

RAMON DE MESONERO ROMANOS

and

MARIANO JOSE DE LARRA:

A COMPARISON

by

Laura A. Smith, A. B. Fairmount College, 1924

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Approved by:

Instructor in charge

Arthur L. Owen
Chairman of Department

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The period of years 1820-1843, bridging Spanish history from the memorable occasion of Ferdinand VII's agreement to support the Constitution of 1812 to the year in which Isabel ruled in her own right, covers a series of upheavals in the state system which are fearful to contemplate. The country had just passed through one of the saddest periods of her history, the years between 1814 and 1820. Ferdinand VII, so much desired by the Spanish people after the French occupation, proved to be one of the most despotic rulers Spain had ever had. During this period the press was reduced to LA GACETA and EL DIARIO DE MADRID; a strict committee called the Junta de Censura was appointed to censure all books and other publications.¹ The Jesuits were re-established in power. Every activity of public life was cramped. Secret societies were organized, in an effort to find an outlet for the self-expression so long repressed. During this period, too, occurred the insurrection and succeeding independence of the larger part of Spain's colonies in America. With all these

forces at work, it is little wonder that in the year 1820 began the seething of another great political conflict which has not yet permanently settled into calm.

The period of dissension which I have chosen to traverse may be roughly divided into two major conflicts: that of the royalist versus the liberal and that of the Cristino versus the Carlist. In the second conflict, essentially the same parties were functioning under different names, the Cristinos a combined force made up of the liberals and moderate royalists, and the Carlist the old absolutist branch of the royalists. Ferdinand's reign was made up of a series of attempts on his part to placate the people by appearing to be liberal in sympathy, these sham submissions usually followed by a partial, or more often, complete revocation of their testimony. The following affords a typical example. When the French had again gained power in Spain, in 1823, under the leadership of the Duc d'Angouleme, it became necessary to move the court then being held in Cádiz. Before removing to Puerto de Santa María, Ferdinand in his manifesto of September 30, 1823 promised to adopt a government which would meet

the needs of the people, to forget the past without any exception. This was followed the next day, October 1, by a furious denunciation of everything pertaining to the so-called constitutional government. This, in 1823, was the death knell to the second constitutional epoch, begun in 1820.

The three years between 1820 and 1823 have been called the liberal triennium.³ The comparative freedom promised by Ferdinand prevailed to a greater or less degree for the three years. The ten years between 1823 and 1833 have been called the ominous decade.⁴ The reaction of 1824, when the French again came to proclaim Ferdinand absolute ruler, while severe, was not as drastic as the absolutism of 1814.⁵ From July, 1831 to November, 1832 was published the review CARTAS ESPAÑOLAS, in which appeared contributions from the leading writers of the day. From November, 1832 to August, 1836 the leading periodical was LA REVISTA ESPAÑOLA, a continuation of the same review under a different name, with the same editor.⁶ Both of these figure much in the history of the period, so closely were politics and writing associated in the first half of the nineteenth

century in Spain. In most aspects the decade was one of fanaticism and tyranny. An author affirms that during the period of domination of Angouleme were established sixty thousand prisons in two months' time.⁷ Upon the return of Angouleme to France and the entrance of Ferdinand into Madrid, the cries of "¡Viva el rey absoluto!" and "¡Mueran los negros (liberales)!" were everywhere heard and in these cries is epitomized the doctrine and practice of the royalists. The liberal, as the word implies, was in favor of constitutional government and freedom of self-expression in living and writing.

The event of most portent to Spanish letters during this decade was the exile of more than twenty thousand liberals, who were not allowed to return until 1833, the year of Ferdinand's death.⁸ Thus the greatest minds of Spain were denied expression in their own country, and the decade was one of tyranny and literal paralysis. The reading or introducing into Spain of any literary or philosophical works was prohibited, as was any pastime which in any way possible might affect the reactionary tendencies of those in power. The writings of men as moderate as Jovellanos, Moratín, and Quintana were under

censure. Also, during this decade, the universities were closed by Calomarde, in 1831, not to be reopened until October 7, 1833.

Though exiled, the liberals made many an effort to return and establish their ideals in the rule of Spain. Every effort was frustrated and death was the punishment of any captive.

"Parecía como que el despotismo, presintiendo su próximo fin, quería, en su agonía, llegar al término de los horrores."¹⁰

The extreme to which prosecution was carried is marked in the case of a poor shoemaker, who, mistreated by a royalist, in his desperation cried, "Libertad, libertad, ¿dónde estás que no vienes?" For this unguarded cry he was hanged seven days later.¹¹ Even women did not escape the gallows and were put to death at the slightest suspicion of liberal sympathies.¹² Such was the state of affairs between the royalist and the liberal.

In September of 1832 Ferdinand was seized with a violent illness. His condition renewed the anxiety concerning the successor to the throne. In his desire for a direct heir Ferdinand had published on March 29, 1830 the pragmatic sanction

of Charles IV. This sanction made legal the ascent of his daughter Isabel to the throne, in direct opposition to the Salic law of Philip V which made it possible for a male only to inherit the crown. The dissension stirring Spain now becomes concentrated in the conflict between the Cristino and the Carlist. The Cristinos were so-called because of the liberal sympathies of Cristina, wife of Ferdinand, who had charge of the government during his illness, and who later became regent. This band was composed of those liberals and moderate royalists who favored the succession of Isabel to the throne. The Carlists were absolutists, who favored the succession of Carlos, brother of Ferdinand.

The last decade to be considered here covers the years 1833-1843, period of the regency of Doña María Cristina de Borbón, wife of Ferdinand and mother of Isabel. Espartero was the power behind the throne during this period and it was through his efforts that the Carlists were subdued. Ferdinand's death on July 29, 1833 marked the release of the intellectually imprisoned, made possible the beginning of a new era in Spain. The influence of the French Revolution, embodying

the spirit of freedom in its broad significance, was beginning to be felt in all Europe. The exiles were allowed to return, bringing back to Spain the new ideas soon to find expression in some of the great masterpieces of Spanish literature. The rapidly increasing number of secret societies had much to do with forming the new Spain, the real Spain which had been trying for so long to break the shell of despotism and live in her own right.

It was during this period that there began to flourish in Spain the so-called romantic period of Spanish letters. The turbulence of the times, the reaction toward the suppression of absolutism, the influence of ideas engendered abroad, all contributed to the birth and rapid development of the movement in which the ego is the ruling force. The individual must express himself. His own reaction to life overshadows the importance of life itself; the impression of all life finds residence in his being and his expression of it results in romanticism.. This expression is not confined to any certain form; in any form it takes it is the result of an impression and not the result of the circumstances

causing the impression. Not all during the period under consideration demanded expression through the medium which romanticism offered, but romantic writings were the tendency of the new age. This new influence was felt in the important fields of literature; drama, poetry, article of manners, and the novel. It is the purpose of this discussion to deal particularly with the article of manners as developed by Don Ramón de Mesonero Romanos and Mariano José de Larra, not to establish them as products of a romantic age, for Mesonero has classic tendencies, but to discover that reaction of the individual to the forces of society endeavoring to claim him as only an atom in its sphere of influences. The same sphere revolved about these two writers, and how differently did they respond! The contrast in the nature and character of these two has led me to investigate and endeavor to interpret the spirit of their articles of manners, incidentally of the age in which they were produced, by a comparison of the forces which make up the personality of a writer, briefly: what he has to say, how he says it, and where possible, why he says it. In undertaking a

comparison of this nature, it is necessary to confine the investigation only to those works which by virtue of the author's age offer a fair basis of comparison. The genre chosen, the article of manners, limits the field to the only medium of expression in which the works of these two authors may be fairly compared. These two men are the outstanding costumbristas of their age and are initiators in the writing of the true cuadro de costumbres in Spain. With the field limited as to type, it must further be limited as to time. Mesonero Romanos lived a long, fairly peaceful life (1803-1882) while José de Larra died, after a turbulent existence, at the age of twenty-eight in 1837. His first literary work of importance was EL POBRECITO HABLADOR, published in 1832. The years 1832-1837 mark the period of activity of Larra as a writer, twenty-three to twenty-eight years of age. Mesonero Romanos published his first true article of manners, El Retrato, in CARTAS ESPAÑOLAS January 12, 1832 under the pseudonym of El Curioso Parlante. During the years 1832-1835, Mesonero published forty-six articles of manners which he collected and had reprinted toward the end of 1835 in two

volumes under the title of PANORAMA MATRITENSE. He published a new series from January 1837 to January 1842, reprinted in a volume in 1842 with the first series, under the title of ESCENAS MATRITENSES.¹³ Later, in the last edition during the life of the author, published in 1881, the title PANORAMA MATRITENSE was restored to the first series and that of ESCENAS MATRITENSES given to the second series only. The period of activity of Mesonero as a contemporary of Larra may be considered, then, as 1832-1842. It is upon this basis that the comparison will be made.

CHAPTER II

THE LIVES OF MESONERO AND LARRA

The lives of Mesonero (El Curioso Parlante) and Larra (Figaro), particularly the latter, had a direct influence upon their works. Though Larra was not wholly in sympathy with either the romantic or classic school, but chose to favor whatever course seemed to be the truer expression of life, he himself is a typical "romantic" character. Seemingly gay and enthusiastic in his first works, he was always longing for the day in Spain when a man could express himself more freely, and was longing for Spain to shake off the oppression she had so long borne, to become a modern nation. In the state Spain then found herself, it was practically impossible for her to be what Larra hoped for. She was not ready for constitutional and representative government. Larra wished for a complete restoration of health when the patient was hardly on the road to convalescence, and was given to having a relapse as soon as partial health was regained. Larra was longing for an ideal at the time impossible to attain. In this aspiration, his character is in keeping with the romantic hero

of literature, whose longing for the unattainable is one of his chief traits. Larra gives voice to his realization of the futility of longing in one of his articles: "By what strange fate is man ever to be longing for that which he does not have?"¹⁴ It happens that his life further brings out this trait of his character, but it was during the last years of his short life that life seemed so hopeless to him.

Larra and Mesonero were both precocious. Larra, born in 1809, was writing a Spanish grammar and translating the Iliad at the age of thirteen.¹⁵ At nineteen years of age, in 1828, he published his first work, EL DUENDE SATIRICO DEL DIA, which is not included in the edition of his complete works.¹⁶ He wrote a play in 1831 which was presented, and began the publication of EL POBRE-CITO HABLADOR, his first important work as a costumbrista, in 1832, at the age of twenty-three.¹⁷ Mesonero, born in 1803, was left at the age of sixteen, upon the death of his father, to manage the business affairs of the family,¹⁸ and it was not until 1833 that he could turn from business cares to give his time to writing. In the winter of 1820-21, at the age of seventeen years,

Mesonero wrote twelve short articles of manners, MIS RATOS PERDIDOS, which critics agree are the embryo of his ESCENAS MATRITENSES. These works are an example of remarkable precocity, though they lack the finished style and deep insight of the writer in later years. In his school years Mesonero had amused himself with the writing of SEMBLANZAS, prose portraits of schoolmates and intimates, and as early as 1822 is mentioned as one of the editors of a short-lived periodical, El indicador de las novedades, de los espectáculos y de las artes. At the time of writing for this publication he was the age of Larra when publishing EL DUENDE SATIRICO. Mesonero wrote one play during this period but it was never published. From 1826-1829 he was adapting several classic dramas. The first work of Mesonero as a costumbrista was published in 1832 in CARTAS ESPAÑOLAS, at the age of twenty-nine years. Larra upon beginning his serious work as a critic and costumbrista was twenty-three years old. No doubt Mesonero was hindered by his business affairs from pursuing a literary career earlier. Also, Mesonero had more difficulty in finding his chosen field. He finally realized that he was not

a poet or romantic writer, and that realistic prose was his field. Larra had more success in any field which he happened to undertake, due to his imagination and superior quality of style.

