believes, men will worship "las dos únicas divinidades de la nueva religión: la Ciencia y la Justicia Social."<sup>24</sup>

The social ills which Blasco treats most frequently in his novels are poverty, ignorance, and oppression, all of which might conceivably be solved by Aresti's new "divinities." There is one problem, however, for which the novelist's materialistic philosophy evidently affords him no solution. It is the problem of how men may avoid gloom and desperation over the inevitable

end of their physical existence. The great majority of his characters are absorbed in their daily affairs and are never seen to concern themselves with this matter. The following paragraphs are devoted to a survey of the attitudes of those who do.

The most detailed case of this type occurs in La bodega (1905). When the gypsy girl Mari-Cruz dies, one of her relatives begins to think about the hereafter and to wonder whether he will ever see her again. He decides to ask the opinion of Salvatierra, the humanitarian. Salvatierra's kindness has gained him the confidence of the gypsies; and since he has some knowledge of medicine, they regard him as a highly learned man. Faced with Alcaparrón's question, Salvatierra finds himself in a difficult position. He is reluctant to disappoint his humble friend, but he is too honest to hide the fact that his views on science do not permit him to accept the traditional belief in life after death. He begins his reply by attempting to point out ways in which man may be regarded as immortal. At intervals, however, he forgets that his purpose is to console; and at such moments, he expresses his own doubts and anguish.

First, Salvatierra explains that man is immortal in the sense that no atom of the physical being is ever lost, but that it survives and contributes to support the life of following generations. In this sense, Alcaparrón can regard his relative as surviving:

Sí, volvería a verla, él lo afirmaba con solemne gravedad. Es más; estaría en contacto a todas horas con algo que habría formado parte de su ser. Todo lo que existía quedaba en el mundo; sólo cambiaba de forma; ni un átomo llegaba a perderse. Vivíamos rodeados de lo que había sido el pasado y de lo que sería el futuro. Los restos de los que amábamos y los componentes de los que a su vez nos habían de amar flotaban en torno nuestro, manteniendo nuestra vida.<sup>25</sup>

Next Salvatierra relates how the death of his mother left him emotionally unable to accept the extinction of the human personality:

¿Sólo restaba de mamá, de la viejecita bondadosa y dulce como las santas mujeres de las religiones, aquel cuadro de tierra fresca y removida y las margaritas silvestres que nacían en sus bordes? Se había perdido para siempre el eco de su voz acariciadora...?<sup>26</sup>

At times he tries to believe in a mysterious survival of something more than mere impersonal matter:

...cuando siento ganas de llorar recordando la nada de aquel montón de tierra, la triste insignificancia de las florecillas que lo rodean, pienso en que no está allí mamá completamente, que algo se ha escapado, que circula al través de la vida, que me tropieza atraído por una simpatía misteriosa y me acompaña envolviéndome en una caricia tan suave como un beso...<sup>27</sup>

As an illustration of what he means, Salvatierra says that possibly "...en este vientecillo que nos roza la cara hay algo de las manos suaves y temblorosas que me acariciaron..."<sup>28</sup> Applying the same idea to the case of Mari-Cruz, he points out how Alcaparrón may perceive traces of her personality in the world of nature:

Sí; Alcaparrón sentiría cerca de él a su amada muerta. Algo de ella subiría hasta su rostro como un perfume cuando arañase la tierra con el azadón y el surco nuevo enviase a su olfato la frescura del suelo removido. Algo habría también de su alma en las espigas del trigo, en las amapolas que gotearan de rojo los flancos de oro de la mies, en los pájaros que cantaban al amanecer cuando el rebaño humano iba hacia el tajo, en los matorrales del monte, sobre los cuales revoloteaban los insectos, asustados por las carreras de las yeguas y los bufidos de los toros... ¿Quién sabe---continuó el rebelde---si en esas estrellas que parecen guiñar sus ojos en lo alto hay algo a estas horas de la luz de esos otros ojos que tanto amabas, Alcaparrón?<sup>29</sup>

Salvatierra continues his discourse "como si quisiera convencerse a sí mismo." Attempting still to prove that man leaves in the universe "algo impalpable e indefinido, sello personal de [su] existencia,"<sup>30</sup> he turns to science in search of proof:

---la gota se pierde en el mar...y sin embargo, allí está... ¿Qué significaba la grandeza o la pequeñez? En una gota de líquido existían millones de millones de seres, todos con vida propia: tantos como hombres poblaban el planeta. Y uno solo

de estos organismos infinitesimales bastaba para matar una criatura humana, para diezmar con la epidemia una nación. ¿Por qué no habían de influir los hombres, microbios del infinito, en aquel universo, en cuyo seno quedaba la fuerza de su personalidad?<sup>31</sup>

Salvatierra concludes his discourse with the admission that his attempt to believe in some form of immortality may be merely a manifestation of cowardice. He places the blame on human ties of love:

...¡ay! La Muerte, la incógnita, nos espía y nos sigue, burlándose de nuestras soberbias y nuestras satisfacciones... Yo la desprecio, me río de ella, la espero sin miedo para descansar de una vez, y como yo muchísimos. Pero los hombres amamos y el amor nos hace temblar por los que nos rodean; troncha nuestras energías, nos hace caer de bruces, cobardes y trémulos ante esa bruja, inventando mil crímenes. ¡Ay, si no amásemos..., ¡qué animal tan valeroso sería el hombre!<sup>32</sup>

Salvatierra's version of immortality might be described as the "transmigration of matter."<sup>33</sup> An earlier example of this may be seen in a poem by the Mexican poet, Manuel Acuña, (1849-1873).<sup>34</sup> I have found no evidence as to whether Elasco developed the concept independently, or whether he borrowed it from Acuña or some other writer. In any case, its appearance in the work of both men is probably the result of the same general influences.<sup>35</sup>

A case somewhat similar to Salvatierra's is that of Renovales, the painter of La maja desnuda, (1906). Realizing that he neglected his wife during her lifetime, Renovales decides to visit her grave. He does this evidently as an act of penance and also as a means of feeling himself closer to her. He believes, or tries to believe, that the personality of the dead may be perceived through traces of the physical being:

Iba a verla; a poner sus plantas en la misma tierra, última sábana de su cuerpo; a aspirar un aire en el que subsistía, tal vez, algo de aquel calor, que era como la respiración del alma de la muerta. ¿Qué le diría?<sup>36</sup>

Renovales makes the first visit in company of a friend. This proves unsatisfactory, for he feels himself inhibited by the friend's presence. On returning

the next day, he finds that with the aid of solitude, silence, and the natural beauty of the cemetery, he is able to imagine that he sees his wife and hears her voice. Blasco offers a physical explanation of the phenomenon, but it is not entirely clear as to whether he is offering his own theory to the reader, or whether he is relating a rationalization which occurred to Renovales:

Era una resurrección; la imagen de la muerta estaba ante él, formada, sin duda, por moléculas invisibles de su ser que flotaban sobre la tumba, por algo de su esencia vital que aun aleteaba en torno de los restos materiales con cierto retardo de dolorosa despedida, antes de emprender la carrera a las profundidades de lo infinito.<sup>37</sup>

In time, the vision vanishes; and in its place come reflections on the macabre aspect of death. Renovales concludes, finally, that his attempt to communicate with his wife are absurd. He continues to be tormented by remorse; but he is evidently resigned to his materialistic beliefs, and sees no hope of replacing them with others which might afford more consolation.

The last three important examples of Blasco's thought on this subject are found in the war novels. One of these examples can be studied more appropriately at another point.<sup>38</sup> The first of the other two appears in Los cuatro jinetes del Apocalipsis, (1916). Marcelo Desnoyers is one of the most important characters of the novel. Previous to the day he visits his son's grave in a military cemetery, there is no clear indication as to the nature of his ideas on religion or philosophy. He is simply another of Blasco's men of action who are rarely observed to think about such things. As he stands by Julio's grave, his thoughts reflect the materialistic belief that man does not merely inhabit a physical body, but that he is that body, and that its disappearance marks his end:

Su hijo estaba allí, ¡allí para siempre!...;Y no lo vería mas! Lo adivinó dormido en las entrañas del suelo, sin ninguna envoltura, en contacto directo con la tierra, tal como le había

sorprendido la muerte, con su uniforme miserable y heroico. La consideración de que las raíces de las plantas tocaban tal vez con sus cabelleras el mismo rostro que él había besado amorosamente,...fue lo primero que le sublevó, como si fuese un ultraje. Hizo memoria de los exquisitos cuidados a que se había sometido en vida...; Todo para venir a pudrirse en un campo de trigo, como una bestia de labor que muere reventada y la entierran en el mismo lugar de su caída.

Quiso llevarse de allí a su hijo inmediatamente y se desesperó porque no podía hacerlo. Lo trasladaría tan pronto como se lo permitiesen, erigiéndole un mausoleo igual a los de los reyes... ¿Y qué iban a conseguir con esto? Cambiaría de sitio un montón de huesos; pero su carne, su envoltura, todo lo que formaba el encanto de su persona, quedaría allí confundido con la tierra. El hijo del rico Desnoyers se había agregado para siempre a un pobre campo de la Champaña.<sup>39</sup>

Desnoyers does not confine his thoughts to his personal grief, but rather allows them to lead him to an awareness of how pitiful man's position is in a universe ruled by mere chance. At first he protests furiously against "el Destino" which has permitted the injustices of war, and then he resigns himself to the implications of his disbelief in Providence:

No había justicia; el mundo era un producto de la casualidad; todo mentiras, palabras de consuelo para que el hombre sobrellene sin asustarse el desamparo en que vive.<sup>40</sup>

Turning away from the hopeless grief of the parents, whose lives he says are nearly over, Blasco finds relief from gloom by fixing his attention on youth and on the continuity of the human race. The Desnoyers daughter, who is also present, is moved by "el duro instinto de la independencia que separa a los hijos de los padres para que la humanidad continúe su renovación."<sup>41</sup> After placing flowers on her brother's grave, and after thinking about him for a little while, she relegates her memories of him to a second place and turns her attention to her husband, rejoicing because he has returned alive from the war.

The last of Blasco's cemetery scenes is found in his last war novel, Los enemigos de la mujer (1919). When Miguel Lubimoff, the main character, returns from the war, he visits the graves of two friends who have died

during his absence. They are the duchess Alicia and the English nurse, Lady Mary Lewis. As Miguel stands near the duchess' grave, he notices some butterflies moving about, and it occurs to him that there is a similarity between the clashing colors of their wings and the nature of her tempestuous and irregular soul. Moments before, he noticed a similar correspondence between the white wings of some other butterflies and the soul of the heroic nurse:

Miguel establece una relación entre estos insectos y el espíritu que habitó el organismo que se deshace cerca de sus pies, bajo un metro de tierra. Sus colores variados y desacordes le hacen pensar en el alma de la muerta. También, minutos antes, otra mariposa blanca revoloteando sobre las flores traídas por Lewis le ha hecho ver el alma pueril y sublime de lady Mary.<sup>42</sup>

After reflecting for some time on the manner in which death destroys physical beauty, Miguel seeks relief in the idea that traces of the human personality survive in beautiful plant and animal forms. He even thinks that there may be an actual transfer of character traits through the absorption of matter:

Tal vez en la corola de las florecillas hay una gota del alma de Alicia, y las mariposas la beben para continuar su ebrío revuelo sobre las tumbas.<sup>43</sup>

Unlike Salvatierra of La bodega, Miguel Lubimoff makes no serious attempt to derive consolation from this concept. Perhaps this is because he, unlike Salvatierra, has not lost anyone close to him, and is therefore not in such great need of consolation. In the end, however, his reaction is somewhat like that of Desnoyers in the first war novel; and this suggests a trend not observable in the thesis period. Like Desnoyers, Miguel is saddened by the belief that man is alone in an impersonal, non-providential universe. He has this feeling after his visit to the cemetery, and it accompanies him as he goes to the plaza and observes the crowded places of entertainment. He

sees that the young people are dancing in an almost frenzied manner, as though to compensate for the time lost during the war, and that the hotels which served as hospitals are again scenes of gaiety. The encounter with death has evidently increased man's will to live. For a moment, it seems that this thought will console Miguel, but it does not. The novel closes with his discouraging conclusion: "La Tierra y el Cielo ignoran nuestros dolores. Y la vida también."<sup>44</sup> This means, probably, that he regards life as a blind, impersonal force which is no less indifferent to the individual's welfare than is the rest of the natural world.

Miguel Lubimoff is the last among Blasco's characters to meditate on the ultimate destiny of man. The subject does not, therefore, assume increasing importance as the novelist advances in age. Actually, it is not a major theme in any period or even in any one of the novels. What he does say about it is significant, however; for it constitutes his admission that in one important aspect, his ideology is unsatisfying to him. It suggests that while undoubtedly he has come to regard his materialistic philosophy as the only one possible for an enlightened, modern man, he fails to make complete emotional adjustment to it. In this connection, it must be recalled that his background was a religious one, and that early in life he probably held the traditional Christian belief in immortality.<sup>45</sup>

#### The Supernatural in Blasco's Novels

In his authorized novels, Blasco rarely mentions or describes supernatural or supposedly supernatural events, and when he does, his skepticism is usually obvious.<sup>46</sup> Probably one of the best examples of this is found in Entre naranjos, in the entertaining account of a flood and its effect on the credulous masses. With indulgent humor and an evident zest for folklore, the novelist describes how the common folk of Alcira insist on holding



a procession to save the town. Incredulous persons smile and suggest that it would be more worthwhile to vacate the houses near the river; but the crowd is sure that parading a certain image will cause the waters to recede miraculously, "como el agua de un cántaro que se rompe."<sup>47</sup> In their desire to frighten the mayor into granting permission for the procession, many individuals appear carrying weapons: "Parecía que iban a matar al río."<sup>48</sup> The priest who is expected to preside over the procession describes it as a "mojiganga tradicional."<sup>49</sup> He is reluctant to go out in the rain; and he is concerned lest the image be swept away by the waters, as it almost was on a previous occasion. He fears also that the flood may become a major one, with resulting embarrassment for religion:

Además, cualquier día, después de sacar en rogativa a San Bernardo, el río se llevaba media ciudad, "¿y en qué postura--como decía él--quedaba la religión por culpa de aquella turba de vociferadores?"...Era una escena extraña ver al hombre de la Iglesia protestando en nombre del buen sentido, pretendiendo luchar contra las pre-ocupaciones amontonadas por varios siglos de fanatismo.<sup>50</sup>

After the procession is over, those who believe in its efficacy refuse to admit that the water is still rising. One young man's zeal expresses itself in considerable ferocity:

Y un mocetón de ojos feroces hablaba de vaciarle el vientre de una cuchillada a cierto burlón que aseguraba que el río subiría sólo por el gusto de dejar malparado al milagroso fraile.<sup>51</sup>

Having revealed his amusement at this type of superstition, Blasco does not bother to describe the confirmation of faith which must have occurred when the flood stopped short of inundating most of the town.

In one of his last novels, El caballero de la Virgen, Blasco relates an apparently supernatural event without making it entirely clear that he intends it to be regarded as illusory. This occurs when the sixteenth cen-

ture pioneer Fernando Cuevas visits the ruins of a fort in Santo Domingo. As he stands among the ruins, Cuevas sees a strange procession of Spanish noblemen moving through the place. Although his dog howls in a lugubrious manner, and although the first of the marchers pass without seeming to see him, he suspects nothing unusual until he extends his greeting to the company:

Y se quitó cortésmente su gorra para saludar, sin que la procesión de desconocidos respondiese verbalmente a su saludo. Pero todos a un mismo tiempo se llevaron la diestra a sus birretes y sombreros para contestar a su cortesía, y Cuevas vio con terror que al descubrirse llevaban dentro de las tocas sus cráneos completamente blancos, quedando descabezados y desapareciendo después instantáneamente. Esta desaparición apenas llegó a presenciarla Cuevas, pues tembloroso e invocando a la Virgen, echó a correr, viéndose al poco rato fuera de la ciudad, al lado de su perro, que seguía aullando con las orejas enhiestas y los ojos fijos en las ruinas.<sup>52</sup>

This strange scene serves as a prelude to a period of meditation during which Cuevas foresees the magnitude of Spanish sacrifices in the New World:

La procesión de espectros de esta ciudad en ruinas iba a repetirse en toda una cara de nuestro planeta, a ambos lados de la línea ecuatorial, desde las frías alturas donde crece el abeto a las colinas templadas donde florece el naranjo y las llanuras torridas cubiertas de bananos...No iba a existir un rincón de las nuevas tierras, alto o bajo, húmedo o seco, yermo o selvático, que no guardase, como marca heráldica, una osamente española.<sup>53</sup>

Perhaps Blasco intends to provide clues to a rational explanation of the vision, but wishes also to let the reader believe momentarily that it is real. Before it occurs, he mentions that Cuevas has a slight fever, and that, somehow, this has the effect of causing him to remember his friends who once lived with him in the now ruined fort. Since Cuevas, however, rejects rumors that the place is haunted, the sudden vision finds the reader unprepared, at least for the moment, to regard it as unreal. Cuevas' fever worsens, but he never doubts the reality of the apparition or suspects it of having been a result of a beginning illness. Since this illness has no further

consequences of any kind, it would appear that Blasco insists on it only to make the reader realize that it caused the vision or hallucination.

The foregoing examples suffice to illustrate the way Blasco treats the supernatural in his authorized novels. They indicate that the tendency toward fantasy observable in some of his early works was replaced later by a realistic attitude consonant with his devotion to scientific truth.

#### Conclusion

The findings of this chapter constitute evidence that Blasco accepted the scientific and materialistic philosophy which was prevalent during his formative years, and that its influence is definitely observable in several of his novels. He explains its theoretical basis mainly in one propaganda novel, La catedral; but its effects are felt in other novels whenever he displays his disbelief in the supernatural, or whenever his characters regret their inability to believe in the immortality of the soul. The subject of how his materialistic philosophy influences his treatment of religion is a broad one and requires a chapter apart.

## Footnotes

1. It is especially in Los cuatro jinetes del Apocalipsis, Part I, Chapter V, that Blasco gives indications of abandoning some of the ideas which he held during his earlier years. In pages 64-77 of this study, I consider the extent and significance of this change.
2. (The page references in this note are to the following work: Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, La catedral, in Obras completas (Madrid: 1958), Volume I.) The main events of La catedral begin with Gabriel Luna's last return to Toledo and terminate with his death. In chapters II and III, which he devotes to the antecedents of the situation existing at the time of that return, Blasco gives several clues as to dates, but he also leaves some gaps. The chronology is as follows. Gabriel was eighteen years of age when his father died (p. 954). In 1868, evidently a short time after his father's death, he went to war (p. 954). He spent three years in the army (p. 956). Next, he spent over a year in a refugee camp (p. 956), at least five more in Paris (p. 961), and several as a propagandist, eight of them in Lucy's company (p. 961). Then he returned to Toledo for the first time, "envejecido antes de los cuarenta años." (p. 962). Next, he was a propagandist in Barcelona for an indefinite period of time and then went to prison for two years (p. 964). Following his release from prison, he lived in London for two years and then spent an indefinite period of time wandering around the continent (p. 964). Then he made his final return to Toledo. At this time, he was "enfermo, con el cuerpo arruinado antes de la vejez." (p. 934). In accordance with the foregoing data, the main events of La catedral must begin no earlier than 1889, and probably a little later. The period of time covered by the main events is of uncertain length, but it must have been brief, for Gabriel was suffering from a hopeless case of consumption when they began, and he was overtaken by violent death before his illness could run its course.
3. Ibid., p. 958
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 960.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid. For additional evidence of Blasco's belief in the theory of man's evolution from lower forms of animal life, see page 1051 of the same work.
9. Ibid., p. 960.
10. Ibid. For Haeckel's version of this statement see The Riddle of the Universe, p. 291.

11. Haeckel, The Riddle of the Universe, pp. 388-391.
12. Blasco, La catedral, p. 960.
13. Haeckel, The Riddle of the Universe, pp. 288-291.
14. Ibid., p. 169.
15. Blasco, La catedral, pp. 1028-1029.
16. Ibid., p. 1028.
17. Ibid., p. 1050.
18. Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, La horda, in Obras completas (Madrid; 1958), I, 1515.  
Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, La bodega, in Obras completas (Madrid; 1958), I, 1363.
19. Blasco, La catedral, p. 961.
20. Ibid., p. 962.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., p. 1067.
23. Ibid., p. 1069.
24. Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, El intruso, in Obras completas (Madrid; 1958), I, 1214.
25. Blasco, La bodega, pp. 1314-1315.
26. Ibid., p. 1315.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., p. 1316.
30. Ibid., p. 1315.
31. Ibid., p. 1316.
32. Ibid.
33. The recurrence of this concept may be observed, for example, in a discussion of Juana de Ibarbourou's poetry, in An Anthology of Spanish American Literature (New York; 1947), p. 749, by E. Herman Hespelt and others.
34. The following stanzas from Acuña's poem, "Ante un cadáver", reveal the general similarity between his beliefs and those of Salvatierra:

Tú sin aliento ya; dentro de poco  
volverás a la tierra y a su seno  
que es de la vida universal el foco.

Y allí, a la vida en apariencia ajeno,  
el poder de la lluvia y del verano  
fecundará de gérmenes tu cieno.

Y al ascender de la raíz al grano,  
irás del vegetal a ser testigo  
en el laboratorio soberano.

Tal vez para volver cambiado en trigo,  
al triste hogar donde la triste esposa  
sin encontrar un pan sueña contigo.

