THE REGIONALISM OF JOSE MARIA DE PEREDA

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PREFACE

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CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

a. Youth and Adolescence

José María de Pereda, the youngest of a family of twenty-two children, was born February 6, 1833, in Polanco, a village of the province of Santander, the son of Don Juan Francisco de Pereda y Haro and Doña Bárbara Sánchez de Porrúa. His mother was a lady of culture and refinement, keenly interested in an adequate education for her children. To this end the family moved to Santander and José María entered the Instituto Cantabro in October, 1844.

Due doubtless more to the bestial ferocity of the schoolmaster, Don Bernabe, than to any predilection for belles lettres, Pereda became an accomplished Latin scholar. This phase of his secondary education comprises the years from 1844 to 1850. It was then decided that for the luster of the house, and as a testimony to its patrician standing, Pereda should enter the army. Accordingly, in the autumn of 1852 he went to Madrid to begin the studies that were to prepare him for the artillery branch of the service.

1. See Sotileza for evidence of Pereda's Latin training, and chapter IX for a picture of Don Bernabe.
His journey to the capital and his subsequent adventures during his two years residence there are colorfully described in his later writings.

He found the study of mathematics irksome, and soon began to spend his evenings in the theatres and at the café La esmeralda, the latter being a rendezvous of many of the literary celebrities of the day. In spite of the opinions of many of his friends to the contrary, Pereda thought he could make a soldier of himself.

To this end he stayed on at Madrid even after he had lost all interest in his proposed vocation. More and more of his time was being spent in the reading of novels, especially those of Paul de Kock and Dumas, père. He was a witness to the street fighting of '54. Suddenly, seized with an overwhelming desire to be among his own people, and convinced finally that God had called him by some other road, he gave up his studies in Madrid and returned to Santander at the end of 1854. As a matter of fact, his contacts with literary men during this period were of a very superficial nature and he did no writing of his own.

In 1855 his nerves were badly shattered as a result

1. Apuntes para la biografía de Pereda: El diario montañés, número extraordinario, Santander, May 1, 1906, p.3.
of an attack of cholera and he was obliged a little later to go to Andalucía for his health. Upon his return, Castor Gutiérrez de la Torre founded "La abeja montañesa", a periodical in which many of Pereda's subsequent writings were to appear. He was active during this period in the literary club El ateneo chico, whose membership comprised a group of young intellectuals, students for the most part in the university. These men were largely responsible for his first literary attempts.

His first contribution was a humorous article, Ya escampa, which was published in "La abeja montañesa", August 25, 1858. It was signed P, as were all of his writings until July 20, 1864, at which time he first affixed his full name to an article Los zanganos de la prensa. In collaboration with Eduardo Bustillo, he wrote dramatic and literary criticisms for the above periodical. A little later, Pereda, Sinforoso Quintanilla, and Juan de Palayo founded the review "El Tío Cayetano". For this review he wrote Las visitas, El trovador, El jandalo, and La Primavera. From 1860 to 1863 he wrote five dramatic pieces: Tanto tienes, tanto vales, Palos en seco, Marchar con el siglo, Mundo, amor y vanidad, and Terrones y pergaminos. These were unsuccessful in the main, although Tanto tienes, tanto vales, a
one-act play in romance, was presented upon the occasion of the visit of Isabel II to Santander, August 4, 1861.

In 1869 Pereda married Doña Diodora de la Revilla y Huidobro.

b. From Escenas montañesas to 1874

The Escenas appeared in a collection in 1864 edited by Jubera y San Martín. An editorial in La correspondencia de España of November 25 of that year recommended them to the public, and soon after Pereda received the hearty congratulations of Hartzenbusch, Mesonero Romanos and Antonio Flores. Pereda's neighbors, however, gave them but scant attention, as did the Madrid press. One paper, El faro asturiano, praised them generously, and expressed the opinion that their style was worthy of being imitated. Pereda's realism was too strong for a public brought up on Trueba's rose-water sentimentalism. The latter's prologue to the collection did much damage to the author's reputation, since Trueba spoke too emphatically of Pereda's "pessimism", his tendency to sublimate the qualities of the Montaña, and his penchant for photo-

graphing the ugly. La gaceta del comercio gave the
Fagutax a frigid reception of some nineteen lines,
and took the occasion to predict no more than a
"succès d'estime" for Falos en seco.

In November, 1864, Pereda went to Paris for some
months devoted to reading and to the theatre. Upon
his return, the Ateneo Cientifico y Literario was
founded, and Pereda was made secretary. He took
appointment to this minor position not as a personal
affront, but as an insult to his literary achieve-
ments, since he was the only member of the staff who
had published anything to date. He sensed more and
more that Trueba's disparaging criticism was making
itself felt, in spite of the fact that a certain
group of educated people were praising him, and that
La robla and A los indias had appeared in "El mundo
universal", a periodical which was enjoying great
fame at that time. While such difficulties lose
their significance in the light of Pereda's proven
genius, mention is made of them to show the opposition
that he encountered at first hand; the aversion and
antipathy that the realistic Renaissance encountered.
In spite of his firm convictions and his unshakable
literary inclinations it is evident that caustic
editorial comment found an easy mark in a man of his
delicate sensibilities, for he wrote no more for the
theatre, and contributed no more "cuadros" to the "Abeja montañesa" after La romería de Carmen. The only one appearing therein after 1865 is Los baños del sardínaro, which can scarcely be classed as a "cuadro"—being more strictly speaking a chronicle, and innocuously urban—not one to set on edge the nerves of those ladies who made such wry faces upon the appearance of some of the author's earlier work. The remainder were published in "Almanaque de las dos Asturias", and in volumes VII, VIII, X, XII, and XIII of "Revista de España".

The turbulent events surrounding the 24th of September drew Pereda into journalism again and he resumed the publication of "El Tío Cayetano". Until 1872 he was, doubtless impelled more by religious and esthetic impulses than any others, a politician. He wrote extensively for this magazine and showed himself to be a decided Carlist. Publication was again discontinued, due to disagreements among the staff, many of whom were supporters of Alfonso. Pereda took an active part in the organization of the "Círculo Tradicionalista de Santander", and then went to the Cortes representing the district of Cabuer-niga. This period of his life also finds expression
In his later work, he was thoroughly disgusted with political life, but did not at once return to literature in spite of the success enjoyed by the second part of the Escenas, and the fact that he was made a corresponding member of the Academy. While in Congress, Muñoz de Arce complimented him on his literary achievements, and Pérez Galdós, in "El debate," spoke favorably of Tipos y paisajes. These demonstrations were beginning to soften the old thorn in his side--Trueba's acrimonious criticism, yet in spite of them he had no serious intentions at this time of resuming his literary career. Finding himself in 1872 the possessor of an adequate fortune, he occupied himself with the building of a beautiful home, surrounded by a magnificent park, but, as one commentator has naively pointed out, "failed to provide himself at the time with a study, an office, a library, or even a table at which he could write."

Second Period.

It was V. Venéndez y Pelayo who, after repeated exhortations and arguments, finally persuaded Pereda.

1. e.g. Los hombres de pro.
to resume his literary activities. About this time another favorable reaction had begun to set in towards the Escenas, due in no small measure to the generous reception they had received in America. There was also a growing admiration for Tipos y paisajes, and the highland people were clamoring for more of his work. Accordingly, in 1875 Pereda added to La mujer de César the novelization of one of his dramatic attempts, and the results of his political adventures, publishing them all in a volume called Bocetos al temple. In 1876 he wrote, in fortnightly installments, the majority of Tipos trashumantes for the periodical "La tertulia". The following summer they were published in a single volume and the public received them with wild acclaim. It is at this point that Pereda turned his attention to the cultivation of the novel.

With the appearance of El buso suelto, literary Spain saw in Pereda a man worthy and well able to do battle with Galdós. In fact it was a battle for many years—a friendly but none the less energetic one—waged not only through their novels but through their voluminous correspondence. The reading public took sides in the controversy and argued for or against
Don Gonzalo González de la Gonzalera and De tal palo, tal astilla, as opposed to Galdós' Doña Perfecta, La familia de León Roch, and Gloria. One faction of Pereda's followers had long insisted that he should desert the novel and devote himself entirely to the "cuadro de costumbres", and the publication in 1881 of Esbozos y rasgones, with the epical Fin de una raza, did much to strengthen the idea that he was more of a "painter" than a novelist. Pereda, however, was not of this mind, and redoubled his efforts in the field of the novel, to the disgust of M. Menéndez y Pelayo, who still held with Sum cuique, La leva, Blasones y talezas, El sabor de la tierruca, and the insuperable dialogues and coloring of Don Gonzalo, and of De tal palo, tal astilla.

The marked successes of Pedro Sánchez and Sotileza placed their author at the head of the Spanish novelists of his day. Critics were unanimous in their praise, and Clarín in particular hastened to eulogise him. However, nothing pleased Pereda so much as the ever growing admiration of his own people, for they were

his greatest source of inspiration. During the year 1884-1885 he was feted and honored in all parts of Spain and Portugal by the most prominent literary men of his day.

c. Last twenty years.

With no desire to rest upon his laurels, Pereda wrote La Montalvez in 1887, and La puñcho in 1889. The former provoked much discussion, and Padre Coloma wrote Pereda upholding the moral intention of the book.

In 1890 he wrote Nubes de estío, and in 1891 Al primer vuelo. Pereda suffered much over the ensuing criticisms of the former by Emilia Pardo Bazán. In 1891 he was an unsuccessful candidate for senator and shortly after this he went to Barcelona to manage the Floral Games. On this occasion he delivered an address on realism which won him many supporters.

In September, 1893, there occurred the tragic death of Pereda's favorite son, his first-born Juan Manuel, the shock of which left him almost without inclination to finish his novel Peñas arriba, in the compilation of which he was engaged at the time.

1. See Sotilaza...introduction


3. See Peñas Arriba...introduction.
book was eventually finished, however, and Pereda was deeply moved by the reception it received both at home and in foreign countries—six thousand copies being sold in twenty-one days. The episode depicted in Pachín González seems to be a reflection of his dejected spirits, for in the work he succeeded in condensing the terror, martyrdom and horrible anxiety of a whole city.

In 1897 he was admitted to the Spanish Academy, an honor long past due. He hesitated to accept this distinction, but upon the insistence of his friend M. Menéndez y Pelayo he finally acceded to his wishes, as he had done on so many previous occasions. Pereda's active work was over. He was admittedly "muy cansado", and longed for the seclusion of his home and the atmosphere of his Montaña. In 1903, through the public subscriptions of his friends and admirers, he was further honored with the Cross of Alfonso XII, a highly fitting and culminating demonstration of their love and respect. He died in Polanco, March 1, 1906.
CHAPTER II
Political and Literary Background

Pereda was so much influenced by the political conditions of his day that it behoves us to consider briefly just what sort of picture Spain presented at that time. His first contact with political agitation came upon the occasion of his going to Madrid in 1852 to study in preparation for a military career. This first experience caught him at a very impressionable age. As a young, unsophisticated provincial, conditions, bad as they were in reality, were doubtless magnified by his youthful imagination and did much to formulate the prejudices which he held throughout life in these matters. The street fighting, mob violence and general disturbances of 1854 shocked him, and he saw in them, without analyzing very thoroughly the causes, the inevitable results of any sort of political controversy.

In 1871 Pereda went to the Cortes as a Carlist representative from the province of Santander. Throughout his life Pereda was an ardent Carlist and an adherent of absolutism. The evils resulting from attempts at popular government in Spain go far toward explaining, even though they may not justify, his conviction

1. Vide infra: p.15, Chapter II
that the old form of government was best suited to
the people's needs.

During the last century there were three claimants
to the Spanish throne. All were called Don Carlos, and
were in turn the cause of civil war. The first of
these was the Count of Molina, a brother of Ferdinand
VII. Since Ferdinand had been married three times and
had no issue, Don Carlos considered himself the right-
ful successor of his brother. However in 1827 Ferdinand
married María Christina of Naples, and in October, 1830
she gave birth to a daughter, the Infanta María Isabella.