Mesonero was practical-minded; his having engaged in mercantile affairs as he did until he was thirty years of age accounts for many of his merits and shortcomings. ²³ In the business world of every day, he naturally looked at things with the eye of a business man, and was eager to put into execution any plan for improvement in the material world he saw about him. Mesonero published in the DIARIO DE AVISOS DE MADRID in 1835 many projects for reform in his city, among them plans for better lighting, sanitation, and pavements, improvement of markets, numbering of houses, and establishing a school for blind children; ²⁴ in the SEMANARIO PINTORESCO ESPAÑOL in 1838-1839 plans for a savings-bank and a system for loaning ²⁵ money to the poor. Nearly all of these projects were put into execution due to the co-operation ²⁶ of the mayor Marqués de Pontejos. These works of philanthropy Mesonero was carrying on after he had retired from business and had time and energy to devote to the work which interested

him most, viz. the attempt to make Madrid a progressive city. His practical training beginning at such an early age, when he had planned on pursuing literary studies at a university, could not fail to make his a more unimaginative nature than it otherwise would have been. Always a lover of books, however, he did not neglect his study and read deeply in the history and customs of Madrid.²⁷ But the daily pressure of business cares during the formative years undoubtedly had its place in making of him the cautious, conscientious, steady soul that he was, and tended to create in him the desire to pursue the middle course in affairs of life and letters. Thus, while Mesonero spent the years of his life from ages seventeen to thirty in the business world, waiting for an opportunity to devote his life to letters, for Larra a briefer span of years, ages nineteen to twenty-eight, sufficed to gain the position which the literary world today accords him, as he died by his own hand a month before reaching his twenty-eighth birthday. The years of greatest literary activity in the life of Larra are the five from 1832, date of publication of EL POBRECITO HABLADOR, to 1837, the year of

his death. The active career of Mesonero as a writer of articles of manners covers the decade from 1832, when his first article of manners appeared, to 1842, date of the last article of the series ESCENAS MATRITENSES. During this decade the important contributions of Mesonero are the two volumes of articles of manners, PANORAMA MATRITENSE and ESCENAS MATRITENSES. During the five years of Larra's activity he composed the major part of his works, comprising his articles of manners, political and dramatic criticisms, and a romantic novel, EL DONCEL DE DON ENRIQUE EL DOLIENTE (1834).

Larra's father was a physician of note in the imperial army. In 1813, he took his family to France where Larra was in school until 1818. Upon their return to Spain in that year, his education was continued at home until it became necessary for Larra to attend school to learn to speak Spanish fluently. He was put in the school of San Antonio Abad where he received a classical education. It is said that he was a very tractable child, never giving cause for punishment. He was devotedly studious and had to be coaxed from his books at night to go to bed. He intended to

study law at the University of Valladolid and did complete a term of study there, but meeting utter disillusionment in a love affair, he forsook his studies and his family and went to Madrid. The influence of this affair upon him was drastic. It is said that his whole nature was changed; the studious, contented, confident boy became suddenly mistrustful and sad. ³⁰ However, he became enamoured with an attractive girl in Madrid and set out to make his living as a man of letters. He married at the early age of twenty against the wishes of his family. After a short period of happiness, the young couple, due to money troubles and domestic infelicity, found their marriage difficult. The wife at length returned to her parents' home. The last years of Larra's life were embittered by a tragic love affair. He fell deeply in love with a married woman of charm, who, flattered by the attention of a promising writer, encouraged him for a number of years. Finally, she refused to see him and Larra, believing life held no more promise for him, shot himself at his own home the evening of Feb. 13, 1837. This love affair and the almost hopeless state of affairs in the government caused Larra's articles the

last year of his life to be filled with the deepest despair. Two articles which reveal the despondency which had taken possession of his soul are El Día de difuntos de 1836³¹ and La Nochebuena de 1836³².

Larra's life, brief, a whirlwind of emotion, Mesonero's during the corresponding years was comparatively prosaic, but rich in affections of enduring quality. He had a deep love and respect for his father,³³ lovingly cared for his mother and sister after his father's death,³⁴ and lived a happy, contented life with his wife and children.³⁵ His children have honored the memory of their father by editing his works.³⁶

The works of the two writers are materially affected by the tenor of their lives. As long as Larra had hope of a day of greater liberty in Spain and had an interest in living, his articles were sparkling and humorous, or brilliantly satirical. When his own life and the hope of a new day seemed futile, his writings revealed the desolation of his heart. Mesonero, holding aloof from political troubles, found a satisfaction in life never realized by Larra. Larra would never have found satisfaction in life as Mesonero lived

it. The difference in their temperaments and reaction to the life about them will be brought out in a later chapter.

Mesonero lived until 1882, his active literary career having ended about forty years previously. The funeral of Mesonero was unpretentious, without any official following or public demonstration of sorrow. The council of Madrid gave the name of Mesonero Romanos to the street where he was born, and later an inscription was placed in the home where he died. In 1903, on the commemoration of the hundredth anniversary of his birth, a monument was erected in his honor in Madrid.

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The funeral of Larra is auspicious because of the circumstances attending it. The procession, as described by Mesonero, was formed by his many friends and admirers, out of reverence for his great literary merit. Palms and laurels adorned the hearse and covered volumes of his works which lay upon his coffin. About the grave, verses in tribute to him were read, notably those of Zorrilla, who sprang into fame upon this occasion as a young poet of genius.

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Both writers traveled abroad. Larra received his early schooling, from the ages of nine to

fourteen, in France. In April of 1835 he went abroad, visiting London and Paris, not returning until January of 1836.³⁹ Mesonero made two trips abroad, one from 1833-1835, after having sold out his business, another in 1840 and 1841. After the first trip he wrote a treatise recommending reforms in Madrid, suggesting adoption of improvements he had seen abroad.⁴⁰ After the second tour he wrote a volume of memoirs which is of little interest today.⁴¹ During Larra's term in school in France, he spoke French (for a period of five years) and acquired his love of study. The second journey was of little consequence since it came so near the end of his life. Mesonero's first journey was of some moment to Larra; according to Mesonero, it was he who suggested Larra to the editor of LA REVISTA ESPAÑOLA as his substitute during his absence.⁴²

Thus it seems that Mesonero and Larra were good friends. Critics have very little to say of this, but it is said that Larra visited Mesonero the morning of the day of his suicide,⁴³ and Larra wrote two articles about the PANORAMA MATRITENSE in tribute to Mesonero. They both frequented the meetings of the Parnasillo, a literary society,

where they must have become interested in each other personally, in the discussions held there. It is said that Larra did not become intimate with the authors and artists there, due to his "innate mordacity".⁴⁴ But Larra had many friends, one of the most intimate of whom seems to have been the count of Campo-Alange, in whose company he made his journey abroad and whose necrology he wrote Jan. 16, 1837, less than a month before his own death.⁴⁵

Larra's contributions to the literary world as a costumbrista are: EL DUENDE SATIRICO DEL DIA (1828), a series of pamphlets which came out at no fixed date, and of which only five numbers were issued; EL POBRECITO HABLADOR (1832), more important than the first publication, containing several of his best known articles;⁴⁶ and a collection of dramatic, literary, political articles and articles of manners published from the years 1832-1837 inclusive, in the periodicals REVISTA ESPAÑOLA, EL OBSERVADOR, EL ESPAÑOL, and EL MUNDO. Larra wrote two plays, NO MAS MOSTRADOR and MACIAS, and one romantic novel, EL DONCEL DE DON ENRIQUE EL DOLIENTE, with the same theme as MACIAS, a story of impossible love. He also wrote some verse

which is negligible. His best work is as a costumbrista and literary critic; had his life been a longer one, we should have other works to judge which might have given him a different place in literature. E. Allison Peers says, "Had he lived into old age, as did his contemporary, Mesonero Romanos, the story of Romanticism in Spain might have been different, for he had many of the qualities of the leader which that movement lacked."⁴⁷

The best collection of Larra's complete works is OBRAS COMPLETAS DE DON MARIANO JOSE DE LARRA, Barcelona, 1886.

Mesonero's most important contribution to literature, critics in general agree, is the series of articles of manners contained in the two volumes PANORAMA MATRITENSE (1832-1835) and ESCENAS MATRITENSES (1836-1842). These works cover the most active period of his career and are the volumes to be considered in this work of comparison. Mesonero has been called the chronicler of Madrid of the first half of the nineteenth century.⁴⁸ Aside from his articles of manners, his most important works are the history of old Madrid, EL ANTIGUO MADRID, "fountain of erudition where anyone may come who wishes to investigate some point relative to the

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 history of the town of Madrid", and MEMORIAS DE UN SETENTON, an autobiography in which he relates in a vivid way the important happenings of Madrid from 1808 to 1850. In this work he gives evidence of a remarkable memory and displays an intelligent understanding and appreciation of the significance of the events of the first half of the nineteenth century. Besides these works, Mesonero has written little of importance to us today. Two less significant volumes are TIPOS Y CARACTERES, a collection of articles which had appeared in periodicals from 1843 to 1862, and RECUERDOS DE UN VIAJE POR FRANCIA Y BELGICA, written after his second journey abroad. His sons also collected some of his fugitive articles and put them in a volume called TRABAJOS NO COLECCIONADOS. The most complete edition of the works of Mesonero is that of 1925-26.

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Larra and Mesonero are the best costumbristas of the nineteenth century. Another accorded a high rank is Estébanez Calderón, El Solitario, often considered with the other two writers, especially noted for the picturesque quality of his writings, but his language is archaic and the customs and manners he pictures are confined

for the most part to the provinces. Critics agree that Larra is the greatest prose writer of the first half of the nineteenth century, that his style and genius place him in the first rank of Spanish writers. But it is a question whether Larra should be called a greater costumbrista than Mesonero, as Mesonero's works as a whole are a more faithful representation of the life of the time. Yet Larra pictures aspects of the age which are lacking in Mesonero's work, through the medium of his political articles and dramatic criticisms, so that his work, indirectly picturing customs, is a direct expression of the spirit of the age in which he lived. There are arguments that Mesonero preceded Larra as an initiator of the genre and arguments that Larra was first, but they began writing in earnest in this field at about the same time and it matters little to us which preceded. Usually Mesonero is granted the position by critics as being the initiator in Spain of the true article of manners. They had both read Jouy of France and Addison of England and were undoubtedly influenced to take up the new medium of expression out of admiration for the articles they had read. Larra is read with

more pleasure than Mesonero, and is considered a greater writer by his own countrymen. In his criticism of PANORAMA MATRITENSE Larra gives a sketch of the origin of the article of manners, tracing it through the picturing of customs in the drama, satire, short story, and the novel.