... ..

Y en medio de esos cambios interiores  
tu cráneo lleno de una nueva vida,  
en vez de pensamientos dará flores,

en cuyo cáliz brillará escondida  
la lágrima, tal vez, con que tu amada  
acompañó al adiós de tu partida.

... ..

La tumba es el final de la jornada,  
porque en la tumba es donde queda muerta  
la llama en nuestro espíritu encerrada.

... ..

La tumba sólo guarda un esqueleto,  
más la vida en su bóveda mortuoria  
prosigue alimentándose en secreto.

Que al fin de esta existencia transitoria  
a la que tanto nuestro afán se adhiere,  
la materia, inmortal como la gloria  
cambia de formas, pero nunca muere.

Poesías de Manuel Acuña con un prólogo de D. Fernando Soldevilla,  
5th ed. (Paris; 1892), pp. 128-129, 131.

35. In his work entitled Manuel Acuña (Mexico: 1960), p. 1314, Fernán Castillo Nájera tells how the young poet and medical student, Manuel Acuña, was converted to the materialistic views commonly held by men of science in his time.
36. Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, La maja desnuda, in Obras completas (Madrid: 1958), I, 1634.

37. Ibid., p. 1636.
38. Since Alicia of Los enemigos de la mujer tries to believe in immortality as taught by traditional Christianity, I consider her case in my chapter entitled "Attitudes Toward Religion in Blasco's Novels." See pages 69-71 of this study.
39. Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, Los cuatro jinetes del Apocalipsis, in Obras completas (Madrid: 1958), II, 994.
40. Ibid., p. 995.
41. Ibid., p. 996.
42. Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, Los enemigos de la mujer, in Obras completas (Madrid: 1958), II, 1427.
43. Ibid., p. 1428.
44. Ibid., p. 1437.
45. Concerning Blasco's religious background, one of his biographers says the following: "La infancia de nuestro héroe fue poco precursor del rumbo que había de tomar su vida. Hijo de padres en extremo religiosos, fue educado en los más puros preceptos de la religión católica, hasta el punto de ayudar diariamente la misa en la iglesia de los Santos Juanes, próxima a su vivienda.." Ramon Martínez de la Riva, Blasco Ibáñez, Su vida, su obra, su muerte, sus mejores páginas (Madrid; 1929), p. 18.
46. Among the early works which Blasco did not wish to have republished, there are several short stories and one novel in which he treats medieval themes in the romantic manner. Events of a supernatural nature are relatively numerous in these works, and Blasco fails in most instances to register his own disbelief or skepticism. It would appear that he was rather strongly under the influence of romanticism when he wrote these works, and that he was not yet so dominated by the concern for scientific truth as he came to be later. The novel referred to above is El Conde Garcí-Fernández (Madrid: 1928). The supernatural element in this novel appears when the count consults a witch in order to discover the cause of his discontent. By way of reply, the witch creates a magic cloud of smoke in which the count sees the image of a woman he has never met. The witch predicts that same woman will become his wife, and her prediction is fulfilled. Supernatural events play a more important role in some of the short stories of the collection entitled Fantasías (Madrid: 1928). Perhaps the best example is the story entitled La misa de media noche. The main character of this story is a modern youth, Ludovico, who is interested in local legends. One night, he insists on visiting the reportedly haunted tower of a castle. While he is in the tower, the figure of a medieval nobleman Montalbán comes to life and steps down from a painting. Following the ghostly figure, Ludovico enters the chapel of the castle and witnesses a mass attended by personages of bygone ages. Some of them are ancestors of the present owner of the castle, and others are members of an enemy family.

At the close of the mass, Montalbán announces that the two surviving descendants of the families have fallen in love, thus ending the old feud. Overcome by the strange music which follows this announcement, Ludovico loses consciousness, and the guard's family finds him there the next day. When he has recovered and is taking leave of this family, the owner of the castle returns unexpectedly. Montalbán's announcement was true: his one remaining descendent, Enrique de Montalbán, has married Luisa, the only remaining member of the enemy family, and has come to spend his honeymoon at his ancestral estate.

47. Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, Entre naranjos, in Obras completas (Madrid: 1958), I, 495.
48. Ibid., p. 594.
49. Ibid., p. 595.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid., p. 599.
52. Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, El caballero de la Virgen, in Obras completas (Madrid: 1958), III, 1507-1508.
53. Ibid., p. 1508.



## CHAPTER III

### ATTITUDES TOWARD RELIGION IN BLASCO'S NOVELS

Anticlerical sentiment was strong in some of Blasco's early, "unauthorized" works.<sup>1</sup> During the period 1894-1915, there is actually no evidence of any fundamental change in his views on religion. Instead, there is merely an increase in antireligious criticism when he turns from writing entertaining regional novels and begins his works of thesis. This being the case, I have chosen to disregard chronology in this period, and to study typical representatives of the groups into which the characters may be divided on the basis of their ideas about religion and their attitudes toward it. Since there is some change after 1915, I devote a separate section to the novels written after that year.

#### Characters Who Express Blasco's Own Ideas and Attitudes

One of the characters who expresses Blasco's views on the social consequences of religion is Dr. Aresti of El intruso. Aresti is separated from his intolerable beata wife and has dedicated himself to humanitarian work among the impoverished miners of an area near Bilbao. Usually he sets forth his ideas in discussions with friends and relatives who hold views opposed to his own. He believes that modern science disproves the supernatural basis of religions, but the main reason for his active opposition to Christianity is his belief that it serves as a support for economic oppression:

Los privilegiados empleaban la religión como un escudo.  
"Nada de esperar en la Tierra la justicia para todos.  
Estaban en manos de Dios y había que ir a la otra vida  
para encontrarla. Mientras tanto, el pueblo podía ser

feliz en su miseria, con la esperanza del paraíso después de la muerte; dulce ilusión, supremo consuelo que los revolucionarios sin conciencia, le quieren arrebatar...." Así se expresaban los que tenían interés en que todo continuase lo mismo en la Tierra a la sombra protectora de las creencias. ¿Cómo no habían de indignarse los infelices contra una religión que les cerraba el camino de la justicia aquí abajo, para no darles más que la quimérica esperanza de una justicia divina que los ricos pueden sobornar con sus dádivas a los sacerdotes?...

El cristianismo había engañado al pobre manteniéndole en su triste situación con la esperanza del cielo y la amenaza del infierno.<sup>2</sup>

Aresti believes that this state of affairs did not originally characterize Christianity. He speaks of Christ with respect and even affection, but he insists that men have succeeded in making a mockery of Christian teachings:

¿Jesús? Fue un gran poeta de la moral. Yo amo su recuerdo con la ternura de la compasión, viendo la inutilidad y el sarcasmo de su sacrificio. Sus sucesores han trastornado sus doctrinas, explicándolas y practicándolas al revés. Su asesinato fue una conspiración de las autoridades constituidas: gobernantes, ricos y sacerdotes, los mismos que hoy son sus devotos y explotan su recuerdo.<sup>3</sup>

Years later, when Blasco wrote to a clergyman explaining the motive behind his thesis novels, he employed a conciliatory tone which contrasts sharply with Aresti's combative attitude and sometimes harsh language:

Mi segunda época es la de la novela que podemos llamar social o mejor, de tendencia: La catedral, El intruso, La bodega, La horda, etc. Este grupo es natural que no sea de su agrado. Sus convicciones repetables (como lo son todas las convicciones sinceras) y su caracter sacerdotal se alzan en este período de mi existencia literaria como un obstáculo entre nosotros dos, que nos impide vernos bien. Sigamos adelante. Únicamente haré constar que todo eso lo escribí con sinceridad y entusiasmo. Acabamos de sufrir nuestra catástrofe colonial; España estaba en una situación vergonzosa, y yo atacué rudamente, pintando algunas manifestaciones de la vida soñolienta de nuestro país, imaginando que esto podía servir de reactivo.<sup>4</sup>

Like all of Blasco's thinkers of the thesis period, Aresti shows no signs of recognizing a human need for religion. Instead of at least recommending nature worship, as did Haeckel, he says that the most religious societies are those in which the least satisfactory conditions exist:

Aresti acogió la sarcástica descripción de aquella sociedad sin Dios con rostro impasible. Si la religión era un freno para los apetitos y las violencias, ¿por qué la criminalidad era más frecuente en los pueblos atrasados y devotos que en otros de mayor cultura? ¿Cómo era que los mayores crímenes de la Historia habían coincidido con los períodos en que el entusiasmo religioso se mostraba más ardiente?<sup>5</sup>

Without having illustrated these remarks with concrete examples, Aresti proceeds to explain his view of how science will provide a basis for morality. He believes that the desire for personal immortality is characteristic of primitive people and that it stems from egotism. He believes also that science emancipates men from such an attitude and causes them to feel greater solidarity with the whole human race. The individual thus enlightened does not need to console himself with the desire to live forever in "un bienestar celeste"; on the contrary, he is capable of being satisfied with the prospect of living on in the sense that the effects of his good deeds will continue to manifest themselves in the progress of the human race. He no longer needs a fear of punishment to make him behave properly. The morality of the great heroes of humanity, Aresti believes, was based on this view; and in the future, cases like theirs will become much more numerous.<sup>6</sup> It should be observed that Aresti's ideal concept of immortality is never more than a mere theory. Blasco's novels furnish no examples of anyone who actually derives consolation from it in time of grief, or who even attempts to do so.

Despite his rejection of Christianity, Blasco retained in part the Catholic concept of sainthood and tended to make his idealistic and humanitarian characters conform to it. Like the saints of Catholic tradition, his non-religious but saintly characters all strive to alleviate human misery. They all lead more or less austere lives, and they are all celibates, or they become and remain so. Gabriel Luna of La catedral furnishes the best example of this celibacy. His two closest friends are women more

or less of his own age. One is the English girl named Lucy, who is his fellow-propagandist; and the second is the reformed prodigal Sagrario. In both cases, the relationship is of a purely intellectual and spiritual nature. This contrasts sharply, of course, with the libertarianism and sensualism which the novelist tolerates in some of his characters. In two cases, Blasco reveals an awareness of the similarity between his saintly characters and those of Christianity. One of these characters is the English nurse, Lady Mary Lewis of Los enemigos de la mujer, whom he describes as a virgen dolorosa.<sup>7</sup> The other is Fernando Salvatierra of La bodega, whose saintly qualities are recognized even by his adversaries:

Era un santo laico, según confesaban sus adversarios. Nacido dos siglos antes hubiese sido un religioso mendicante preocupado por el dolor ajeno y tal vez habría llegado a figurar en los altares.<sup>8</sup>

Blasco emphasizes this comparison further by saying that Salvatierra's mother, who permitted him to spend the family's modest fortune on revolutionary activities, was "como las madres de los santos de la leyenda cristiana, cómplices sonrientes de todas las generosas locuras y disparatados desprendimientos de sus hijos."<sup>9</sup>

Salvatierra is perhaps the most ascetic of Blasco's characters. His humanitarian zeal having been increased by a period of imprisonment, he resolves to subsist only on bread, water, and cheese. He feels that in view of the poverty existing in the world, he has no right to enjoy a better diet. Although he is thin and weak, he refuses a good meal when it is offered to him; and for a time, he even insists on sleeping among the farm laborers in their wretched quarters. He has never tasted wine, and he never uses tobacco. All of this forms a marked contrast to the love of luxury which is common among Blasco's characters, and which he evidently enjoys describing.<sup>10</sup> Like the emphasis on celibacy, it illustrates how he tends to regard his "saints"

as a group apart from the rest of humanity, and how he attributes to them a type of conduct which he expects of no one else.

When Blasco emphasizes the saintliness of his humanitarians and social reformers, he probably does so with the intention of lending respectability and dignity to his serious criticism of religion. In keeping with this intention, he chooses Salvatierra, one of his most saintly characters, to deliver some of his strongest antireligious propaganda. Perhaps to lessen further the possibly disagreeable effect of this criticism, he expresses some of it in more or less poetic terms. At one point, Salvatierra recalls how church bells ring during passion week, first to announce the death of Christ, and later, to announce the resurrection. Using his recollection of this custom as a point of departure, he begins an enumeration of the evils and miseries which persist despite the existence of Christianity. At intervals, as though he were still hearing the bells, he punctuates his discourse with the negative part of their message: ";Cristo ha muerto!"<sup>11</sup> After repeating this refrain for the last time, Salvatierra says:

Sí; bien muerto estaba. Su vida no había servido para aliviar uno solo de los males que afligen a los humanos. En cambio, había causado a los pobres un daño incalculable predicándoles la humildad, infiltrando en sus espíritus la sumisión, la creencia del premio en un mundo mejor. El envilecimiento de la limosna y la esperanza de justicia ultraterrena habían conservado a los infelices en su miseria por miles de años.<sup>12</sup>

In speaking thus against humility, Salvatierra fails to indicate that there is a form of it which he himself practices and presumably admires. Although he was once a "diputado" and was even offered the position of minister during the period of the Republic, he is meek in manner and does not wish to be addressed except as "Fernando" or "tú." His insistence on staying among the lowly farm laborers is another example of his humility. It can only be assumed that he approves of humility in personal relationships among equals,

and that he rejects it when it consists of submitting to oppression instead of resorting to rebellion.

In his criticism of charity, Salvatierra makes another sweeping denunciation without making it entirely clear that he is criticizing only a perversion of a virtue, and not the virtue itself. His own charitable acts<sup>13</sup> must be taken into account when such statements as the following are being considered:

¡La caridad! ¿Y para qué servía? Para mantener al pobre en la esclavitud, esperando unas migajas que acallaban su hambre por un momento y prolongaban su servidumbre.

La caridad era el egoísmo disfrazándose de virtud: el sacrificio de una pequeñísima parte de lo superfluo repartida a capricho. Caridad, no; ¡justicia! ¡A cada cual lo suyo!

La caridad no había hecho nada por dignificar al hombre. Diecinueve siglos llevaba de reinado; la cantaban los poetas como inspiración divina; la ensalzaban los felices como la mayor de las virtudes, y el mundo estaba igual que el día en que apareció ella por primera vez con la doctrina de Cristo. La experiencia resultaba suficientemente larga para apreciar su inutilidad.

Era la más impotente y la más anémica de las virtudes.<sup>14</sup>

Presumably Salvatierra is so much opposed to what he has seen practiced in the name of charity and humility that he refuses even to admit that these terms can refer to anything good. He does, at least, admit that he agrees with the Christian ideal of fraternity:

Los hombres comenzaban de nuevo su marcha hacia la fraternidad, el ideal de Cristo, pero abominando de la manse-<sup>15</sup>  
dumbre, despreciando la limosna por envilecedora e inútil.

Salvatierra's attitude toward religion is somewhat understandable in view of the injustices which he sees practiced in its name. He sees constantly how the rich and pious landowners of Andalusia use it as an excuse to oppress the poor and to defend privilege. He sees also that the clergy does nothing to correct this situation. It is only in later years, when Blasco turns his attention to entirely different settings and problems, that the reasoners in his novels cease to associate religion with oppression.

In addition to protesting against Christianity in the name of social justice, Salvatierra objects to it on the grounds that its coming destroyed the beauty and love of beauty characteristic of classical civilization. In approaching this subject, he evokes memories of the beauties of pagan culture, and especially of pagan mythology and religion:

Un estremecimiento de las entrañas de la tierra había conmovido un día al mundo antiguo. Los árboles gimieron en los bosques, agitando sus melenas de hojas, como plañideras y desesperadas; un viento fúnebre rizó los lagos y la superficie azul luminosa del mar clásico que había arrullado durante siglos en las playas griegas los diálogos de los poetas y los filósofos. Un lamento de muerte rasgó el espacio, llegando a los oídos de todos los hombres. ¡El gran Pan ha muerto!...Las sirenas se sumergieron para siempre en las glaucas profundidades; las ninfas huyeron despavoridas a las entrañas de la tierra para no volver jamás, y los templos blancos que cantaban como himnos de mármol la alegría de la vida bajo el torrente de oro del sol, se entenebrecieron, sumiéndose en el silencio augusto de las ruinas.<sup>16</sup>

It was observed in the foregoing chapter that when Blasco wrote La catedral, he was probably influenced to some extent by the thought of the German zoologist Ernst Haeckel. Further possible evidence of Haeckel's influence is observable in the way he and Salvatierra coincide in the view that Christianity is necessarily ascetic:

Salvatierra

"Cristo ha nacido", gritó la misma voz. Y el mundo fue ciego para todo lo exterior, reconcentrando su vista en el alma...

El sol siguió brillando...La naturaleza continuó su obra creadora, insensible a las locuras de los hombres...y [el mundo] aborreció la materia como pecado vil, y oprimió los sentimientos más puros de la vida, haciendo de su amputación una virtud.<sup>17</sup>

Haeckel

Primitive Christianity preached the worthlessness of earthly life, regarding it merely as a preparation for an eternal life beyond. Hence, all we find in the life of man here below...is of no real value...Contempt of nature, aversion from all its inexhaustible charms...are Christian duties; and they are carried out to perfection when a man separates himself from his fellows, chastises his body, and spends all his time in prayer in the cloister or the hermit's cell.<sup>18</sup>

Haeckel's opinion of Christian art is essentially that it is beautiful, but that it has nothing to do with real Christianity, and that by distracting the mind from the contemplation of nature, it retards the advance of science. Salvatierra's view is different. His remarks reflect Blasco's love of exuberant, sensual beauty, and his dislike for the ascetic and pathetic tendencies in Christian art:

...los hombres...no amaron otras flores que las que transparentaban la luz en las vidrieras de las ojivas, ni admiraron más árboles que las palmeras de piedra que sostenían las bóvedas de las catedrales. Venus ocultó sus desnudeces de mármol en las ruinas del incendio, esperando renacer tras un sueño de siglos, bajo el arado del rústico. El tipo de belleza fue la Virgen infecunda y enferma, enflaquecida por el ayuno, la religiosa, pálida y desmayada como el lirio que sostenían sus manos de cera, con ojos lacrimosos, agrandados por el éxtasis y el dolor de ocultos cilicios.<sup>19</sup>

Although Salvatierra is not religious, it is perhaps somewhat incongruous that a person of his ascetic tendencies should express this dislike for the ascetic in Christian art. His doing so reflects a certain duality in the novelist's attitudes. Blasco is influenced by the ascetic ideal to the extent that he evidently cannot create saintly characters without making them conform to it; but he objects to that same ideal when it threatens to banish sensual beauty, and when it appears in the name of religion.

Blasco's love of natural beauty and his objection to religious asceticism appear also in Sónnica la cortesana, his only novel set in ancient times. At one point, the two main characters, the luxury loving Sónnica and her lover Acteón, engage in a discussion of religion. Both are Athenians, and both have reached a degree of learning and sophistication which does not permit them to believe in the deities of pagan mythology. When Sónnica declares that she believes more in beauty than in the power of the gods, Acteón smiles and asks, "¿Dudas de los dioses?" She replies, "Lo mismo



que tú. Los dioses sólo pueden ya servir de modelo a los artistas...pero los amo porque son sanos y hermosos." Instead of believing in the gods, Sónnica believes "en algo misterioso que nos rodea y anima la vida...Creo en la belleza y el amor."<sup>20</sup> In the course of this conversation, the two discuss the puritanical attitude with which the barbarians regard love, and they conclude that this constitutes the most odious feature of barbarian or non-Greek culture. Since the action of the novel occurs in pre-Christian times, there can be only an indirect criticism of Christianity. After describing a nation which is obviously ancient Israel, Acteón expresses the belief that if that nation's beliefs should ever dominate the world, humanity would retrogress and require centuries to find its way back to the beauty which gladdens life:

Si un pueblo así llegase a obtener la grandeza universal de Grecia, si se enseñorease del mundo, imponiéndole sus creencias, se apagaría la eterna luz que brilla en el Partenón; la humanidad andaría a oscuras, con el corazón seco y el pensamiento muerto...y pasarían siglos y más siglos antes que los hombres encontraran otra vez su camino, marchando de nuevo hacia nuestros risueños dioses, hacia la belleza, que alegra la vida.<sup>21</sup>

The foregoing examples suffice to reveal the main ideas and traits of most of the characters who share Blasco's position on religion and who help convey his antireligious propaganda. In general, they possess qualities which serve as an endorsement for their message. They are superior to most men in their idealism, good character and enlightened attitudes.

Only one uneducated and perhaps not highly intelligent character is a vigorous opponent of religion. This is el Nacional, the banderillero of Sangre y arena. His case is of interest mainly because it illustrates Blasco's practice of never presenting a fellow-unbeliever in an entirely unfavorable light. Through his friendship with a schoolmaster, el Nacional has learned a little about progressive tendencies and religious skepticism.