The Salic Law, which barred females from succession
to the throne, had been abrogated a few months before,
and so with the birth of this child the hopes of Don
Carlos and his party were destroyed. At the time of
the king's illness in 1832 the Carlites persuaded him
to reinstitute the Salic Law. However, when he recov-
ered he immediately revoked it. Carlos continued his
intrigues, and as a result was banished in 1833.

Shortly afterwards Ferdinand died.

The Carlist party, supported by the usurper Dom
Miguel of Portugal, at once proclaimed Don Carlos king.
The next year, England, France, Spain and Portugal
formed an alliance which resulted in the dethronement
of Dom Miguel and the banishment of Don Carlos, who
then fled to England. A month later Don Carlos again appeared in Spain and incited an insurrection of the northern provinces. This is known as the first Carlist Rebellion. It lasted five years, from 1834 to 1839, when General Espartero finally conquered the Carlist leader, Narroto.

Don Carlos fled to France. Upon his death in 1855 his followers proclaimed his son Don Carlos, Count of Montemolin. This caused another insurrection in 1860. Don Carlos was taken prisoner and was released only after signing a declaration renouncing all claims to the throne. He died the following year.

The Carlists immediately proclaimed Don Carlos, Duke of Madrid, a nephew of the second pretender. In April, 1872, the third Carlist Rebellion broke out in the north of Spain. This lasted for three years. It will be recalled that Parada was a representative to the Cortes in 1871. Just a year before this an Italian prince, Amadeus, of the royal house of Savoy, was persuaded, with grave misgivings, to try his hand at the ungrateful job of ruling Spain. He held the throne for two years and fulfilled his oath of office with exemplary good faith, but at the end of that time he found the popular hostility against him as a foreigner so great that he gave up the task in disgust.
José Montero, who knew Pereda personally, and upon whose estimate of his political sympathies we can depend, says the following:

"Pereda was a Carlist. He was a Carlist always, by reason of his education, as a matter of course, from the years of his youth. He never concealed it for a moment; but it is also certain that he figured in the party actively only by chance. Those who knew intimately affirm that in reality he was more of a traditionalist than a Carlist, and above all decidedly anti-liberal."

The strife and unrest of the period embracing Pereda's active political career entrenched him firmly against popular government. He could not see that existing conditions were, in a large measure, those inherent in a period of transition. Pereda in politics, as in many other matters, found it easier to believe what he wanted to believe. He was never one to go to the root of such matters and distinguish thoroughly cause and effect. One with a broader, saner view of history would have realized that bloodshed, strife, disorganization and lowered morale are apt to follow in the wake of all great and drastic social change. Not so with Pereda, for he was always ruled more by the heart than by cool reason.

Pereda was a devoted disciple of Cervantes, and

the latter's influence on his work is clearly marked in thought and style. He made a distinct plea for a revival of the classic traditions of the Golden Age and of the picaroon novels in place of the foreign standards which his countrymen had been following for the two preceding centuries. He declared that the language of Spain's modern, regional novel should be:

"The language of Quixote and of all the imperishable treasure of Spain's classical literature; of which constitutes no mean part the picaresque novel of the Golden Age, and whose Guzmanes de Alfarache, Lazarillos de Tornes, Rinconetes, Nonipodios, Pablos de Segovia and such have little in common with your elegant figures of the salons, with exalted members of Parliament or academicians!"

We have discovered nothing to indicate that as a youth Pereda's literary tastes were in any wise different from those of the average young man. His biographers tell us that while he was a student in Madrid he spent long hours over the novels of Paul de Kock and Dumas père. This choice probably reveals nothing of significance as regards literary taste.

Having renounced his military career and returned to Polanco, he fell in with a group of young intellectuals who helped kindle in him the desire to write. His first efforts were contributions to local period-

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1. Vide infra: p. 22, Chapter III
icals and were in the form of cuadros de costumbres. Here are reflected unmistakably the classical traditions for which he stood throughout his subsequent writing. One may justifiably assume that Pereda knew and admired the works of Mesonero Romanos, for the influence of the Escenas Narritenses can be seen in his own first collection, Escenas montañosas.

The Andalusian authorress, Fernán Caballero, took the first bold step away from romanticism, and she is to be considered Pereda's most immediate predecessor. She rejuvenated the Spanish novel by a plea for the rights of sound, wholesome realism. Moreover, she recreated the national type and gave it the form of the observational novel—the novelas de costumbres. Pereda continued in the same direction, his works being, however, more rugged in nature and devoid of Fernán's excessive emotionalism and sentimentalism, although his treatment of religious subjects is in general somewhat similar to hers.
CHAPTER III
Pereda's Conception of the Regional Novel

In his discourse on regionalism, delivered upon the occasion of his admittance into the Royal Spanish Academy in 1897, Pereda both defines and defends the regional novel as he has cultivated it. It is his purpose not to discuss the novel as a class, but rather to speak "of one of its special manifestations, the one most fit for the extension of its possibilities—the regional novel". His definition is as follows:

"We have found it convenient to give that name to the novel which is developed in a district or community possessing life, characters and color which are distinctive and characteristic, and which play a principal part in the evolution of the work".¹

It is emphatically explained² that the "novela urbana" does not fall into this category no matter where the city described may be, as long as it is one of those governed by modern social standards and steeped in the swirling current of fashion. He says further:

"The novel to which I have reference has more points of contact with nature than with society, with the durable than with the ephemeral and transient;

¹ Discursos leídos ante la Real Academia Española en las recepciones públicas del 7 y 21 de febrero de 1897, p.108.
² Ibidem
with the eternity of art than with the human artifice of 'circumstances'; and I almost venture to assert that in few nations of the world is the 'raison d'etre' of this important branch of literature as well grounded as in Spain, whose moral unity is, by virtue of its cohesion, so notable -- as is the lack of the same in her historical and ethnographical precedents, in her customs, climates and temperaments. The regional novel is then respected here, as is the sentiment that engenders and produces it.¹

One of the misconceptions concerning Pereda's regionalism, and one which he greatly bewails is that its cultivation makes for the dismembering and extinction of the historical and political collectivity of the nation; that the inevitable corollary of devotion to the "patricia chica" is a lessening of respect for and devotion to the "patricia grande". Nothing could be more alien to his purpose; he emphatically denies that his regionalism engenders such disrespect, since it is:

"that which is nourished by a love for the native soil, for its laws, practices and virtuous customs, for its atmosphere, its light, its panoramas and its horizons; for its traditional pleasures and festivities; for its wealth of folk-lore and ballads; for the aroma of its fields and the fruits of its harvests; for its summer breezes and its winter fire-side scenes; for its seashore and the mountains of its frontiers; and as the sun and epitome of all this, by a love for the spot where one has been born and where one hopes to die; for the family group sheltered in its enclosure or for the venerable shades of those who no longer

¹ Idem: p.109
exist in it but who return to life in the hearts and memories of the living in each prayer which, in the shadows and august silence of the night, is offered to the dead by the voice of a vigilant church bell.\(^1\)

As though the greatest love for one's "patria grande" could not be contained in any given part of it! As though the willingness with which her sons offer even their very lives for its preservation\(^2\) did not constitute a more palpable reality than any hypothetical theories of duty or vague, imperfect and symbolical abstractions!

Pareda's regionalism had nothing to do with political geography or history, with the fundamental laws of the state, nor much less with the arbitrary markings of frontiers. It quarrels with nothing and with no one "save with the pomp of the salons, the exhalations of the great industries, business men, the different political agitations and all their off-shoots?\(^3\) For this reason its jurisdiction might be extended even to the city, or to that part of it in which there remained, by the grace of God, "something of the picturesque mass of an original and indi-

genous people, with their faith and their pleasures and their ancestral laws. In such a people Pereda sees the real and inexhaustible source of the regional novel or "more generically and correctly speaking, the popular novel and therefore the national and purely Spanish novel."

Considering its singular temper, the simplicity of coloring and texture of its principal elements, it is futile, avers Pereda, for any writer, however accomplished he may be in the compilation of foreign models, to attempt the cultivation of the native regional novel unless he carries in his innermost self the elements that constitute it. A certain inherited genius is an absolute prerequisite; either it exists or it does not; it is something felt -- never acquired; nor will any writer, great as may be his enthusiasm, who arrives, impelled by curiosity, to the scene of his proposed labors, notebook in hand, ever grasp it.

Attacking foreign influences, he says:

"Today in this classic Spanish country everyone lives, moves, travels, thinks and legislates in the French or English style. At the same hour as the French or English, our national figures sit down to

3. Idem: p.118
dinner. Their bills of fare are written in French, as are even the labels of our famous Spanish wines; the servants are foreign and their very attire makes it difficult to distinguish them from those they serve; the names pertaining to the dinner service are foreign, as are those of every piece of furniture in the room; even the conversation of the diners and the books that later they will read in their moments of leisure are foreign."

It was Pereda's firm conviction that with such an influence being felt everywhere, it was nothing short of a miracle for anyone to produce a truly Spanish work "in the sense in which this word should be taken when speaking of works of art". Let the most obfuscated "modernist" refute this if he is able to do so, says Pereda, but let it be born in mind while he (Pereda) denies the existence of this quality (truly Spanish) in the commonly popular novel of the day, he claims it for that one which deserves it by all rights. Its language is, he declares, the language of Quixote, and of all the imperishable treasures of Spain's classical literature; of which constitutes no mean part the picaresque novel of the Golden Age, and whose Guzmanes de Alfarache, Lazarillos de Tormes, Rinconetes, Monipodios, Pablos de Segovia and such have little in common with your elegant figures of

1. Idem: p. 123
2. Idem: p. 128
the salons, with exalted members of Parliament or academicians. These classic characters constitute "the truly illustrious and neversufficiently praised heritage of our present-day Castilian realism".

Furthermore, if we deny that the contemporary regional novel is truly Spanish, we are obliged perforce to include the above-cited examples from the Golden Age in the same category because, "good or bad, those of today are composed of the self-same elements as those of yesterday, and the circumstances surrounding their composition alter in no way the nature of things".

Establishing the essential differences between the "alta novela", or novel treating of modern sophisticated society, and the "novela popular", or the regional novel, he says, among other things, the following:

"I should say that this novel (alta novela) is in the same relation to the regional novel as are pictures of the studio to mural paintings; in the former there is greater luxury of composition and study of the model; the latter, on the other hand, is more spontaneous and spirited. The one is the novel of ideas; the other is preferably that of deeds, more real and less rhetorical. The former studies things in the state in which the incessant movement of innovations places them; the latter prefers the lasting and the unchanging; the one

2. Idem: p. 129
3. Idem: p. 131
polishes and embosses, investigates and sounds the social organisms influenced by the so-called "medio ambients"; the other carves the figures of its pictures from the very mountain rock, in the open air and sunlight. The one seeks as the basis of its creations the artificial adornment of the city, a man-made thing; the other seeks nature, a work of God unchanging through all time. The former is more deeply concerned with the drawing and with the delicacies, the latter with the coloring. For these reasons the regional novel is simpler, and on that account less interesting, than the other, for the great mass of people who breathe the same air as the author that produces their favorite.