"It is necessary that the writer of articles of manners be quick-sighted, but he should know how to distinguish the features which suffice to make up the picture."⁵¹ In the second article of the same title, he says that "this branch of literature must combine the most profound and philosophic observation with a light, apparently superficial quality of style, must combine exactness with grace; it is necessary that the writer mingle with all classes of society, and know how to distinguish the emotions common to all mankind -- he is to have understood the spirit of this age, in which the cultured all recognize education as a leveller of society; he is to be piquant in style, without becoming too caustic, as bitterness does not correct --"⁵² In living up to this creed, Larra has established his place in literature. It is due to this quality of universality and careful distinction that his works, and

Mesonero's, have lived and will continue to be read with interest. Larra praises Mesonero as a ⁵³
costumbrista exemplifying these qualifications. Further on he says, "Mesonero has studied and has come to know his country thoroughly." It is generally conceded that Mesonero knew Madrid as no other man has known it. Larra criticizes his style: "one of our few modern prose writers: correct, decorous, elegant, ... and almost always fluent in style; pure in his language, and very often piquant and jovial." He finds only one fault in his style and that is its "pale color". He attributes this to a possible overdue amount of meditation or to fear of offending others. Mesonero wrote no article dedicated to Larra, though he admired him. It has been the experience of the present writer to feel that Larra had a higher regard for Mesonero than Mesonero had for Larra. Be that as it may, the writers give evidence of mutual admiration and their names will always be associated together as the best known men in their field of the article of manners in Spain of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER III

MATERIAL

A. The Spirit of the Age

Though Mesonero and Larra both wrote articles of manners, their outlook on life and purpose in writing differ. Mesonero contrasts Larra and himself: "...my mission on earth is to laugh; but to laugh softly and without offense at the common faults and social follies. Let the eager pen of political satire remain with the memory of my unfortunate friend Figaro. We have always trod separate paths. He did not follow in my footsteps nor did I pretend to do more than admire and respect his. ... This is a matter of temperament and convictions; for I am not Figaro, nor do I see things in such a gloomy light, nor understand political matters, nor am I determined to shorten my days through ennui and boredom of living. ... Just the opposite ... My patience is great, and although belonging to this century, I should like, if it is possible, to live on into the next, even though it were only to satisfy my curiosity."⁵⁴

This was written in 1842 and shows Mesonero at the age of thirty-nine still eager to live and observe,

while Larra had met death at his own hands five years before at the age of twenty-eight.

Mesonero and Larra, it is true, did follow different paths. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in a comparison of the subject matter of their articles. Larra wrote much in two fields little explored by Mesonero: politics and the theater. Mesonero wrote of the picturesque customs of the day for the sake of recording them and the pleasure he took in observing them. Larra wrote practically nothing of a purely festive nature as are these articles of Mesonero; if he describes the customs of the times, it is to ridicule them and to point out the way to better the situation.

Both men criticize the spirit of the age in which they live: here more than elsewhere is their common field. The first half of the nineteenth century was an age of transition. Larra explains this transition by saying that the political upheavals of his day are the convulsions of a worn-out civilization which must disappear and cede her position to a new world, with no past, it is true, but with promise of a future. He believes that the lamentable state of manners in Spain is a

sign of the weakness, not of old age, but of childhood, that society there is only beginning. 56
 There seems to be a touch of the prophet about Larra. Though unusually pessimistic about life, he always sees something better ahead -- never really finding it, he remains the pessimist. He is deeply concerned over the faults of his age in Spain, a proof that he is a loyal Spaniard. Who grieves about the careless habits of one he does not love? Larra finds it hard to live happily because every opposition is a tumult in his soul. Mesonero sees the faults and criticizes them, but he is the type who is apt to become indulgent and take the faults along with the rest, if necessary, to make up the sum total of a contented life. As to the transitory age, Mesonero says, "an old race which is disappearing and being fused into a new, which renounces the past and sacrifices the present by giving itself over to the illusions and hopes of the future." 57

Larra and Mesonero both criticized their age as one of indecision, with everything done either half-heartedly or carried to an extreme. Mesonero says, "... our customs of today, indecisive, neither original nor wholly borrowed, neither old

nor new, neither good nor bad, neither serious nor foolish, a mixture of our own tastes with those learned abroad; this refinement of luxury along with the most horrible misery; this inconstancy of ideas which makes us abandon today the project of yesterday, and to undo what is already done simply because it exists: to try everything and to exaggerate everything. ... to run from the bull-fight to the Italian opera, from the political societies to the Prado, from high to low, from the past to the future and from the present to the past; from the year 8 to 14 and from 14 to 8, from 23 to 14 and from 33 to 20, from 36 to 12 and from 37 to ... God only knows!"⁵⁸ Mesonero sums up the situation in Madrid: "... a people rich and poor, indifferent and eager, backward and progressive, with memories and hopes, with fanaticism and philosophy; a mixture, in short, of the delicate and the gross, of the epochs that have passed and of those which are yet to come."⁵⁹

Larra devotes two articles to the indecisive character of the period: Ventajas de las cosas a medio hacer and Cuasi. In the former, he says that Spain, seemingly young, does not show her age, that in order to grow old it is necessary

to live. She has jumped from one thing to another, particularly in government, happy temporarily with each in turn, only to find that it is something else which will prove more satisfying. Consequently everything is half done. Something is always left to be done, some deep problem to be solved

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tomorrow. In Cuasi, he says that every feature of the nineteenth century lacks something; the age is a profile only. It is a century of medium tints rather than vivid colors. It lacks a really great man to give an impulse to the age as Alexander, Augustus, and Louis XIV gave energy and grandeur to theirs. In Spain, everything is "almost": an "almost" certain hope to be "almost" free some day, canals unfinished, a theater begun, everything half done. Everything is ruled by a happy mean which is really nothing but a big

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"almost" poorly disguised.

Closely associated with this indecision is the time-wasting habit of the Spaniards. One of Larra's most famous articles has immortalized this theme. "A great person he must have been who first called laziness a mortal sin." On every hand in Spain, according to Larra, one is met by delay and the refrain, "Come back tomorrow".

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Mesonero describes the delay attending a lawsuit. In his article Tengo lo que me basta, a parallel to Vuelva usted mañana of Larra, he says, "This attitude of 'I have enough to suit me' prevents the Spaniards from working constantly to better their lot, to increase their fortune, and prepare for a more attractive future, and ... often makes men and nations renounce their vitality and intelligence, condemning them to a voluntary paralysis, and perhaps to their certain and inevitable ruin. Much time, both authors agree,

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was wasted in so-called polite society. Larra describes the idle existence of a young man of society who rises perhaps as early as ten, reads the newspapers, takes a walk, makes a few calls, and in the evening attends the theater where he hears a translation of Scribe, much interpolated by orchestral symphony. To a question, "And what do you do in society?" comes the answer, "Nothing."

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Mesonero states that generosity is an acknowledged trait of the Spaniards and that with nothing is he more prodigal than with time. Many waste

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time by loafing around the Puerta del Sol memorizing signs or listening to a blind man sing. The laborer, with his pick upraised, drops it at the

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stroke of noon. The wasting of time is more noticeable in the early evening than at any other time, says Mesonero. It is not enough to interrupt work by dining at three or to have a siesta; another hour is lost in the café or at billiards, or walk-
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 ing aimlessly about. The time spent in one of the cafés mentioned, the Café de Lorencini, la Fontana, or Café del Príncipe, where questions of the day were discussed and debated, would not have been considered wasted by Larra. Though Mesonero was a frequenter of the Café del Príncipe as a member of the literary society El Parnasillo, he acknowledges that he did nothing in
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 a café but drink. An exaggeration, assuredly, but gives further evidence of Mesonero's passive nature. Mesonero and Larra both speak of the
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 time wasted in idle gossip. The most serious result of this time-wasting habit of the Spaniards is the consequent paralysis of activity in every field. It is with this result that Larra and Mesonero are concerned.

According to Larra, there was a spirit of restlessness, a knowledge that Spain ought to progress accompanied by a lack of knowledge as to what steps she should take. This "half knowledge"

prevented the Spaniards from appreciating the good they did have, and blinded them to the progress they were already making.⁷¹ Larra suggested that to this hope for the future should be added the experience of the past.⁷² This same indifference of the people toward the good they already possessed is noted by Mesonero also. He laments the feeling of indifference toward the glories of the past, an example of this being the tearing down of the house of Cervantes.⁷³ In the time of Mesonero, particularly during the period in which he wrote the PANORAMA and the ESCENAS, there was a notable lack of public monuments in honor of famous men. In 1833, the year of the article La casa de Cervantes, there was no public inscription in memory of Cervantes. Due to the influence of this article, the house of Cervantes was reconstructed and a tablet erected there in his honor⁷⁴(1834).

Larra, particularly, berates the indifference to amusements in Spain. "The Spanish people either do not feel the necessity of diversion or amuse themselves like the wise man, with their own thoughts. ... One day only in the week, and that not the entire year, do my countrymen amuse themselves." He refers here to the bull-fight. For

the lower class, castanets and a dance in the street on a holiday suffice for amusement. The members of the social set, instead of attending horse races, hunting, or spending a week-end in the country, while away the day in idle talk in the morning, sleeping the siesta in the afternoon, and in the evening perhaps attending the theater where they applaud the "pretty face of the prima donna".⁷⁵ The chief amusement of the middle class is to celebrate a holiday by putting the whole family into a cab and going to the hotel for dinner.⁷⁶ Larra points out that the theater is not in itself an amusement, as one is a spectator only and does not communicate with the rest of the public.⁷⁷ He attributes the lack of amusements in part to the almost total lack of a middle class in Madrid, an industrial class. Another cause of the Spaniard's hesitancy to amuse himself in public is his adherence to old customs. After a long succession of centuries of subordination, he finds it hard to eat, laugh, and live in public. A people is not really free until liberty has taken root in their customs and has become identified with them.⁷⁸ Larra devotes one article to the hunt,⁷⁹ a sport on the decline in his day.

Another evidence of the indifference of the age is in regard to the burial of the dead. The cemetery was rarely visited, and then usually for the walk instead of out of reverence for the dead. Their peace was rarely disturbed by the weeping of their kinsmen.⁸⁰ There was no watching over the body before burial, and no funeral procession. Much of the mourning displayed in church was for effect.⁸¹ Mesonero tells us, however, that the customs in burial of the dead changed after the death of Larra. This burial service gave rise to funeral processions, first for public men, the custom later becoming general.⁸²

The people of Madrid were in general indifferent to the need of improvement in their city. Mesonero, probably more than any other person, was instrumental in arousing interest in material improvements. Before 1834 and 35, the streets and walks were in poor condition, the lighting system was poor, the theaters, markets, cemeteries, and prisons were poorly kept, and there was little police protection.⁸³ The houses in general were overburdened with balconies. The windows were small and were fitted with a poor grade of glass (Mesonero and Larra).⁸⁴ Mesonero writes humorously

about the houses of the time. The stairway was winding and so narrow that if one met the water-carrier coming down, he or the water-carrier had

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to back up. The bedrooms were so narrow that one could get a good idea of his last resting place.

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The kitchen was as wide as a chimney and as clear

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as the Soledades of Góngora. Both authors complain of the poor hotels or inns and their poor

service. This is treated at length by Larra in

La fonda nueva. "Three years straight I had the

misfortune to eat in the hotels of Madrid, and today only the desire to observe the changes in our

customs, ... or to pass the time of day with my

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friends can force me to such an absurdity."