He is zealous in his attempt to spread his beliefs, but lack of formal education and the "pobreza de su mollera"<sup>22</sup> render him ineffectual from a purely intellectual standpoint. He maintains, for example, that the Biblical account of Adam and Eve cannot be true, for if it were, all men would have the same surname. He has good qualities, however, which compensate for his ignorance. He never drinks wine, which he believes to be "culpable del atraso de la clase jornalera,"<sup>23</sup> and he is always concerned for the welfare of his family. Doña Angustias, the mother of the bullfighter Gallardo, deplores el Nacional's ideas on religion; but both she and Gallardo's wife feel relieved when he accompanies their son and husband in his travels. El Nacional is an example of how even uneducated persons of good sense tend to adopt enlightened attitudes. In the first place, he helps express the novelist's propaganda against bullfighting. He is a banderillero because he has no other way of earning a living, but he is somewhat ashamed of his profession, and he regards it as something "reaccionaria..., argo así como de los tiempos de la Inquisición."<sup>24</sup> Second, although he is illiterate, he believes in education. His thinking centers mainly around one idea, namely, that the ills of humanity are caused by lack of education: "La salvación estribaba en que la gente supiera leer y escribir."<sup>25</sup> Sometimes, in his concern for Gallardo's welfare, he accompanies him to the café cantantes. On such occasions, he sits mute and grave, not shocked, but only sorry for the women whom he sees there, and whose unfortunate position he attributes to "falta de instrucción."<sup>26</sup>

#### Good Persons Who Hold Religious Beliefs

In his authorized novels, Blasco rarely makes unfavorable portrayals of clergymen.<sup>27</sup> His usual method of presenting antireligious propaganda is simply to have certain characters deliver speeches explaining his beliefs and

expressing his disagreements with systems of religion. Most of the priests whom he describes in detail do not play an important role as opponents of his ideology,<sup>28</sup> and he tends to portray them as essentially good men.

One of these priests is el pare Miguel, the village cura of Cañas y barro. El pare Miguel has been sent to the wretched Palmar area as punishment for some offense. A lover of hunting and of rugged action, he is at his best in situations which require that authority be imposed by blows. His angry glare frightens people who do not behave properly in church, and he does not hesitate during religious services to kick his young assistant for making mistakes. El pare Miguel is a man of good intentions and of good sense, however. This becomes evident especially when he undertakes to advise the illicit lovers, Tonet and Neleta. He makes no display of pious horror over their irregular situation; but he does go out of his way repeatedly to suggest that it would be better for them to marry, even at the cost of part of Neleta's inheritance, than to live subject to the espionage of greedy enemies. On the occasion of the vagabond Sangonereta's death, el pare Miguel displays real religious sincerity. Although his inability to abandon his habitual brusqueness lends a somewhat grotesque note to the solemn occasion, it is clear that he really is concerned about helping Sangonereta make proper spiritual preparation for death.

Another essentially good priest is Don José Fernández of Los argonautas, a Spanish emigrant bound for Argentina. The rustic Don José admits that he has little learning, and that he is simply "un cura de olla y misa."<sup>29</sup> Having suffered hunger all his life, he displays a voracious appetite in the ship's dining room, much to the amusement of the other passengers. Like el pare Miguel, he is dutiful and serious in the fulfillment of his religious functions:

Era un bracero de la Iglesia, siempre dispuesto al trabajo. De sermones, poca cosa; de problemas teológicos, menos; pero para confesar ocho horas seguidas y ayudar a un cristiano a bien morir, allí estaba él insensible al cansancio, sin miedo a los contagios de la enfermedad, habituado a la agonía humana con un coraje profesional.<sup>30</sup>

The best example of Don José's sincerity in religion is his regret on learning that he has not been summoned in time to administer the appropriate sacraments to a dying steerage passenger.<sup>31</sup>

While Don José and el pare Miguel are both rather comical figures, neither displays any perversity or does any harm. The novelist evidently respects them for their good qualities and regards their rusticity as sufficient excuse for their adherence to beliefs which his more enlightened characters reject.

Blasco's most detailed and most sympathetic portrayal of a high-ranking ecclesiastical personage is found in La catedral, the same novel in which he presents the theory of his materialistic philosophy. This personage is Don Sebastián, a cardinal and archbishop of Toledo. In an intimate conversation with his relative and old confidant, Tomasa, the disturbed cardinal seeks support for his hope that somehow God will be understanding and make allowance for an irregularity in his life. In a long and rambling discourse, he admits that he has had a love affair and that he has children; but he insists that he has done no real wrong. In his desire to reassure himself, he declares clerical celibacy to be a mere invention of men. He says that while he has undoubtedly broken the laws of the church, he has not disobeyed God. After making these unorthodox assertions, however, he admits that as death approaches, he is filled with fear and spends many nights trembling and doubting the safety of his soul. Finally, he cites his record as an opponent of modern impiety and asks Tomasa if she does not believe he will be saved.<sup>32</sup> Being an extremely sensible woman, Tomasa understands that the cardinal is a

victim of hard circumstances. He has struggled for years to attain the only high position available to him. Now that he has attained it, he cannot enjoy it because it does not allow him to recognize his daughter publicly and to defend her reputation. In her reassuring remarks, Tomasa undoubtedly expresses the novelist's own opinion of the case. She praises the cardinal for traits which Blasco always admires--simplicity, affability, and above all, straightforwardness and freedom from hypocrisy---, and she attaches little importance to the cardinal's failure to suppress normal instinct:

---Tranquílcese, don Sebastián. Yo he visto muchos santos en esta casa, y valían menos que usted. Por asegurar su salvación hubiesen abandonado a los hijos. Por mantener lo que llaman la pureza del alma, habrían renegado a la familia. Créame usted a mí: aquí no entran santos; hombres, todos hombres. No hay que arrepentirse de haber seguido el impulso del corazón. Dios nos hizo a su imagen y semejanza, y por algo nos puso el sentimiento de la familia. Lo demás, castidad, celibato y otras zarandajas, lo inventaron ustedes para distinguirse del común de las gentes. Sea usted hombre, don Sebastián, que cuánto mas lo sea, resultará más bueno y mejor le acogerá el Señor en su gloria.<sup>33</sup>

Since Don Sebastián demonstrated his sincerity and his zeal for religion by combating modern impiety, it would appear that he is one of the novelist's ideological enemies. It is unusual for Blasco to portray this type of person favorably, but in this case he evidently has a special reason for doing so. By showing sympathy for the cardinal, he emphasizes his disapproval of clerical celibacy and suggests that people should not be blamed for rejecting religious dogma when it conflicts with natural inclination.

Only one of Blasco's priests is definitely indifferent to religion. This is Don Luis, the musician of La catedral. Don Luis is intelligent and tolerant, and it is probably only his obsession with music that saves him from complete unbelief. In one of his long conversations with Gabriel, he practically admits that, in his mind, beautiful music takes the place of religion:

Yo me ocupo poco de religión. Creo lo que me enseñaron, y no me tomo el trabajo de averiguar más. Sólo me preocupa la música, que alguien ha dicho que será la religión del porvenir, la manifestación más pura del ideal. Todo lo que es hermoso me gusta y creo en ello como en una obra de Dios. "Creo en Dios y en Beethoven," como dijo su discípulo... Además, ¿qué religión tiene la grandeza de la música? ¿Conoce usted el último cuarteto que escribió Beethoven? Se sentía morir,...Y entonces escribió este lamento, esta despedida a la vida, cuya grandeza no puede ser igualada por ningún canto, por ninguna palabra de la religión.<sup>34</sup>

In some respects, Don Luis is eccentric, childish, and selfish. Members of the cathedral chorus laugh at the ridiculous old hat which he wears rather than spend money for anything but new sheets of music. When he learns that Gabriel appreciates his talent, he finds the latter's presence indispensable; and whenever Gabriel is absent, he experiences a "furia infantil."<sup>35</sup> During Gabriel's illness, Don Luis even refrains from purchasing new music so that he can contribute money for medical care. His generosity is tinged with selfishness, however; for he trembles to think that death might rob him of his only educated listener. Despite his faults and eccentricity, Don Luis is one of Blasco's reasoners. In his discourse on music, he shares the mission of the other characters who proclaim one of the novelist's essential ideas, namely, that beauty transcends traditional religion.

In the case of two female characters, Blasco suggests that worldly experience leads even rather uneducated persons to reject extremes of credulity and of piety.

Tía Tomasa, the cardinal's confidant in La catedral, is an elderly woman of common sense who inclines toward an unorthodox disregard for dogma. Her extensive experience with the clergy teaches her to feel little reverence for the living dignitaries of the Church and even for the saints portrayed in the chapels of the cathedral. Her strongest statement of religious faith is that she believes "en la Virgen del Sagrario y un poquito en Dios."<sup>36</sup> She does, however, believe strongly in true charity; and it is she who assists

Gabriel when he opposes her brother's uncharitable code of honor and brings home Sagrario, the prodigal daughter.

Antonia, the young seamstress of Arroz y tartana, is a character who finds the piety of her earlier years decreasing as she grows older. She remembers that as a child, she was regarded as remarkable for her devotion to religion. She spent hours kneeling before images, and she considered a visit to a chapel as her greatest pleasure. She imagined that religious pictures spoke to her, and that the Virgin stepped down from them to sing her to sleep. Later in life, she remains a model of morality; but her childish beliefs fade. In her mild way, she expresses Blasco's rejection of religious puritanism. "Ahora soy mala, muy mala," she exaggerates. "Rezo cuando estoy triste, oigo misa los domingos, tengo mucho miedo al diablo; pero me gusta bastante el mundo, y voy siendo algo impía, pues algunas veces me digo que no es tan pésimo como lo pintan los predicadores..."<sup>37</sup> Kindly, blind old Micaela, who lives with Antonia, has experienced no such change. Her past has been one of menial toil, and her present life is one of "descanso puramente animal." Her type of existence has left her faith intact. Only two subjects occupy her mind: Antonia's welfare and the joys of heaven, where the "bienaventurados" are dressed in white.<sup>38</sup>

Blasco created several beautiful and sophisticated female characters whose role is chiefly that of upsetting men's lives, sometimes involuntarily. His characters of this type almost never display any interest in religion. The principal exception<sup>39</sup> occurs in the case of Lucha Andrade of La voluntad de vivir. Although she is usually engrossed in pleasures, Lucha never abandons her religion; and she has recourse to it in critical moments. Despite her frivolity, she is an essentially good person, incapable of intentional disregard for the welfare of others. She is genuinely disturbed by the unbelief of her Spanish suitor Doctor Valdivia, and for a time she goes to church

every day in order to light candles to the Virgen on his behalf. Later, when she realizes that by rejecting Valdivia she has caused him to commit suicide, her love for him revives; and she exerts herself to save his soul:

La certeza de ver comprometida la salvación eterna de aquel hombre, le hizo temblar de miedo y, poniendo el alma en sus labios y en sus ojos una expresión de súplica, rezó y rezó a la Madre de Dios, pensando que había sido mujer y como mujer perdonaría sus miserias y comprendería sus anhelos.

Era lo único que podía hacer por él...rezó horas enteras, implorando perdón para ella y el pobre doctor, condenado en vida por su incredulidad, condenado en muerte por su desesperación.<sup>40</sup>

Blasco portrays Lucha as devoted to religion probably because he regards such devotion as characteristic of her nationality. She is from a small Spanish American republic which he does not mention by name,<sup>41</sup> but which he describes as having a port on the Pacific named Nueva Coruña, and a capital city named Santa María de los Andes, located at an altitude "donde vuela el cóndor."<sup>42</sup> It is a country inhabited by Indians and persons of mixed race.<sup>43</sup> In his account of a book written by the dictator of the republic, the novelist describes its population as fanatically religious:

...un halago a los sentimientos religiosos de la República, donde la dominación española había dejado gran parte de su lastre frailuno, y los indios que seguían pacíficamente a Valenzuela soñaban con el degüello de los gringos protestantes y de todo el que no creía en la milagrosa Virgen de los Andes.<sup>44</sup>

The upper class is more civilized, but it too is strongly religious. Lucha includes the aristocratic women of her class when she tells her Spanish lover: "...cuidadito con decir impiedades en mi presencia...ya sabe que en mi país somos muy devotas."<sup>45</sup> Even the aristocratic men probably share this tendency to some extent. The dictator prides himself on his association with the aristocracy, and he believes that religion was the best thing which came to his country from Spain.

The foregoing examples indicate that despite his opposition to religion,



Blasco was tolerant enough to create a number of reasonably good and attractive characters who retain faith in it. It is probable, however, that if he had explained the persistence of their faith, he would have attributed it to lack of enlightenment. Most of them are of the lower class and are more or less uneducated. A few have had more opportunity for formal education; but probably none of these, not even the cardinal, have experienced the liberalizing influences which transformed Gabriel Luna of La catedral. In any case, none of Blasco's good religious characters have an important role as opponents of his antireligious ideology. The characters who do play this role are always portrayed unfavorably.

#### Religious Fanatics

Two of Blasco's religious fanatics are women of the upper class. One of them is Antonieta of El intruso, the wife of young Dr. Aresti. Antonieta has been "educada, como la mayoría de las niñas de su clase, con una instrucción de monja, sin más horizonte que el chismorreo de las tertulias y las visitas diarias a la iglesia."<sup>46</sup> She is excessively puritanical, and she is strongly opposed to her husband's desire to continue his medical studies. Two years after her marriage, she admits that she does not love her husband. She claims that she would, however, if he would only abandon his scientific studies and attend religious functions "como las personas decentes."<sup>47</sup> Aresti becomes convinced that she is not capable of loving anyone, and that her confessor exerts an unfavorable influence over her thinking. Aware finally that he cannot reform her, he goes away and leaves her to her increasingly extreme piety.

A somewhat similar but more detailed case is that of Doña Cristina, also of El intruso. Doña Cristina is the wife of a wealthy industrialist. By the time she has a daughter of marriageable age, her fanaticism has

reached such a point that she abandons her former elegance and even neglects her person:

Revelábase en ella el desprecio a la carne que sienten los devotos fervorosos, el abandono físico, la suciedad cantada como mérito celestial en la vida de muchos santos.<sup>48</sup>

Cristina's case is complete in that it exemplifies the three evils which Blasco attributes to religious fanaticism among women. First, as in Antonieta's case, her fanaticism destroys marital happiness. Second, it causes and even encourages immorality. She knows that her husband has found love in an extra-marital affair, but she tolerates it because it leaves her free to indulge in her extreme puritanism and piety.<sup>49</sup> Third, she is violently opposed to modern liberal thought.

Cristina is to some extent a tool of the clergy. Under the influence of her confessor, she contributes money to political campaigns and aids in a boycott, all designed to promote ecclesiastical control in Bilbao. When Dr. Aresti thinks about her fanaticism, however, he concludes that clerical influence is not its only cause. He points out that Spanish men have relegated their wives to an insignificant position, and that the resulting boredom causes the women to rely on religion for emotional and social outlets. He believes also that innate traits play an important role in the problem. Thinking evidently of Cristina's puritanical tendencies and her lack of interest in intellectual matters, he says that the women of his country--presumably the north of Spain--are of a somewhat cold temperament, and that they are by nature disinclined to take interest in anything which is not of immediate, practical value.<sup>50</sup> Aresti might also have stressed the role of education. Since Cristina is of the aristocracy, it is to be assumed that her education, like Antonieta's, was of a narrow and bigoted type. This would help explain the fact that, although she appears to be reasonably in-

telligent, she is totally unable to follow his intellectual arguments, and can only dismiss them as "filosofías alemanas, monsergas confusas que habían inventado los impíos para ocultar su maldad, cuando tan claro y sencillo es creer en Dios...."<sup>51</sup>

The only important fanatical female character of the middle class is Doña Bernarda of Entre naranjos. In a general way, Doña Bernarda's case is similar to that of Doña Cristina of El intruso. She is obliged to take an interest in practical matters, however; and sometimes her concern for money competes with religious fanaticism as the determining factor in her conduct. Although she has less free time than her aristocratic counterparts, she too finds her existence boring and turns to religion for relief: "Se había refugiado en la devoción como en un oasis fresco y agradable en medio de su vida monótona y vulgar."<sup>52</sup> Her devotion is "crédula e intransigente,"<sup>53</sup> but probably no more so than that of the wealthy fanatics. To perhaps an even greater degree than Doña Cristina, she illustrates Blasco's tendency to depict religious fanatics as not merely unenlightened, but as morally and even physically displeasing.

Doña Bernarda's greedy father-in-law chooses her for his son, Ramón, because she is industrious and economical, and also because she is to inherit property. It does not matter to him that she is homely, ill-humored and taciturn, or that, in her zeal to defend the family fortune, she shouts and quarrels with employees and dealers. Like Antonieta and Doña Cristina of El intruso, Doña Bernarda does not love her husband. In her case, however, concern for money rather than piety takes the place of marital love: "...tenía el egoísmo de la señora campesina que considera cumplidos todos los deberes en ser fiel al esposo y ahorrar dinero."<sup>54</sup> Like Doña Cristina, she tolerates her husband's extra-marital amorous adventures; but she does so merely because they cost no money. When Don Ramón's conduct degenerates

to such a degree that it does endanger the family's fortune as well as its reputation, her piety does not prevent her desiring and even praying that death will take him. When this wish is granted, she feels nothing but satisfaction. She is indifferent to dress, as was Doña Cristina; but this too is at least partly a matter of economy rather than of piety. She appears on the street in a "mantilla no muy limpia"; and for some time, in order to save money for her son's political career, she even wears an "hábito" instead of a dress.<sup>55</sup> Her case resembles that of Doña Cristina also in that she exerts herself on behalf of a reactionary government. She does this at least partly to improve the family fortune, for her husband is a local politician. The same activity also affords a spiritual reward, however; for when she hears the clergy praise the unprogressive regime which she supports, she feels assured concerning her safety in the hereafter.<sup>56</sup>

By standards higher than her own, the results of Doña Bernarda's efforts are reprehensible. Her son is assured a financially rewarding but actually useless political position. He finally marries the religious and wealthy girl whom she chooses for him, and the familiar pattern repeats itself: the pious wife proves to be of a "virtud rígida y áspera como el esparto,"<sup>57</sup> and the husband seeks relief in an illicit affair. Having achieved her aims, and having contributed incidentally to maintain a corrupt regime and vicious customs, Doña Bernarda can rest from her labors and devote her last years entirely to religion.

In La bodega, Blasco describes the clergy as playing an entirely negative role in society. At the same time, however, he suggests that clergymen and even whole religious orders are somewhat at the mercy of their capricious and wealthy supporters. One of these is Don Pablo Dupont, the most important of the novelist's male religious fanatics. Don Pablo is a wealthy man who owns an estate in rural Andalusia and a great wine factory in Jerez. He is extremely

pious, and he makes displays of servility when members of the clergy are in his presence. No religious order or individual priest, however, can long retain his favor and financial support. At one time, his purse and the door of his mansion are open to the members of one order. Later, he simply tires of seeing their style of hood or color of robe and withdraws from them. He can be satisfied only by masses celebrated or sermons preached in the churches of the order temporarily enjoying his favor. The social evils described in La bodega are the exploitation of the agricultural workers and the excessive consumption of wine, and the priests do not protest against either one. Perhaps they are too lacking in social consciousness to realize, when they perform ceremonies designed to invoke divine blessings on Don Pablo's vineyards, that they should refuse to do so unless he takes measures to alleviate the poverty of the laborers who toil there. It is also possible, however, that they are afraid to arouse Don Pablo's displeasure. Even when his mother, the fanatical Doña Elvira, protests against her son's entertaining heretical wine buyers from abroad, the priests seek to calm her. Mindful of Don Pablo's generous support of the Church, they remind her of how much good his success in business enables him to do.

Don Pablo combines religious fanaticism with an exaggerated pride of class and family. He believes that social hierarchies are of divine origin and that any attempt to alter or abolish them is an offense against God. He knows that he can count on certain learned clergymen to support this theory. There is no indication, however, as to whether he has learned it from them or whether they are merely accustomed to agreeing with the rationalizations and traditions characteristic of the powerful aristocracy.<sup>58</sup>

Don Pablo's case is complicated by the fact that he probably has psychotic tendencies. His great economic power has the effect of lessening the impression caused by his religious excesses, and of making people afraid to laugh openly

at him. He is known, however, to have done extraordinarily ridiculous things in the name of religion. One person who knows him well finds that as time passes, it becomes difficult for him to believe his own recollection of one of Don Pablo's absurd acts of faith. When a watch-dog bit some workers, Don Pablo sent them to the hospital, but not before administering some pills made from religious estampas:

Dupont explicaba su conducta, cuando le hablaron de este suceso, con una sencillez que daba espanto: Primero la fe; después la ciencia, que algunas veces hace grandes cosas porque se lo permite Dios.<sup>59</sup>

In addition to being extremely credulous where religion is concerned, Don Pablo is highly excitable and has a very quick temper. At the slightest offense, his face turns red and his voice becomes shrill with rage. His appearance also suggests possible abnormality. He is very fat for a man of less than forty; his arms seem too short; and he has "labios carnosos sobre los cuales la virilidad sólo había trazado un ligero bigote."<sup>60</sup>

In Don Pablo's case, Blasco shows his awareness of the complex nature of socio-religious problems. Instead of placing all the blame on one side, he shows how a selfish aristocracy and a degenerate religion support one another and combine to maintain an unjust social system. Don Pablo's psychotic tendencies are indicative of the novelist's attitude toward male religious fanatics. The female fanatics among his characters never display signs of mental derangement, but the male ones sometimes do, probably because he regards religious fanaticism as abnormal for men.