Raising the question as to what constitutes interest in a novel, Pereda, after asserting that the matter of interest is not always an esthetic pleasure, speaks of the following three types of readers and what they seek in a novel:

a. The vulgar reader who derives interest from the complications and surprises of the plot and for whom all else in the book is superfluous.

b. The layman, or reader of average education, who holds the dictates of fashion in great store, and who is interested in a novel only when the characters occupy strictly the places rightly theirs; for them the marquis must always be a marquis and the menial always a menial; and finally everything in the novel must end in the manner of the Roman gladiators in the

1. Idem; pp. 132-135
arena and with the elegance that the circumstances and personages demand.

c. The still more "modern" reader, who, scalpel in hand, derives interest from a work only if in it he is able to conduct a minute analysis of the profundities of the human spirit.

Finally Pereda ventures¹ that he might count on the fingers of one hand the readers who seek interest and real aesthetic pleasure at their true sources,

"in the artistic adornments of the work; in its steady, natural and diaphanous development; in the eternally human reality of its characters; in the essential, intimate and strict concordance of subject and place with the language and style of the novelist."

Dismissing as relatively unimportant the various literary movements that tend to upset the established order of things,² Pereda avers that the wise novelist will not attempt to oppose them too strenuously, but will rather withdraw to a point outside their influence and her, content to see them pass, will go on working independent of them. It is in such a sanctum that he wishes to place his regional novel, since by definition it is the one most naturally out of contact with all

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2. Idem: pp. 145-146
disturbing, transient innovations.

The purpose of the regional novel, finally, is to make for the preservation of national customs and characteristics.

Pereda expresses this idea in the following words:

"When races and peoples have lost their peculiar characteristics; when the vast panorama of humanity has but a single color, and this a sad one, and the world comes to be one immense and desolate plain and its inhabitants are perishing of ennui...let there remain for them, God willing, the refuge of the art of these times, as a faithful archive of their forgotten national customs, where the hopeless may find something upon which to fasten the eyes of the spirit, something to set vibrating once more the chords of an idle heart, to the end that this pure and noble delight may be diffused and circulate through their veins, as the germ of more elevated inspirations and the sap of a new life."

1. Idem: pp. 145-146
CHAPTER IV
Language and Literary Style

Pereda avers¹ that many novelists who in reality lack the attributes necessary for the production of regional novels seek to wrap themselves in a cloak of pseudo-regionalism as regards language, and in this effort to acquire a gift denied them by nature the best they attain is a cultivated or literary, archaic, pedantic and artificial language, in the main devoid of the essence of reality. Thus we see that he was conscious of the importance of language, but that he did not consider its manipulation an art that could be cultivated beyond well defined limits.

Mention has elsewhere been made² of the author's general reaction to foreign influences, and it remains for us to examine his linguistic reaction. We have seen that his own studies led him well into the fields of French, Italian and English letters³ and as a youth he became a very proficient Latin scholar. The influ-

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2. Vide supra: Chapter III, p. 21
ence of Italian on his vocabulary is negligible; English words appear more frequently, and French words and expressions more often still. This rather pronounced use of French and English terms does not argue a contradiction to Pereda’s “españolismo”. On the contrary, it will be found that their use serves a well defined satirical purpose, for it is when he most desires to render a ridiculous picture of hypocritical society that their use is most frequent.

This explanation, however, does not account for his over-use of Latinisms. This abuse is particularly evident in Sotileaza. Although the author’s treatment of Father Polinar is a caricature the priest’s fondness for Latin is overdone. It would seem that Pereda were determined in this instance to make use of the Latin he learned as a youth whether appropriately or not.

Pereda cared for the approval of his fellow mountain people more than anything else, and since he really wrote for them one might argue that his regional vocabulary is not out of place. On the other hand, the first edition of Sotileaza was accompanied by a special vocabulary due to the technical nature of so many of the terms used. This fact might tend to discourage readers, well able, if confronted with a less
formidable medium of expression, to appreciate and absorb his message. This is moreover an obstacle that we encounter when we attempt to classify Pereda as a novelist of national appeal. It is well and good to argue that any problem worthy of a novelist's attention can be examined in the Montaña as well as anywhere else, but if the author's vocabulary is too highly provincial in nature it may constitute a barrier greater than the average reader's curiosity in the subject.

It is evident, however, that Pereda was sincere in the matter of language and that he was not seeking a cheap and artificial distinction through the use of so many provincial terms. They came as second nature to him and represented most perfectly his reaction to the life he was describing. It was his theory as set forth in the Discurso¹ that the regional novel at its best is characterized by a language

"original, rich and vigorous; with its provincial idioms, which in turn are the sap and fibre of the beautiful Castilian tongue, treasure of Spain's classical literature."

Thus we see him as a representative of the purest academic standards patterned after the soundest classical traditions.

Pereda sought always to be the finished, polished artist. This does not mean that he sacrificed feeling and natural expression to a rigid form, but it means that his style underwent well defined stages of development. It is characterized at its best by a tone of elegance and a certain grandeur which may be said to reflect the rugged austerity of his native Montaña.

While his language and style are forceful, they do not on that account cease to be flexible, and Pereda has a feeling for the most subtle shades of expression.

As a regional novelist Pereda is to be considered under two main heads (leaving aside his abortive attempts as a dramatist): as a writer of cuadros de costumbres and as a novelist proper. Anything more than the most superficial consideration of his works as a whole shows Pereda the novelist to be simply an amplification and embellishment of Pereda the costumbrista.

His first writings, Escenas montañesas (1864), are, of all his works, probably the most natural reaction to his surroundings and the most spontaneous productions of Pereda the regionalist. Here we find simple, colorful word-pictures of familiar types and customs, unburdened by the weight of a thesis or the least hint of a didactic intent. The Escenas are
compact, well balanced and full of a buoyant, picturesque dialogue that always characterizes the author's work at its best. Here, more than anywhere else in all his work, he has captured the power of words and forceful expression, but still these sketches are very simple in structure, and the desired impression is more often conveyed by the particular turn of a word or phrase than by a futile piling up of the details of descriptive material. We have an expression of Pereda's own valuation of the simplicity of art, for in the Discurso he says:

"The greater the simplicity of the artistic element, the greater is the resulting work of art."

It is now my purpose to examine, from the viewpoint of style, five of Pereda's novels: El buceo suelto, Pedro Sánchez, Sotileza, La Fontalvez and Peñas arriba. These five are representative of the different phases of his literary production, and one can trace in them the gradual evolution of his style and procedure as a regionalist.

**EL BUEY SUELTO (1877)**

Gedeón, the protagonist, finding himself alone in the world and the possessor of an adequate fortune, sets about coolly to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of matrimony. He seeks the advice of three

acquaintances and it is significant that they are all calibates. The first is a miser; the second has a mania for tidiness; the third is abnormally jealous by nature. Each of these judges, from his own particular point of view, warns him against marriage. Gedeón is convinced that their arguments are sound, and from purely selfish motives decides that he will remain a bachelor.

There then follows a series of pictures depicting his futile search for happiness and contentment outside of marriage. He has trouble with his servants and with his housekeeper. The latter brings her mischievous and ill-bred son to live in his house -- much to the disgust of Gedeón's faithful dog, Adonis.

Gedeón finally takes a mistress, a woman of low birth and weak character. He is blackmailed and otherwise annoyed by her shiftless relatives and has proof of her infidelity to him. On his death-bed he witnesses her quarrel with his housekeeper over the disposition of his estate. At this time he is persuaded to marry his mistress. The two children she has borne him then are his legal heirs, although he has no way of knowing for certain that he is their father. The three friends who have warned him against marriage are unhappy throughout their lives, and all come to bad ends in keeping with their selfishness and perversity.

El buex suelto (the title being derived from the popular adage: El buex suelto bien se lame -- the unyoked ox licks himself well) was written in defense of matrimony, and particularly to refute the arguments presented in Balzac's Les petites misères de la vie conjugale. Pereda, in his prologue to the novel, dedicated to M. Menéndez y Pelayo1 declares that it is not his purpose to solve any problem but simply to discuss a certain subject -- claiming for himself

1. Prologue to Volume 2, Obras completas, Madrid, 1891, p.6
the same right that so many others have taken. He raises the question as to why, in the face of so many translations and books written in Spain picturing the unpleasant side of marriage, there should not have appeared at least one work that gave an idea of the miseries of a bachelor’s existence. This, then, is his thesis: matrimony is man’s natural state—a social duty and not a fashion or matter to be accepted or rejected on the basis of personal whims... and any individual who selfishly shirks the responsibilities of such a state, as does his protagonist, is bound to experience all the hardships, sacrifices and trials he hoped to escape, without enjoying any of the compensations inherent to married life.

The work is not, strictly speaking, a novel. It is more correctly to be termed a series of "pictures", and it is too shot through with the task of defending a thesis to be either convincing or representative of the author at his best.

Gedeón is one of Pereda’s most unhuman characters. He is little more than an automaton and far from a flesh and blood character. He is oversimplified, and his tribulations do not move us very much. He is presented as absolutely alone in the world; he has no relatives and no friends worthy of the name; he stands
for nothing in his community -- exercises no profession; 
the casino bores him, as does the theatre; art in gener-
al and literature in particular nauseates him; he is 
abnormal and neurotic by nature. Given such a point 
of departure, the picture of his experiences could 
not help being unconvincing. He does not suffer 
from discontent simply because he is a bachelor. He 
is rather doomed from the start because of his inherent 
characteristics. Solita, his mistress, is devoid of 
all culture and wholly incapable of inspiring a genuine 
passion. When the physical aspect of their infatuation 
wears itself out Gedeón is helpless and discontented. 
Marry such a character and he would long for the joys 
of bachelorhood; divorce him or make him a widower 
and he would again seek matrimony. In short, he would 
of necessity be bored and restless always and every-
where.

**El Sueño** loses force because it is too pre-
tentious. The idea underlying it could -- and should -- 
have been developed into an interesting cuadro. The 
style is ironically humorous. As a thesis novel it 
proves nothing, and taken as a whole it lacks reality.

PEDRO SÁNCHEZ (1883)

The story centers about a village youth, Pedro 
Sánchez, who, under the influence of a Madrid politician
and office-holder Agusto Valenzuela, is persuaded to renounce the chance of a humble position in his native village and seek his fortune in the city. He accordingly goes to Madrid, but his pseudo-patron refuses for so long to give him an interview that he almost despair of realizing his hopes.

On the way to the city he had made the acquaintance of one Serafín Baladuque, a political hanger-on who was in and out of office as often as his particular faction lost or regained control, and while waiting for his patron to see him he spends much time with this gentleman and his family.

Valenzuela tells Pedro Sánchez to return in a few months, and the youth turns in the meantime to journalism, serving on the staff of a reactionary paper. By his keen wits he begins to make a name for himself although in reality he knows nothing at all of newspaper work. We then follow him through a long series of adventures as a political agitator, rioter and revolutionary leader, until finally he becomes a successful office-holder. He has married Clara, Valenzuela's daughter, and she with her mother try his soul with their extravagances, snobishness and vain social aspirations. Pedro surprises his wife in an adulterous situation and leaves her.

Serafín Badaluque had been killed in the rioting during a street engagement of the Revolution (1954), and his daughter Carmen is left an orphan. Pedro finally marries her — a worthy, unassuming girl whom he had somehow overlooked in his mad scramble for advancement. Just when he imagines himself about to enjoy a quiet and happy life in company with Carmen and the two children she has borne him, he loses the three in an epidemic. Thoroughly disheartened, he returns to his native village to end his days.

Pardo Bazán had likened the tenor of Perea's work up to and including El sabor de la tierruca to a beautiful, well watered, well cared-for garden, but withal a garden of limited horizons, and goes on

1. Vide infra: p. 59, Chapter V

2. Pardo Bazán, Emilia: La cuestión palpitante, Madrid, 1891 p. 268
to say that he has never made any attempt to study deeply the large centers of civilization. In Pedro Sánchez Pereda has deserted the Montaña and has shown us that he is able to describe life accurately in another field. The novel is picaresque in type, and with the political corruption of the day as a background the protagonist is the mouthpiece through which the author satirizes existing conditions. The real charm of the book, however, lies in the fact that although it is in reality a criticism of corrupt politics and social hypocrisy (completing the trilogy begun with Los hombres de pro and Don Gonzalo González de la Consalera), the thesis is subjugated enough to allow the author to tell a thoroughly interesting story. We do not find here the oversimplification of character of which Pereda is so frequently guilty.