In one inn it was necessary to pay six or seven

dollars to escape a poor meal; there was no beauty

to the place, no carpet, no good waiters, no mirror,

no stove in the winter, nor ice water in the summer,

no good wine. Another hotel was dark and dingy.

Hotels in general are described by Larra as having

dirty tablecloths and napkins, dirty table service,

but a critic can gain little without exaggeration.

Mesonero speaks of an inn's poorly seasoned food

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and poor service.

B. Society

Society, according to both writers, was one of pretense. Mesonero is particularly concerned with the mania for public position. It was the style to aspire and if possible achieve a position with a name and thereby win fame in political, governmental, or social circles. This mania took people from the fields and factories, deprived commerce and industry of the most useful men of the day, made of a man of action a schemer, of a literary man a flatterer. Many were made unhappy by being removed from the sphere in which they properly belonged, where they would have been able to excel.⁹¹ This constant striving after position made an age of insincerity in which simple virtues were scorned for brilliant reputations.⁹² In a city like Madrid, where there were no great commercial enterprises, it was not strange that so many should be seized with this mania for position.⁹³ The craze for politics could completely change the character of a man.⁹⁴ Mesonero was never fond of politics, anyway, which he calls "one of the ring-leaders of the spirits of hell."⁹⁵ In one of his articles, comparing the years 1808 and 1832, he

says that the latter year lacks the frankness, the natural sincerity which characterized the social contacts of the earlier year. In place of these is found disdain of the simple virtues and pretense of manner. ⁹⁶ In another article he states that the cause for this pretense is the desire for power, obliging one to study and weigh his words and acts, disdaining to appear a common man. "Ambitious plans and hopes make one scorn the solid paths of fortune to follow the deceiving bypaths of favor". ⁹⁷ Mesonero, in keeping with his nature, preferred the quiet, intimate social gathering to the formal, pretentious one. ⁹⁸ At a social function of polite society, if it is a dance, no one dances; there is no real conversation, and neither the minds, people, nor their words represent their true value. ⁹⁹ A distinguished position in society may bring misery. A man finds himself at the top of the social ladder, but is miserable in the midst of his grandeur. ¹⁰⁰ Larra calls society the worst necessity of life. ¹⁰¹ In the social circle, man, to be found charming, must have a good education, must be versed in the classic authors, must understand and practise all the niceties of society. Beside these, a noble soul, a good figure, a just

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heart are as nothing. In a society of idle talkers the idea is never conceived that something may be done innocently, with good intention, without any hidden motive.

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The manners of the middle class were execrable, according to Larra. "Deliver me from those houses where an invitation is an event, where a decent table is set only when there are guests, in which there reigns the brutal frankness of the middle class Spaniard." ¹⁰⁴ Again he ridicules the boorish manners of many people about Madrid. Particular instances are scenes in a livery barn, a police office, a tailor shop, and a café. The tailor was so courteous that the Frenchman visiting Spain came to the conclusion that in Spain all gentlemen were tailors or that all tailors were gentlemen. ¹⁰⁵ Larra accounts for the apparent frankness and levelling of society on the basis that they are the product of a society which is just beginning rather than ending. ¹⁰⁶ Mesonero does not trouble himself much about any display of bad manners; he seems to have very little to say on the subject. He does make mention of the rude reception given a stranger in Madrid upon inquiring his way. ¹⁰⁷

Larra treats of society as a sociological force. In two articles he brings up the question as to how much power society has over man. Society must defend herself as an individual. It is through this truth that she has the right to call a crime a crime and to inflict punishment for it. Society's purpose is not to destroy the criminal but the crime. ¹⁰⁸ Man, forced to live in society, succumbs to her will because it is the stronger. Larra has voiced a sentiment here which is universal; the conclusion drawn is in force as long as law and order exist. Again, he asks, does society have the right of capital punishment? The right which force gives her. If a man does wrong killing ¹⁰⁹ another, society rights the wrong by killing him. Larra comes to no definite conclusion but is sad that capital punishment has come to be the result of the necessity of society to defend herself.

C. Education

Larra and Mesonero point out the dangers of a too strict or too liberal an education. The contrast between these two extremes is brought out by Larra in Casarse pronto y mal.¹¹⁰ A parent, seeing in herself the folly of an education ultra-religious and strict, being allowed to read only a few chosen books, goes to the other extreme in educating her son, allowing him to read at will, teaching him that religion is a convention, and establishing her relationship with him on the paltry basis. The result is that he is vain, superficial, presumptuous, and proud. He rushes into marriage, instead of happiness finds boredom, and upon discovering that his wife has run away with another, causes her to commit suicide and then kills himself. This article is in a measure prophetic of his own life. Larra's plea is for a sound education, based on true religion, an education which will teach respect for virtue and will lead one to an active life.

Mesonero considers the follies of an unwise education in his article Antes, ahora, y después.¹¹¹ As the title indicates, it is a question of the

effect of the education of one generation on the next. To begin with, Mesonero asserts that education is the force which sustains and molds almost at will the character of man. ¹¹² A woman of noble birth, educated so strictly by parents and husband that she is denied every pleasure, rebels at the age of forty-five, upon the death of her husband, and leads a life of gayety and unrestraint. In her desire to appear younger than she is, she becomes a pal to her daughter. The daughter is allowed to read any book of her choice and, though naturally home-loving, is taught that she must live according to the dictates of fashion. The result is an unhappy marriage and solitude, in the midst of which she realizes that her children are out of sympathy with her and are following in the footsteps of their parents. Mesonero does not offer any constructive plan of education, simply points out the follies of the two extremes.

D. Foreign Influence

The lack of a true nationality, untainted by foreign influences which did not suit the temperament of the Spanish people, was felt by both authors. Mesonero pictures the folly of a French education for a Spaniard. A youth so educated returned to Spain to find himself wholly out of tune with his environment and had to return to France to be happy, leaving behind him his father who had dreamed so much of the triumphant home-

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coming of his son. Mesonero ridicules the use of French phrases in conversation and the affecting of French mannerisms.

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Larra scorns the use of Latin and French interpolations in literature. Though Mesonero frequently quotes a foreign passage at the heading of his articles, Larra has few such quotations in the volume of OBRAS. He looks upon the use of these phrases as an affectation of erudition and maintains that there are enough good Spanish quotations to meet any demand for illustration.

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The realm into which both writers resent intrusion of the French influence perhaps more than in any other is that of literature. In the

early nineteenth century almost no original writing was done in Spain. So many translations of French works were made that, considering the difficulty of translating the spirit of one nation into the language of another, the majority of them were necessarily poor. Translations, especially of plays, proved so popular, however, that many able writers devoted their time and talent to this work. This fact, together with the strict rules of the neo-classic school then in vogue, created a dearth in Spain of characteristically Spanish literary productions. When the influence of French classicism waned, the romantic period was ushered in, and there was a revival of letters and masterpieces were produced under the influence of this new trend. During this period there continued to be translations of French literature, particularly dramas. Though Larra admired Alexandre Dumas and Victor Hugo, he did object to the literature of France being imposed upon a Spanish public whose beliefs and customs were entirely different from those of the country where the literature was produced. He represents the French literature of the day as that of a decrepit society which has trod every step of human civilization, leaving behind at

each step a belief or an illusion, a society without faith. To implant the products of such a society on Spanish soil is like encouraging a man to live by showing him a corpse. Larra admires Balzac for his knowledge of French society.

"Balzac has traversed the world of society with a firm step, pushing aside the brambles along the way, sometimes receiving pricks from the thorns in his effort to clear the path, and has arrived at the boundary only to see there -- what? -- an unfathomable abyss, a brackish sea, bitter and shoreless, reality, chaos, a void." He does not consider Eugene Sue, Alfred de Vigny, nor George Sand to be moved by good faith, and speaks of the "horrible" trend of their writings and the "dismal" conclusion to be drawn from them.

Mesonero thinks even less of the French novelists than does Larra. Larra admires their ability as men of letters but is out of sympathy with the spirit of their works. Mesonero admires neither the subject matter nor style. "George Sand, with her attempted philosophical dissertations -- and her crude descriptions, moves along at a pace which tires the reader. Mr. Balzac is as weighty and as tedious as George Sand." The novel of

Dumas is the reverse of these; with him the action moves along with an unusual swiftness -- the only interest consists in accumulating one incident after another. He criticizes the style of the French writers as harsh and affected. He quotes a passage: "the eyes of the heroine, buried in their orbits, were as though suspended in the globe of tears" and then says of it, "...to understand this gibberish one must be at the same time a gardener and an oculist."¹²⁰ As to subject matter, "blood and scaffolds everywhere and horrible crimes justified or scoffed at."¹²¹

The novel at this time in Spain (1840) was the least important field of literature. Those authors who did write novels were writing historical or romantic novels after the fashion of Sir Walter Scott. Mesonero did not attempt a novel. Larra wrote one, EL DONCEL DE DON ENRIQUE EL DOLIENTE, a romantic novel dealing with an impossible love. Mesonero's criticism of the French novels reveals a flair for adverse criticism which he usually conceals, in order to be consistent with his policy of offending no one.

E. Literature

As has been mentioned in the introduction, so-called romantic literature began to flourish in Spain in the year 1833. It was a period of release of individual expression and reaction to the period of French neo-classic influence in the early nineteenth century. A writer of this period expresses through the medium of the newspaper his personal reaction to the various activities of the life about him. The two writers we have chosen to consider were active during this period in contributing articles to the leading periodicals of the day, Larra mainly to REVISTA ESPAÑOLA, OBSERVADOR, and EL ESPAÑOL, Mesonero to CARTAS ESPAÑOLAS, REVISTA ESPAÑOLA, SEMANARIO PINTORESCO (his own paper), and LA ILUSTRACION.

Mesonero's consideration of literature is limited to general discussions of literary trends; he seldom criticizes the particular works of his day. He often states that he does not have the flair for politics. A writer who did not take an active part in the politics of the day was an exception. Mesonero mentions himself and Zorrilla as being about the only writers who did not

indulge in the political game. Larra, on the other hand, was profoundly interested in politics. He himself states that literature is the expression of the state of civilization of a people. In his own age, he relegates literature to a position of secondary importance, politics occupying the first place in public interest. He lays the blame for the lack of progress in Spanish letters to religious and political tyranny, and to the fact that the character of the literature itself was not investigative and progressive, but all imagination. Due to the period of French influence, Spain, lacking an inspiration in her own right, adopted the ideas of the French school, which apply particularly to the drama, as the novel was not an important field until the period of realism came in. Larra expresses the hope of Spain's one day having a literature of her own, national, representative of Spain. Along with the moral and physical liberty which Spain has gained must eventually come a rebirth of letters, an era of letters to be based on truth only, the result of an investigative and progressive age. Imagination itself, "what is it but a beautiful truth?" In this expression, Larra voices his conviction

that truth in a thing is what man finds in it through his own investigation and interpretation. This is the thought of the romanticist.