There are two male characters who display some type of religious fanaticism and who are more obviously abnormal than Don Pablo. One of them is Brother Vicente of La horda, a freakish individual who is an example of what Blasco thinks some of the saints of religious tradition actually were. Vicente's physical appearance is unprepossessing, and his mannerisms suggest ab-

normality:

Era un hombre vestido con ropas cuidadosamente cepilladas, pero que por su holgura revelaban no haber sido confeccionadas para su cuerpo...Tenía la cara rojiza, con profundos surcos, en cuyo fondo la piel aparecía blanca y brillante. Los ojos parpadeaban, inflamados, sin pestañas, con las corneas sucias de sangre. Las orejas sobresalían casi despegadas del cráneo, como si fuesen a aletear. Las púas blancas y amarillentas del bigote y la barba delataban la torpeza de unas tijeras manejadas ciegame. Parecía fuerte, con una salud campesina capaz de afrontar las mayores durezas; pero las privaciones habían amojamado su cuerpo y daban a su paso cierta irregularidad, como si las piernas sólo pudiesen avanzar a costa de nerviosos temblores. Gesticulaba y hablaba solo, sin hacer caso de la extrañeza de las gentes. De cuando en cuando se detenía y, apoyando un codo en una mano, se llevaba la otra a la frente, partida por una arruga vertical.<sup>61</sup>

Vicente is extremely religious; but he has been refused admission to a convent, probably on account of his eccentricities. He believes himself to be a member of a special order founded exclusively for himself, for certain priests have given him written instructions concerning the way he should live. Among other things, he is to walk a great deal and think little about holy things. The first part of this regulation was probably designed to satisfy his irrepressible urge to roam about, and he finds it easy to follow. The second part proves impossibly difficult for him, and his walks become a perpetual preaching campaign. He often kneels to pray in the streets; and he persists in reproving blasphemers, even though they repay him with mockery.

The novelist uses irony to stress the uselessness of Vicente's piety. His religious endeavors result only in the false conversion of a rascally shoemaker. This individual, after hearing Vicente's exhortations for fourteen years, realizes that the best way to exploit the evangelist's charity would be to profess conversion. As a false convert, he succeeds in undoing Vicente's only really beneficial action. Vicente has rented part of his living quarters to the young couple, Isidro and Feliciana. As the two sink

deeper into poverty, he excuses their nonpayment of rent. Touched by Feliciana's attempt to work when she is ill, he even gives her a little money. Finally, the shoemaker becomes jealous of his competitors for Vicente's charity and acquaints the latter with the fact that they are not married. Seized with genuine horror at the thought of living with such sinners, Vicente takes steps to rid himself of them. Partly as a result of his pious scruples, the two young people finally reach complete destitution.

Blasco employs irony also in describing Vicente's ignorance. When Isidro lives in Vicente's apartment, he adorns the walls with pictures of such men as Zola, Darwin, and Haeckel. Since Vicente never reads the newspapers, he does not know who these men are; he suspects, however, that they may be "entre Garibaldi y Voltaire,"<sup>62</sup> that is, that they may be representatives of an adominable, antireligious ideology about which he has heard only vague rumors. Isidro succeeds in convincing him that his suspicions are unfounded. Finally, Vicente comes to admire some of the men for their long white beards and serene expressions, and to believe that they resemble saints.

Vicente is ignorant even in matters of religion. When pious ladies give him money, he spends most of it on religious books, mainly saints' lives, and on rent for a place to house them. He has read a little from the works of Santa Teresa and San Juan de la Cruz, but generally he does not read, not only because his eyesight is poor, but because profound things confuse him: "...se me embrolla el pensamiento, me da vueltas la cabeza apenas leo cosas profundas."<sup>63</sup>

Isidro's opinion of Vicente is presumably what Blasco himself thinks about such individuals and about much of the piety of past centuries:

Dos siglos antes, la muchedumbre habría venerado al señor Vicente; los reyes le habrían visitado en su tugurio; las gentes piadosas, en la hora de su muerte, habrían caído



sobre el cadáver, arrancándole los pelos y pedazos de su hábito como santas reliquias, y tal vez, a aquellas horas, figuraría en los altares, trocadas las sucias vestimentas en mantos de oro.<sup>64</sup>

The case of Sangonereta of Cañas y barro is of interest chiefly as evidence that the novelist regards visionary religion as absurd and to be found only among abnormal persons. In addition, it furnishes the best examples of his bold religious caricatures.

As the neglected son of the village drunkard, Sangonereta spends his childhood begging from door to door and living on the charity of sympathetic neighbors. As he grows older, it becomes clear that he is destined to be hopelessly lazy and to be an alcoholic like his father. His interest in religion begins after he manages to obtain the easiest job in the village, that of sexton. In his spare time, he reads religious books and claims to have learned nearly the entire New Testament by memory. He likes to stress especially the commands to take no heed for the morrow, and to consider the manner in which the birds are fed and the lilies of the field are arrayed. When he is dismissed from his position for drinking, he cites these commands as his excuse for begging instead of seeking any type of employment. He even goes so far as to preach that work is an absolute sin, and to announce the coming of a divine Utopia, in which the world will be redeemed from the curse of ambition and work.<sup>65</sup> At some point, he comes to believe firmly in his own theories. When a wandering scissors grinder finds him lying in a drunken stupor and touches him with his hand, he becomes convinced that he has been favored with a divine visitation, and that the touch of the hand means that he is one of the elect. Sangonereta's case is little more than religious farce, and the novelist pursues it relentlessly to a cruel end. Impressed by the fact that the vagabond has confessed before dying, the pious ladies of the community give him an elegant religious burial. His old com-

panions can scarcely restrain their laughter when they file past his bier and see him dressed in a friar's robe.

The foregoing examples include Blasco's most important religious fanatics. Nearly all the characters who play important roles as opponents of his ideology belong to this category. In addition to being intellectually unenlightened, they are stubborn and unreasonable; and they tend to be physically displeasing. Vicente and Sangonereta are the principal members of a sub-group of eccentric zealots who illustrate the novelist's low opinion of extreme and visionary religion.

#### Religion in the Later Novels: 1916-1928

In Los cuatro jinetes del Apocalipsis (1916), Blasco displays a much more conciliatory attitude toward religion than he does in his earlier novels. It is quite understandable, in fact, that persons acquainted with him only through this novel of the First World War might not suspect him of holding any views on religion other than conventional and orthodox ones.<sup>66</sup> There is no anticlerical propaganda in this work, and in two instances, the danger to the French nation is seen to cause religious and antireligious persons to forget their enmity. This occurs for the first time during an emotional scene in which large numbers of Frenchmen depart for the front. One of these men is an anticlerical carpenter. Moved by a desire to demonstrate his good will toward all fellow-patriots, he goes out of his way to shake hands with a companion in arms whom he knows to be a priest.<sup>67</sup> Later in the same novel, as the invaders approach the town of Villeblanche, the anticlerical mayor and the town priest forget their ideological differences and remain friends until they die heroically together.<sup>68</sup> It is in the pro-Allied arguments of one of the characters, however, that Blasco's increasingly conciliatory attitude toward religion becomes most evident. This character is Tchernoff,

an extravagant, unkempt, and picturesque Russian revolutionary, whose exciting visions provide the symbolism on which the title of the novel is based. Tchernoff's opinions regarding German militarism harmonize with the pro-Allied tone of the whole work and are, without doubt, intended for the readers' serious consideration and approval. Tchernoff's background is not described in detail, but it seems to be assumed that a Russian revolutionary of the time can be expected to reject religion. His acquaintances, therefore, are surprised on one occasion to hear him speak favorably of it. In his attempt to demonstrate what he believes to be the moral superiority of Russia and France over the Germany of his time, Tchernoff says that "el ruso es un cristiano humilde, igualitario, democrático, sediento de justicia..." To this he adds:

...el alemán alardea de cristianismo, pero es un idólatra como los germanos de otros siglos. Su religión ama la sangre y mantiene las castas; su verdadero culto es el de Odín, sólo que ahora el Dios de la matanza ha cambiado el nombre y se llama el Estado.<sup>69</sup>

After pausing a moment to appreciate the surprise of his audience, Tchernoff announces: "Yo soy cristiano." At this point, one of the listeners concludes that the Russian must have been indulging in his habit of excessive drinking. Having created a dramatic effect by his overstatement, Tchernoff explains: "...me preocupo poco de Dios, y no creo en los dogmas, pero mi alma es cristiana como la de todos los revolucionarios."<sup>70</sup> As he continues his discourse, he emphasizes further that he does not actually consider himself to be religious, but that he does believe Christianity to be in essential agreement with democracy. Evidently he sees something good in religions in general, their supposedly retrograde German variety excepted:

La filosofía de la democracia moderna es un cristianismo laico. Los socialistas amamos al humilde, al menesteroso, al débil. Defendemos su derecho a la vida y al bienestar, lo mismo que los grandes exaltados de la religión, que

vieron en todo infeliz a un hermano. Nosotros exigimos el respeto para el pobre en nombre de la justicia: los otros lo piden en nombre de la piedad. Esto nos separa únicamente... Las religiones tendieron siempre a la universalidad. Su fin es poner a los hombres en relación con Dios y sostener las relaciones entre todos los hombres. Prusia ha retrogrado a la barbarie creando para su uso personal un segundo Jehová, una divinidad hostil a la mayor parte del género humano, que hace suyos los rencores y las ambiciones del pueblo alemán.<sup>71</sup>

Tchernoff continues with similar arguments and concludes, finally, that "la religiosidad germánica es la negación del cristianismo."<sup>72</sup>

When Tchernoff's attitude toward religion is compared to that of such earlier characters as Salvatierra of La bodega, Dr. Aresti of El intruso, and Gabriel Luna of La catedral, it becomes obvious that some important change has occurred in the novelist's thinking. First, it must be asked whether there are any indications that he may have actually abandoned atheism. Tchernoff's remark that he concerns himself little about God is not one of definite unbelief. He does not appear to doubt the existence of a Supreme Being when he says that religions have always tended toward universality, and that their purpose is to put men "en relación con Dios."<sup>73</sup> In the absence of supporting evidence, however, it would be assuming too much to interpret these passages as proof of the novelist's conversion to belief in God. At the most, it can be concluded that he has ceased to be a militant atheist, and that he is no longer interested in denying the existence of a Supreme Being. It should be observed in this connection that when he speaks through Tchernoff, Blasco gives no indication of having come to believe that human conduct needs any type of supernatural or divine guidance. On the contrary, he evidently believes, as he did when he wrote El intruso,<sup>74</sup> that moral and altruistic behavior is a product of human intelligence:

El animal no conoce el derecho, la justicia, la compasión; vive esclavo de la lobrete de su instinto. Nosotros pensamos, y el pensamiento significa libertad. El fuerte, para serlo, no necesita mostrarse cruel; resulta más grande cuando

no abusa de su fuerza...La civilización es el afinamiento del espíritu, el respeto al semejante, la tolerancia de la opinión ajena, la suavidad de las costumbres.<sup>75</sup>

Since the new attitude toward religion probably does not stem from an actual conversion to a belief in God, it must be asked whether there is evidence of a change in ideals which may have led Blasco to abandon his opposition to Christianity. Again the answer is in the negative. His greatest ideal is that of social justice; and when he speaks through Tchernoff, his views on the subject are essentially the same as they were when he wrote the thesis novels. Tchernoff's condemnation of the supposed German caste system, for example, recalls the novelist's denunciation of the Spanish class system in La bodega. The supposed tendency of the German nation to regard God as its ally is reminiscent of Don Pablo's belief in the divine origin of aristocratic privilege.<sup>76</sup> The Russian's opposition to the theory of a master race<sup>77</sup> is in harmony with the condemnation of racial prejudice in Los muertos mandan. All the humanitarians would have approved of Tchernoff's attitude toward the weak and humble:

Todos tienen derecho a la vida, ya que nacieron; y del mismo modo que subsisten los seres orgullosos y humildes, hermosos y débiles, deben seguir viviendo las naciones grandes y pequeñas, viejas y jóvenes. La finalidad de nuestra existencia no es la lucha, no es matar, para que luego nos maten a nosotros...<sup>78</sup>

The change in Blasco's attitude toward religion probably stems, at least in part, from a shift in his interests and purposes. As long as he is concerned mainly with correcting or exposing unfavorable conditions in Spain, he tends to associate religion with the conservative Church of his country and to regard it as an enemy with which he can afford to make no compromise. In the war period, his interest shifts to the international scene; and a new enemy absorbs his attention. Faced by what he regards as this enemy's extreme arrogance, and aware, probably, of a need for moral support in op-

posing it, he becomes willing to emphasize the affinity between his own ideals and those of Christianity. For the first time, he decides to give Christianity credit for coinciding with him in his concern for the unfortunate. He even admits that the Christian emphasis on humility has its positive side.

In the next war novel, Mare nostrum (1917), there is no further evidence of a trend toward reconciliation with Christianity. Instead, one of the strong male characters displays the indifference toward religion which is to be suspected in others of his type, but which is almost never demonstrated. In addition, Blasco's liking for pagan and classical themes reappears.

While Ulises Ferragut is a child, his mother hopes that he will become a priest. She even installs a chapel in their home so that he can "play religion". Later, however, he comes under the influence of his uncle, el Tritón, who is a kind of modern pagan and enthusiast for the Mediterranean. As a result of this influence, pagan ideals replace Christian ones in Ulises' mind, and he becomes a seaman and life-long lover of the Mediterranean. He marries, but he spends most of his time at sea, and his wife Cinta is obliged to remain at home and to tolerate his amorous adventures with women of foreign ports. Finally, when his love affair with the German spy Freya leads indirectly to his son's death in a submarine attack, his wife reminds him of the existence of religion. She is pious; and although she does not know the full story of her husband's guilt, she gives the tragedy a religious interpretation: it is God's punishment for Ulises' licentiousness.<sup>79</sup> Ulises is deeply distressed by his guilt and by the loss of his wife's affection, but there is no indication that her religious argument makes any impression on him. He finds relief in action, first by bullying her old professor friend, and later, by placing himself at the service of the Allied cause. His in-

difference to the religion of his wife and mother persists even in the face of death. When his ship is torpedoed and he is on the point of drowning, he does not remember the God of Christianity. Instead, he thinks he sees Amphitrite, the pagan goddess who has always appealed to his imagination.<sup>80</sup>

In the next novel, Los enemigos de la mujer (1919), one of the main characters develops an emotional need for religion. This character is the Duchess Alicia, a woman who spends most of her life in the pursuit of pleasure. She is an unbeliever during her years of gay living, her pious background notwithstanding. The novelist does not actually explain the origin of Alicia's unbelief. He seems to equate it, however, with the indifference to religion characteristic of one who thinks only of worldly pleasures:

Persistía en ella la incredulidad de sus tiempos dichosos. Los que gozan las dulzuras de la existencia no se acuerdan de la muerte ni piensan en lo que pueda haber después de ella. Nadie siente un alma religiosa en un baile, en un banquete, en un encuentro de amor.<sup>81</sup>

When she receives notice of her son's death in a German military prison, Alicia is on the point of embarking on another one of her amorous affairs. Stricken by remorse, she interprets the calamity as a providential punishment for her misconduct:

Dios me ha castigado: y si no es Dios, el que sea: la fatalidad, un poder misterioso que nos hace expiar nuestras faltas, llámese como se llame...¿No ves una intervención superior, un castigo a mi maldad?...Tengo la certeza de que he matado a mi hijo.<sup>82</sup>

Like some of Blasco's earlier characters, Alicia cannot resign herself to her own disbelief in the immortality of a loved one. Here again, in portraying grief over the extinction of the human personality, Blasco stresses the dissolution of the physical being:

¿Se revolvió contra la nada de la muerte! ¿Aquella carne de su carne estaba pudriéndose en un cementerio ignorado de Alemania! ¿Y esto era todo?...¿Ya no había más?...¿Moriría ella a su vez y no volvería a encontrar en una existencia

superior aquel hijo en el que había concentrado toda su voluntad de vivir? ¿Se borrarían ambos en la realidad, como dos puntos microscópicos, como dos átomos cuya vida nada significa?...

--Necesito creer--dijo con toda la energía de su egoísmo maternal...Mi único consuelo es esperar que volveremos a encontrarnos en un mundo mejor; un mundo que no conozca las guerras ni la muerte...<sup>83</sup>

In explaining her intended moral reformation, Alicia tells one of her acquaintances that she is now a believer. As she continues her explanation, however, it becomes clear that she merely desires to believe in religion and does not actually succeed in doing so:

Deseaba ser creyente, pero en realidad no lo era. Se acordaba de su madre, la sencilla doña Mercedes. ¿Cuánto daría, por tener la confianza en el más allá de la buena señora! Aquella fe que en otro tiempo provocaba sus burlas le parecía ahora algo superior. ¿No poder conocer la resignación de las almas humildes!<sup>84</sup>

Alicia is aware of the emotional basis for her desire to believe in religion:

Ella necesitaba creer, porque era desgraciada. Se acogía a la religión como un enfermo desesperado implora al curandero en el que no tiene fe, porque la razón le muestra sus errores, pero que al mismo tiempo le halaga con una absurda esperanza, al haber sanado a otros milagrosamente.

--El dolor nos hace místicos--continuó--Lo que yo siento es no poder serlo, como son otros. Rezo, y la resignación no viene a ayudarme.<sup>85</sup>

Having no natural inclination for a life of seclusion and meditation, Alicia seeks comfort in assuming a maternal role toward Martínez, a young convalescent army officer. When a rival for her affection spoils this maternal illusion, she becomes unable to pursue her striving for religious faith:

--Mi ensueño se desvaneció. Mi hijo ha vuelto a ser mi hijo, y el otro es un hombre. Imposible confundirlos de nuevo en una sola persona. Ya no puedo rezar...<sup>86</sup>

Eventually Alicia seeks relief in the work of caring for wounded soldiers. Although she continues in this activity until her death, she does not appear to be happy; and her acquaintances suspect that she is tired of life.



Alicia is not the first of Blasco's characters who seek to believe in immortality, but she is the first one who tries to attain such belief through conventional religion. The novelist's sympathy with her attempt is evident in the pathos with which he describes it. Her case suggests that the conciliatory attitude toward religion observable in the first war novel is not entirely a matter of social and political attitudes, but that it has its counterpart in a new willingness to admit that religious faith, if it can be attained, is a desirable source of consolation in time of bereavement. Alicia's quest for faith does not mark the beginning of a trend, however; for it is the only case of its type in Blasco's novels. With the exception of some historical personages who live in an age of faith and take religion for granted, the characters of the remaining eight novels almost never think about religion and the hereafter.

In two of his historical novels, Blasco undertakes the revindication of certain popes of Spanish origin. In El papa del mar (1925), he treats Pedro de Luna (1328-1423), who became Benedict XIII, one of the rival popes of the Great Schism. In A los pies de Venus (1926), he deals with some of the Borjas (Borgias), especially Rodrigo de Borja (1431-1503), who became Pope Alexander VI.

As he writes about the popes, Blasco evidently attempts to display a neutral attitude toward the Church and religion. One of the two reasoners whose meditations and conversations convey most of the novelist's thought is Claudio Borja, a young intellectual of bohemian inclinations. Claudio is concerned with the popes as historical personages, but he gives no indications of being interested in religion. The other main reasoner is Baltasar Figueras, a scholarly priest.<sup>87</sup> Figueras undoubtedly believes in the doctrines of the Church,<sup>88</sup> but he does not discuss religion as such. He has

dedicated his life to the revindication of the Borgias, and their reputation and accomplishments are his constant theme of conversation. When it comes to praising the Borgias for their contribution to the spread of Catholicism, Blasco lets Figueras speak. Perhaps this is a device intended to call attention to the magnitude of the Borgias' accomplishments and, at the same time, to suggest that it is the priest rather than the novelist who is enthusiastic about the propagation of the faith. Figueras stresses particularly the cultural and demographic phenomena which accompanied the spread of Catholicism, but the general effect of his remarks on the subject is pro-religious. It is inconceivable that a discourse so favorable to religion as the one he makes in St. Peter's Square would have passed without some type of refutation or rebuttal in the thesis novels. The following excerpts suffice to reveal the general nature of that discourse:

--Nunca puedo ver esto...sin pensar en nuestro Alejandro...nadie me negará que durante su Pontificado llegó el catolicismo a su mayor grandeza...El catolicismo, tal como es actualmente, inicia su desarrollo bajo el gran Papa español. En su tiempo se descubre a América; él es quien reparte el mundo entre españoles y portugueses...Veinte naciones americanas son ahora católicas, al otro lado del Océano, por haber nacido a la vida cristiana en tiempos de nuestro Alejandro. Más de cien millones de seres acatan a Roma en el opuesto hemisferio por el proselitismo del Papa Borgia, quien se apresuró a enviar misioneros a América en el segundo viaje de descubrimiento...Y para los que no pertenecen a nuestra religión, el pontificado de Alejandro Sexto representa un gran acontecimiento de nuestra raza...¿Qué eramos los blancos...? Una minoría de la Humanidad...;Quién sabe si, faltos los blancos de expansión, debilitados en una lucha incesante por la propiedad del exiguo suelo, esos pueblos de Asia...habrían acabado por caer sobre los nuestros, esclavizandolos por la fuerza de su inmensa superioridad numérica!...Pero descubrimos los españoles el mundo americano en tiempos del Papa Borgia, y gracias a nosotros pudo Europa desarrollarse en la más prolongada de las masas continentales... 89

In his attempts to create a favorable impression of the popes of Spanish origin, Blasco emphasizes their personal integrity as well as their accomplishments. In citing proof of their integrity, he tends to avoid unnecessary

reference to their personal religion. He relates that Pedro de Luna did not wish to be elected pope, but that once he was elected, he believed it his duty to resist all efforts to depose him. In his long and detailed account of Luna's resistance to the forces of Rome, Blasco stresses the man's remarkable tenacity and indomitable courage in defending his convictions. He describes Luna as a "varón de puras costumbres,"<sup>90</sup> but he says scarcely anything about his personal views on religion. Perhaps he assumes it to be obvious that if a man of such integrity had not been genuinely religious, he would not have spent years defending his right to an ecclesiastical position. In his defense of Rodrigo de Borja, Blasco does cite religious faith and devotion as evidence of sincerity. He does so out of necessity, for he is obliged to use all available means of minimizing the unfavorable impression created by this individual's scandalous conduct. He maintains that Rodrigo really believed in God and the Virgin, and that he really was concerned with the welfare of his soul. As proof of this concern, he cites the special precaution which Rodrigo took to avoid being unprepared for death:

Llevaba a todas horas una hostia consagrada dentro de un relicario de cristal pendiente del pecho o de una muñeca, para poder comulgar sin pérdida de tiempo en el caso de que le sorprendiera la muerte.<sup>91</sup>

Readers acquainted with Blasco's thesis novels might expect him to indicate that Rodrigo's faith in religion was normal for his time, but that it would be unacceptable by enlightened, modern standards.<sup>92</sup> In keeping with his now more nearly neutral attitude toward religion, Blasco refrains from making such a statement. The following passage illustrates how he insists that moral standards change, and how he avoids making it clear that he regards religion itself as something acceptable only to the mentality of an earlier age:

Los que juzgan el pasado con arreglo a su mentalidad moderna... se equivocan de un modo lamentable y no pueden comprender el

alma de los hombres de aquellos tiempos. Era más compleja que la nuestra: vivían en el período renacentista, donde todos luchaban entre las ansias del placer, despertadas por la literatura, y una educación cristiana adquirida en su juventud. Comprendo perfectamente la devoción mística por la Virgen que mostró el Papa Alejandro, la Santa Forma acompañándole a todas horas, y al mismo tiempo sus varios hijos ilegítimos... Casi todos los cardenales y muchos pontífices eran parecidos a él. Aún no se habían purificado las costumbres eclesiásticas para hacer frente a las críticas de los protestantes... Podía haber ocultado fácilmente sus hijos, por ser ilegítimos, llamándolos sobrinos, a imitación de otros pontífices; pero este español era incapaz de tapujos e hipocresías.<sup>93</sup>

In his last historical novel, El caballero de la Virgen (published in 1929), Blasco relates the exploits of Alonso de Ojeda, an early Spanish explorer in America. Ojeda is greatly devoted to the Virgin, and her image accompanies him during his travels. The novelist displays an indulgent attitude toward the naive aspects of his hero's religion, and he makes them seem quaint and almost amusing. For example, Ojeda experiences unusual hardships during a certain journey. After giving some thought to the matter, he thinks he discovers a supernatural cause for his trouble:

...todo ello era advertencia de la Virgen, fatigada de que él la llevase de un lado a otro por tierras extrañas y a través de los mayores peligros.<sup>94</sup>

The remedy which occurs to him in this case is to promise to build a chapel at the first opportunity and to leave the image of the Virgin there to rest and receive the homage of the Indians. In this novel, as in those about the popes, Blasco tends to make generous allowance for changes in customs and beliefs, and to avoid suggesting that religion itself is as outmoded as some of the bizarre practices and attitudes which once accompanied it.<sup>95</sup> Ojeda is extremely impetuous and violent, and sometimes he is cruel, but he usually repents if he realizes that he has done wrong. While he is still a relatively young man, he thinks for a while of becoming a friar. Blasco regards this as merely a phenomenon typical of the time: "Sintió de pronto

el ansia mística de muchos hombres de aquella época, osados guerreros, que acababan haciéndose frailes."<sup>96</sup> In his role as reasoner, Fernando Cuevas realizes vaguely that the behavior of Ojeda and his companions will seem incomprehensible to future generations. He understands that their acts are often not in keeping with their religion, and he makes no unfavorable comment on that religion itself:

A pesar de que era igual en sus sentimientos a los caudillos, tuvo, por breves instantes, una vislumbre de la dualidad inexplicable de carácter de todos los hombres férreos que durante medio siglo iban a conquistar las nuevas tierras. Mostrábanse siempre entre ellos caballerescos y generosos. Eran crueles en sus rencores, y luego de una mansedumbre cristiana para perdonarse, si es que no se habían matado antes. Sus durezas las reservaban para los indios. Humanidad inferior y falta de razón, según las ideas de la época, que sólo merecía interés por parte de algunos frailes de espíritu evangélico.<sup>97</sup>

In the postwar novels, there is only one character who is an exponent of both the ideals held by the humanitarians of the thesis period. This character is Dr. Gabriel de Acosta, the renaissance humanist who appears in both En busca del Gran Kan and El caballero de la Virgen. Acosta contributes to the ideal of scientific truth by combating certain misconceptions concerning geography, and he works for the ideal of social justice when he aids Jewish victims of religious persecution. Since he is enlightened and plays a positive role in society, there can be no doubt that he has the novelist's approval. The brief and general description of his outlook and ideas is very significant; for it suggests that at this late point in his career, Blasco still retains something of his skepticism.

Acosta era un escéptico curioso que veía pasar la vida con interés, y al mismo tiempo con incredulidad y tolerancia. Hablaba de los dioses más que de Dios, imaginándose a la Humanidad con mayor dicha en los tiempos del paganismo que en el presente. Estudiaba a los sabios y a los poetas de aquellos siglos remotos, creyendo que después de ellos el mundo había vivido en la oscuridad y la barbarie.<sup>98</sup>

Acosta differs from the idealists of the thesis novels mainly in that he is

not an extremist. He regrets the religious persecutions of his time, but he believes that the differences between the persecuted and the persecuting faiths are not worth a painful sacrifice. He avoids difficulties for himself by observing the forms of the state religion;<sup>99</sup> and when young Lucero is reluctant to abandon the faith of her ancestors, he advises her to accept conversion rather than face a life of uncertainty and danger.<sup>100</sup> His moderation reflects a trend observable generally in the postwar novels. The exalted idealism of the thesis period has given way to an attitude which rarely permits any strong pronouncement on controversial issues, religious or otherwise.

#### Summary

In Blasco's novels of the period 1894-1915, there is considerable openly antireligious propaganda. The greater part of it appears in three thesis novels. In La catedral (1903), he sets forth the views on science which form the basis of his unbelief. In El intruso (1904) and La bodega (1905), he combats Christianity in the name of social justice and denounces it particularly because he thinks it encourages submission to oppression. To a lesser extent, he opposes it also because he thinks it advocates asceticism and puritanism. His portrayal of characters also reveals his attitude toward religion. If his characters of this period were rated on the basis of positive traits, the spokesmen for his antireligious ideology would hold first place; for they are nearly always the most enlightened and idealistic. In second place would appear the inoffensive and usually unsophisticated characters who believe in religion, but who sometimes acquire skeptical tendencies as they grow in worldly experience. At the bottom of the scale would be found the religious fanatics, most of them reactionary opponents of the novelist's ideals of scientific truth and social justice, and also the eccentric and

abnormal individuals referred to above as "religious zealots."

Los cuatro jinetes del Apocalipsis (1916) marks the end of Blasco's opposition to religion and his change to a relatively favorable attitude toward it. In the ten novels which follow, however, pro-religious sentiment is less in evidence than its opposite is in the thesis period. In fact, aside from the tolerance which he displays in dealing with religious personages of earlier and less enlightened ages, his new attitude has only one important manifestation in these novels, namely, the sympathy with which he describes a vain quest for faith in Los enemigos de la mujer. His failure to create other cases of this type is perhaps less a result of indifference to religion than of an unwillingness to dwell on a problem for which his unbelief allows him no solution. Unlike such thinkers as Haeckel and Comte, whose enthusiasm for science he shares, Blasco simply accepts the disconsoling implications of his lack of religion and makes no attempt to find relief in a non-supernatural substitute. Dr. Acosta of En busca del Gran Kan is the only character of the later novels who bears witness to Blasco's continuing unbelief. Further evidence of it appears, however, in a moralizing statement at the close of La vuelta al mundo de un novelista (1925), which is a three volume account of a journey which Blasco made in the 1920's:

Aún no ha llegado la gran revolución, la interior, la que inició el cristianismo sin éxito alguno, pues ningún cristiano practica sus enseñanzas. Lo que he aprendido es que debemos crearnos un alma nueva, y entonces todo será fácil. Necesitamos matar el egoísmo; y así la abnegación y la tolerancia que ahora sólo conocen unos cuantos espíritus privilegiados llegarán a ser virtudes comunes a todos los hombres.

## Footnotes

1. In accordance with the decision explained in note 2, Chapter I, I make few references to the works which Blasco wrote before 1894. One of these, the very long novel entitled La araña negra (1892), is strongly, even violently, anticlerical. In it, interest centers around a clerical plot to give a religious order possession of two family fortunes. Padre Claudio and padre Tomás, the most important ecclesiastical personages involved in the plot, are diabolically clever and unscrupulous individuals who fully believe that the nature of their goal justifies the use of any and all means to attain it. I have not learned whether the exaggerations and lurid details which abound in this work account for the novelist's unwillingness to have it republished in later years. In any case, the anticlericalism of the authorized novels is much more restrained and suggests greater maturity on Blasco's part.
2. Blasco, El intruso, pp. 1178-1179.
3. Ibid., p. 1183.
4. Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, "Nota biobibliográfica," Obras completas (Madrid: 1958), I, 18.
5. Blasco, El intruso, p. 1180.
6. Ibid., pp. 1180-1181.
7. Blasco, Los enemigos de la mujer, p. 1422. For a general description of Lady Mary Lewis, see pages 1392, 1481-1421 of the same work.
8. Blasco, La bodega, p. 1216.
9. Ibid., p. 1218.
10. Blasco is particularly fond of describing magnificent meals and his characters' enjoyment in partaking of them. The following are some examples of this: Doña Manuela's New Year's Day dinner, Arroz y tartana, in Obras completas (Madrid: 1928), I, 295-296; Sangonereta's Feast, Cañas y barro, in Obras completas (Madrid: 1928), I, 912-915; Rosaura Pineda's meal on the seashore, El papa del mar, in Obras completas (Madrid: 1928), III, 1031.
11. Blasco, La bodega, p. 1297.
12. Ibid., p. 1298.
13. The following passages furnish examples of how Salvatierra practiced charity: "...la madre de Salvatierra...encontraba aceptables sus prodigalidades de filántropo, que le hacían volver a casa medio des-



nudo si encontraba un compañero falto de ropa." Ibid., p. 1218. "En el presidio, sus costumbres habían causado asombro. Dedicado por afición al estudio de la Medicina, servía de enfermero a los presos, dándoles su comida y sus ropas. Iba haraposo, casi desnudo; cuanto le enviaban sus amigos de Andalucía pasaba inmediatamente a poder de los más desgraciados." Ibid., p. 1216.

14. Ibid., p. 1274.
15. Ibid., p. 1298.
16. Ibid., p. 1296.
17. Ibid.
18. Haeckel, The Riddle of the Universe, pp. 338-339.
19. Blasco, La bodega, p. 1296.
20. Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, Sónnica la cortesana, in Obras completas (Madrid: 1958), I, 731.
21. Ibid.
22. Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, Sangre y arena, in Obras completas (Madrid: 1958), II, 158.
23. Ibid., p. 157.
24. Ibid., p. 158.
25. Ibid., p. 159.
26. Ibid., p. 158.
27. See note I of this chapter.
28. The main exception is the priest Don Antolín, sometimes referred to as Vara de Plata, of La catedral. Don Antolín takes great pride in the history of the Spanish Church, and his role is chiefly that of defending it in discussions with Gabriel Luna. Like most of the characters who are of considerable importance as opponents of the novelist's ideas, he is portrayed unfavorably. His vice is stinginess, and he carries it to such an extreme that he dresses only in wretched garments which other persons have discarded. He has saved a considerable amount of money, and he makes small loans to persons in need, but he is much feared as a relentless usurer. See Blasco, La catedral, pp. 965-970, 1001-1014.
29. Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, Los argonautas, in Obras completas (Madrid: 1958), II, 628.
30. Ibid., p. 767.

31. Ibid.
32. Blasco, La catedral, p. 1043.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid., p. 973.
35. Ibid., p. 1015.
36. Ibid., p. 974.
37. Blasco, Arroz y tartana, p. 319.
38. Ibid., p. 347.
39. Rosaura Pineda of A los pies de Venus is another female character of this type who retains some attachment to religion. Like Lucha Andrade of La voluntad de vivir, she is a Spanish American, her native country being Argentina. Actually, Rosaura's adherence to religion has little consequence other than that of probably making her a more sympathetic listener to Claudio Borja's discourses about the popes. The novelist never shows her engaging in any acts of piety, but merely mentions her adherence to Catholicism: "...la bella señora mezclaba con una vida de incasantes diversiones, verdaderamente pagana, una adhesión inquebrantable al catolicismo." Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, A los pies de Venus, in Obras completas (Madrid: 1958), III, 1053.
40. Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, La voluntad de vivir (Barcelona: 1961), p. 374.
41. In accordance with note 8, Chapter I, Blasco's failure to mention the name of Lucha's country would appear to be a precaution intended to disguise the identity of certain characters.
42. The country in question evidently is not Argentina, Chile, or Peru, for in describing Dr. Valdivia's interest in it, Blasco says: "No le interesaban las repúblicas sudamericanas prósperas y progresivas, como Argentina y Chile, o las naciones de venerable historia como el Perú..." Ibid., p. 122.
43. In time of war, the population of Lucha's country displayed "toda la ferocidad de un pueblo que sentía en sus venas sangre india..." Ibid., p. 44. Even the dictator, Valenzuela, and his confidant, Cortecero, are of mixed race. Ibid., pp. 30, 41-42.
44. Ibid., p. 49.
45. Ibid., p. 73.
46. Blasco, El intruso, p. 1105.
47. Ibid., p. 1106.
48. Ibid., p. 1143.

49. Ibid., pp. 1156-1157.
50. Ibid., p. 1120.
51. Ibid., p. 1181.
52. Blasco, Entre naranjos, p. 572.
53. Ibid., p. 564.
54. Ibid., p. 572.
55. Ibid., pp. 572-573.
56. Ibid., p. 572.
57. Ibid., p. 673.
58. On at least one occasion, Don Pablo openly declares his belief in the divine origin of class barriers. This occurs when his dissolute nephew, Don Luis, dishonors María de la Luz, and her brother demands that Don Pablo settle the matter by arranging for the marriage of the two. Don Pablo is shocked by his nephew's behavior, but he says that the best he can do is arrange for the girl's entry into a good convent. He insists that intermarriage between social classes is actually a sin: "Claro es que todos somos hijos de Dios, y que los buenos gozarán igualmente de su gloria; pero mientras vivimos en la Tierra, el orden social, que viene de lo alto, exige que existan jerarquías y éstas se respetan sin confundirse. Consulta el caso con un sabio, pero un sabio de verdad, con mi amigo el padre Urizábal, o algún fraile eminente, y verás qué te contesta: lo mismo que yo. Debemos ser buenos cristianos, perdonar las ofensas, auxiliarnos con la limosna y facilitar al prójimo los medios para que salve el alma; pero cada uno en el círculo social que le ha marcado Dios, en la familia que le destinó al nacer, sin saltar las barreras divisorias con intentos de falsa libertad, cuyo verdadero nombre es libertinaje." Blasco, La bodega, p. 1342.
59. Ibid., p. 1226.
60. Ibid., p. 1225.
61. Blasco, La horda, p. 1421.
62. Ibid., p. 1446.
63. Ibid., p. 1425.
64. Ibid., p. 1421.
65. Blasco, Cañas y barro, pp. 871-872.
66. As a work of war propaganda in favor of the Allied Powers, Los cuatro jinetes del Apocalipsis achieved almost instant popularity in the

United States and undoubtedly was read by many persons who had never heard of Blasco before. The effect of the passages of Apocalyptic symbolism in Chapter V, Part I, and of the conciliatory attitude toward Christianity observable in the same chapter, was probably that of convincing many such readers that the novelist was an adherent of Christianity, or at least, of leaving them with no suspicion that he had written antireligious novels a few years earlier. According to Camille Pitollet, one of the first letters which Blasco received from an American reader of Los cuatro jinetes del Apocalipsis was that of a Protestant pastor. This individual addressed the novelist "como... un exégeta de nota y recurría a su erudición bíblica con respeto a dudas antiguas que abrigaba acerca de diversos pasajes del Apocalipsis." Camilo Pitollet, V. Blasco Ibáñez: Sus novelas y la novela de su vida (Valencia: 1921?), p. 167.

67. Blasco, Los cuatro jinetes del Apocalipsis, pp. 875-876.
68. Ibid., pp. 900, 925.
69. Ibid., p. 864.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid., pp. 864-865.
72. Ibid., p. 865.
73. Ibid., p. 865.
74. Blasco, El intruso, pp. 1180-1181.
75. Blasco, Los cuatro jinetes del Apocalipsis, p. 866.
76. See note 58 of this chapter.
77. See Blasco, Los cuatro jinetes del Apocalipsis, p. 866.
78. Ibid.
79. Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, Mare nostrum, in Obras completas (Madrid: 1958), II, 1136-1137.
80. Ibid., p. 1214.
81. Blasco, Los enemigos de la mujer, p. 1373.
82. Ibid., pp. 1374-1375.
83. Ibid., p. 1373.
84. Ibid.
85. Ibid.

86. Ibid., p. 1410.
87. Claudio Borja serves as Blasco's spokesman in both El papa del mar and A los pies de Venus, but Baltasar Figueras appears only in the latter novel.
88. Figueras first appears when he comes to visit Claudio Borja in Nice. In his description of the new character, Blasco says: "Creyó Borja haber vuelto a la adolescencia viendo a este hombre, que próximo a su ancianidad, se mantenía alegre, bondadoso y crédulo, lo mismo que en sus tiempos de seminarista." A los pies de Venus, p. 1051.
89. Ibid., p. 1209.
90. Ibid.
91. Ibid., p. 1107.
92. In La bodega, Blasco says that two centuries earlier, the antireligious humanitarian, Salvatierra, would have been "un religioso mendicante preocupado por el dolor ajeno." (La bodega, p. 1216.) Isidro Maltrana of La horda thinks that two centuries before, the eccentric religious fanatic Vicente would have been revered for his holiness. (La horda, p. 1421.)
93. Blasco, A los pies de Venus, p. 1107.
94. Blasco, El caballero de la Virgen, p. 1487.
95. In the novels which Blasco wrote after his thesis period, there are almost no passages which could reasonably be considered as even slightly disrespectful of any religious practice. The following is a possible exception: "Como Ojeda imploraba con frecuencia el amparo de la Virgen, aquella mala gente que lo seguía, obediéndole a la fuerza, lo imitó por impulso supersticioso, rezando todos finalmente con verdadera devoción ante la tablilla pintada en Flandes y comprada por un obispo español." Ibid., p. 1487.
96. Ibid., p. 1503
97. Ibid., pp. 1476-1477.
98. Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, En busca del Gran Kan, in Obras completas (Madrid 1958), III, 1222.
99. Ibid., p. 1221.
100. Ibid., p. 1390.
101. Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, La vuelta al mundo de un novelista, in Obras completas (Madrid: 1958), III, 800.

## CHAPTER IV

### DETERMINISM IN BLASCO'S NOVELS

During the last half of the nineteenth century, a vast increase in scientific knowledge led many thinkers to conclude that eventually the natural sciences would enable man to identify and understand the determining causes of all human phenomena, those commonly regarded as "spiritual" included. Probably the best definition of this theory of determinism, as it came to be known, is that given by Hippolyte Adolphe Taine (1828-1893) in the introduction to his Histoire de la littérature anglaise. Vice and virtue, Taine maintained, are the products of scientifically identifiable causes, exactly as are sugar and vitriol.<sup>1</sup> He held that there are three primordial forces which make men what they are, namely, "la race," "le milieu," and "le moment."<sup>2</sup> By "race" he referred to innate and hereditary characteristics; and in speaking of "milieu," he had in mind the whole range of social circumstances and non-inherited physical conditions which affect individuals and nations. In explaining the role of "moment," he said, in essence, that "le race" and "le milieu" have effects which necessarily differ in various stages of history because they act not on a tabula rasa but on a "surface" modified by what has already transpired.<sup>3</sup>

Determinism inevitably became involved with the question of free will. Perhaps the best statement of the determinist position on this matter is that of Ernst Haeckel:

In the last century the dogma of liberty was fought with general philosophic and cosmological arguments. The nineteenth century has given us very different weapons which we find in the arsenal of comparative physiology and evolution. We know that each act of the will is as fatally determined by the organization of the individual and as dependent on the momentary condition of his

environment as every other psychic activity. The character of the inclination was determined long ago by heredity from parents and ancestors; the determination to each particular act is an instance of adaptation to the circumstances of the moment.