Pedro Sánchez is a character of real flesh and blood, in which we can trace the conflict of certain passions, certain ideas and certain impulses of the will; he has temperament and is an artistic creation without ceasing to be human. As such a human character, he influences life about him, but not nearly so much as he is himself influenced by circumstances. This adds to his human and realistic quality.

Pereda has by no means attained his full stature
as a novelist in this work, but he is beginning to approach that stage. The characters are here portrayed simply and logically, and they move in an atmosphere that tends to develop them step by step. We lose sight of the author and begin to move with the protagonists, to feel with them.

*SOTILEZA* (1884)

Pereda responded to the general demand on the part of critics and his reading public that he write the maritime epic of his native town -- and the result was *Sotileza*. In the preface to this work\(^1\) he dedicates his efforts "to my contemporaries who may still be living in Santander". They are his inspiration, and it is by them that he wishes to be judged. Moreover, he considers them to be the only ones capable of appraising the novel and admonishes the critics not to quote foreign authorities nor to hold up before him their standards by which "the art of presenting situations and incidents of human life in works of the imagination" are to be judged. The author vigorously reasserts his literary bill of rights, as it were, to treat his subjects realistically but free

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1. *Obras completas*: volume IX
from the lurid aspects arising from the consideration of the fashionable boudoir, the usurious banker, the mercenary politician, the cake-eating whipper-snappers of the salons, the problems of adultery, of prostitution and fallen virtue. He modestly announces that Sotileza is a "picture of the miseries and virtues of a handful of unknown people against the background of nature in her varied manifestations".

The novel opens with a really brilliant scene in the school of an old priest, showing him in the act of attempting the impossible task of beating some rudiments of knowledge into the hard heads of the sons of poor fishermen of Santander. This is first-rate realistic treatment, and for a few chapters, as long as Fereda keeps to what is essentially costume-bristling material, the high level is maintained. In fact he begins his story well, with the escape of his heroine as an orphan child from the inhuman family who had adopted her into the protection of a kindly old couple.

The story he seeks to tell is of a beautiful and virtuous girl named Casilda. The fisherfolk have nicknamed her Sotileza (the leader of a fishing line) for her fineness and passion for cleanliness and personal neatness. The heroine is loved by three men. One of these she loves, Muergo, an impossibly boorish and stupid clown, who is drowned at sea. The second, Andrés, is the son of a sea-captain, and so far above her social level. The third, Cleto, is the son of the family who so maltreated her when she was a child, but is a worthy fellow himself; and him she finally marries, though there is no indication that she really loves him.

Sotileza, considered by many critics to be the author's masterpiece, is surely his most pretentious novel. In describing his native Santander and the fisherfolk with whom he is so familiar he is in his
element. There is nothing of the notebook school of realistic treatment here. Life has to be seen at first hand, felt deeply and thoroughly assimilated to be reproduced as Pereda has reproduced it in these pages. "He is no land sentimentalist in ecstasy over the perils of nautical life. He knows the sailor of Santander, and with scientific certainty he paints his sufferings, strife, sorrows, and few joys; the brutal vicissitudes of his shore existence; his drunkenness; his comfortless home, his sullen resignation and last of all the ever-present spectre of fatality that weighs upon his spirit. The Sidera expresses this idea upon the occasion of her husband's illness, and it stands as one of Pereda's best pictures of the wretchedness of a fisherman's existence:

"Poor fellow! Fifty long years battling with the sea, with chills that provoke fevers and suns that scorch, with wind and rain and snow; little rest, a moment's sleep, and off again to the boat before the break of day. And then, shut your eyes so as not to see the spectre of death that goes abroad before any living creature and always, always accompanies the poor wretches, to put an end to their business when they least expect it and when they have no other help but God's mercy. See here, Don Andrés, I don't know what it is that comes over me when I see people haggle over a penny for a pound of cod in the market place—the same folks that throw away a dollar on a rag they don't want. If they only realized what it cost to get the fish out of the sea! What danger! What drudgery! And why, good sir? Because the first day

2. Sotileza: chapter 12
the unlucky fisherman remains in bed his family has nothing to eat, however hardworking and honest he may be, like this poor fellow who hasn't a single vice."

"Humanity here may be savage, but it is never disgusting, and pity is the essential note of the book."

The heroine, while she lacks a thorough psychological analysis, is withal the most notable of Pereda's feminine characters. She enters the story as a little girl; fair-haired, pale, scant of speech, with a hard frown and a valiant gaze, reared in surroundings of revolting squalor but stainless pure in person and mind. She leaves as a beautiful young woman; cold, unresponsive, antipathetic, devoid of all emotion. Pereda has failed to draw this character from within; she appears as one whose actions have simply been observed and recorded — not analyzed. She is cold, calculating and self-contained on the theory that her "honor" is all she has with which to make a bargain with life.

The caste system obstructs itself overmuch. Pereda takes it for granted that marriage between Sotileza and Andrés is impossible. He is really capable of a genuine passion for the girl, but it never occurs to him that he can marry her until he

has compromised her "honor". Cleto is of her own class: the idea of an alliance with him is regarded with approval by her foster parents, her friends and Padre Polinar. The latter says to her on one occasion

"Though you are beautiful and virtuous, and by all rights deserve a marquis, marquises are not in the habit of seeking wives among the fisherfolks, Silda, and sooner or later you will have to marry a callealtera.""

Pereda approves of this idea, for in another instance he declares

"Realize that alliances between people of different stations are not the normal thing and that no good can come of them. A man is obliged to take a wife who is his social equal, and thus act in accordance with the law of God that demands that everything stay in its proper place."?

Pereda believed that men are born to a certain place in society and that they should be content to stay there. The complacency with which Andrés' father patronizes Sotileza and her family is obviously approved by Pereda as a noble condescension. Moreover, these humble people are pictured as happy to look up to one whom destiny has placed above them, and accept in the spirit of meekness befitting their station what crumbs may fall from his table.

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1. Obras Completas, volume IX p.433
2. Idem: p.82
Padre Polinar, though somewhat idealized and oversimplified in treatment, is a real sailor's priest, and at all times human. He deserves to rank with Nanzoni's Padre Cristoforo and Maley's Abbé Constantin. He has been treated with humorous sympathy.

Tía Sidora and Nechelín are admirably well sustained characters. The author has given the latter a realistic treatment with little apparent effort. Nechelín is very scant of speech, and often says simply "uva" when he agrees with those who address him. With this one word Pereda conveys as much about his character as he might have done in pages of description.

Carpia, Sarguesa and Nocejón are psychologically consistent characters and call for no special comment. Muergo is a caricature and Cleto has scarcely been rendered at all. The former is singularly attractive to Sotileza. Pereda makes no attempt to explain his heroine's fondness for this brute. We understand it to be an attraction of opposites.

Pereda has given us in Andrés a more convincing character than we have in the heroine. There is more attempt at inner delineation. However, considering the unity of the novel as a whole, Andrés constitutes a heterogeneous element.
Clarín says in this respect

"The novel of the señoritas should have been more strictly here; the piercing analysis devoted to Andrés should have been devoted to the heroine."

Aside from the matter of misplaced analysis, this "señorita" is occupying a place that should have been reserved for a fisherman. The novel purports to portray the fisherfolk of Santander, and Andrés is not really one of them. His home environment, culture and education unfit him for such a vocation. He is attracted by these people—enjoys thoroughly being with them, just as any normal youth might be expected to do, in contact with a picturesque mode of life differing greatly from his own. Pereda devotes page after page to his education, his home life, to his mental struggles and to his love for Sotileza. This is the part of the novel where the interest lags.

We want the author to take us back to the heroine, to Huergo or to Cleto. When these three do appear, it is to set off some point in the development of Andrés' character. One day when he goes fishing with his friends there is a terrible storm; the boat is nearly lost. Pereda goes so far as to incapacitate the captain and make Andrés the hero of the day. It is a stirring

1. Alas, Leopoldo: Nueva campana, Madrid, 1887 p.145
2. Sotileza: Chapter XXVIII
picture. His parents, distracted because of his absence, are on the shore with others of a large crowd, watching the seemingly hopeless struggle. Finally, through the seamanship of Andrés, a lad experiencing virtually his first storm at sea, the crew and the boat are saved. But why, one asks again, should he have been the dominant figure, and not a bona-fide fisherman?

The author could have taken all that relates to Andrés and have made another interesting novel. In such a case, the minute analysis of his character, the circumstances surrounding his family life, his education, his youth and adolescence would have been in point.

One leaves Sotileza with the feeling that Pereda just missed writing a great novel. The atmosphere of boats, tarry ropes and men, the sea in storm and calm, together with a general impression of the type of life described,—all this is very good. Where he fails is in not telling his story dramatically; some of his characters are not drawn from within, and they do not leave us convinced of their reality.

**LA MONTÁLVEZ (1886)**

Early in the story Verónica, the daughter of the Marquis and Marquise of Montalvés, is sent to France
to complete her education. There she makes the acquaintance of two girls, Leticia Espinosa and Sagrario Miralta, who take upon themselves the task of imparting their knowledge of the world to this unsophisticated provincial girl.

When she returns home who is a marriageable young woman, and soon returns the attentions of one Pepe Guzmán. He is a worthy enough sort of fellow, but has no means. A rich banker, Mauricio Ibáñez, is also seeking her hand, and is favored by Verónica's mother because of his wealth. The marquise instills in her daughter the idea that money is the only thing of value in life. Leticia and Sagrario support the marquise in this stand, and do their part in influencing Nica (Verónica) infavor of the banker.

Nica, the worldly-wise girl that her environment has made her, decides to have both the money and her lover. She consents to become Ibáñez's wife, but in name only. Accordingly the contract is arranged and she gives Pepe Guzmán the key to her bedroom.

She has by her lover a daughter, Luz, a charming, innocent girl who is the incarnation of those virtues so long stifled in her predecessors. Nica sends her away to school in different places at an early age, and finally to France so that she may grow to womanhood in ignorance of her mother's past life. Nica herself takes a new lease on life and determines to live so as to be worthy of her daughter's innocence and faith in her. When Luz becomes eighteen years of age her mother takes her from the convent where she has been living. The girl falls in love with a young man named Ángel Nuñez. Nica has for some time been borrowing money from this youth's father, who is a man of the most rigid moral principals. When the family learns of Ángel's love for Luz they are horrified and tell him the mother's history. The boy, seeking advice, goes to Leticia Espinosa, whom he considers a friend, but who in reality is greatly infatuated with him. She advises him not to marry Luz. Subsequently she writes the girl a letter telling her that she is the daughter of Pepe Guzmán. The shock of this revelation breaks her health and in a short time she dies.

If in Pedro Césares Torera has abandoned the Montaña except for slight references to it at the beginning and end of the story, in Lá montañes he
has completely deserted it. He is here in a field completely foreign to him; he is defending a thesis that is the fruit of a life-long prejudice; in short he has given us in Le Montalvez a cross-section of depraved urban life, dogmatically informed that it is representative of city life as a whole when of all men of his time he was one of the least competent to write with impartiality on this subject.

The procedure is highly deterministic. Nice Montalvez is surrounded by depraved, ignoble characters, all of whom are oversimplified in the direction necessary for the support of the author's thesis. Her outcome can be foreseen from the first, and her fall from virtue does not move us greatly. If there had been exerted upon her even the minimum of those influences for good which touch ordinarily even the most low-born at one time or another we could picture her more logically as the victim of a depraved social order. As it is, the result is too clearly predestined to carry conviction.