Realizing that his age was one of transition, Larra interprets letters from this viewpoint. The fight between classicism and romanticism is a result of the restlessness of the old world.¹²⁷

Speaking of literature, he says, "Our literature is nothing but an extinguished fire, among whose ashes there still flickers an occasional reluctant spark. Our golden age has already passed, and our nineteenth century has not yet arrived."¹²⁸ Poetry was in a retrospective state, still under the spell of the classical school, with its murmuring brooklets, and sad dove, and the golden or ebony locks of Phyllis. Before a new poetry could be created, it was first necessary to forget the old, and this, felt Larra, was what Spain had not yet learned to do. "Everything moves slowly with us; why should poetry alone increase its speed?"¹²⁹

He praises the romantic drama as an exponent of the new freedom in literature. "It is new, original, a comet appearing in the literary system, hidden to former ages and reserved for the explorers of the nineteenth century alone. In a word, it is

nature on the stage, liberty in literature, the right of man to be recognized, law without law." ¹³⁰

After the death of Ferdinand in 1833, there was a certain degree of freedom of the press.

Now in a mood of exultation, Larra revels in the prospect of writing in an enlightened period; ¹³¹

again, in a fit of despair, he wonders why everyone talks in eloquent terms of freedom of the press when in reality there is no such thing. ¹³²

A writer for the periodicals spends most of his time writing what he does not think and trying to make others believe what he does not believe himself. His life is spent in saying what others do not wish to hear, and in writing for the censor. ¹³³

Larra laments the dearth of real genius in Spain, and the lack of appreciation for the genius which does exist. A writer is never praised for fear that he may become puffed up with pride. ¹³⁴

If he writes a poor article, who is he, anyway, to write a good one? If he does succeed in writing a good one, "It's probably a translation", his friends will cry. If he tries to offend no one, his writings are weak, no wit nor originality in them; if he writes well and with feeling, bringing a smile to the lips of the reader, "He is a

clown"; if his writings are full of indignation against stupidity, "Heavens, what a disposition!"¹³⁵

No profession or trade in Spain, states Larra,¹³⁶ produces less for living than that of writing.

In a country where literature has hardly any reward other than fame, talent at least should be given honor in public. It is the first protection that a people can give a writer and the only one that the government cannot take away from him.¹³⁷

Mesonero has something to say about the literary man in Spain. "What is a literary man in Spain? An exotic plant, to which no tree lends its shadow; a bird which passes without building a nest; a spirit without form or color; a flame consumed by giving light to others; a star, escaped from the sky into an ungrateful world which does not recognize its value."¹³⁸

Confident of his own genius, the writer must necessarily look to his material interests, must learn to praise, to beg favors of the powerful. If he depends on his genius only, it may suffice to gain for him a distinguished place in posterity, but as long as he lives, he will suffer privations, and despair will shorten his life, leading him to to a sepulchre which his admirers will seek in

vain." ¹³⁹

Mesonero attributes the holding of public office by literary men to the influence of men of letters of the late eighteenth century who held high positions of state. ¹⁴⁰ Literature came to be ¹⁴¹ a means, not an end.

Mesonero, unlike Larra, does not find in any subject he chooses a means of expressing his views concerning the vital issues of the day. He chooses a subject for the subject itself and gives a finished picture of it. His literary views are confined to a few articles, notable Costumbres literarias and Romanticismo y los Románticos, both of ESCENAS MATRITENSES. Larra discusses literature of his day in some phase or other in no less than twenty articles besides his many dramatic criticisms.

It has already been said that Larra is romantic in tendency, Mesonero classic. One of the most famous articles of Mesonero is the above-mentioned Romanticismo y los Románticos. It is unique among Mesonero's articles of manners because he lets himself go and has great fun with his theme; he even rivals Larra in his gay moods. The article is directed against the exaggeration of

romanticism as evidenced in writings and personalities. In it he says that the word "romanticism" no doubt was heard oftener than any other in all Europe but he ponders over a definition for it. It colors everything -- literature, the fine arts, science. Any extravagance may be committed in the name of pure romanticism. He attributes the spread of romanticism to Victor Hugo who came to Madrid in 1810, found there pure romanticism, returned to Paris with his discovery, elaborated upon it, opened up shop, and proclaimed himself the Messiah of literature! The rest of the article deals with the effect of romanticism on a young would-be writer. To become a romanticist, he had first to romanticize his dress and person, then his ideas, characters, and studies. He decided to be a poet believing that this career alone would lead him to the temple of immortality. He sought to enrich the darker side of his nature by visiting cemeteries and schools of anatomy, by exploring the ruins of monasteries and testing the poisonous qualities of certain plants. By delving into the literature of the past, he was inspired to write "a few fragments in poetic prose and a few fables in prosaic verse." Everything began with exclamation points

and ended with curses. There was mention of mysterious shapes, infernal laughter, gigantic figures, yellow flowers, and carnivorous vultures. His thought ranged from suicide to the smiles of the angels. Encouraged by this first effort, it remained for him to write a play in order to become immortal. "He summoned all his intellectual forces ... and even evoked the shadows of the dead to question them on certain points; martyred histories and swallowed the dust of the archives; called upon his muse, and -- with his left eye at the romantic telescope, his phosphoric fantasy was at last inflamed and he composed a drama."

The title of his drama was ;|ELLA ...!!! Y

;|EL ...!!! Drama Romántico natural, Emblemático-sublime, anónimo, sinónimo, tétrico y espasmódico.

"The time was the fourth and fifth centuries, the action took place in all of Europe and lasted about a hundred years." This exaggerated, but highly successful, article reveals the little sympathy Mesonero had for romantic literature in general, and the great enjoyment he could get out of a subject if he warmed up to it.

F. The Press

Out of some eighty-four articles in the PANORAMA MATRITENSE and ESCENAS MATRITENSES of Mesonero there is contained only one article dealing primarily with the press of Spain. It is objective in nature, essentially a short history of the DIARIO DE MADRID, a daily, from the date of its first appearance Feb. 1, 1758, up to the time Mesonero wrote his article May, 1835. The daily started out with the front page devoted to the lives of the various saints, becoming during the years of despotism the organ of the government, and finally, by 1835, the voice of the people. Mesonero relates at length the varied interests of the paper and praises it as the source of information on any topic. In a humorous vein, he tells us that everyone from the religious old lady to the stockholder may find the notice he is seeking. The years mentioned seem to offer as great a variety of "ads" as we have in the twentieth century newspaper. The list ranges from the needs of a child to those of the dead. "And at last he is dead; he doesn't have to worry, for he will not lack a coffin and a shroud at reasonable

prices, according to the taste of the consumer."

The final thing he considers is the price. The DIARIO sold in 1835 at slightly more than one cent a day.

Turning to Larra, we find that he deals with the press in several articles, particularly Yo soy redactor,¹⁴³ El hombre pone y Dios dispone,¹⁴⁴ and Un periodico nuevo.¹⁴⁵ The three deal with the woes of being an editor. The theme of the first is "Oh, what a pleasure it is to be an editor!"; in the second all the characteristics of animal, plant, and mineral life necessary to an editor are enumerated; in the last, a proposed newspaper, to embody all the characteristics which Larra thinks a newspaper should have, is destined to oblivion, so many are the hindrances to freedom of expression. The last article is dated Jan. 22, 1835, bringing its publication within a few months of that of Mesonero's article. The three articles of Larra are written in an ironical vein, with philosophical meditations leading up to or arising out of the subject in consideration. He begins the Yo soy redactor with the cry, "By what strange fate is man always to long for that which he does not have?" The youth longs for a beard; when he has it, he

curse the barber and the razor. A man is loved by one; he prefers to win the love of the one who scorns him. An intense longing to be an editor is rewarded with an editorship; the glow of satisfaction that comes with it dies and the editor is just as disillusioned as was the writer of plays. The dire consequences of telling the truth in a review of the theater, the discovery that an editor's head should never ache, the searching for one's articles in the newspaper and never finding them, the futility of trying to write a political article, the horror of typographical errors -- these are the woes that beset an editor. The whole thing, of course, is an exaggeration. Larra no doubt had the keenest pleasure in writing for the newspaper.

In Un periodico nuevo Larra jovially criticizes the pace at which the Spain of his day moves. "Haste, rather speed, is the soul of our existence, and what is not done speedily in the nineteenth century is not done at all; from this it is easy to suspect that we never do anything in Spain." Due to this increased rate of living, the newspaper had succeeded the novel in importance. "Let us not be surprised if, faithful to their

origin, the newspapers have preserved their love for lying, which has distinguished them from other publications since the most remote times.... Innumerable are the advantages of a newspaper; there being newspapers, in the first place, it isn't necessary to study, because after all, what is there that a newspaper does not teach?" In this idea there is a parallel in Mesonero's article, but with the difference that Larra inevitably interprets with a satirical touch that brings to the reader immediate appreciation of the value of things as he sees them. The reader appreciates Mesonero's attitude but not as vividly as that of Larra. In summing up the value of a newspaper he says with irony, "Let us agree, then, that the newspaper is the great archive of human knowledge, and that if there is any means of being ignorant in this country, it is not to read a newspaper."

In the newspaper which it occurs to him he might establish (newspaper of his mind only) he proposes that it shall treat of everything. What else? He is determined to waste no words; therefore each session of the Cortes will be announced in two lines, some days less. There

will be political articles, to be sure; the censor will be the one who has the difficulty in understanding them. There will be military articles, but they will never be as weighty as their subject. Whenever there is a good book published it shall be analyzed; consequently that section will be light. Of the theater nothing will be said as long as there is nothing to say, which will be a long time. In this vein, he continues to conceive the plan for his newspaper. He decides, after all, never to publish it, as after all the difficulties which confront him, there will always be the censor.

Larra's constant cry as a journalist was for freedom of the press. Many of his articles have their inspiration in this theme.

G. The Theater

Mesonero's observations on the theater are confined for the most part to a brief history of the Spanish theater, criticisms of some of the important dramatists,¹⁴⁶ a view of the audience as it watches a performance,¹⁴⁷ and the description of the gathering of a company of actors.¹⁴⁸ Larra in his dramatic criticisms analyzes life itself, covering the field of every human emotion, and gives real insight into the status of the theater in his own day, its faults and virtues, his hopes for its future, and through it, interprets the age in which he lives.

Though Larra as a dramatic critic far surpasses Mesonero, the general observations made by the two men offer a basis of comparison of the stand taken toward the theater. Mesonero, in 1842, gives a very good survey of the status of the theater.¹⁴⁹ He reviews first the situation at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when a few gifted dramatists were achieving success in the manner of the French neo-classic school. He mentions Moratín and Quintana especially; the play LA COMEDIA NUEVA of Moratín he considers

the best play of the period. During the period of translations of French and Italian plays there was a scarcity of original works, which Mesonero attributes to the rigidity of the classic school, the strict censorship, and the political disturbances. ¹⁵¹ The best minds of the period had been

transferred from the literary field to the political so that the Spanish theater died in its infancy through total lack of sustenance. ¹⁵² The theater

was revived under the influence of the romantic movement. The types of plays being produced in Spain after the literary revolution were many: the character play, the historical drama, the political play, the Calderonian play, and the romantic drama. With all this variety, there was little originality or fixed trend, due to the fact that Spanish society itself suffered from a lack of originality. ¹⁵³

According to Larra, the theater was an indispensable diversion of the people of his time; it directed the opinion of the public who frequented it; was a moderator of customs, which, to Larra's mind, afforded the only true prosperity of a people. ¹⁵⁴ Little importance had been given to the theater, hence its peculiar state, the ridiculous

position of the poets, and the deplorable situation of the actors. To make a successful theater, says Larra, requires the co-operation of four units: the theater, the poets, the actors, and the public. These four depend greatly on the protection which the government may grant them. The public showed the lack of their co-operation by applauding poor plays, by applauding translations as heartily as original plays, by showing no appreciation of the beauties which cost the poet so much labor. A costume was apt to be approved because it was ridiculous; an exaggeration in speech or gesture was applauded, so that the actor found it difficult to seek a reputation on the basis of good acting. The public, according to Larra, was the principal cause of the low state of the Spanish theater. He urges instruction for the guilty public, a sound religious education -- "when education is founded on religion, virtue, and true learning, then it can be only a good for everyone: then only can it lead man to know his true interests in society. When the public can appreciate all the beauties of the works of the imagination, when national pride, newly-awakened, makes them demand of original minds works worthy of their

consideration; then the public will mold the actors, as the public alone can make of them what it will. Then authors will write with pleasure, actors will give an excellent performance, and the management will make generous recompensation." Granted that the public needed sound instruction, it was up to the poets to furnish it, as "the men of talent have always been the first in all nations to give the first impulse". If the authors wrote works of merit, the protection needed would necessarily follow. ¹⁵⁵ This spirit of co-operation Larra felt to be the necessary force to bring the Spanish theater out of its state of decadence.