Since the naturalist movement in literature stemmed from the nineteenth century's enthusiasm for scientific thought, determinism necessarily played an important role in it. Zola explained, in effect, that his "experimental" novels were intended to reveal the working of deterministic forces:

J'en suis donc arrivé à ce point: le roman expérimental est une conséquence de l'évolution scientifique du siècle; il continue et complète la physiologie, qui elle-même s'appuie sur la chimie et la physique; il substitue à l'étude de l'homme abstrait, de l'homme métaphysique, l'étude de l'homme naturel, soumis aux lois physico-chimiques et déterminé par les influences du milieu; il est en un mot la littérature de notre âge scientifique, comme la littérature classique et romantique a correspondu à un âge de scolastique et de théologie...<sup>5</sup>

Since the determinists tended to regard man as an exclusively physical being, they inevitably came into conflict with traditional religion. Zola's comment on the Spanish novelist Emilia Pardo Bazán reflects this situation. Pardo Bazán found the bold realism of Naturalism acceptable; but she rejected determinism,<sup>6</sup> at least in theory, and remained a faithful member of the Catholic Church. Zola did not claim to be well acquainted with her works, but he thought her claim to be a Naturalist was necessarily incompatible with her profession of religion:

Lo que no puedo ocultar es mi extrañeza de que la Sra. Pardo Bazán sea católica ferviente, militante, y a la vez naturalista; y me lo explico sólo por lo que oigo decir de que el naturalismo de esa señora es puramente formal, artístico y literario.<sup>7</sup>

#### Determinism in the Valencian Period

##### Arroz y tartana (1894)

In Arroz y tartana, the first Valencian novel, Blasco stresses his characters' inherited and innate traits. The main character is Doña Manuela

Pajares, a proud middle-aged widow who has two serious moral weaknesses. One of these is her tendency to live beyond her means. This is emphasized from the beginning of the novel. The first scene is set in a market place where Manuela has come to buy provisions for a magnificent New Year's dinner. She is possessed by "una embriaguez de compras," and she spends as though her purse were "un cántaro sin fondo regando de pesetas el mercado."<sup>8</sup> In the second chapter, the reader learns that by the time Manuela was eighteen, her father recognized her lack of financial ability and refused to let her participate in the management of his business. Only when she married the easy-going Melchor Peña did she find herself free to squander money. Her second husband Rafael Pajares was as extravagant as herself; and by the time he died, her fortune was almost gone. At this point, her brother Don Juan intervened and arranged matters so that she could have a modest income. For some time, she followed his advice and lived within her means; but the desire to see her daughters marry wealthy men finally caused her to resume spending. This is the state of affairs when the novel begins.

It is clear that Manuela's father el fraile was economical like her brother. If Blasco had wished to take every opportunity to emphasize heredity, he might have described Manuela's deceased mother, at least very briefly, indicating that she was a spendthrift like her daughter. He fails to do this, but he does suggest that Manuela's love of spending is an inborn trait. When she treats her brother Don Juan to a grand dinner in the hope that it will make him feel generous enough to grant her a loan, he refuses because he believes her to be innately incapable of managing money:

Tú serás siempre la misma Manuela, la loca, la pretenciosa, y morirás cuando gastes el último céntimo. Cada uno nace con su carácter, y tú eres de aquellos a quienes el pobre papá cantaba la antigua copla:



Arros y tartana,  
casaca a la moda,  
¡y rode la bola  
a la valensiana!  
.....

--Marchas a tu perdición, Manuela. Cuando estés en la miseria, siempre me acordaré de que soy tu hermano, y tendrás donde comer tú y los tuyos...Pero dinero, ¡ni un céntimo!<sup>9</sup>

When Manuela tries to obtain money from her son Juanito, the latter asks his uncle for advice. Again Don Juan declares his sister to be hopelessly irresponsible in financial matters:

Ella vive en la trampa como en su propio elemento, y ya sabrá salir de este apuro como de otros. Aún le queda algo para ir tirando; y cuando no tenga ni camisa, reventará, tenlo por seguro.<sup>10</sup> Es de esas gentes que no mueren hasta gastar el último ochavo.

In her effort to gain Juanito's sympathy, Dona Manuela tells him tearfully that her creditors have called her "tramposa" because she cannot pay her bills: "Me han amenazado; me han llamado tramposa porque no puedo pagar...;Tramposa!...;A una señora como yo! No puedo sufrir tanta vergüenza."<sup>11</sup> When Juanito finally yields and promises to help his mother, Blasco speaks as omniscient author to conform the opinion of the creditors. His words suggest also that Don Juan was right in believing her to be "tramposa" by nature:

Yo te lo devolveré, hijo mío; te lo devolveré pronto...Y lo decía con toda su alma, con la buena fe de los tramposos cuando se ven salvados, que confían ciegamente en el porvenir y creen mejorar su fortuna en el futuro.<sup>12</sup>

Having overcome her son's resistance, the insatiable Manuela cannot resist bargaining for a little more than he promised:

Mira, hijo mío: quince mil pesetas justas no han de ser. Puedes firmar por dieciséis mil. No digas que no, rico mío. Completa tu sacrificio. Necesito algún dinerillo para pagar ciertas cuentas, y, además, las Pascuas vamos a pasarlas en nuestra casa de Burjasot; vendrán amigos, y hay que quedar bien. Ante todo, el decoro de la familia y no caer en el ridículo.<sup>13</sup>

Twice Manuela has the opportunity to assure herself and her family of a reasonably good standard of living. The first time is when she inherits wealth, and the next is when her brother puts her affairs in order for her. Both times she demonstrates her incapacity for managing money. Unable to obtain funds from Don Juan, she goes from bad to worse, obtaining her son's signature for loans and entering finally into an affair with a married man in return for financial favors. Her excessive spending ends only when Juanito dies and her lover vanishes, and she finds herself again at her brother's mercy.

Manuela's second great defect is a tendency to esteem unworthy persons. Since childhood she loved the dashing and rascally Rafael Pajares, and it was only when his unfaithfulness wounded her vanity that she decided to marry the plain but respectable Melchor Peña. After Peña died, Manuela married Pajares. Her love for her worthless second husband was so great that, for a time, she even practiced economy because he advised it. On learning that he was squandering money she sacrificed to save, she resumed spending, "para dar en la cabeza a su marido."<sup>14</sup> Manuela demonstrates her weakness by repeating errors. After Pajares dies, she forgets her spite and begins to cherish his memory. Since her two sons Juanito Peña and Rafaelito Pajares resemble their respective fathers, she tends to treat them accordingly.

Juanito had relatively little contact with his father, for he was less than seven when the latter died. He must have inherited certain characteristics from him; for he always resembled him closely, both in temperament and morals. Manuela's second husband is the first to notice this resemblance. Observing how the quiet youngster contemplates his mother with "estúpida adoración," Pajares concludes that he is "tan bruto como su padre."<sup>15</sup> Both father and son were hard working and economical. Both were indulgent and affectionate toward Manuela, who disliked them; and both were unable to de-

fend themselves against her grasping instincts. After Manuela inherited wealth, her discontent with her first husband's lack of aristocratic distinction reached such a point that she made him completely miserable. He was bored when she obliged him to go on fashionable outings, and he could never manage the polite and frivolous conversation which she expected of him. If Juanito suffers less in this respect, it is only because, by the time he becomes an adult, Manuela has other children to help her entertain guests and can afford to relegate him to obscurity.

When Manuela feels the need to ask Juanito for money, she ceases to neglect him and begins to treat him like one of the family. He begins to accompany her to social events; and when he does, his reactions are similar to those of his father. At the opera, for example, he is bored but is afraid to move lest he annoy the spectators. He is fond of associating with the servants; and Manuela, who disapproves of this plebian tendency, believes that he has inherited it from his father. On one occasion, she thinks: "Aquel chico no desmentía su sangre: era ordinario, y su mayor placer consistía en charlar con las criadas."<sup>16</sup> Another time, when he spends the evening in the kitchen, she concludes that "aquello debía ser hereditario... su padre sin duda revivía en él."<sup>17</sup> This reference to heredity is of special interest, for it is the only example of scientific terminology in the entire novel. Sometimes Blasco points out resemblances, and sometimes he leaves the reader to conclude that they exist; but with this exception, he avoids statements which would tend to give the novel a deterministic tone.

In their love life, Juanito and his father exhibited the same tendencies. Blasco emphasizes this by saying, when Juanito falls in love, that there appeared in him "un hombre nuevo, en el cual despertábase el mismo romanticismo de su padre cuando era joven."<sup>18</sup> Both father and son were extremely

timid in courtship. After two years of torment during which he memorized his declaration of love repeatedly and forgot it at the critical moment, Melchor Peña wrote it and sent it to Manuela. Juanito, for his part, has great difficulty in summoning courage to propose marriage; and his fiancée doubts that he will ever have the courage to do so. He does finally, but only after many agonizing postponements. Both Juanito and his father die from primarily moral rather than physical causes. The differences in the details of the deaths correspond to different stages in Doña Manuela's downward career, not to a difference in the two men's temperament or physique. Melchor Peña died of an illness which the physicians could not explain, and which evidently resulted from unhappiness and from suspicions of his wife's renewed interest in her former lover. Juanito's sudden death from cerebral congestion is appropriately more dramatic, for it results mainly from the shock of learning that Manuela has finally resorted to an amorous affair to obtain money. As a reminder of the similarity between the two cases, Blasco has the uncle accuse Manuela of killing Juanito because he was Melchor Peña's son: "Te estorbaba por ser hijo de quien es."<sup>19</sup>

Blasco does not describe the physical appearance of Manuela's two husbands, both of whom are deceased before the action of the novel begins. He does, however, furnish a detailed description of the second husband's son Rafaelito Pajares. The latter, he indicates, is "el fiel retrato de su padre."<sup>20</sup> In his mother's eyes, Rafaelito is very handsome. She is especially proud of the "garbo" with which he wears his clothes and of the dashing manner with which he greets people. In some respects, however, his appearance is distinctly unattractive; and Manuela's failure to notice this is perhaps the novelist's device to emphasize her fondness of what is morally unwholesome. Rafaelito's body is "flacucho y pobre." His thinness is accentuated by his

enormous nose and his prominent Adam's apple, and his indolent manner and insolent gaze are outward manifestations of his tyrannical character and bohemian habits.<sup>21</sup> Since Blasco evidently intends that both of Manuela's sons be replicas of their fathers, it would be reasonable to expect that he would describe Juanito's physical appearance in detail and indicate that he too looks like his father. He fails to do this, however, perhaps through oversight or indifference to careful documentation. The only information which he furnishes concerning Juanito's appearance is that at the age of thirty he is a "grandullón" whose timid ways contrast rather comically with his beard and elevated stature.<sup>22</sup>

Blasco completes the series of similarities between parents and children of this family by establishing a resemblance between Manuela and one of her daughters. Of the two, Conchita is the one who resembles her mother most closely. She has Manuela's "mismo aire majestuoso, y comenzaba a iniciarse en ella un principio de gordura..."<sup>23</sup> This scanty description corresponds in a general way to the slightly more complete one of the mother. At the age of eighteen Manuela was "hermosota" and had the "aspecto de una matrona romana."<sup>24</sup> When she is almost fifty, she is tall and somewhat stout, well-preserved, "arrogante y bien plantada."<sup>25</sup> As a minor character, Conchita has relatively little opportunity to display her mental traits. There is no indication as to whether she is a spendthrift like her mother. She does show signs of having inherited Manuela's tendency to like perverse persons, however; for she persists in her love for Roberto del Campo, even when he fails to show proper respect for her. Since each one of the three older children resembles one of the three parents, it is probably unnecessary to Blasco's plan that Amparito, the youngest daughter, should bear a close resemblance to anyone in particular. Nevertheless, the tendency to stress heredity is

evident in her case also. It is clear that at least in temperament she is much like her father Rafael Pajares. She is the "loquilla de la casa," incapable of restraining her laughter whenever she sees ridiculous persons and always fond of tricks. She likes, for example, to insert "terribles barbaridades" in the love letters which she writes for illiterate servant girls.<sup>26</sup> In this respect she resembles her father, who as a youngster was an "alegre confeccionador de chistes y calavera de los más audaces," a "cabeza a pájaros" whose gaiety was "desenfrenada."<sup>27</sup> Amparito is a very minor character, and perhaps for this reason Blasco does not make it entirely clear as to whether or not she was destined to be as evil as was Pajares.

The case of Manuela's family is one of the best examples of determinism in Blasco's novels, for he never again makes the action of a novel depend quite so completely on a series of similarities between related persons. Although he neglects some opportunities to establish resemblances and fails to trace any one trait through more than two generations, the cases of heredity and innate characteristics are numerous and important enough to make Arroz y tartana conform, at least in a considerable degree, to the concept of an experimental scientific novel.

#### Flor de Mayo (1895)

In Flor de Mayo, the second Valencian novel, Blasco presents a family situation somewhat similar to that of Arroz y tartana. The widowed mother siñá Tona prefers her indolent and rascally second son Tonet to his dutiful and hard-working elder brother Pascual, usually called el Retor. In Flor de Mayo, however, the novelist stresses heredity and inherent characteristics somewhat less than he does in Arroz y tartana. In the first place, Tonet and el Retor are full brothers; and only one of them resembles one of the parents. It is el Retor who is physically and morally "un vivo retrato de

su padre."<sup>28</sup> This resemblance is of somewhat less consequence than that which existed between Juanito and his father in Arroz y tartana, for there is no indication that siñá Tona disliked her deceased husband and that she tended to dislike el Retor because he was like his father. It is important in another respect, however; for it suggests that el Retor probably inherited his pronounced and ultimately fatal tendency to trust persons less worthy than himself. Tonet seems to resemble no one, and siñá Tona is at a loss to explain the origin of his defects.<sup>29</sup> He evidently did not inherit them from her. She is economical and industrious; and the greatest irregularity in her life, her disastrous love affair with the young carabinero, Martínez, was the result of passion and of trustfulness rather than of perversity. Tonet, on the other hand, displays both cynicism and shrewdness as he deceives el Retor and carries on a love affair with the latter's wife.

There is a resemblance between Martínez and Roseta, his illegitimate daughter by siñá Tona. Roseta is blonde and blue-eyed like her father, rather than brunette like her mother; and she resembles him also in that she is much given to daydreaming:

Lo que decía Tona: "De tal palo, tal astilla." También el granuja de su padre se pasaba las horas muertas, embobado ante el horizonte, como si soñase despierto, y sin servir para otra cosa.<sup>30</sup>

In Roseta's case the resemblance between parent and child has no bearing on the plot. Here again, as in the case of Amparito of Arroz y tartana, the novelist probably points out a resemblance simply because he is under the influence of the experimental novel with its tendency to emphasize heredity and family history. When Flor de Mayo is compared to Arroz y tartana, however, Roseta's similarity to her father proves to be of interest; for it calls attention to a significant difference between the mothers in the two

novels. Doña Manuela of Arroz y tartana displays an evidently inherent weakness when she shows her preference for the children of her worthless second husband. Siñá Tona, on the contrary, learns from experience. She detests the memory of Martínez; and she is not particularly fond of Roseta, for her resemblance to her father is too marked.

Still another case of heredity involves little Pascualet, whom el Retor believed to be his son. After he learns of his wife's affair with his brother, el Retor orders the fishing fleet out to sea in stormy weather, not because he is interested in fishing, but because he wishes to escape from the sight of people who know of his disgrace. On shipboard, he observes Pascualet and becomes aware of a resemblance which he failed to notice before: "era la misma cara, el mismo gesto...Era el hijo de Tonet, no podía negarlo."<sup>31</sup> This is important in that it helps bring out the un-failing nobility of el Retor's nature. When his ship is about to sink, he realizes that little Pascualet is not to blame for Tonet's conduct. He kills Tonet, not for revenge, but to keep him from escaping with the only life preserver available for the child.

In describing the incident of the life preserver, Blasco probably intends to suggest that Tonet's behavior, which is not explainable in terms of heredity, is at least instinctive and innate:

El peligro hizo reaparecer en Tonet el matoncillo del puerto, el perdido incapaz de respetos, y sonrió feroz y despreciativamente a su hermano...Tal vez no se engañaba y el chico fuese su hijo; pero la piel propia es lo primero.<sup>32</sup>

Flor de Mayo is the second and last novel in which Blasco creates several cases of resemblance between members of a family, and makes at least some of the resemblances important to the plot. Thereafter such cases occur only sporadically and involve usually only minor characters.



Cañas y barro (1902)

Neleta of Cañas y barro is one of the characters in whom the influences of environment are most clearly observable. Her life begins with misfortune, for from early childhood she experiences neglect and the most extreme poverty. The effect of this poverty is that it leaves her extremely eager to have money and always ready to sacrifice principle to financial advantage. Another one of her misfortunes is that as a young woman she finds no suitable husband in the wretched village where she lives. One of her two companions in early life is Sangonereta, a youngster who is as poor as herself, and who soon becomes a hopeless alcoholic. The other is Tonet, a young man of whom she becomes extremely fond, but who is weak-willed and incapable of supporting her. When her mother's death and Tonet's years of absence and indifference leave her utterly alone in the world, Neleta attempts to improve her situation by marrying the only wealthy man of the village. This step proves to be a downward one; for the man is sordid old Cañamel, the village tavern keeper.

When Tonet returns home, Neleta finds herself between conflicting pressures. Until he returns, she manages to resist numerous temptations and to remain faithful to Cañamel. Her lifelong passion for Tonet is evidently irresistible, however; and since her fear of poverty does not let her think of abandoning her husband, she inevitably yields to temptation and enters into an illicit love affair. When Cañamel becomes suspicious, the desire to protect her financial welfare proves stronger than love; and she dismisses Tonet, at least temporarily. Cañamel's death does not improve Neleta's situation; for under the influence of greedy relatives, he has stipulated that she shall lose part of her inheritance if she remarries or falls in love. Incapable of sacrificing any money, she takes another down-

ward step, that of deciding not to remarry, but to resume her secret affair with Tonet.

Neleta's conduct at this point seems understandable enough in terms of her intense fear of poverty, her love for Tonet, and her awareness of his inability to support her. She has, furthermore, fallen victim to the common human weakness of wanting more money than she has. Realizing that she is wealthy only by local standards, she wishes to enrich herself through usury so that she can live in Valencia in a manner befitting a lady. Later, when the surrender of part of the original inheritance will be a small matter, she will perhaps marry Tonet. The novelist, however, cites still another reason for her behavior. He believes, evidently, that avarice is instinctive among people of her class and that under the influence of extreme poverty it has almost become hereditary:

La avaricia de la mujer rural se revelaba en Neleta con una fogosidad capaz de los mayores arrebatos. Despertábase en ella el instinto de varias generaciones de pescadores miserables roídos por la miseria, que admiraban con envidia la riqueza de los que poseen campos...Recordaba su niñez hambrienta, los días de abandono, en los que se colocaba humildemente en la puerta de los Palomas, esperando que la madre de Tonet se apiadase de ella...Sentíase capaz de un crimen, antes que entregar un afiler a los enemigos...nada de casorios ni de dar dinero a nadie; primero se dejaría abrir por el vientre como una tenca.<sup>35</sup>

Neleta makes her most disastrous decision when she finds herself expecting Tonet's child. Since Cañamel has been dead too long, she cannot claim the child to be his. She is in danger, therefore, of having to surrender part of her fortune. Faced with this choice between maternal love and money, she decides finally to have the child taken to Valencia and abandoned there. The plan miscarries and results in the death of both Tonet and the child.

Neleta does have some redeeming qualities. She is capable of gratitude,

for she is always friendly toward the members of the poor family which befriended her during her childhood. Whenever the grandfather of this family comes to Cañamel's tavern, she serves him wine in the largest glass and overlooks his little debts.<sup>34</sup> She is constant in her affection for Tonet; and when she decides to have her child abandoned, she feels the need to believe that it may fall into the hands of wealthy people. When it is born, she has to order Tonet to take it out of her sight at once so that humane sentiments will not have time to overcome her selfishness. She is perverse to some extent, however; and the novelist suggests that she is so by nature:

Al contar, recordaba que aún no hacía un año que Cañamel había muerto: y con su instinto de perversa inconsciente, deseosa de arreglar su vida de acuerdo con la dicha, se lamentaba de no haberse entregado meses antes a Tonet. De haberlo hecho, hubiera podido ostentar su estado sin miedo, atribuyendo al marido la paternidad del nuevo ser.<sup>35</sup>

To summarize Neleta's case, it may be said that she is described as naturally selfish and greedy, and that unfavorable environmental circumstances strengthen her bad characteristics and lead her eventually to criminal conduct. There is no clear indication that she is influenced by heredity.