Pereza could never have expected us to accept the cruel conception of virtue represented in the visitation of the sins of her ancestors on Luz had he not been doggedly determined to uphold his thesis to the bitter end. Virtuous as he shows himself to
be in his works as a whole, this treatment of the consequences of sin strikes us as unfair and unworthy of a man of his evident sympathy and understanding. We close the book with a feeling of sadness and rebellion.

PEÑAS ARRIBA (1895)

Don Celso, a benevolent mayorazgo of native mountain stock, the last of a long line of rural patriarchs, is approaching the end of his days saddened at the prospect of dying without an heir who could carry on his work in the community. For many generations his ancestors have exercised a sort of patriarchal sway in the lives of their neighbors. By virtue of their positions it has naturally fallen to them to watch over their less fortunate acquaintances—now encouraging, now restraining them, giving a word of sage advice or even aiding them financially if the circumstances demanded it. This responsibility had long since come to be a sacred trust to them, motivated by the doctrine of "la noblesse oblige".

Since none of Don Celso's children have survived, he looks upon his nephew, a native of Madrid, as the possible solution of his problem. This young man, Don Marcelo by name, is the typical city youth of average parts. He enjoys an income adequate for his needs, and having sowed discretely his portion of wild oats is prepared to settle down amid the elegancies of the capital. His uncle's request makes very little impression upon him at first, but finally in a spirit of filial duty he decides to comply with what he suspects may be a last request. He prepares for the visit, but with little or no idea of being able to accede to his uncle's dearest wish... that he renounce his idle life in Madrid and make his home permanently in the mountains.

At the end of the first lap of the journey he is met by Don Celso's servant, Chisco, and the two complete the rest of the journey on horseback. For a city-bred young man this journey was bound to be replete with surprising scenes. Marcelo's first impressions were those of awe and wonder in the presence of such rugged surroundings. These gave way, as the ascent became more difficult, to others of disgust and indifference. It is a more or less disgruntled Don Marcelo who is finally received by his
uncle at the end of the journey. At the supper table, the village priest Don Sabas Penas and one Padre Molasco, both of whom have anticipated his arrival, pay their respects, and after the usual exchange of formalities Marcelo excuses himself and retires.

From the following morning there begins the slow process of acclimation that is destined eventually to change Marcelo’s whole outlook on life. Don Celso does everything in his power to make his nephew comfortable. He is provided with a horse, and in company with Chisco and the latter’s boon companion, Pito Salaso, he goes on numerous hunting expeditions.

In the course of these jaunts he learns much of the history and social background of the various members of the community. He learns among other things that Facia, the woman servant in Don Celso’s household and her daughter, Tona, were taken in after the mother had been deserted by her itinerant mountebank husband. Pito Salaso also confesses his love for Tona. Chisco tells him too of his passion for Tanasia, the daughter of el Topero, and speaks of his rival, Pepasco, favored by the girl’s family because of his more abundant means.

Marcelo meets another village fixture in the person of el Tarumbo, a man who has a mania for looking after the affairs of his neighbors to the great detriment of his own. The village doctor is Neluco Celis. He is a young man who has settled in the mountains, content with a small practice. As he explains to Marcelo, who marvels at his ability to find real happiness here, he is really in his natural element, because this close contact with nature is food and drink to the poet and painter in his nature. He discusses in great length the advantages of the simple life over that of the city, and doubtless is one of those most responsible for Marcelo’s subsequent metamorphosis.

Don Pedro Molasco’s daughter, Mari-Pepa, and his niece, Lituca, are frequent visitors in Don Celso’s home, and Marcelo is at once attracted by the evident character and striking appearance of the latter.

Without accompanying Marcelo through the weeks that immediately followed his arrival at Tablaman;—weeks devoted to hunting in the hills or to visits about the town, we come to the time when Don Celso’s health takes a decided turn for the worse. As Neluco has explained to Marcelo, his uncle’s death is a matter of months. It is the case of the machine
that is worn out, and no one can predict when the end will be.

While Marcelo has come to find his surroundings much more bearable than at the beginning, he is scarcely sure that he could be happy there for the rest of his life. Realizing, however, that his uncle's dearest wish is to have him adopt this mode of life as his own, he tells him one day that he will do all he can to carry on his work. He makes this declaration with the mental reservation that after his uncle's death, if he can no longer stand the monotony of the hills, he will be free to return to Madrid.

Don Celso has another severe attack and a short time after acquainting Marcelo with his duties as heir and head of the little community dies. There then follows the final test of Marcelo's resolution. While his uncle had been alive he had had much to do caring for him, but now that he was gone the house seemed empty. Marcelo cannot resist the urge to return to Madrid for a little while. Before he goes he discusses with Nelucco the advisability of his taking a wife, and Nelucco suggests Lituca -- a suggestion which, while it dovetails perfectly with Marcelo's own choice, surprises him because he had long imagined Nelucco to be in love with the girl himself.

He finds life in Madrid boring after his sojourn in the mountains, and after arranging his affairs returns to Tablancas. He redecorates his house, helps the bashful Pito Salces plead his suit with Tona, and marries Lituca himself.

Peñas arriba, chronologically the last of Pereda's novels, disputes first place with Sotileza as the highest and most artistically finished expression of the author's social philosophy -- the doctrine of the Simple Life. While it has greater unity and more regular movement than the latter, it is moreover the product of a philosopher whose outlook on life has been tempered and mellowed by age and experience.

The novel is dedicated to the author's beloved son
Juan Manuel, whose death occurred when the novel was about two thirds completed. Knowing the anguish that such a loss would cause to a man of Pereda's sensibilities, we can well appreciate the effort it must have cost him to finish the novel and his efforts "to seek, in the peaceful regions of Art, one more refuge from the tempests besieging an oppressed spirit."

The novel has but slight personal interest. The various characters, while interesting pictures treated individually, are really the accessories, and the rugged mountain landscape fills the scene. Pereda has returned for his last and most pretentious work to the Montaña, and, free from all didactic preoccupation, has given still another, and his greatest, interpretation of nature. In Peñas arriba, nature is not the background against which there transpire events of a more or less trivial nature — a literary procedure practiced by many less competent writers who have dragged nature in by the heels although they have no real interest in its treatment. In this novel the natural background assumes proportions of grandeur and significance, because its "life" and that of the protagonists have literally fused, and they develop side by side.

1. Peñas arriba: Prologue, p. 5
We have seen that Pereda developed from a writer of _cuadros de costumbres_ to a novelist of comparatively wide range, and that in the exposition of his philosophy of life he tried his hand at the presentation of diver problems with varying success. If upon occasion he deserted the Montaña and sought to present a picture of life in a field alien to the Santander he knew so thoroughly, a broad sympathy for the study of nature is still evident in almost all his work, even though it may sometimes be relegated to an accessory position. Moreover, he never ceased to be a _costumbrieta_, even in those works that as a whole have to be denied such a classification.

_El buen sualte_ resulted in a fiasco because of the thesis it carries, and because in his treatment of his subject he has been too deterministic. Only the most naive reader could accept his conclusions as here presented. Only in spots does it do Pereda credit. It contains a few tolerably realistic passages, and the scene depicting Gedeón's death is the one convincing part of the book. As a thesis novel it proves nothing.

In _Pedro Sánchez_ we see Pereda in a happier vein. Here he is telling us a story for its own sake, and if in reality the novel is a satire on corrupt politics
the didactic element is kept in the background, and
his lesson is conveyed rather by implication than
by direct presentation.

Sotileza represents an effort equalled and sur-
passed only by Peñas arriba. In spite of numerous
inconsistencies and misplaced analysis, the novel as
a whole does Pereda great credit. It is the general
impression we get from the work that is convincing,
and not the delineation of individual characters.
Here the author appears as a good workman, fast
acquiring the technique of a novelist.

After Sotileza it is disappointing that Pereda
should have dropped to the low level of La Montalvaz.
Here he is again in a field unknown to him, and so
wrapped up in his defense of a thesis that his work
suffers on that account. It may be said generally
that whenever the thesis is present his works lack a
penetrating, unbiased analysis of character, are
deterministic and oversimplified, and for all the
above reasons unconvincing and unrealistic.

Peñas arriba is Pereda's most finished and
convincing production. It is the congelation of his
social philosophy combined with the sublimation of the
natural surroundings of the Montaña. It results in a
good novel because the author was here on firm ground,
and had an opportunity to make use of the materials which he was best fitted by temperament, training and inclination to use. The novel is a plea for the Simple Life amid natural surroundings, but there is nothing that approaches a thesis to be defended. The work deserves to rank as Pereda's masterpiece.
CHAPTER V
Some Aspects of Pereda's Social Philosophy

With the exception of the two years spent in Madrid as a military student (1852-1854), a short trip to Paris (1864), and such journeys about the Peninsula as his obligations as a literary man demanded, Pereda spent all his life in the isolated northern province of Santander. This district, hemmed in on the one side by the ocean and on the other by the bold Cantabrian mountains, is cut off not only from Europe in general, but even from the rest of Spain. In such seclusion he passed his adolescence, received his early schooling, and formed his first impressions of society. In the light of his few subsequent travels and contacts with other peoples and customs, it would be very notable if such circumstances did not greatly influence his social attitude. The quiet, simple mode of life, as he observed it in the villages of his native province, Pereda considered the best obtainable, and the core of his social philosophy is a plea for its preservation.

In his own life, as well as in his writings, Pereda was a Christian patriarch, and ever conscious

of his obligations to those beneath him and dependent upon him for guidance and encouragement. He did not live by one set of standards and write by another. He did not present the picture of one who simply went about doing good and preaching the good life -- he was good. The Christian patriarch idea permeates the Obras completas and is the key to their interpretation. From the publication of the Facetas montañesas (1864), Pereda's writings can be seen taking the form of a sociological thesis, somewhat after the manner of Balzac's Comédie humaine, the purpose of which was to defend the author's principals of right living and to attack vigorously all influences that tended to interfere with them. As the Christian patriarch -- as his brother's keeper -- we recognize Pereda as the archetype of such creations as Don Ramón in Don Gonzalo González de la Gonzalera, and Don Coles in Peñas arriba. It was Pereda's conviction that certain ones in every social group are born to positions of responsibility -- born with the right and ability to acquire higher education. These few are the patriarchs of his ideal society; as their wisdom and material possessions increase so does their responsibility. Far from serving as means of personal, selfish aggrandizement they are a sacred
trust to be used for bettering the lives of those who look to them for advice and encouragement.

In the face of any innovations that might tend to destroy the status quo of his chosen social group Pereda is highly intolerant. This is particularly the case since his preconceptions made him consider all changes baneful per se. His convictions on some problems show him to be guided more by the heart than by a dispassionate scientific attitude.

"Pereda proceeded by instinct, impelled by the heart, by impulses genuinely Spanish and those of a pious, legendary hidalgo. His religion, his caballereía, his filial submission to the kind example of his father and to the plans of his elder brother, were the inspirations that moved him to scatter dark clouds, to protect the weak against the strong, and to demonstrate practically that one finds a treasure by digging in the corner of his own garden."1

a. Scientific attitude

Pereda attacks violently all of the palpable scientific manifestations of advancing civilization.

"Pereda's education never led him far into theories of political and social science. His peculiar aversion to scientific learning, particularly, disqualified him for an appreciation of such science."2

In these tangible media of communication -- such as the telephone, telegraph, railway and newspaper -- he saw a grave threat, channels for the rapid dissemination of ideas that would plant the seeds of doubt and

1. Idem: p. 12
unrest. In Sotileza one of the characters bewails
the fact that the merchants do not develop their
own commerce. They spend too much time, he says,
considering the proposed railway from Alar to
Santander, and a steamship line between Santander
and Cuba.