These interpretations of Larra and Mesonero of the state of the theater show the subjectivity of the former and the objectivity of the latter. Mesonero skims the surface of outward evidence; Larra probes into the mystery of the situation and offers a solution. By suggesting a remedy for an evil Larra is objective in his subjectivity.

¹⁵⁶ Authors and actors were poorly paid. A playwright might receive fifty or a hundred dollars for a play that made a fortune for the printers. The theaters showed plays without obtaining permission from the author. Stage-managers were

poorly paid, the theater poorly decorated and dimly lighted, offering poor music and poor dancing. Actors in general Larra thought were poor. Until a move was made to establish a school for actors, all that was necessary to become one was to have a good memory or a good prompter. ¹⁵⁷

Larra devotes one article, Yo quiero ser cómico, to exposing the ignorance of the mediocre actors of his day. A young man decides to be an actor because he figures that "it is an occupation in which there is nothing to do". ¹⁵⁸ He has neither studied nor read, does not know history, costuming, or society, does not understand the human heart. But to be a king in a play, it will suffice to be haughty and look over his shoulders at his companions; if he is to be a judge, he will leave on his hat and knock on the floor with his cane; to be a knave, he will arch his brows, make his voice hoarse, and wear a mysterious air. In addition to this, if he has a good prompter, knows how to speak ill of poets even if he does not understand them, and praises plays for their language even though he doesn't know what it is, he will ¹⁵⁹ make a good actor.

Concerning the copyright of a play, Larra

says it would be futile for a playwright to bring suit for title. "It matters little whether the goddess of justice gets the fruit of our plays or the bookseller. At least we get glory through the latter and Astrea would bring us only cares and the empty shells of the oyster she had gobbled."¹⁶⁰

An author may find the title of his play changed; he is lucky if the entire role of the protagonist is not suppressed.¹⁶¹

At times Larra is enthusiastic in praise of good acting. According to his own statement he had no greater pleasure than to write praise of them. Larra loved the theater. "Our pen runs swiftly for praise. When it is a question of censure, it is only by force of hours that we can finish even the briefest article for the press."¹⁶²

Larra is equally free with his praise and censure of the plays of the period. He is unusually enthusiastic in his praise of the drama *LOS AMANTES DE TERUEL* by Hartzzenbusch. After seeing two particularly bad plays, he says, "There were shown in the theater two plays with the usual hissing: for hissing and plays are things as inseparable as a corpse and a dead

man." ¹⁶³ "If the theater had good plays, how could we suffer these tatters of farce that she shows us?" ¹⁶⁴

Larra believes that the historical drama of the romantic school is the faithful representation of life. In it, kings and vassals, great and small, public and private interests, are mingled as in the world. Each character talks in language fitting to his sphere. The result will be true to nature, as the language of the heart is the same in all classes, and emotions are universal. ¹⁶⁵

In another article, Larra goes to the extreme of despondency concerning the situation and expresses no hope for betterment. "The Spanish theater is a confusion; some author, some translator; with these exceptions everything is chaos and oblivion, rather, a complete ignorance of art, of the theater, and of acting. . . . If my advice is to be followed, let the theater shut down, because there is no reform or improvement possible where there is no love for art." ¹⁶⁶

Larra believed that the theater reflected rather than molded the morals and manners of a people. ¹⁶⁷ The government afforded little protection to the theater and had always tolerated

it as an unavoidable evil. Larra quotes the government as saying, "The theater is bad; I consent to the thief as long as he renders me as tribute part of the spoils."¹⁶⁸

Larra accounts for the crimes and horrors of the plays of his time as an expression of the age. "We go to the theater to see reproduced the sensations which affect us most deeply in life. In the present time neither the poet, the actor, nor the spectator has any desire to laugh; the pictures of our time affect us seriously and the events of which we are so interested a part can predispose us for no other kind of theater.... Our age is like the drunk man, whose thirst torments him; he can quench it only with wine, for water seems insipid when his longing leads him to taste it."¹⁶⁹

Mesonero does not deal with the representation of the play of his time. He does give us a picture of the forming of a company of actors during the season of Lent. In this he confesses, "For me the inner workings of the theater are as unknown as the isles of the polar region."¹⁷⁰

H. Scattered Articles

Mesonero and Larra were both loyal Spaniards; they wanted to see a day when Spain should achieve a nationalism characteristically Spanish. But as progressive men, they were eager to see material improvement and realized that many innovations necessarily should be borrowed from more progressive countries. Mesonero busied himself about doing what he could to arouse public sentiment toward beautifying and modernizing his city. His orderly and sympathetic nature urged him on to this task of improvement in which he took much delight. The backward spirit of the age, the lack of originality, and the subservience then prevalent hurt Larra to the quick. His sensitive nature rebelled at any flaw in the soul of his nation. Mesonero was chiefly concerned with the exterior, Larra with the interior, so that we have Mesonero writing of improvement in buildings, of picturesque street scenes and Spanish customs, of employment and unemployment, of the stock exchange, public monuments, and fashion in dress at the same time that Larra is writing of politics, of the Carlist wars, the censorship of the press, and the soul of his

people. Mesonero is objective in his attitude, Larra subjective. If Mesonero writes of modes of dress, it is to compare them with the political situation.¹⁷² Mesonero describes a carnival and the masked figures for the sake of the picturesque theme;¹⁷³ Larra takes advantage of the opportunity to say that "all the world is a mask and the whole year long is a carnival."¹⁷⁴

Both writers were men of judgment who naturally would interpret similarly the general trend of any great movement. These general trends of the age in which the men lived have been considered. It remains to review briefly the questions or subjects treated by one that are not developed to any extent by the other.

No attempt will be made to interpret the political situation as presented by Larra, as the careful study which the political articles require for correct interpretation has not been made. A general grouping will suffice for the purpose of this work which is in the main confined to the true article of manners. The political are those groups entitled Cartas de Figaro, Cartas de un liberal, and Dos liberales. These deal mainly with the troubles of the liberals under the

existent regime, and the Carlist question. Three separate articles, also, are directed against the Carlists: Nadie pase sin hablar al portero,¹⁷⁵ La planta nueva o el faccioso,¹⁷⁶ and La junta de Castel-o-branco.¹⁷⁷

Larra treats of very few subjects of a festive nature, while many of Mesonero's articles are of this type. He describes the animation of street scenes in the articles La calle de Toledo,¹⁷⁸ Las ferias,¹⁷⁹ El día de fiesta,¹⁸⁰ and Paseo por las calles.¹⁸¹ Mesonero loved to watch his people in their gay celebration of a national festival and loved to write of them, probably realizing that future generations could get a picture of customs from his articles. Articles describing festival days are La Romería de San Isidro,¹⁸² La procesión del Corpus,¹⁸³ and El Martes de Carnaval y el Miércoles de Ceniza.¹⁸⁴ Interior scenes of animated interest are La comedia casera,¹⁸⁵ which pictures the audience at an amateur play; Las tiendas,¹⁸⁶ describing the shifting scene in a store on a busy shopping day; Las tres tertulias,¹⁸⁶ a picture of polite society enjoying doing nothing; El dómينو,¹⁸⁸ showing the spirit of carnival and the dance; El patio de correos,¹⁸⁹ a scene of confusion in the

postoffice where all types, with as many dialects,
 have come to get their mail; Las casas de baños,¹⁹⁰
 telling of the popularity of the public bath houses,
 from the shabby to the magnificent, in all styles
 from the Greek to the Chinese;¹⁹¹ La Bolsa,¹⁹² a
 description of the stock exchange with its crowd
 of eager merchants, moneylenders, and brokers with
 their babble of certificates and per cents; La
exposición de pinturas,¹⁹³ an exhibit of paintings
 where the classics, the romantics, the practical-
 minded, the ignorant and the children reveal
 their reaction to the various works of art; La
posada, o España en Madrid,¹⁹⁴ a long article
 without much interest to the casual reader, but
 which contains descriptions of typical provincials
 and conversations in dialect which lend a touch
 of local color. All of these articles of Mesonero
 so full of pictorial interest are valuable docu-
 ments of picturesque customs and offer a study of
 the types of people in Madrid of that day. There
 remain a few articles to be mentioned for their
 individual interest.¹⁹⁵ El retrato, the first
 article of Mesonero's to be published in CARTAS
 ESPAÑOLAS and the one which launched him upon
 his career as a costumbrista, is an appealingly

written sketch of the varied fortunes and fate of
the portrait of a friend. La filarmonia ¹⁹⁶ is the
only article in either Mesonero's or Larra's
works dealing with the Italian light opera popular
in the early nineteenth century and which reached
its height of popularity in 1831. El sombrero
y la mantilla ¹⁹⁷ is a fashion sketch. Evidently
the small hat for women was coming into vogue in
Mesonero's time. Mesonero did not like the style,
as Paquita won love instead of Serafina because
of her mantilla. A prima noche ¹⁹⁸ contains a
sketch of the principal cafés in Madrid popular
as meeting places in the early evening. El
cesante ¹⁹⁹ deals with retirement on a pension.
Madrid a la luna ²⁰⁰ is a picture of Madrid by
moonlight after midnight, with the night watchman
as the principal figure. In Al amor de la lumbre
o el brasero ²⁰¹ Mesonero laments the passing of the
Spanish brazier to cede to the French chimney.
"The brazier is going, as are the capes and the
mantillas, as went the nobility of our ancestors,
the faith of our fathers, and as our own national
existence is going. And the foreign chimney ...
the laws, literature, customs, and the language of
other countries are taking hold of this society

which disowns her history, of this ungrateful daughter who pretends to be ignorant of her forefather's name."

CHAPTER IV

PERSONALITY

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A. Philosophy of Life

In studying the writings of a man one becomes acquainted with his personality, whether it be objectively expressed or may be read between the lines. Larra expresses his feelings freely, so that his personality permeates his work. His philosophy of life, based upon living as he experiences it himself, may be interpreted as follows:

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Man longs for something he does not possess.

He strives, wins, and does not find the satisfaction

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he hoped for. The joy is in the expectation.

This lack of real satisfaction creates in him a

restlessness, a desire for constant change and

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variety. Life is attractive because it offers

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this variety. Progress is continual change.