Innate defects are clearly dominant in Tonet's character. While he is a child, his grandfather tío Paloma determines to teach him hunting, fishing, and the art of propelling a boat by means of a pole, all of which are important skills in the island community. After about a year of this training, it becomes obvious that the youngster is instinctively lazy: "El barquero vio claro: lo que su nieto odiaba, con una repulsión instintiva que ponía en pie su voluntad, era el trabajo."<sup>36</sup> When the old man attempts to administer correction by means of blows, the incorrigible Tonet seizes stones and prepares to defend himself. His case is a mystery, for neither his father nor his grandfather is lazy. The latter presumably knows the family's

history; and as he thinks about Tonet, he asks himself:

¿A quién se parecía, pues, aquel arrapiezo? ¿Señor!  
 ¿De dónde había salido, con su resistencia invencible  
 a toda fatiga, con su deseo de permanecer inmóvil, des-  
 cansando horas enteras al sol, como un sapo al borde  
 de la acequia?<sup>37</sup>

When it comes to helping his father Toni on the farm, Tonet's laziness becomes evident again: "Su instinto de muchacho perezoso se rebelaba."<sup>38</sup> Unable to escape work entirely, he spends every evening in Cañamel's tavern and longs for Sunday to come so that he can be there all day: "Le gustaba la vida de inmovilidad, con el porrón al alcance de la mano, manejando los mugrientos naipes..."<sup>39</sup>

As the novel progresses, Blasco begins to attribute Tonet's defects to lack of will power. When he returns from military service, Tonet seems at first to have improved. He begins to help his father, who is filling a portion of the lake; but his is "el ardor momentáneo de los seres de es-casa voluntad." He soon abandons this heavy work, for "la fuerza de su voluntad no llegaba a tanto."<sup>40</sup> His tendency to avoid work is evidently not related to any bodily disorder, for during festivals he is always ready to dance and participate in other vigorous activities.<sup>41</sup> His "falta de voluntad" manifests itself also when Neleta explains her plan to abandon their child. He is frightened by her audacity and tries to object, but "la mirada de Neleta impuso cierto miedo en su voluntad débil."<sup>42</sup> When he decides to commit suicide, he is moved not only by fear of punishment and by remorse for having thrown the child into the lake, but by an awareness of his irremediable defects. As he ponders his case, he agrees with the novelist's repeated explanation of it: "Su delito era el egoísmo, la volun-tad débil..."<sup>43</sup> He concludes, finally, that he is "la mala rama y debía morir, no obstinarse en seguir muerto y sin jugo, agarrado al árbol, para-

lizando su vida."<sup>44</sup>

The one clear case of heredity in Cañas y barro is that of Sangonereta, who inherits his father's weakness for drink. By the time he is eleven years of age, Sangonereta's "instinto de parásito" leads him to frequent the church.<sup>45</sup> He does not go there from religious motivation; on the contrary, he goes because the building is cool on warm days, and because he has heard about the good qualities of the wine stored there. Later, when Sangonereta has become a confirmed drunkard and vagabond, the novelist explains that "las aficiones de su padre a la vida errante y al vino habíanse despertado en él..."<sup>46</sup> There are two minor characters for whose behavior Blasco offers deterministic explanations. One of these is old tío Paloma, Tonet's grandfather. Tío Paloma loves the Albufera lake so intensely that he even comes to hate his son for attempting to convert a part of it into a rice field. The novelist's explanation is that "los instintos de las primitivas razas lacustres revivían en el viejo."<sup>47</sup> The other one of these two characters is the drunkard Sangonereta, who amazes everyone by his ability to travel alone and intoxicated amidst the canals and through areas of dangerous mud bogs. His ability to do this is instinctive and presumably innate: "su instinto de hijo del lago le sacaba del peligro."<sup>48</sup> It is in Cañas y barro that Blasco most often cites instinct and innate traits as causes of his characters' behavior. This, together with the marked emphasis on environmental influences, gives the work in general a rather strongly deterministic tone. Since it is the last of the Valencian novels, there can be little doubt that the novelist was as much inclined to emphasize determinism at the end of the period as he was when he began it with Arroz y tartana.

La barraca (1898)

In the plot of La barraca, there are four main steps or developments:

1. Tío Barret murders the landlord who evicts him and is imprisoned, leaving his barraca vacant and his fields untilled.
2. In order to intimidate their landlords, the neighbors resolve to enforce a boycott of the barraca and its surrounding fields.
3. Batiste Borull and his family attempt to break the boycott.
4. The neighbors drive Batiste and his family away.

As Blasco develops this plot, it becomes clear that each one of the major developments is an inevitable result of the foregoing one, and that the characters are moved generally by forces and circumstances beyond their control. The reader is evidently expected to sympathize with the normally inoffensive old tío Barret and to understand that he should not be judged harshly for committing murder. Barret's family has occupied the barraca and tilled the surrounding fields for generations, and he is so profoundly attached to the place that he would rather die than surrender it to a new tenant. In refusing to accept an unjust eviction, he merely behaves as any true son of the huerta would in similar circumstances:

La desesperación regeneró a Barret. Volvió a ser el hijo de la huerta, altivo, enérgico e intratable cuando cree que le asiste la razón.<sup>49</sup>

Barret cannot believe that he will actually be evicted. When the eviction does occur, he virtually loses his ability to reason; and it is when he is in this state that he kills his landlord. When he is imprisoned and his neighbors decide to keep his farm unoccupied, their decision is inevitable because it is instinctive. Pimentó, the local bully, is their leader; but there is no evidence that he originated the plan. The instinct of self-

preservation suggested it to everyone at the same time:

Fue esto un acuerdo tácito de toda la huerta, una con-  
juración instintiva en cuya preparación apenas si  
mediaron palabras....<sup>50</sup>

In his determination to cultivate Barret's farm, Batiste obeys overpowering motives. In the past, he has drifted from one occupation to another, always working hard to support his family and always pursued by misfortune. As a wagon-driver, he was conscientious and hard-working; but if any wagon was overturned or if any horse fell and was injured, it was certain to be his. When he attempted farming on non-irrigated land, he experienced four consecutive years of drouth. Finally, he was reduced to complete desperation: "Ya no sabía qué hacer ni adónde dirigirse."<sup>51</sup> Then he received an extraordinarily attractive offer from the owners of Barret's farm: in return for restoring the farm to productivity, he would be permitted to occupy it rent-free for the first two years. Since Batiste was too needy to reject this offer, he attached no importance to reports of how Barret's former neighbors drove away new tenants: "la miseria no tiene oídos."<sup>52</sup> He knew, furthermore, that he had the law on his side. While readers of La barraca can have little sympathy for the brutal Pimentó who leads the persecution against Batiste's family, they are made aware that the neighbor's hostility is not without some justification. When Batiste breaks the boycott, the landlords become as exacting as before. Actually, his neighbors persecute him because a cruel turn of fate causes their vital interests to conflict with those of one who is of their own class, but who is more helpless than themselves.

While the inexorable march of events in La barraca has some similarity to the cause-and-effect action essential to determinism, there is actually in the novel little evidence of the scientific attitude which distinguishes

determinism from mere fatalism. The novelist suggests a biological basis for behavior only in one important instance, namely, when he cites instinct as the cause of the neighbors' resolve to keep the barraca vacant. The case of the lazy and drunken Pimentó seems especially to invite an explanation in terms of heredity or disease, but none is forthcoming. Heredity is suggested in only a relatively unimportant case, that of Batiste's sixteen year old daughter Roseta. In describing how Roseta arises early in the morning and walks to work in a distant factory, Blasco says that she is "de toda la familia la más parecida a su padre: una fiera para el trabajo, como decía Batiste de sí mismo."<sup>53</sup> Later, when one of the girls gathered at the fountain on Sunday calls Batiste a thief, "la firmeza del padre surgió de pronto en Roseta";<sup>54</sup> and she springs to the attack, undaunted by the numerical superiority of her enemies. When Batiste is injured by his enemy, Roseta displays courage similar to her father's as she examines and dresses his severe wound.

In at least two respects, La barraca anticipates the thesis period. First, it reveals the novelist's awareness of agrarian problems which he is to treat seriously in La bodega. Second, Blasco is slightly less pessimistic in La barraca than in most of the other novels of its period; for he suggests at least once that there is some hope for humanity. When the schoolmaster Don Joaquín consoles Batiste at little Pascualet's funeral, he tells him, in effect, that the neighbors whose persecution led to the child's death are not really bad, but merely ignorant. Most of Don Joaquín's speeches are pompous, and they are evidently intended to amuse the reader. On this occasion, however, the serious import of his words suggests that Blasco does not intend them to be taken lightly:



--Créame a mí, que los conozco bien: en el fondo son buena gente. Muy brutos, eso sí, capaces de las mayores barbaridades, pero con un corazón que se commueve ante el infortunio y les hace ocultar las garras...¡Pobre gente! ¿Qué culpa tienen si nacieron para vivir como bestias y nadie los saca de su condición?...Aquí lo que se necesita es instrucción, mucha instrucción. Templos del saber que difundan la luz de la ciencia por esta vega...<sup>55</sup>

A comparison between Batiste and two characters of Cañas y barro helps illustrate how little evidence of determinism there is in La barraca. Sangonereta and Tonet cannot avoid disaster because they are inherently incapable of overcoming their own weaknesses. Batiste, on the other hand, has no weakness. He struggles hard to defend himself and his family, but he is overwhelmed by circumstances over which he has no control. The novel ends on a note of fatalism. When the neighbors come at night and set fire to the barraca, Batiste and his family barely manage to escape with their lives. Since they cannot save the house and its contents, they sit down nearby, with "resignación oriental," to await the dawn. With "la pasividad del fatalismo," they watch the fire which destroys the product of their labor.<sup>56</sup>

#### Entre naranjos (1901)

Entre naranjos combines sharply contrasting romantic and naturalistic elements. Superficially, it is a story of love in springtime, with beautiful Valencian landscapes as background. On close examination, it becomes evident that the novelist views love primarily as an irresistible natural urge, and that he attributes the breakup of the love affair to conflicting innate characteristics.

When young Rafael Brull meets the opera star Leonora Moreno for the first time, he is on a mountain, engaged in contemplating the magnificent landscape. When Leonora arrives to visit the mountain shrine, his attention

turns from the charms of the scenery to those of her person. The novelist abandons his description of nature and proceeds to a detailed description of Leonora's marvellous beauty. Through Rafael's eyes the readers see the details of her dress, her golden hair, her luminous green eyes, her fine complexion, etc. In addition to being impressed with Leonora's physical appearance, Rafael begins at once to appreciate her as a person. Her kindness toward an ailing peasant woman who visits the shrine impresses him favorably, especially because it contrasts with the crude behavior of the local women.

Having fallen in love with Leonora at first sight, Rafael seizes the first opportunity to win her esteem. She appreciates his gallantry in coming to her rescue during a flood, but she insists that their relationship must be one of friendship only. As he becomes better acquainted with her, he comes to respect her more. He learns, for example, that even when her father disowned her on account of her irregular love life, she found ways to care for him. Even in the later stages of their love affair, when familiarity has lessened the need for gallantry, Rafael is careful to treat Leonora with the type of generosity which she has shown to others. When he plans to go away with her, he prefers to carry off the money his mother has saved for him rather than exploit Leonora as other men have done. His respect and love for her are separate matters, however; and after a preliminary period, there are indications that the attraction which she exercises over him is primarily physical. Finally, there is a sordid scene in which she must actually defend herself physically against his advances.

Elasco devotes the first two-thirds of Entre naranjos to Rafael's courtship. During this period, love becomes a powerful urge which transforms him and causes him to lose his former timidity. He ceases to obey his domineering

mother, who fears that his visits at Leonora's house may have an unfavorable effect on his political career. Leonora herself enjoys his friendship, but she tries in various ways to discourage his amorous intentions. She tells him that she is too old for him; that she has had numerous affairs with men; that she now desires only repose, friends, and tranquility; and that she considers love to be an "hermosa y cruel patraña."<sup>57</sup> In addition, she insists that she and Rafael are incompatible by nature:

Rafael, amigo mío, no sea usted tonto. Yo soy buena para amiga; no puedo ser ya más..., aun cuando le amase. Somos de diferente casta. Lo he estudiado a usted, y veo que es sensato, honrado, y tímido. Yo soy de la casta de los locos, de los desequilibrados; me alisté para siempre bajo las banderas de la bohemia, y no puedo desertar. Cada uno por su camino. Usted encontrará fácilmente una mujer que lo haga feliz...Usted ha nacido para padre de familia.<sup>58</sup>

Leonora cannot be overwhelmed by Rafael's impetuosity, but nature decrees that she shall not triumph in her resolution to avoid still another love affair. It is now the spring of the year, a dangerous season for her:

¡Ay! Me da miedo la primavera: ha sido siempre para mí la estación fatal...¡La primavera! Si alguna locura he hecho en mi vida, ella ha sido la consejera. Es la juventud que renace en nosotros; la locura que nos hace la visita anual.<sup>59</sup>

Since she is displeased by Rafael's violence, Leonora announces that their friendship has ended, and that she will leave Valencia. She postpones her departure, however, in order to enjoy the perfume of the orange trees in bloom. It is this voluptuous feature of nature which breaks down her resistance and causes her to fall in love.

When Rafael goes to say farewell, he no longer has any hope that Leonora will ever love him. He pays his visit, however, on a spring night which is more likely to arouse amorous sentiments than he realizes:

La ciudad entera parecía desfallecer en aquel ambiente cargado de perfume. Era un latigazo de la primavera acerbandó con su exaltación la vida, dando mayor potencia a los sentidos... Un estremecimiento voluptuoso agitaba la ciudad, adormecida bajo la luz de la luna.<sup>60</sup>

He finds Leonora ready to abandon prudence and embark on an illicit love affair. She admits, in effect, that she has fallen victim to the night and the season:

¿Que venía usted a despedirse sin querer verme? ¿Qué galimatías es ése? Diga usted sencillamente que es una víctima de esta noche peligrosa; yo también lo soy... Estoy ebria sin haber bebido. Las naranjos me emborrachan con su aliento.<sup>61</sup>

The love affair proves to be of short duration. After Rafael has persuaded Leonora to let him go away with her, the old family counselor Don Andrés, locates him and advises him to desist from his plan. Don Andrés does not succeed in turning Rafael against Leonora until he reminds him that in loving her, he is contenting himself with "las sobras de los demás." Now Rafael takes offense at what he excused before: "La ceguera de la felicidad no le había dejado pensar que no era él el primero que pasaba por sus brazos..."<sup>62</sup> His timidity reappears; and instead of facing Leonora to tell her that he has changed his mind, he sends her a letter full of cowardly excuses.

Blasco does not intervene here as omniscient author, as he does sometimes, to explain his character's behavior. The ease with which Rafael allows himself to be turned against Leonora is difficult to understand, unless it is assumed that the novelty of the love affair was wearing off, and that his bourgeois sense of values was ready to be awakened.

The meeting of the lovers eight years later serves to emphasize how time has proven the accuracy of Leonora's judgment. Rafael has become, as she predicted, a mediocre middle-class family man. Bored by his puritanical wife, he believes again that he is desperately in love with Leonora. He would be happy to follow her, he declares, even though she might permit him to be only her friend or servant. Leonora, however, finds that he is no

longer handsome and that he no longer attracts her. She is glad to have met him again, but only because she can now be certain that nothing remains of her love for him. She does not use scientific terminology, but she does effectively summarize the novelist's fundamentally deterministic point of view. Her love affair with Rafael, she declares, was an unavoidable but inevitably transitory phenomenon, a result of specific natural causes:

Nuestra pasión murió porque debía morir. Tal vez fue un bien que huyeses. Para romper después, cuando yo me hubiese amoldado para siempre a tu cariño, mejor fue que lo hiciese en plena luna de miel. Nos aproximó el ambiente, aquella maldita primavera; pero ni tú eras para mí ni yo para ti. Somos de diferente raza. Tú naciste burgués, yo llevo en las venas el ardor de la bohemia. El amor, la novedad de mi vida, te deslumbraron; batiste las alas para siempre, pero caíste con el peso de los afectos heredados. Tú tienes los gustos de tu gente ...Cada uno a lo suyo. Las aves de corral, a su pacífica tranquilidad, a engordar al sol; los pájaros errantes, a cantar vagabundos, unas veces sobre un jardín, otras tiritando bajo la tempestad.<sup>63</sup>

The foregoing examples suffice to illustrate the pessimism which prevails in Blasco's Valencian novels. Since the causes which lead the characters to tragedy and frustration are usually identifiable as deterministic, it is correct on the whole to describe the period as one of pessimistic determinism.

#### Determinism In The Thesis Period

##### La bodega (1905)

In the thesis novels, the pessimistic determinism of the Valencian period reappears occasionally, but there is also evidence of a more hopeful attitude. Sometimes, as in La bodega, both tendencies appear in the same work.

Blasco's main purpose in La bodega is to describe the unsatisfactory social and economic conditions which he has observed in rural Andalusia

and to point out the reasons for their existence. His analysis is generally of a constructive type; for although he does not suggest specific remedies, the evils which he exposes usually prove to have obviously remediable causes. This may be observed, for example, when the young aperador Rafael and an old laborer Zarandilla discuss the habits and vices of the lower classes of Andalusia. When Rafael compares the shepherds of the mountainous areas to the laborers of the great lowland farms, he attributes the laborers' moral inferiority to environmental conditions rather than to innate or inherited traits. He admires the shepherds especially for their remarkable honesty. They earn their meager living by tending rich men's flocks and herds; and although they can practically never afford meat, they disapprove greatly of any one of their number who secretly kills one of his master's animals.<sup>64</sup> The laborers, on the other hand, are much inclined to vice. Rafael, who has attempted to help them, has found the task a very difficult one, especially because they are distrustful both of one another and of members of other social classes. He believes that at least some of their bad habits are the inevitable result of the overcrowded conditions in which they live. The defect with which he has the least patience is their laziness. When he mentions this, old Zarandilla comes to the laborers' defense. Drawing on his own past experience as a field hand, Zarandilla describes at length the wretched diet and continual fatigue which are the constant lot of these people; and he concludes, in effect, that they are exactly what circumstances have made them.<sup>65</sup>

One of Blasco's aims in La bodega is to expose the evils of alcoholism. His attitude on this subject is not an entirely hopeful one; for in dealing with it, he lapses at least once into his former tendency to regard character traits as inherent rather than acquired. This occurs during a conversa-

tion between young Fermín Montenegro and the humanitarian Salvatierra. As an extreme ascetic, Salvatierra tends to exaggerate when he speaks against wine. Fermín smiles on hearing the humanitarian's fierce tirade, but he agrees with him to some extent. When he expresses his agreement, he adds that he believes his people to be born lovers of drink:

¡No tanto, don Fernando!...Reconozco, sin embargo, que es uno de nuestros males. Puede decirse que llevamos la afición en la sangre. Yo mismo confieso mi vicio: me gusta una copa<sup>o</sup> ofrecida por los amigos...Es la enfermedad de la tierra.

The deterministic tendency to emphasize inherent traits is observable especially in the description of two characters. One is the gypsy girl Mari-Cruz and the other is Salvatierra. Blasco says, in effect, that Salvatierra is a humanitarian and idealist by nature and that these tendencies would have determined his behavior regardless of the age in which he lived. Having been born in a century of revolutions, he is a revolutionary; for he cannot help associating himself with movements intended to help others. At the same time, however, he cannot repress his urge to perform acts of charity, even at the expense of his own welfare. If he had been born two centuries earlier, he would not have been a revolutionary; for the age was not one of revolutions. His concern for others would necessarily have manifested itself, however; and he would have been "un religioso mendicante, preocupado por el dolor ajeno."<sup>67</sup> The case of Mari-Cruz differs from that of Salvatierra in that her inborn characteristic is not a moral quality, but a physical weakness. She appears to be a reasonably intelligent and normal young woman; but when she experiences a severe fright, her previously undetected case of tuberculosis becomes greatly aggravated; and she dies within a few days. Her ignorant aunt believes the illness to have been caused by "la sangre corrompida por el susto, que

no podía salir, y la mataba."<sup>68</sup> Salvatierra, however, has some knowledge of medicine; and when he observes Mari-Cruz during her illness, he suspects "el remoto arañazo del alcohol en esta agonía."<sup>69</sup> When he inquires concerning her parents, her aunt attempts to deny that the father was an alcoholic:

--Su pobresito pare bebía como cualquiera, pero era un hombrón de mucho aguante. Sus amigos le llamaban de apodo Damajuana. Pero ¿verle borracho?...nunca.<sup>70</sup>

This statement only serves to convince Salvatierra that his conjecture was correct; and he mourns "la muerte de aquella criatura, que sólo había visto una vez, mísero engendro del alcoholismo..."<sup>71</sup>

The tendency to abandon determinism is observable especially in the case of María de la Luz. As a part of his propaganda against the excessive use of wine, Blasco describes how the dissolute aristocrat Don Luis entertains some people of the working class and encourages them to drink heavily. When all of them are under the influence of alcohol, he takes advantage of one of the girls among them. It is obviously the novelist's intention that María de la Luz be regarded as an innocent victim of circumstances. Tempted by the good quality of the wine, her father sets her a poor example by drinking too much; Don Luis, whom she respects because he is an aristocrat, disregards her protests and continues to refill her glass. Although she is actually not to blame for her disgrace, tradition requires that she be regarded as dishonored and fit only to enter a convent. She accepts this as right and natural, and her outraged fiancé even believes that he would be justified in taking her life. The stage appears to be set for some type of tragic ending, but the novelist allows Salvatierra to convert Rafael to a reasonable point of view. This constitutes a triumph of will and logic, and it contrasts sharply with the prevalence of hopeless weaknesses and uncontrollable passions in the Valencian period. The tendency



to abandon determinism is accompanied by an increase in optimism. Salvatierra does not see his desires for social reform realized, but he continues to believe that justice will prevail eventually. Rafael and María de la Luz cannot change the customs and prejudices of their native land, but they do go to a new country where they know a better future awaits them.

### La horda (1905)

In the first chapter of La horda, the reader meets the young writer Isidro Maltrana and learns that he is struggling against the disadvantages of poverty and bad education. Isidro himself realizes how his studies have affected him:

...el reconocía su gran defecto, el mal de su generación, en la que un estudio desordenado y un exceso de razonamiento había roto el principal resorte de la vida: la falta de voluntad. Era impotente para la acción.<sup>12</sup>

In the second chapter, there is a description of Isidro's education. He is from a poor home, but he has had an opportunity to study because a pious lady took an interest in him. As a university student he delighted in studying voraciously, and at the age of seventeen he could already read several foreign languages. His subsequent history indicates, however, that he failed to acquire habits of discipline and a sense of direction in life. His protectress was a rather simple soul who measured his progress by the increase in the heaps of books which filled his room, and her only concern was that his studies might lead him to impiety. When she died without having made a will, Isidro found himself with little money; and he was soon obliged to begin earning his own living. This is the situation at the beginning of the novel. As the plot unfolds, scarcity of work and Isidro's incapacity for constructive action combine to reduce him to utter destitution and despair.