"Railways! Steamships! Foolhardy ventures;
tomfoolery of a restless people who are eager to
taste fortune, but of whom in the end it will be
said 'here lies a Spaniard who being well of wished
to be better'... if we manage with what we have at
our immediate disposal and don't plunge into such
insane ventures as those of the railway and the
steamships (which, thank God, amounts to no more
than the dream of some four loafers) we shall prosper
and quickly see our pennies turned into dollars."

Ridiculing scientific research, Pereda, speaking
through Don Baldomero in El sabor de la tierruca, says:

"What possible advantage to society is there in
the fact that, after twenty years of searching, an
astronomer, crouched behind his telescope, should
announce that he sees one more little star in the
heavens than we do? With half of those now discovered
I have more than I can use, and so do you, Pablo....
Suppose he announces that a comet is going to appear
at a certain time. If it appears we are going to see
it anyhow, and if it does not, of what conceivable
good was the prediction?"

"Let someone aver that Aristotle or Plato said
such and such a thing. What do you have then?...opinions, disputes and arguments. Doesn't that seem
the height of stupidity? As for practical science --
mechanics, physics or chemistry -- all that amounts
to is the passion for mixing up in something that

1. Sotileza: p. 158
2. El Sabor de la tierruca: p. 43
does not concern us. If men would only live in the
sphere that immediately surrounds them they wouldn't
give a snap of their fingers for all the scientific
hubbub of the present century!1

Ferada's attacks on the press of his day took
two forms. The first is illustrated in Jubes de estío
and in Suma quique. In the former he bitterly berates
the press of Madrid. He accuses it of being biased
and loath to recognize provincial writers until their
fame has gone half way round the world. On the other
hand, he alleges that it praises without question any-
thing that local writers produce. In the latter Don
Silvestre, a character who has always read and praised
the articles in a metropolitan newspaper, discovers,
when he visits the city, that the author is a low-
minded libertine. Don Silvestre can scarcely believe
his own eyes when he sees the editor of this paper
participating in the most revolting debauchery:

"And so that paper that I used to read in my
village with such faith is edited by a man of that
stamp! And all those articles that pleaded for
greater order, morality, community welfare, humanity;
philanthropy and brotherhood, far from being truthful,
are a sacrilegious joke, an insult to God and man;
and an ignoble exploitation of public good faith?"2

In another mood he shows himself to be less
bitter in the matter -- more inclined toward humorous

1. El sabor de la tierruce: p. 50
2. Escenas montañesas: p. 208
banter and ridicule. Examples of this treatment are to be found in the protagonist's experiences as a newspaper man and literary critic in the novel Pedro Sánchez and in the article entitled Habego, in the volume Federico González.

Pedro Sánchez was surprised to find that there were many people connected with the newspaper who were writing about things concerning which they knew nothing. Pedro asks the editor about this point and the latter dismisses his question with a laugh:

"We would be in a fine state if we had always to know the facts of the things we discuss in the papers. Why do we need skill and cleverness in this business if it is not so that we may enter wherever we choose, discuss a matter, and then retreat without the fear that someone may have, in the meantime, blocked our way of escape? Skill in the use of words is more important than great erudition in this business."

In the Habego, Pereda treats humorously the type of the modern reporter. After summarizing his activities and rejecting him as an indigenous Spanish product, he bemoans the fact that the young men who expend so much energy in this vocation have prostituted their talents for such a trivial end. Their raison d'être, he says, is due to two things -- the doubtful "honor" of having their own paper be the first to print

1. Pedro Sánchez, P. 99
print a given piece of news; the growing mania on
the part of the Spanish people for "scoops" and
last-minute news that, as soon as they are read,
will be forgotten for still later ones.

Fereda alludes to the Darwinian theory of
evolution as unworthy of even serious discussion. He shows himself suspicious of doctors. This attitude
is not particularly notable because there had long
existed a justifiable contempt for their practices,
and they had been roundly attacked in literary works.

b. Españolismo

Fereda is thoroughly Spanish in temperament, and
an exponent of those ideals that the world has stamped
as distinctively Castilian. M. Menéndez y Pelayo speaks
of him as

"one of the most thoroughly Spanish writers
of all those that have flourished in the present
(nineteenth) century." He is distrustful of foreign lands and foreign influ-
ences, both in literature and politics. There is an
apparent inconsistency in this attitude, since

"As a man of culture he was well acquainted with
the best in French, English and Italian letters,
being proficient besides in the first two languages." 

2. Vide supra: pp. 21, 22, Chapter III
While he is singularly loath to reflect outside influences either in language or thought, he uses many foreign words in his works. However, it will be found that these are used either to add to the development of a character or as a medium of ridicule. He has much to say about these foreign influences in his _Discurso de ingreso_.

In _Bocetos al templo_ he speaks of the United States as:

"an immense depository of all the world's greatest thieves, a labyrinth of things big and bad."

In _El buce suelto_ he contemptuously mentions a colonist who:

"brags that he doesn't believe in God because he had spent some six days in the United States."

In keeping with his blind nationalism, Fereda is extremely bitter against the _indiano_. He saw in him another source of contact with extraneous social groups—another disturbing influence. The _indiano_ was bound to assimilate new ideas and customs while abroad, and upon his return the people of the com-

1. See _Sotileza_ for picture of Don Bernabe
2. _Vide supra_; Chapter III, p. 21
3. _Bocetos al templo_; p. 237
4. _El buce suelto_; p. 345
munity would, in spite of themselves, react to them--
to their disadvantage, contended Pereda. In Don Gonzalo
González de la Gonzalera we have a picture of the indiano
that he is attacking. It was this character's express
purpose to impose his newly-acquired "culture" upon
the easy-going villagers he had left years before. In
this particular case his influence was not only distur-
bing but disastrous. The following passage gives an
idea of his aspirations:

"Coteneo will be just as I left it, half fellow
and half to be worked over. The inhabitants are like
so many melons that go about two by two as though by
a miracle. There is a priest that fills their heads
with a lot of nonsense, to say nothing of another man
who, simply because he has a few lands and a magnifi-
cent house, thinks himself destined to guide and ad-
vise the rest of the village... I'll present myself...
with a half dozen leather-covered English trunks, and
one of the first things I'll do will be to build myself
a palatial home...a little later I'll have myself made
mayor...people will doff their hats to me a half league
away...when the house is finished I'll marry the most
chic young lady of the village. Finally, I'll intro-
duce all the modern customs; I'll reform the very
thought processes of these backward people...the
government will perhaps hear of my worth, and--who
knows? There are many morquises in the world made
of baser metal than my own? 

In A las indias, the author presents still another
side of the indiano. Not only does the search for easy
wealth in the new world lead, usually, to heartbreak
and disappointment but it encourages emigration--a very

1. Don Gonzalo González de la Gonzalera: p.112
bad practice in itself. Pereda’s convictions on this subject are sound, because the practice, which at the discovery of America had to be encouraged by special inducements (land grants, free passages, and penal pardons), finally developed into a grave situation. The adventurous blood of the men who were pouring out of Spain to seek their fortunes in the new world was just the element the country most needed a little later.

After Andrés’ parents have taken leave of him and are returning to their home, his mother in her sorrow:

"can't help apostrophizing the earth she is treading, and its apparent sterility that was driving its sons away to seek in other countries that which their native land could not give them".

"An unjust charge" avers Pereda, "and one that, perpetuated in the mouths of the ignorant, nourishes, in this province, the plague of emigration and depopulation".

In Fachín González, we have another picture of a youth who wanted to be an indiano. The day before he is to sail, he and his mother are miraculously saved from death in an explosion that killed hundreds of other less fortunate onlookers. The next morning he has changed his mind about going—seeing in his salvation a sign from heaven—and one not to be over-

1. *Alas indias*, p. 96
looked:

"Mother, let me tell you that all those particulars about my passage are now to me just like last year's clouds. Since yesterday I'm a very different person... Somehow, tempted as I was by the devil, I was saved and did not pay for my error with those innocent ones that perished... What greater good fortune? Do I need more proof of where my destiny lies? I want to return to the poor little corner of our community and work—for both of us—as my father did before me, happy and blessed by God. And after all, where is there a better inheritance? Blessed is the work that gives one honor and peace of spirit... but greed—that desire for money that is never satisfied—I curse it as the most dangerous pastur.

c. Political views

In no instance is Pereda's intolerance more manifest than in the matter of politics. This is to be explained, in a large measure, in the light of his own unfortunate contacts with the political agitations of his day. As a student in Madrid he was a witness to the Revolution of 1854. His own political career as a member of the Cortes was highly distasteful to him, and he gives us a picture of these experiences in Los hombres de pro. Thus, in weighing Pereda's attitude in the matters of politics and public life, it is highly essential, if we are to do him justice, to judge him as one influenced to a great degree by an epoch in which his country presents a picture of disorganization and corruption.

1. Fachín González: p. 113
Probably many of the conditions of these days can be more accurately termed the inevitable result of any radical political change—not necessarily bad per se—but this is a distinction to which Pereda is blind. As it has elsewhere been pointed out,\(^1\) it never would occur to him to analyse those conditions scientifically, and for this reason he confuses cause and effect. His conclusions are the spontaneous result to be expected from the clash of such a temperament with a radically changing social order, sweeping away the institutions and practices in which he instinctively placed all his faith.

Nor were his impressions of politics merely the result of passive observations. As a member of the Cortes, he led the life of an active politician and office seeker. On all sides he saw corruption, hypocrisy and demagogism, and his experiences disgusted him thoroughly. He stood for the old order and was bitter in his antipathy toward liberalism. Politics, though necessary, are dangerous, he contends; and liberal views, since they diffuse the terms of political agitation, force the consideration of these issues upon the masses, the very ones who should not mix up in these matters. It is his

\(^1\) Vide supra: Chapter V, p. 56
idea that the common people are no more capable of resolving political questions than they are of profiting by higher education. The ideal society, then, is for him one in which a few rule, and in which the rest accept blindly and in good faith all of their legislations—not wishing to have a hand in what they know nothing about. It never occurs to Pereda that such a state of affairs is a hotbed of unrest—a fact verified over and over again historically.

Politicians set about, he contends, to dupe the people, and by working on their emotions and blinding them with glib promises obtain their own selfish ends. In Los hombres de pro he treats of this subject of campaign promises humorously, but none the less ironically on that account. Don Simón is soliciting the support of the influential men of the district. Don Jeromo promises him the vote of his precinct if he can have the assurance of a roadway from his door to the royal highway. Simón assures him that this will have his support, and that the road is as good as built. Don Jeromo laughs and says that this is exactly the same way all the candidates have talked to him for the last ten years, and that the road is not done yet. He wants some sort of concrete proof, and asks Don Simón to deposit $3,000 against the ful-
fillment of the pledge. Don Simón is highly indignant—since, as Pareda would have us believe, he does not intend ever to keep his promise—and declares that this demand is equal to distrusting him and questioning his integrity.
No novelist has been fully explained until we know something of his feminine characters. A study of Pereda's works reveals him as singularly unresponsive to the Ewig-Weibliche, around which, from the time man first began to write, literary expression has circled for warmth and inspiration. Although such a fact observed in a writer of Pereda's comparative voluminousness might strike the casual student of literature as unusual, a more careful analysis of the man's whole philosophy will show his asceticism on this score to be wholly harmonious with his general conservatism.

One can deduce from his work that any violent display of the emotions would have been highly distasteful to him in actual life, and in all his writings, the problem of sex, the glow of passion scarcely play any part. One can affirm with finality that they are never treated for their own sake, but rather only as an accessory, or when their discussion cannot possibly be avoided. Even the more innocuous forms of innocent love strike him only as a dainty enchantment, a thing which the more serious-minded person will treat with a smile, as though conscious of the
part love plays in life, but as though immune to its blandishments himself.