A thing is interesting because it is new. It has

promise. This urge for change felt by Larra makes of him a critic, gives him a desire to see improve-

ment. Man may be content with his surroundings

simply because he has become accustomed through

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laziness to have a fondness for them. Convention

is born of laziness. ²⁰⁸ But life demands action.
 It is better to do something wrong and then to
 right it than to do nothing. ²⁰⁹ Circumstances do
 not make the man; talent is usually superior to
 the situation. ²¹⁰ Man has pity for the weak; only
 the superior will win. ²¹¹ It is given to genius
 to open new paths; ²¹² the superior man has a
 sacred obligation to humanity as a leader. ²¹³ Man
 in general in society is only what education and
 government make of him. The true Spaniard, then,
 is the one who will say to his fellowmen, "The
 goal is further on; walk faster if you wish to be
 the first to reach it." ²¹⁴ Flattery is the worst
 enemy to progress. The need of the public is a
 sound education based on religion, virtue and true
 learning. The only difficulty for man is to find
 wherein lies his real interest in life, and this
 only a sound training can give. ²¹⁵ Truth, as
 revealed by nature, should be the motive in every
 act or art. ²¹⁶ Literature should be the expression
 of the science and intellectual progress of the
 age. ²¹⁷ Nature is so varied that any art which
 represents it will necessarily reflect its differ-
 ent aspects, so that a romantic drama with its
 horrors may not be an unnatural expression of

life. The expression of the feeling of a man's heart makes his works and his life sincere. The head may rule the heart, but usually at the expense of the heart. A thought, if sublime, takes hold of the heart and the word used to express it will necessarily be sublime. ²¹⁹

The sincerity of a feeling takes care of the expression of it. Life, after all, is a journey. The traveler doesn't know where he is going but he believes his destination is happiness. Anyone who may be disillusioned has no right to discourage the one who is seeking the good of life as he goes along. ²²⁰ The world is difficult, however; it is a world of illusion and strife, and supreme peace comes only after death.

This brief interpretation of life in general is based on passages chosen from the works of Larra which I believe to be the sincere expression of his views on life. They do not reveal the momentary passions of great jubilation or utter disillusionment. Larra's moods color his writings -- this is a trait which makes the reader sympathize with him as a personality. What he has to say is given added vitality because of this expression of the heart. The reader recognizes a mood in

the writer. If it is one of exuberance, he may be carried along with it; if it is one of despair, the relative value of the situation is not lost sight of. The tensivity of the mood brings out the subject in clear relief. It is only occasionally that Larra reaches the extremes of elation or despondency. In his articles he is usually the satirist of clear vision pointing out the follies of his day humorously or ironically, always with intelligent understanding and convincing style. He carries out his characteristic love of variety in his articles and in the moods in which he writes them. In one article he says himself that laughter and tears go hand in hand.²²¹ Perhaps in no article better than Figaro de vuelta does he show us the jubilant side of his nature. He has just returned from France and his joy at being in Spain again inspires in him hope and praise for his country. "His native land is more necessary to the Spaniard than his church."²²² Turning to the other extreme, El Día de Difuntos shows his spirits at their lowest ebb. He fancies Madrid a vast cemetery where each house is a family tomb, in each street an incident lies buried, and each heart is the urn of a hope or of a desire. By

giving expression so freely to his own feeling, Larra belongs to the romantic school, though at no time does he acknowledge the title of romanticist. Contrast to this picture of Madrid one which Mesonero gives to us in Madrid a la luna:

"In the moon I have the misfortune of being able to see only the moon; and in the towers, towers; and in the town of Madrid a collection of men and streets and houses."²²³

In how far does Mesonero reveal his personality to us in his articles of manners? Both writers express in prefaces and in the body of their writings their purpose in presenting them to the public. Here is revealed to some extent the personality of the men but it will be the purpose here to interpret their personality through their writings only. It is a much more difficult task to discover what Mesonero felt, what was his personal reaction to the life about him. This very difficulty tells us that Mesonero did not wear his heart on his sleeve as Larra did. At every turn he endeavors to present things in their true light, to offer a finished picture for the appreciation of the public, with the values predetermined and artistically, evenly developed.

He has enjoyed his subject and has made a faithful reproduction. Larra paints the picture as he writes, leaving a dash of color here or there, perhaps at times causing a lack of proportion, but making his subject unusually palpable. This does not imply that Mesonero is devoid of real feeling. He is perhaps more normal than Larra. He has a more kindly philosophy, not so much upset by life's emotions. He does not take himself so seriously, so that his panorama of Madrid and her customs, written for the sake of a faithful reproduction, remains a document of greater pictorial than human interest. We feel that Larra's writings are prompted by the joy of writing, by the need to express himself. In a dialogue in one of his articles, in answer to a question as to what benefit he has derived from his writings, he confesses that the pleasure he has had in the writing of them has more than satisfied him.

Mesonero is not concerned, as Larra often is, with his personal feelings, but with the appeal of the subject he is treating. If it is a question of office seeking or of the police, he is calmly serious or satirical, impersonally so. In a more jovial or picturesque theme, he loves to

look at his subject through the eyes of the spectator and do no more than record what he sees, in a pleasing, rather whimsical style. ²²⁶

This is his usual method. In a few cases, he goes beyond moderation and becomes hilarious, as in Romanticismo y los románticos, ²²⁷ or pessimistic as in Inconvenientes de Madrid. ²²⁸ Mesonero's personality must be inferred. By the nature of his writings in subject matter and in presentation, it is evident that Mesonero was a man of even temperament, sympathetic with his fellowmen, gifted with a talent for observation and jovial criticism, maintaining a middle course, never becoming petty or lofty.

B. Satire

Both men used satire as a tool for portraying the follies of their fellowmen. Larra's is sharp, often pessimistic and impatient. Mesonero's is mild, usually impersonal. Both are frequently jovially satirical. The best example we have of Mesonero in his humorous satire is the above-mentioned article directed against the extremes to which romanticism was often carried by its exponents. This article appeared in September of 1837 when romantic letters were at their height in Spain. It is a good-natured diatribe and was accepted good-naturedly by the type of romanticist censured. In it, Mesonero is carried away with his subject as he seldom is, and enjoys himself to the utmost in developing it.

In addition to that mentioned, the most of Mesonero's satire is, rather, gentle ridicule, with possible the exception of the article Inconvenientes de Madrid in which he exhibits his impatience with the pretense of ambitious society and the furors of politics. In every case where satire is employed, though effective, it is used with caution. In the hands of Larra, it is a

weapon often used, though never unfairly directed toward an individual; it is satire as universal as it is keen.

Examples have been chosen which it is hoped will illustrate Larra's gift of satire and his method of employing it. In an article on an author's right of ownership to his own play, he says, "We really do not understand why an author should be owner of his play; true, it seems that in society everyone should be owner of what is his; but this doesn't apply by any means to poets. The poet is an animal who, like the monkey, was created to amuse others for nothing; his things do not belong to him, but to the first person who comes along and appropriates them ... God created the poet for the bookseller, as the rat for the cat."²²⁹

La gran verdad descubierta is a short satire. "And they say that great political upheavals are good for nothing. A lie! An atrocious lie! From the conflict of opinions is born truth. Do you know what was discovered in Spain, in Madrid, just two days ago? It was discovered, decided, and determined that 'The law protects and assures individual liberty'! A hidden secret,

unheard of or even suspected. . . . Now that this is written down in black and white, and officially approved, let's see who will not go straight. . . . Discussion, discussion -- there's the secret. ²³⁰
 Praise to this great truth just revealed."

Another typical example is chosen from Tercera carta de un liberal de acá a un liberal de allá. "You ask me wheter it is a representative government that we have? You know, often I do not understand your questions. Everything is representative here. Every liberal is a pure, living representation of the passion of Jesus, for the one who is not whipped is crucified. Every Spaniard represents a sad role in the drama of life, and our own native land is within two inches of representing the picture of hunger. Everything is pure representation -- to come to me, then, with the question whether or not we have a representative government is to ask a ²³¹ drunk man if he drinks wine."

One of the most interesting of the short satirical articles of Larra is Lo que no se puede decir no se debe decir, in reference to the press. In this he says, "One thing I abhor -- these men who are always opposing everything; no government

pleases them, not even the one we have today...
Not I. God forbid. Man must be docile and sub-
missive.... I want to write an article, for
example. What shall I do? Nothing -- what an
independent writer should do in times like these.
I begin by putting at the head of my article
"What cannot be said must not be said." With this
truth set down, I close my eyes and venerate the
law."
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C. Humor

In contrasting the humor of Larra and Mesonero, that of Larra may be said to be lively and spontaneous, that of Mesonero quiet and reflective. Larra's enjoyment of a situation is contagious. The turn of a phrase may provoke laughter. A humorous passage of Mesonero's is more liable to bring a smile to the lips of the reader, or a passive recognition of the presence of humor. But Mesonero's sense of humor is not to be depreciated. It is there to be enjoyed, and is often highly pleasing, but that is the difference -- it is pleasing rather than amusing.

In neither writer is humor a dominating trait. With Larra it is a gift. It occurs only occasionally, but brings immediate appreciation or response. It is the way Larra expresses a thought which constitutes the humor. He is intentional in his presentation of it; the reader enjoys the fun Larra has had in saying it. It is this occasional flash of humor, here and there, in a phrase, in a sentence, or perhaps in a paragraph, that shows his wit. He sometimes develops a humorous situation and dwells upon it, as in El

Castellano Viejo, but seldom, and it is not in these passages that his best humor is found. On the other hand, Mesonero often presents a humorous situation. He even has articles which are written for the sake of the humorous theme, as El amante corto de vista. In these passages, however, the humor is usually no more than pleasing. Mesonero's best work in a humorous vein is the article El Romanticismo y los románticos, mentioned in the discussion on satire. This belongs rather to the field of humorous satire and is an exception to Mesonero's usual style. The style he most frequently uses in humor is the whimsical, and is well illustrated in his article El retrato, an appealingly written article, before mentioned, concerning the fate of a friend's portrait.

D. Conclusion

These two men, leading writers of articles of manners of the nineteenth century, were thus ever at variance in mode and manner of writing, in their reaction to the forces ruling the indecisive age in which they were living. The character of the period itself, the struggles of Spain to emerge a modern nation after centuries of suppression, appealed to the corrective instincts of these two able literary men. Both were lovers of progress, of their nation, of their countrymen. Larra, on the one hand, chose to remonstrate with his nation over her sluggish soul, sought to arouse in the heart of his people a desire for a progressive Spain. His writings, in their brilliant style, reveal the eager and impatient heart of youth. Mesonero, in viewing the changing characteristics of the epoch, was delighted to find so many situations, institutions, and customs that offered themselves for permanent recording. His orderly soul urged him on to undertake and succeed in many enterprises for improvement of his city, but all the while he loved the Spain that was going, and seemed to wish to record her features

before they gave way to the new. We know that he viewed a situation and pondered over it for the pure pleasure that he had in the pondering. Larra sensed a situation, worked in and through it, and expounded upon it for the great joy he had in action, in expressing himself and urging others to expression. It might be said that in the sea of life Larra kept to the center while Mesonero watched from the shore. When the waters were smooth, Larra's spirit was untrammled and he was happy and light-hearted. When the waters became rough, he was forced to cry out, to urge others to do something before the waves should effect complete destruction. Being in the midst of things, he wrote of vital issues of the day -- of politics, of the spirit of the times, of literature, the press, and the theater. His writings are full of the vitality of personal experience, Mesonero's of personal observation. Larra's work is dynamic, Mesonero's panoramic. Larra talks, tells us what he feels. He is like the modern writer in that what he feels at the moment is more important than the subject he is considering, if the subject arouses in him a desire for expression. His pen is active in

expressing what his heart feels. He writes with originality at every turn; his genius and his alert mind enable him to do it. His satire is keen; he was too much concerned to be mild. His humor is spontaneous; he knows laughter.