Four generations of Isidro's family are represented in the novel. His

grandmother la Mariposa and her companion old Zaratustra live in the most extreme poverty, but there is no indication that they are weak or abnormal. They are intended, evidently, to represent the older generation which has simply never caught a vision of progress. Zaratustra is a trash collector, and he lives with la Mariposa in a wretched hovel which he has constructed from trash. He is satisfied with his dwelling, especially because it is warm in winter; and he is entirely unaware of its extremely unsanitary features. He is proud because he has built it, and he evidently believes that the artists who came to paint pictures of it actually admire it. La Mariposa is equally ignorant. Her occupation is that of garbage collector, and she boasts about the fine meals which she prepares from the "better" part of the garbage. She is reasonably intelligent, however; and there is nothing to indicate that unfavorable environment has had a bad effect on her character. She does tend to be somewhat miserly, but in the end she proves to be capable of real generosity. Over the years she has hoarded imitation jewelry and other discarded objects which she mistakenly believes to be of great value. For a long time she is determined not to part with this "treasure." When Isidro becomes completely destitute, however, her better sentiments finally prevail; and she offers it to him.

La Mariposa's daughter Isidra represents the first step in the family's progress. Despite her background, Isidra desires to rise in the world. She refuses to follow her mother's occupation, and she insists instead on working in the households of wealthy families. Although she dies in poverty, her ambition does contribute to the slow advance of the family. If she had remained among the trash collectors as her mother thought she should, she would never have made the acquaintance of the kindly employer who took an interest in her son Isidro and provided for his education. Despite the degradation and humiliation which Isidro endures during part of his life,

he represents another step forward; for he is the first one in the family to become educated and to make his living by intellectual work.

There is one member of the family who does not aspire to improve his situation. He is Pepín, Isidro's younger half-brother, a hopelessly degenerate and criminally inclined youngster. Pepín's parents are both honorable persons, and there is no indication that he had ancestors who were evil like him. It is not clear that he has inherited his bad traits, but there can be little doubt that they are innate. When Isidro visits him in prison, his appearance is described as revealing "la ruindad física de los homicidas por instinto."<sup>73</sup> At some points Isidro's lack of will power might cause the reader to wonder whether he is suffering only from unfavorable environmental influences, as is indicated in the first chapter of the novel, or whether he is somehow inherently defective like his brother. This proves not to be the case, for in the end his weakness vanishes. Destitution and his wife's death in an institution of charity do not arouse in him the will to struggle, but his affection for his infant son does. One day as he holds the child on his knees, he suddenly finds that his "falta de voluntad" has left him. He realizes at once that in the future he will be strong enough to assure his son a better life.<sup>74</sup> The continuation of the family's progress is thus assured.

In conclusion, it may be said that La horda is an essentially anti-deterministic novel; for it shows how the will to advance and to provide for the next generation leads toward a gradual triumph over poverty and bad education. The earlier tendency to emphasize innate defects appears only in two minor characters, Pepín and the religious fanatic Vicente, whose case was studied in the foregoing chapter.

Los muertos mandan (1909)

In Los muertos mandan interest centers around the question of whether or not the present generation can triumph over racial and class prejudices which have come down from the past. The main character is Jaime Febrer, an impoverished aristocrat of Majorca. At the beginning of the novel, Jaime's financial plight has become desperate; and he decides to marry in order to obtain money. He knows that the wealthy Don Benito Valls would like to ally himself with the aristocracy, but he knows also that he cannot marry into the Valls family without defying local prejudice. Don Benito and his daughter Catalina are chuetas, that is, descendents of Hebrew converts to Christianity; and marriages between these people and cristianos viejos are disapproved of locally. For a time, Jaime is determined to disregard public opinion and marry Catalina. As he meditates on the history of his family, however, he begins to believe that since some of his ancestors persecuted the chuetas, he must have inherited some of their anti-Semitism. Convinced that there is no solution, he abandons his plans for marriage and goes away to the neighboring island of Ibiza. Here he encounters a prejudice which he believes to be unfounded, but which affects him nevertheless. He falls in love with a peasant girl named Margalida and wishes to marry her; but her father, Pep de Can Mallorquí, does not approve. Pep respects Jaime, but he regards any aristocrat as almost a member of another species. He believes marriage between persons of different social classes to be contrary to nature, and he even illustrates his point by describing how an eccentric friar tried in vain to mate a cock and a sea gull.<sup>74</sup> The neighbors, furthermore, will not tolerate the prospect of Margalida's marrying one who is not of their class. Disconcerted by this opposition, Jaime ponders the matter on several occasions and alternates between accepting and rejecting Pep's theories. When he recovers part of

his fortune and can take Margalida away from the island, he becomes convinced at last that humanity can triumph over prejudices. He realizes that his unwillingness to marry Catalina Valls resulted not from an inherited racism, but simply from the absence of love.<sup>75</sup>

The characters of Los muertos mandan who held prejudices were, in effect, believers in determinism; for they believed differences of race and class to be something inherent in the human race, like the inherited differences between species. The conclusion is essentially anti-deterministic, for it shows their belief to be unfounded.<sup>76</sup>

In conclusion, it may be said that in the thesis novels Blasco fluctuates between determinism and emphasis on free will. Some of his characters act only as identifiable determining circumstances permit, and others exercise will power and succeed thereby in overcoming obstacles. Since the latter tendency was virtually absent in the foregoing period, and since it now predominates, it may be regarded as a new and increasingly important trend in the novelist's work.

#### Determinism In The Later Novels

In Los cuatro jinetes del Apocalipsis (1916), the Russian revolutionary Tchernoff argues against the theory of determinism. His brief discourse on the subject is part of Blasco's pro-Allied war propaganda, and it is obviously intended for the reader's approval. Tchernoff is opposed to determinism mainly because he believes the Germans base a theory of national superiority on it. He identifies it with belief in the survival of the fittest and with the concept of the inequality of peoples and races. He admits that it may be the law of life among animals, but he insists that it should not be allowed to prevail among human beings.<sup>77</sup>

It has been observed that in the thesis period there were some indications of a trend away from determinism. Tchernoff's remarks suggest that this is continuing. The case of Julio Desnoyers, the war hero, provides additional evidence. Julio is in France when the war begins; but since he is a citizen of Argentina, he is exempt from military service. At first, he continues to pursue pleasure as usual. Sometimes the pressure of public opinion causes him to feel ill at ease, but it does not make him decide to become a soldier. Finally he does become one, but only because his better sentiments triumph over his baser inclinations. He becomes ashamed of his attempts to continue his romance with Margarita Laurier, a wounded veteran's wife; and he decides, for the first time in his life, that he should do something worthwhile.<sup>78</sup> Margarita furnishes a better example of free will. Her affection for Julio makes it difficult for her to break with him, but she insists on doing so simply because she has decided to do what she knows is right. Her firmness and the nobility of her example cause Julio to become ashamed, and this in turn leads him to reappraise his position.

In Los enemigos de la mujer (1919), his last war novel, Blasco lapses once into determinism. This occurs in his account of Lady Mary Lewis, the heroic war nurse. Lady Mary's humanitarian tendencies become especially conspicuous during the war, but the brief account of her life reveals that she has always felt great concern for the welfare of others. There is no indication that experience or education have contributed to make her what she is, or that she has had to triumph over less noble inclinations. In explaining her sublime conduct, Blasco avoids scientific terms and uses religious ones instead, perhaps because he regards them as more appropriate in the case of a saintly person. The effect, however, is essentially deterministic: He declares Lady Mary to be one of the elect, one of the "eternas santas" who are completely unselfish and who desire only to serve

humanity. He believes that persons of her type existed long before religions began, and that they will continue to exist after doubt has destroyed all the religious faiths of the present day.<sup>79</sup> At another point in the same novel, Blasco emphasizes free will. This occurs when Miguel Lubinoff assumes the role of reasoner and meditates on the life of the Duchess Alicia. In concluding his meditations, Miguel says, in effect, that each individual is what he wants to be, and that it is useless, therefore, to complain about the influence of Destiny.<sup>80</sup>

In the postwar novels, Blasco turns more and more toward fatalism. A theme which becomes increasingly important is how fate frustrates people by allowing opportunities to come too late in life. The first example of this appears in La tierra de todos (1922), when Robledo, the engineer, thinks about how ironical it is that he has become rich late in life. He believes that he would have enjoyed his wealth more when he was younger, but he accepts his situation with "fatalismo risueño," and he considers it to be "lógico y de acuerdo con las ironías de la vida."<sup>81</sup> Similar themes are of major importance in the last two novels of predominantly contemporary action, but the characters display less resignation. One of these characters is Concha Ceballos of La reina Calafia (1923), who falls in love with a man too young for her. There is much irony in Concha's case. As a girl of only fourteen she loved the engineer Balboa, who was about ten years her senior. At this early age she had not yet acquired the boldness which later characterized her, and she was too timid to make her feelings known. As a result, Balboa remained entirely unaware of them. Years later, she falls in love with his son Florestán, who resembles him. She realizes finally that she is too old for Florestán, but it is hard for her to break with him, for she knows that love probably will never pass her way again. She is profoundly irritated by the way differences of age have twice frustrated her, and she

comes to the conclusion that there is something unjust about the scheme of things. Matters should have been arranged, she thinks, so that people could all live and die at the same time, like the plants in a field of grain.<sup>82</sup> She is both a physically and morally strong woman who boasts that she has never wept;<sup>83</sup> but when at last she sends Florestán away, the injustice of the situation overcomes her, and she weeps for the first time.

In Blasco's last novel, El fantasma de las alas de oro, there is even more emphasis on the ironies of fate. Juan Espinosa spends the best years of his life working in America, and he is middle-aged by the time he succeeds in becoming wealthy. Then he returns to Spain, acquires a title of nobility, and marries the beautiful Jazmina, who is some thirty years younger than himself. His health declines before he reaches old age, and he becomes unable to enjoy his years of retirement. Embittered by his misfortune, he concludes that life is arranged illogically, and that it seems to be directed by an evil power which delights in mocking men.<sup>84</sup> Jazmina is even more unfortunate. She marries Espinosa partly because her greedy parents wish her to do so, but more especially because she wants some of the luxuries which have always been denied her. The marriage proves to be an unhappy one; for throughout most of its duration, she is obliged to care for her ailing husband. She is still relatively young when he dies, and she hopes yet to marry her former lover. When she returns to Montecarlo where he lives, however, she finds that he has become interested in a younger woman. Unwilling to make him keep his promise to marry her, she accepts defeat and goes away. The title of the last chapter, "Yo he perdido siempre," is taken from a statement in which Jazmina sums up her view of how life has treated her. When she is about to take the train, an acquaintance remarks that she must not be leaving on account of losses in the casino, because



she has not even been seen there. Absorbed in the contemplation of her misfortunes, she replies that she has always lost.<sup>85</sup>

## Footnotes

1. H.A. Taine, Histoire de la littérature anglaise (Paris; 1866), I, 22.
2. Ibid., pp. 24-25.
3. Ibid., p. 25.
4. Haeckel, The Riddle of the Universe, pp. 130-131.
5. Emile Zola, Le roman expérimental (Paris: 1905), p. 22.
6. In referring to the influences of determinism observable in Zola's work, Pardo Bazán called them "las malas hierbas materialistas que crecen en el jardín de Zola." Emilia Pardo Bazán, La cuestión palpitante, in Obras completas (Madrid: 1891), I, 232.
7. Ibid., pp. 24-25.
8. Blasco, Arroz y tartana, pp. 265, 270.
9. Ibid., p. 300
10. Ibid., p. 330.
11. Ibid., p. 323.
12. Ibid., p. 330.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., p. 282.
15. Ibid., p. 283.
16. Ibid., p. 291.
17. Ibid., p. 335.
18. Ibid., p. 344.
19. Ibid., p. 389.
20. Ibid., p. 294.
21. Ibid., pp. 293-294.
22. Ibid., pp. 308, 318, 335.

23. Ibid., p. 284.
24. Ibid., p. 276.
25. Ibid., p. 261.
26. Ibid., p. 284.
27. Ibid., p. 277.
28. Vicente Blasco Ibañez, Flor de Mayo, in Obras completas (Madrid: 1958), I, 411, 412.
29. Ibid., p. 413.
30. Ibid., p. 418.
31. Ibid., p. 470.
32. Ibid., p. 477.
33. Blasco, Cañas y barro, p. 898.
34. Ibid., p. 851.
35. Ibid., p. 902.
36. Ibid., p. 834.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., p. 835.
39. Ibid., p. 847.
40. Ibid., pp. 853, 854.
41. Ibid., p. 847.
42. Ibid., p. 903.
43. Ibid., p. 923.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid., p. 838.
46. Ibid., p. 853.
47. Ibid., p. 827.
48. Ibid., p. 820.

49. Blasco, La barraca, p. 491.
50. Ibid., p. 495.
51. Ibid., p. 498.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid., p. 511.
54. Ibid., p. 519.
55. Ibid., pp. 539-540.
56. Ibid., p. 561.
57. Blasco, Entre naranjos, p. 607.
58. Ibid., p. 621.
59. Ibid., pp. 621, 648.
60. Ibid., pp. 645-646.
61. Ibid., p. 647.
62. Ibid., p. 666.
63. Ibid., p. 684.
64. Blasco, La bodega, p. 1255.
65. Ibid., pp. 1256-1258.
66. Ibid., p. 1296.
67. Ibid., p. 1216.
68. Blasco, La bodega, p. 1310.
69. Ibid., p. 1311.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid.
72. Blasco, La horda, p. 1371.
73. Ibid., p. 1459.
74. Ibid., pp. 1515-1516.
75. Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, Los muertos mandan in Obras completas (Madrid: 1958), II, 337.

76. Ibid., pp. 425-426.
77. Blasco, Los cuatro jinetes del Apocalipsis, pp. 865-866.
78. Ibid., p. 918.
79. Blasco, Los enemigos de la mujer, p. 1421.
80. Ibid., p. 1427.
81. Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, La tierra de todos, in Obras completas (Madrid: 1958), III, 105.
82. Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, La reina Calafia, in Obras completas (Madrid: 1958), III, 238.
83. Ibid., p. 193.
84. Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, El fantasma de las alas de oro, in Obras completas (Madrid: 1958), III, 1545.
85. Ibid., p. 1608.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

In the foregoing study of Blasco's ideas and attitudes, I have followed convenient but somewhat arbitrary divisions. The task now remaining is to correlate and summarize the findings of the various chapters, and to present a general, chronological view of them.

During the Valencian period (1894-1902), Blasco's main purpose was evidently to create vivid and entertaining accounts of life among the middle and lower classes of his native region. His novels of this period reveal his awareness of certain social problems, especially the unjust system of land ownership, poverty, and the lack of educational opportunities; but on the whole, they are not works of social protest. Religion plays only a very small role in these Valencian novels. Blasco's skepticism is evident in a few passages, but generally he made no effort to convert his readers to his point of view. He revealed the nature of his ideology mainly through his tendency to interpret human behavior in the deterministic manner. In numerous instances he either implied or openly pointed out that inherited or at least innate traits, usually undesirable ones, determined a character's conduct. This occurs among major as well as among minor characters; and especially in three of the six novels, the outcome of the plot depends quite definitely on it. The novelist tended toward pessimism during this period, and his main characters are inevitably driven toward frustration and tragedy.

The literary movement known as Naturalism was at its height during Blasco's youth, and it was only beginning to wane when his Valencian period

began. Its supposedly scientific creed was based largely on biological determinism, and its influence was probably what led him to write deterministic novels. Determinism, however, is more than a mere literary fashion; for it implies that man is simply a physical being, governed entirely by the non-providential forces and laws of a material universe. Since it is clear that Blasco was already skeptical of religion, there is no reason to doubt that he had already accepted this materialistic view, and that it helps account for his tendency toward determinism. Two of the Valencian novels are not deterministic. There is little or no evidence of any attempt to analyze behavior in Sónnica la cortesana, perhaps because Blasco felt it would be inappropriate to apply the scientific method of the Naturalists to this evocation of ancient times. As for La barraca, its hero differs from most characters of Naturalistic literature in that he has the will to struggle against obstacles. The tendency toward determinism reappears, however, in the next novel, Cañas y barro.

The thesis period (1903-1909) begins with La catedral, a novel in which Blasco made a rather complete exposition of his ideology. In the discourses of Gabriel Luna, one of his idealistic characters, it becomes clear that Blasco believed in the materialistic doctrine which holds the facts of the universe to be sufficiently explained by the nature and existence of matter, and which rejects any concept of intelligence existing independently of physical beings and processes. In addition to accepting these tenets of all materialistic philosophy, Luna agrees with the theory of biological evolution and reveals an unlimited faith in science. His views, therefore, are essentially those of certain scientists of the late nineteenth century, especially Ernst Haeckel, the German zoologist and

philosopher, with whose works the novelist was evidently acquainted. Blasco's purpose in expressing these ideas was to explain the basis of his concept of the ideal society. He believed that a Utopian state of affairs would prevail eventually, but that this would occur only when belief in traditional religions had disappeared, and when men had learned to worship no other deities than scientific truth and social justice. While his ideology was clearly materialistic in the philosophical acceptation of the term, materialism in the sense of emphasis on material interests and comforts to the exclusion of ideals was clearly contrary to his views. Pro-scientific and anti-religious propaganda appears in several of the thesis novels, but it is always intended to support social reform; and the characters who give expression to it in their discourses are mostly self-sacrificing humanitarians and idealists. They tend to exemplify the Christian virtues of humility and charity, but they are extremists in that they denounce these virtues when they are taught in the name of religion. The novelist's view during this period was that religion tends to make the masses submissive and unwilling to demand their rights, and this evidently was what caused him to be antireligious.

It was in the thesis period, during which Blasco exalted science and openly defended a philosophy of materialism, that he began to abandon the materialistic doctrine of determinism. This was the result of a change in his attitudes and purposes rather than of a modification of his essential ideas. Having become an enthusiast for social reform, he felt the need to support his theses with some encouraging examples of characters who had will power and who succeeded in life. He esteemed science as a means to progress, but he was becoming less interested in pathological cases and more aware that the Naturalist emphasis on determinism was too narrow and pessimistic.



Between 1910 and 1914 Blasco did not write fiction. His first work after this period of literary inactivity was Los argonautas, a novel which might best be described as a travelogue, and which reveals little about his ideology. Next comes his first war novel, Los cuatro jinetes del Apocalipsis (1916). The ideas which he expressed in this work of propaganda differ considerably from those of the thesis period. He had now abandoned determinism; and since he believed it supported the enemy's claim to superiority, he even denounced it as a theory. He equated it with the doctrine of the survival of the fittest; and he declared, in effect, that attempts to apply it to human society were uncivilized. His former opposition to the Christian faith ceased entirely. There is no indication that he came to believe in the supernatural, but he did at least admit and even stress his agreement with some of the teachings of Christianity. Faced with the arrogance of the militarists, he now began to appreciate especially Christ's emphasis on humility. In the third and last war novel, Los enemigos de la mujer (1919), he revealed for the first time an awareness of religion's value as a source of consolation.

In the postwar years, Blasco tended to be tolerant and neutral in matters of ideology. His contemporary novels of this period deal mainly with adventure and modern romance, and his intention in writing them was evidently to entertain. On the whole, they furnish few clues as to his attitude on the important issues with which he dealt in his earlier works. The historical novels are of a more serious nature. Simple narration and description predominate in them, however; and the novelist accomplished his labor of revindication largely by emphasizing the magnitude of his heroes' labors and accomplishments. The main idea which he advanced in these works is that moral standards vary from one epoch to another,

and that this must be taken into consideration in judging historical personages. He respected the faith of the Renaissance popes and other religious characters of these novels, and he avoided suggesting that religion itself is as outmoded as some of the now unacceptable practices which were once associated with it. There is nothing to indicate that the increased appreciation of religion which began in the war period was the first step toward actual conversion. Blasco never again opposed religion in his novels, but he tended to refrain henceforth from disclosing the real nature of his views on it. In En busca del Gran Kan, however, it becomes fairly clear that he agreed with the views of Doctor Acosta, the skeptical humanist. It was in his non-novelistic work, La vuelta al mundo de un novelista (1925), that he more definitely revealed the persistence of his unbelief.

In his last novels on contemporary themes, especially La reina Calafia and El fantasma de las alas de oro, Blasco tended to regard his characters as victims of an unkind fate. An over-all view of his work reveals that he was optimistic mainly when he was defending a cause or advancing a thesis, and that otherwise he usually allowed his characters to suffer defeat in life. In the Valencian novels he generally supported no cause; and his pessimism tended to find a convenient outlet in the defeatist, deterministic explanations of behavior characteristic of Naturalist literature. During the next period, while he wrote on behalf of social reform, he tended to display a somewhat more hopeful attitude; and his characters less often experienced final defeat and frustration. In his later works, he became more nearly a mere spectator of the human scene; and his pessimistic tendency reasserted itself. Naturalism was no longer in vogue in this period, and the novelist had evidently lost all interest in its

deterministic and supposedly scientific approach to literature. In these circumstances, it was natural that his pessimism should find direct expression in simple fatalism.

The study of Blasco's novels reveals that his interests, purposes, and attitudes underwent marked changes as time passed. There is no indication, however, that his basic philosophy ever differed essentially from the materialistic and yet idealistic one which he manifested in La catedral. Beginning with the thesis period, the disconsoling effects of this philosophy are reflected in a few characters who regret their inability to believe in religion and in the immortality of the soul; but the novelist did not allow this to become a major theme in his work. Instead, he wrote sometimes merely to entertain; but often to expose evils, to protest against wrongs, and to revindicate the reputations of historical personages.

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