Whenever forced to consider a love-scene in his novels, Pereda is reticent and highly restrained. Pedro Sánchez stammers and struggles to declare his love for Clara; and the author, as though afraid to approach this scene, brings about the most ingenious situations, which prevent Pedro's having an opportunity to speak alone with her. They end by a sort of telepathic understanding. Don Marcelo, in Peñas Arriba, is another bashful fellow in matters of love—almost afraid to move his right hand for fear his left will see—and it is only after he is assured that his friend the doctor, and the village priest approve that he formally end with all propriety asks for Lituca's hand.

In Sotileza, Pereda has given us a picture of his heroine as loved by three men; Andrés, the son of a sea captain, Huerco, a savage, sensuous brute, Cleto, a youth of her own social rank. The author makes it clear that Andrés loves Sotileza very much, although he never tells her of his love nor considers marrying her until he has placed her in a compromising...

1. Pedro Sánchez: p. 421
position. Sotileza does not return his love, and from the first assumes that the attentions of this señorita could not be serious and terminate in an honorable alliance.

Hugues loves Sotileza in his primitive way. She is strangely attracted to him, and although she permits him to nail her about and to touch her in play, she does not really love him enough to marry him.

Cleto is her social equal, and of the three lovers the one most logically suited to become her husband. Their marriage, however, is a matter of arrangement by her foster parents and Padre Polinor.

Nowhere is as evident as here Pereda's inability to cope with feminine psychological analysis. The inner character of his heroine has escaped him; her reactions could have been made the basis of a fruitful analytical study, but Pereda shuns the task, either because it is distasteful to him or because he is unable to handle it. Sotileza has been presented up to her adolescence as a normal, if not precocious, young woman. Her passivity and coldness to all her suitors has not been justified by her character as so far presented to us. Not only is she cold, but she is indifferent, and love should have been rather more significant to
her, even if considered only as her means of having a family and children—the only future for a poor fisher-girl.

Throughout his work Pereda adheres to the most formal and classic Spanish traditions in the treatment of the love theme. Alliances are arranged only after mutual consideration of the families of the young people involved; there is little or nothing of secret, romantic rendez-vous. In Don Gonzalo González de la Consalera, Don Ramón's daughter Magdalena has seen and fallen in love with Don Álvaro de la Guerra. A short time after the two young people have spoken together casually at fairs and other public meetings Don Ramón, suspecting from the girl's actions that she is withholding something from him, questions her. When she confesses her love for Don Álvaro, the father makes it clear that the affair could decorously have gone no farther without his knowing of it, and in fact declares that she must see no more of her sweetheart until the latter's father has formally demanded her hand for his son.

Pereda believed that the family was the main spoke of the social wheel, and that woman's place was there as an aid to her husband. He may be said to have indorsed the adage "La mujer honrada, la pierna
quebrada y en casa". Omitting the crudity of this saying, it expresses the Mohammedan flavor which permeates his theory of woman's sphere. The modern conception of woman's place in the world and in the family was unknown to Pereda; she is pictured as rightly subservient to her husband at all times, and whatever recognition she hopes to win from him she should seek to acquire through the strength of her feminine influence rather than from any rights afforded her by the civil code. One of Pereda's characters says:

"The marriage in which the husband does not know how to guard his position is no marriage; and this is best guarded when the husband counts for most in the family—that is to say being lord and master of his house; not simply because he is stronger but because he understands better all that touches the sphere he and his wife occupy".1

That a wife's place is filled with responsibilities, and that the expert managing of a family is rather an honor than a thankless, slavish task is here indicated:

"It is my firm conviction that it is more difficult to manage a family so that none of its members go astray, or that there not be discord in the group from time to time, than to govern a state".2

That not only should a woman keep her place in

1. Pablo, in El sabor de la tierra: p. 194
2. De tal palo, tal astilla: p. 119
the family, but that a husband should see to it
that she does, is often evidenced in *Cres.coron trunflos*. 
After Doña Sabina's thoughtless expenditures have 
driven her husband to bankruptcy he sees their error 
and declares in this respect:

"That (i.e. not having managed my own house and 
regulated your expenditures) is precisely the sin of 
my weakness, a sin which with yours has brought dis-
aster upon my house."

In *La mujer del César*, Ramón pays a visit to his 
brother Carlos and his wife Isabel. The family is not 
a happy one. Carlos does not play the man's part, and 
Isabel goes her own way. Ramón asks his brother:

"But would it not be better for your wife to 
accommodate herself to your ways? 
"And why, answered Carlos, should I not accommo-
date myself to hers as I have been doing? 
"Because, Carlos, that is not what the law of 
God ordains, but rather the other."

When Isabel becomes involved, though innocently 

enough in fact, with one of her many admirers, the 

Viscount of Cierzo, Carlos tells her:

"The sort of life you are leading, away from me, 
is the path which leads most quickly to the absolute 
eglect of all your wifely duties. The woman who 
devotes herself to the trivial triumphs of the world 
is very apt to drag through the salons not only her 
own honor but that of her husband as well... I have 
ever had the courage to say to you 'Since I am unable 
to adjust myself to your mode of life, since there is

no place for me in your world, adjust yourself to mine and we shall then try to make of our home a bidding place for true love and happiness, both of which we might then well hope to attain. ... I was unable to say this to you for fear of offending you, but all the time I feared appearances; the world has a way of burning all that nears it, and tarnishes what it cannot burn.²

For a wife to be virtuous is not enough in itself. Carlos takes the blame for not having grappled with the situation sooner, and declares that:

"In these times, more than ever before, women should be made to understand that it does not suffice to be honorable and virtuous, but rather, like Caesar's wife, they must seem so in the eyes of the world."²

1. Idem: pp. 99-100
2. Idem: pp. 119-120
e. Wealth

The desire for riches and their disposition once they have been acquired are problems treated repeatedly in Pereda's writings. Had he lived to see present day fortunes as we know them he would have been amazed and distressed, but at the same time would have rejoiced in modern philanthropy. He considered wealth a trust, and its wise management for the benefit of society a noble accomplishment—a position still held by enlightened conservative opinion. Don Celso in Peñas arriba is a good example of Pereda's ideal administrator. Possessing an adequate fortune, he was content to live a simple life, and used his means frequently to aid his less fortunate neighbors.

Pereda did not look with scorn upon the honest merchant or business man who through faithfully serving his neighbors amassed a modest fortune. On the contrary, he advocated at all times the utilization of those means near at hand for making a good living. He knew that if people stayed at home and tilled the soil or engaged in such business as the village communities offered, even the relatively most prosperous would not exert a bad influence.
The very temperament of the people and the opportunities at hand would be natural checks against the abuses of wealth.

It was the indiano in particular against whom he is most bitter. Here was a type primarily discontented with the modest opportunities at home, who for that reason went away to amass a fortune. In many cases this wealth was acquired quickly, and when the indiano returned to his native village his one desire was to outshine his hard-working neighbors. We have seen in Don Gonzalo González de la Gonzalera how a man of this type returned from the New World with great wealth, and how his one ambition was to impress everyone in the village. No thought of helping his neighbors ever entered his mind, nor did it occur to him that his pretensions might cause unhappiness to those about him.

The desire to live on a scale beyond one's means, and the resulting unhappiness this will entail are demonstrated in Oros son triunfos. When Doña Sabina's husband tells her that they are on the verge of bankruptcy and that they will have to deny themselves some of the luxuries to which they have been accustomed,

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I. Vide supra: Chapter V, p.62
she shouts in a fit of anger:

"Impossible! Your house cannot fail! I simply cannot and will not cease being rich. I am unable to reduce myself to the petty economies of an ordinary woman. You have a distinct obligation in this matter, and don't forget it. You are obliged to overcome whatever obstacles may stand in the way of your family's social position!"

The old story of a young girl's sacrificing herself for money is illustrated in *La Montalvaz*. Nica loves Pepe Guzmán but he has no money. The social scale on which the family has lived for so long can no longer be maintained without a substantial financial backing. The rich banker who wants to marry Nica will solve the problem, and Pereda shows how this way out of such difficulties can only result in unhappiness and disgrace.

Another angle of the problem of wealth is its effect on people wholly unfitted by nature to appreciate its value or spend it judiciously. In *Pepe sor buen arriero* we have a picture of two contented villagers, Blas and Paula. They are not well-to-do, but still have enough to live comfortably. An uncle comes to live with them and upon his death leaves them a large fortune. Their first thought is to move into a mansion far beyond their modest needs.

1. *Crec son triunfos*: p. 156
and to surfeit themselves with the luxuries they have never before been able to afford. Sponge cake and white wine work their undoing. Behind the rather humorous treatment Pereda has given to this story, there is a well defined moral which he expresses in these words:

"I hold that, had the heirs of the indien done what a certain laborer of Castille did when he won a fortune in the lottery, that is, buy a horse with part of his money, and ride to his customary work in the fields, they would have remained happy. I offer this as advice to those who, being happy and contented in their poverty, are visited by capricious fortune; for experience has demonstrated that it is far more difficult to spend a fortune judiciously than to earn one."

Thus it will be seen that Pereda's stand on the matter of wealth is consistent with his general conservatism. He would have people use good sense and moderation in this matter. If their general aims and ideals are what they should be the problems of wealth will not arise. It is when greed, ostentation and corruption rule their lives that riches become a power for evil and unhappiness.

1. Para ser buen arriero; p. 91
f. Education

Pereda shows himself to be opposed to any sort of education except that which may be necessary in order to earn a modest living. This attitude dovetails perfectly with his general antagonism toward scientific advancement and research. Scholarly investigations he dismisses as absolutely useless, and characterizes intellectual curiosity in general as little more than people's desire to mix up in matters that do not concern them. To him the most pitifully ludicrous figure of all is the learned prig who affects to embrace the whole range of human knowledge, and who exults in airing his assumed profundity in erudite controversy. He says in this connection:

"That is why I am so fond of erudite people: they trip themselves up in their investigations and fall in a bottomless pit. They then hasten to cover up their mistake with a resounding phrase, and literally jumping on it to counteract a rebound that would mean their loss, they go forward as though their path held no pitfalls for them."

This very dogmatic stand does not do Pereda credit, and we can only make allowance for it in the

1. Vide supra: Chapter V, p. 57
2. Vide supra: Chapter V, pp. 57-58
3. Sabor de la tierruca: p. 43
light of his general prejudices. Anything beyond the most rudimentary education he considered the leaven of social unrest. He has demonstrated how complicated political theories can work havoc in a contented society because they are too advanced for the villagers, and he objected to higher education on the same grounds. Given life as he knew it in the mountain districts of his native province, he wished above all to keep it intact. Education would make people discontented with their surroundings and might even encourage emigration. Social unrest, another evil as great as emigration, might result if people, after reading and study should seek to better conditions as they were at home.

Fereda considers the home to be the most significant educational force in society. Within it, granting it to be a normal one, are to be found all the elements which make for good character and useful citizenship. Mica Montávez realizes this, and thus pays tribute to home influences:

"Family life, the atmosphere of the home, the care of children, strict attention to domestic duties, with God in the heart rather than in speech -- this is all the knowledge, all the science required so that

1. Vide supra: Chapter V, p. 62
The result of marriage may be useful men and honest women.\(^1\)

That a child's training must start at home is elsewhere indicated in *La Montalvés*, as are also the disastrous results of parental neglect in this respect:

"The least dangerous and most careful education that a young girl can have will be that in which there is felt the loving care of her mother, if to her good fortune she has a mother and a worthy one.\(^2\)

Mica Montalvés was sent away to school at an early age because her parents did not care for her, and because they lavished all their affection on their son. From her resulting character, Pereda shows that such a practice is unwise, since at such an impressionable age and individual's life may be seriously warped, as was that of his heroine.

