A STUDY OF THE WORKS OF
RAMON PEREZ DE AYALA

By

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Chairman of Department
I wish to thank Professor Arthur L. Owen for his patience and assistance in the completion of this work.
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Chapter I Orientation

A. Biographical Summary

Ramón Pérez de Ayala was born in Oviedo, in Asturias, August 9, 1880. His early childhood was a happy one, spent in an atmosphere of affection and material comfort, for his father was well situated financially. When Ramón was eight years old he was sent to the Jesuit college in Carrión de los Condes, where he studied under Julio Cejador, who felt a deep personal affection for the young Ramón, and considered him an extremely talented and unusual child.¹ It was here that his intense hatred of the Jesuit order and its methods of instruction had its inception. After two years at Carrión de los Condes, he was sent to another Jesuit school, the college of La Inmaculada, in Gijón. Here began the cultivation of his marked dialectical ability, which he later turned against the order (A.M.D.G. and La Pata de la raposa). He suffered severe physical punishment from the fathers² and was confronted on all sides with the spirit of moral and religious hypocrisy.

1. Cejador, P. Julio: Historia de la literatura española, volume XII, p. 127
2. Agustín, Francisco: Ramón Pérez de Ayala, su vida y sus obras, Madrid, 1927, p. 16
which for him characterized the order, and threatened to warp or destroy his personality. The intense hatred of the Jesuits engendered in him by his life at the two schools is the dominant note of his second novel, A.M.D.G., and is also expressed in his third novel, La Pata de la raposa. This feeling finds expression frequently, though less violently, in many of his other works (Tinieblas en las cumbres, Troteras y danzaderas, Belarmino y Apolonio).

After completing the course at the Jesuit college in Gijón, and receiving his bachelor's degree, he studied in the University of Oviedo, under Leopoldo Alas and Rafael Altamira. The atmosphere here was much more favorable to his intellectual and social growth, and he developed rapidly. He completed the law course at Oviedo, and after taking his degree went to London. While there, he received word of his father's financial collapse and suicide, and returned to Spain. He had already begun to write for the press, and his collected poems, previously printed in the review Helios, form his first published volume, La Paz del sendero, which appeared in 1904. The next work to appear was the novel Tinieblas en las cumbres, published in 1907.

1. Vide: Tinieblas en las cumbres, p.10; Belarmino y Apolonio, p. 103
Since that time he has published sixteen volumes, eleven of them novels, the others divided between the fields of criticism, poetry, and travel notes. Throughout this period, Ayala has written also for several Spanish and South American reviews, including *Alma española*, *Europa*, *La Lectura*, *Hojas selectas*, *Blanco y negro*, *Nuevo Mundo*, *La Esfera*, *El Imparcial*, *Heraldo*, *España*, *Vida nueva*, *El Sol*. During the war he was correspondent for *La Prensa* of Buenos Aires, and since the war has written regularly for that paper. He has travelled widely in both Europe and the United States, and is thoroughly familiar with the modern cultures of Europe and America.

After his marriage in 1924, he settled down to a quiet domestic life, though he still continued to write for *La Prensa*. Except for his work for this periodical, he devotes his time to his own writing, which has always been with him an absorbing passion. He is serious and thoughtful in his literary work, and writes nothing in haste. He has written a great deal more than he has published, for he destroys much that he writes. His published work, therefore,

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maintains a fairly even level of literary excellence.

At the overthrow of the Bourbon monarchy, and
the establishment of the Spanish Republic, Ayala
was appointed ambassador of Spain to the Court of
St. James, in accordance with the apparent policy
of the Republic to appoint men of recognized literary
and scientific achievement to represent Spain in
other nations.

The actual incidents of Ayala's earlier life
are paralleled so closely in his first four novels,
Tinieblas en las cumbres, A.K.D.G., La Pata de la
raposa, and Troteras y danzaderas, that many critics
have accepted them as auto-biographical. It may be
well, therefore, to examine these novels for in-
formation about the author.