Mesonero, more detached, more calm, achieves unusual success in picturing the customs of his people. Often he is concerned with the spirit of his people, but not as Larra is. He writes of literature and the theater, but not at length. He is most able in his articles of a festive nature, of which he wrote many, Larra few. Mesonero writes an article to give a concrete picture. His articles in general are inclined to be picturesque, in a descriptive or narrative style, usually narrative. The picture he is giving is the important thing; Larra creates the picture just as clearly if he wishes, but the picture is a means, not an end. Mesonero wishes to leave a faithful impression of the effect. He observes and records; Larra observes, delves into the situation bodily, and emerges to utter the dictates of his heart. Mesonero, in recording the effect, is the classicist. Larra, in recording the impression of the effect, is the romanticist.

It may be said in conclusion that as a literary genius, Larra towers above Mesonero. As writers of true articles of manners, the two are probably equally noted. As a recorder of picturesque customs, Mesonero excels.

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 22. Idem: Page VIII
 23. Idem: Page XXII
 24. Mesonero Romanos, Ramón de: TRABAJOS NO COLECCIONADOS, Madrid, 1903, Vol. 1, Pages 3 - 65
 25. Idem: Pages 66 - 104
 26. Idem: Int., Page XIII
 27. Northrup: Op. cit., Pages VI and VII
 28. Larra: OBRAS, op. cit., Int., Page II
 29. Ibidem
 30. Cejador y Frauca: Op. cit., Vol. 7, Page 111
 31. Larra: OBRAS, Page 536
 32. Idem: Page 548
 33. Mesonero Romanos: MEMORIAS DE UN SETENTON Madrid, 1926, Vol. 1, Pages 124 and 125
 34. Northrup: Op. cit., Int., Page VI
 35. Mesonero: TRABAJOS NO COLECCIONADOS Madrid, 1903, Vol. II, Page 626
- According to his sons, he did not marry until 1849, at the age of forty-five.

36. Francisco, one of his sons, directed the publication of a new edition of his father's works in 1925-26, the latest edition of Mesonero's works. His three children, Francisco, Manuel, and Mercedes published two volumes (see note 24) 1903-1905 containing works not published in any regular edition.
37. Mesonero: TRABAJOS NO COLECCIONADOS
Madrid, 1903, Vol. 1, Int., Page IX
38. Mesonero: ESCENAS MATRITENSES
Madrid, 1925, Pages 99 - 101
39. CLASICOS CASTELLANOS: LARRA, Vol. III
Madrid, 1927, Int., Page XXIX
40. Northrup: Op. cit., Pages XVI - XVII
41. Idem: Page XVI
42. UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PUBLICATIONS IN
MODERN PHILOLOGY, Berkeley, 1919, Vol. VII,
Page 95
43. César Barja: LIBROS Y AUTORES MODERNOS
Madrid, 1924, Page 271
44. Cejador y Frauca: Op. cit., Page III
45. Larra: OBRAS, Page 557
46. Probably the best known are ¿Quién es el
público y dónde se encuentra? (page 3 of OBRAS)
El casarse pronto y mal (page 31), El caste-

llano viejo (page 35), and Vuelva usted mañana (page 52).

47. Peers, E. Allison: CINCO ARTICULOS DE MARIANO JOSE DE LARRA, New York, 1929, Int., Page III
48. REVISTA CONTEMPORANEA
Madrid, 1889, Vol. LXXIV, Page 252
49. Idem: Page 252
50. See note 36.
51. Larra: OBRAS, Page 512
52. Idem: Page 515
53. Idem: Page 516
54. Mesonero: ESCENAS, Pages 413 and 414
55. Larra: OBRAS, Page 543
56. Idem: Page 365
57. Mesonero: ESCENAS, Page 41
58. Idem: Page 44; the year 1808 dates the French occupation of Madrid; 14 marks the beginning of the despotic rule of Ferdinand VII; in 1823 the French had again gained power in Spain, and Ferdinand put an end to the constitutional government; in 33 Ferdinand died and Spain returned to the comparative freedom of 1820; in 1836 the Constitution of 1812 was declared workable.
59. Mesonero: ESCENAS, Page 45

60. Larra: OBRAS, Page 323
61. Idem: Pages 452 - 454
62. Idem: Pages 52 - 56
63. Idem: Pages 133 - 145
64. Mesonero: TIPOS Y CARACTERES
Madrid, 1925, Pages 113 and 122
65. Larra: OBRAS, Page 371
66. Mesonero: PANORAMA MATRITENSE
Madrid, 1925, Page 407
67. Idem: Page 408
68. Idem: Pages 409 - 410
69. Mesonero: ESCENAS, Page 42
70. Idem: Pages 53 - 59; Larra: OBRAS, Pages
370 - 372
71. Idem: Page 273
72. Ibidem
73. Mesonero: PANORAMA, Page 329
74. Idem: Page 340
75. Larra: OBRAS, Page 285
76. Idem: Page 286
77. Idem: Page 343
78. Idem: Page 345
79. Idem: Pages 445 - 448
80. Mesonero: PANORAMA, Pages 197 - 199
81. Idem: Page 94

82. Idem: Pages 99 - 101
83. Idem: Page 307
84. Idem: Pages 111 and 112; Larra: OBRAS,
Page 291
85. Mesonero: PANORAMA, Page 112
86. Idem: Page 113
87. Idem: Page 114; Góngora is a Spanish author
noted for his ambiguous style.
88. Larra: OBRAS, Page 286
89. Ibidem
90. Mesonero: PANORAMA, Page 95
91. Idem: Page 81
92. Idem: Page 120
93. Idem: Page 203
94. Idem: Page 215
95. Idem: Page 219
96. Idem: Page 120
97. Idem: Page 285
98. Mesonero: ESCENAS, Pages 402 - 403
99. Mesonero: PANORAMA, Page 237
100. Idem: Page 192
101. Larra: OBRAS, Page 382
102. Idem: Page 383
103. Idem: Page 385
104. Idem: Page 40
105. Idem: Page 364

106. Idem: Page 365
107. Mesonero: ESCENAS, Page 297
108. Larra: OBRAS, Page 504
109. Idem: Page 409
110. Idem: Pages 31 - 34
111. Mesonero: ESCENAS, Pages 203 - 220
112. Idem: Page 204
113. Mesonero: PANORAMA, Pages 239 - 246
114. Mesonero: ESCENAS, Page 384
115. Larra: OBRAS, Pages 25 - 26
116. Idem: Page 518
117. Idem: Page 514
118. Ibidem
119. Mesonero: TRABAJOS NO COLECCIONADOS, Vol. 1, Page 511; Article is dated 1840.
120. Idem, Page 513
121. Ibidem
122. Mesonero: ESCENAS, Page 72
123. Larra: OBRAS, Pages 534, 520, and 473
124. Idem: Page 473
125. Idem: Page 474
126. Ibidem
127. Larra: OBRAS, Page 55
128. Idem: Page 395
129. Ibidem

130. Idem: Page 411
131. Idem: Page 456
132. Idem: Pages 466 and 357
133. Idem: Page 371
134. Idem: Page 12
135. Idem: Page 282
136. Idem: Page 444
137. Idem: Page 495
138. Mesonero: ESCENAS, Page 57
139. Idem: Page 58
140. Idem: Page 59
141. Idem: Page 60
142. Mesonero: PANORAMA, Page 345
143. Larra: OBRAS, Page 266
144. Idem: Page 327
145. Idem: Page 386
146. BIBLIOTECA DE AUTORES ESPAÑOLES
Madrid, Vols. 43, 45, and 47
147. Mesonero: ESCENAS, Page 283
148. Mesonero: PANORAMA, Page 61
149. TRABAJOS NO COLECCIONADOS: Ubi supra,
Vol. II, Pages 416 - 426
150. Idem: Pages 416 and 417
151. Idem: Page 418
152. Idem: Page 419

153. Idem: Page 425; On pages 427 - 430 of this article Mesonero gives a list of original Spanish plays from 1823-43, with their authors.
154. Larra: OBRAS, Page 41
155. Idem: Pages 42 and 43
156. Idem: Page 44
157. Idem: Page 45
158. Idem: Page 264
159. Idem: Page 265
160. Idem: Page 23
161. Idem: Page 24
162. Idem: Page 278
163. Idem: Page 293
164. Idem: Page 294
165. Idem: Page 338
166. Idem: Pages 498 and 499
167. Idem: Pages 485 and 535
168. Idem: Pages 485 and 486
169. Idem: Page 503
170. Mesonero: PANORAMA, Page 62
171. Idem: Page 399
172. Larra: OBRAS, Page 352
173. Mesonero: PANORAMA, Page 265
174. Larra: OBRAS, Page 57

175. Idem: Page 297
176. Idem: Page 300
177. Idem: Page 303
178. Mesonero: PANORAMA, Page 37
179. Idem: Page 177
180. Idem: Page 309
181. Idem: Page 367
182. Idem: Page 71
183. Idem: Page 355
184. Mesonero: ESCENAS, Page 339
185. Mesonero: PANORAMA, Page 45
186. Idem: Page 161
187. Idem: Page 229
188. Idem: Page 265
189. Idem: Page 377
190. Idem: Page 385
191. Mesonero mentions in this article that the population of Madrid at that time was 200,000.
192. Mesonero: ESCENAS, Page 171
193. Idem: Page 313
194. Idem: Pages 355 - 380
195. Mesonero: PANORAMA, Page 29
196. Idem: Page 293
197. Idem: Page 399
198. Idem: Page 407

199. Mesonero: ESCENAS, Page 75
200. Idem: Page 185
201. Idem: Page 381
202. Larra: OBRAS, Page 266
203. Idem: Pages 266 and 320
204. Idem: Pages 290 and 425
205. Idem: Page 290
206. Idem: Page 593
207. Idem: Page 290
208. Idem: Page 289
209. Idem: Page 323
210. Idem: Pages 309 and 330
211. Idem: Page 557
212. Idem: Page 74.
213. Idem: Page 43
214. Idem: Page 64
215. Idem: Page 42
216. Idem: Pages 477 and 534
217. Idem: Page 477
218. Idem: Page 534
219. Idem: Page 288
220. Idem: Page 518
221. Idem: Page 315
222. Idem: Page 455
223. Mesonero: ESCENAS, Page 187

224. Larra: OBRAS, Page 318
225. Mesonero: PANORAMA, Pages 79-85 or 299-307
226. Idem: Pages 29-35 or 99-108
227. Mesonero: ESCENAS, Pages 113-129
228. Idem: Pages 389-403
229. Larra: OBRAS, Page 23
230. Idem: Page 354
231. Idem: Page 377
232. Idem: Page 379

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