In *Los Chicos de la calle* Pereda has given us a picture of the street urchins of the cities. With some exceptions they all drop sooner or later by the wayside from hunger, disease or the results of crime. Pereda seeks to show that the root of the matter is to be found in the lack of proper home environment and elementary education:

"They are, finally unfortunate ones, those who have never known how much consolation and help there is in a father's guidance or in the caresses, prayers and attentions of a loving mother.\(^3\)"

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1. *La Montalvés*: p. 479  
2. *Idem*: p. 29  
3. *Tipos y Paisajes*: *Chicos de la calle*, p. 213
Conclusion

José María de Pereda was an exponent of the traditions of seventeenth century Spain. His work shows him to have been conservative, intolerant and prejudiced in his views. His mission as a writer was to plead for the conservation of the simple, provincial life of old Spain, and to protest bitterly against what he considered the disturbing and corrupting moral tendencies inherent to both intellectual and material progress.

His philosophy was based on life as he knew it in the isolated villages of his own province. This mode of life he considered ideal, and he opposed everything that tended to break it down. Scientific progress, the telephone, the telegraph, railways and steamships, he condemned because they are the quickest means of spreading disturbing progressive tendencies.

Not content merely to praise life in the small villages, he launched bitter attacks against what he termed the universal depravity of large cities, and attempted against such a background to support theses in defense of his very marked moral, religious and political ideals.

He displayed a race prejudice that was blind to anything non-Spanish. His literary inspiration
was an emanation of those ideals the world has stamped as distinctly Castilian. He is at all times hostile to foreign nations and their influences.

Pereda's work at its best is characterized by a virile realism, and the author showed himself well fitted to advance the standard raised by Nesonero Romance, Flores, Larra, Trueba and Fernán Caballero. Pardo Bazán declares that if Pereda is not the most realistic of Spanish writers, he is surely the least idealistic.

"Pereda proceeds in the manner of our classic writers, our realists, more sober and less deeply immersed than the modern naturalists; he has a strict sense of objective reality and he sees with the eyes of a well-balanced temperament. As I picture Pereda faced with the necessity of describing the death of a little child, I imagine his using some four or five reasonable, expressive, correct and energetic sentences, or at least without exaggeration words which carry us but a little beyond the circle of our usual thoughts. Pereda's rhetoric is that of common sense illuminated by the clarity of art."

"He is accustomed to proceed by reasonings rather than by the study of the notions of his characters; and the new art shows how to reveal the interior movements of the mind by the acts that they inspire; thus and in no other way is really manifested the psychic life, given that we see everyone move and see no one think."

In the preface to De tal palo, tal astilla, Pereda

1. "One of the most Spanish of the writers who flourished in the present (19th) century"—Menéndez y Pelayo: Preface to Published Works, volume 1, p.30
shows himself willing to be classed as a realist, but within certain well-defined limits:

"If by realism is to be understood the desire to present in books passions and human characters and pictures of nature within the decorum of art, I am a realist and hold it to be a great honor; but if by such an appellative it is wished to affiliate me -- as has often been done, and with the idea of complimenting me -- under the banners of present day triumphant but obscene naturalism which delights in depicting the ravages of alcoholism and the obscenities of the brothel, I protest against the insult of such a classification...I renounce the glory of being a writer such as this, and moreover call attention to how little I belong to the above movement, having entered the field of art as I did long before it appeared, just as I am now, and without any other affiliation or "school" than my peculiar literary complexion."¹

Pereida's antagonism to the naturalistic movement was due to two things. First, he was not interested enough in it to study it without bias, as his sweeping denunciations indicate. His aversion to the methods of this school arose from a natural distaste for the more palpable of its defects and such abuses as were perpetuated by the less capable and more mercenary of its writers. Secondly, his approach to the subject of degraded, impoverished and suffering humanity was so much an emanation of his own sympathetic character that his pictures deal more with the results of sin than with an analysis and detailed account of the acts themselves. He believed that

¹. De tal palo, tal astilla; pp. 6-7
nothing can be gained by throwing too much light on
man's viciousness. No one knew better than he that
man has his ignoble side, but in so far as this has
to be considered in his works, it is handled rather
by a method of implication than by objective descrip-
tion. Even in Don Gonzalo González de la Gonzalera,
where we have normal, contented villagers converted
into beasts who stoop even to drunken murder, the
impression we derive from the whole is one of sym-
pathy for these misguided people. Sympathy, then,
and not pessimism may be said to be the backbone
of his realistic treatment.

That Pereda would rather never discuss outrages
against decency and hidalguía is indicated in many
instances. In Pedro Sánchez the matter of Clara's
adultery is presented and dismissed in a few words.
Where other writers might have devoted pages or even
chapters to the development of this incident, Pereda
states it simply, without making too much of a point
of it for its own sake, and the realism does not
suffer thereby. In fact, it is by virtue of its
gently more convincing. What Pereda seeks to
show is the effect of this disillusion upon his
hero's character. This he has done, and two or three
lurid chapters, encumbered with a mass of detail,
would only have shifted the emphasis in the wrong direction and blurred the picture.

Another similar treatment is given the subject of adultery in La Montalvaz. Nica makes her bargain with life and decides to marry one man while she gives herself to another. All this is stated plainly enough. After her marriage the author summarizes the consummation of her pact with Pepe Gusman in a scant quarter of a page. His purpose has been accomplished, the character of his heroine definitely demonstrated, and he has no desire to follow her and her lover beyond the door of her boudoir and make us witnesses of their libidinous affair.

In those cases where Pereda is unencumbered by the weight of a thesis his characters are drawn true to life and are free from oversimplification. He never idealizes. In the face of the numerous social problems for which he sought a solution he was too deeply impressed by the need for improvement to give us a rose tinted picture. The keynote to the tone of his realism is a sympathy for lowly types, a desire to ennoble the vulgar and penetrate to the very heart of commonplace existence. In writing of the fisherfolk of Santander, he wrote purely from a love of his subject, and the resulting picture has the
true ring of conviction.

In those cases where Pereda's realism is handled most skillfully and where he most nearly approaches the stature of the finished novelist his work lacks a dramatic quality. He creates no really brilliant social scenes; shuns all poignant situations except those suggested secondarily or by implication; turns instinctively from the analysis of life's greatest moments, from the complexities of sex and the deep dramatic movements of passion. El huérfano is the least dramatic of his novels. It is at best a series of pictures. Peñas arriba shows Pereda to be ever the costumbrieta. The brilliant descriptions of nature and its effect on the protagonist's character are convincing but not dramatic. The lack of this quality mars Estrellas. Pereda failed to tell his story dramatically, and what we get from the novel is a good general impression of the lives of the fisherfolk with drama playing a secondary role.

Returning to a consideration of the simplicity of the elements which compose Pereda's art, it may be said that herein lies the secret of his realistic force. Abnormal types are easier to picture, as a rule, and are more apt to hold the average reader's
attention than normal ones. To take that which is nearest at hand, most familiar to both artist and reader, and so impregnate it with the spark of reality that it takes on a new life and vitality requires the keenest of observation and feeling for significant details of fact. Pereda has demonstrated that he possessed this difficult art of reproducing the primitive, familiar and picturesque speech and customs of the peasants and fisher folk, without by so doing either impairing the exclusive quality of his workmanship or giving his humble types an air of self-consciousness. This sublimation of the simple and familiar when artistically handled results in a more lastingly convincing picture than the depicting of abnormalities. Pereda, when he lays bare the resignation and suffering of the fishermen of Santander, becomes universal in appeal. We forget as we read these passages that they are concerned with a mode of life foreign, in its outward manifestations, to most of us. What Pereda drives home is the universality of human struggle in the face of adverse conditions and adjustments to environment; he helps us discover in ourselves the same sentiments that play a part in the lives of his best drawn characters.

Pereda chose his path and followed it, convinced.
of the soundness of his procedure. In contrast to Galdós, who had his hand continually on the public's pulse, he set about to educate his readers to an appreciation of his realism. This realism was too harsh at first, as is evidenced by the cold reception accorded the early editions of the Edad de manganitas. The beauty and value of his work may not be apparent after a casual reading. The subtlety of color and style calls for a serious study if it is to convey the whole of his message.

In realistic procedure Pereda is objective. The reader deduces the author's thoughts and those of his characters from their overt acts. The most striking example of this procedure is to be found in Pedro Sánchez. The part of the novel dealing with Pedro's governorship is presented so that we see nothing of his inner thoughts or opinions upon his life about him, but through an analysis of his actions and his reactions to his environment, we are easily able to deduce his convictions concerning honor, love and family obligations.

In Satileza, in so far as there is an analysis of character it is objective. Andrés' feeling for the heroine undergoes a change and evolution, and

1. Vide supra: Chapter I, p. 4.
these facts are gleaned from his actions. We do not follow with the author his mental struggle before he went to Sotileza's home on the day he compromised her.

In Enanas montañosas there are numerous instances of this objective realistic treatment. In Alas Indias the full force of the sacrifice the departure of Andrés for the new world entailed, as well as his mother's grief at his going, are conveyed objectively.

Politically he supported the old monarchy and believed that the ideal arrangement was a feudal society in which a contented peasantry lived under the care of considerate landlords. He held that new and liberal ideas of government only cause unrest and suffering when thrust upon people who are unable to understand and utilize them.

He considered the family to be the mainspring of an ideal society. His ideas concerning the relative responsibilities of man and wife are made clear in numerous places. There is a distinct Mohammedan flavor to his theory regarding woman's place in the home, since he pictures her as subservient to her husband at all times. The latter is to be truly the head of his house, and is to be respected as a patriarch.

Fereda's views on wealth and education are
conservative and in keeping with the whole of his social philosophy. This philosophy was evolved from his experiences and unfortunate contacts with a changing age. Reared as a Catholic, he had learned to look with distrust upon all liberal views. Besides, he lived most of his life in comparative isolation and had no opportunity to compare different societies. His conservatism can moreover be explained in the light of economic security. He was the possessor of an adequate fortune, was contented with his life calling and happy in his surroundings. A change in social form could not have benefited him, and so he was logically opposed to liberalism.

As a writer we consider him under two heads: as a costumbriista proper and as a novelist. The latter stage is in reality a development of the former. He never loses his delight in the treatment of nature. Even in those instances in which the scenes of his works are removed from his native surroundings he still shows a marked leaning toward costumbriista treatment. This, it may be affirmed with conviction, was his happiest mood. As a painter of familiar types from among the humble natives of his mountain province he enjoys an enviable position
in the field of Spanish letters. He has laid bare the souls of the Santander fisherfolk and has treated them with great sympathy, keen insight and absolute fidelity. This important phase of his work has the true ring of realistic conviction; the lives and struggles of these people are raised by Pereda to a plane of universal significance. By virtue of the very intensity of treatment that he has given them, they carry us beyond the limits of the Montaña and beyond Spain itself. The lives of fishermen and peasants are much the same the world over, and a study of Pereda's work leaves us with this conviction.

Unfortunately Pereda held that one of the missions of art is didacticism. A man of rigid moral principals, keenly sensitive to the weaknesses and faults of the society of his day, he attempted several times to remedy conditions through his writing. Where another writer might have supported a thesis without serious detriment to his technique, Pereda failed. When once his thesis has taken possession of him it carries him along as though he were powerless to direct his story further, or to keep it within the bounds of artistic treatment. When in this mood he does not hesitate to oversimplify his characters in any direction desired. For this reason his didactic novels prove little or
nothing, and are not realistically convincing. It was in Pereda the _costumbrista_, the interpreter of the humble types of the Montaña, that the spark of genius shone most brightly. He deserves to rank with the first-rate realistic writers of the nineteenth century, but a dispassionate study of his works as a whole indicates that as a novelist he has been overestimated.
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