He was a sensitive, imaginative child, and met
in the atmosphere of the Jesuit schools, with their
rigid and unsympathetic discipline, about the worst
possible stimulus to his development. In A.K.D.G.
he describes the forms of physical and spiritual
terrorization inflicted upon pupils by the fathers.

p. 154
He suffered intensely from this treatment, and became an introvert. Early in his school life his love of belles lettres was awakened. The Alberto of his novels decided deliberately to work in the plastic arts, considering them the medium of expression which possessed the most universal appeal. Ayala, though he has always been deeply interested in drawing and sculpture, nevertheless has from the first given his most serious attention and most sincere devotion to literature. He is a man of thoughtful nature and wide reading. These traits are carried so far in Alberto that they reach the undesirable extreme of introversion and abulia. He has substituted reading and thinking for living, his will is vague and ineffective, and he knows he is missing the meaning of life, but cannot tell where or how to find it. Ayala himself quite evidently never carried introspection and meditation to such an extreme, for his works give evidence of wide experience of men and of life, he has travelled extensively, worked intensely, enjoyed a very happy

1. Agustín, Francisco: *Orí Cid*, p. 17
2. *Vide*: *Tinieblas en las cumbres*, p. 326
married life and large and varied group of friendships and interests. 1

He is a man of a fine culture, acquired through both his vast reading and his widely varied personal experiences. His knowledge of Spanish literature is deep and thorough, and his familiarity with foreign literatures, particularly the English and French, scarcely less so. Every critic sees the influence of Francis James in his poetry, some of which is so very like that of the French author as to appear almost a translation. Madariaga compares Ayala to Shelley, but points out fundamental differences in their manner of treating nature in poetry. 2 In his prose many different influences appear. He feels a passionate admiration for the classic Spanish writers, and the influence of the seventeenth century novelists, both in theme or subject matter, and in the mechanics of style, is discernible in his earlier work, which some have characterized as "picaresque". His is a notably eclectic temperament, influenced by and selecting from his wide range of reading varied elements;

2. Madariaga, Salvador de: Semblanzas literarias contemporáneas, Barcelona, 1924, pp. 112-116
but his own personality is so strong that it molds and combines all these elements into something that is distinctively Ayala.¹ From France, he has taken a sort of modernistic feeling, coupled with excessive metrical liberty; from Italy, the Florentine elegance of the Renaissance; from England, the humor and basis of seriousness that are present in everything he writes; from the Castilian, the richness and gallantry of language and the picaresque manner which cause his humor, though indeed it has much of the English, as well.² He was granted the Premio Nacional de Literatura, together with Concha Espina and Wenceslao Fernández Flores, in 1926. Some of his novels have been translated to various European languages.

B. *Ethics and Esthetics*

With the appearance of *Tinieblas en las cumbres*, in 1907, public attention was attracted rather forcibly to the young novelist. The book showed promise of a genuine literary talent, and was extraordinary enough to compel at least a temporary interest in the author. But however interesting it may be as a first attempt, it is not a very fruitful source of information regarding Ayala's social and esthetic convictions. His subsequent novels and his literary and political criticism reveal much more fully his attitude on social and artistic matters.

A preoccupation with the problem of education is a recurring theme in both the novels and the critical studies. In *A.M.D.G.* this takes the form of a diatribe against the Jesuit schools, the purpose of the book being to demonstrate and condemn the fallacious technique and cruelty of the order in its pedagogical relationships. There is apparently nothing in the Jesuits' educational system which meets with Ayala's approval, and he refers to its curriculum, disciplinary methods, and ideals with scorn and indignation. The Jesuit schools receive less extensive, but not less bitter attacks from him in several other volumes. Alberto, the character around whom the
slender plot of A.M.D.G. is woven, speaks thus of the Jesuit priests in a later novel: "I wish them neither good nor evil, Fina, even though they have done me great harm. Six years, Fina, day by day, restricting my spirit tightly with the bond of fear of ridicule, enervating it with the conviction of the uselessness of effort. When one is a believer, after these six years he becomes a priest, or rather is handed over to them, like a corpse. When he is not a believer..."1 Alberto, who has lost his sense of orientation in life, or more properly, perhaps, never developed one, considers himself a good example of what becomes of the latter. Apolonic's son, the priest who has entered the church unwillingly, in a conversation with a friend, describes his course in the theological seminary as seven years of triple martyrdom. 2 The dissolute old reprobate, Plotino Cuevas, in his death-bed confession to "Padre X", recalls himself to his former school-master with the following ironical commentary on the type of instruction to be obtained in the ordinary Jesuit school: "I studied in a college where you were professor of rhetoric and poetry, mathematics, Psycholo-

1. La Pata de la raposa, Madrid, n.d., p. 269
2. Belarmino y Apolonic, Madrid, 1921, p. 264
gy, logic and ethics, gymnasium and lineal drawing."¹

Ayala sees in education rightly directed a tremendous social force, perhaps the only force of any considerable value, for the improvement of a nation. The kind of education which he considers desirable is that which he classifies as "intellectual education, for tolerance, rather than for instruction".²

He treats the subject of sex with a frankness and a relatively detached attitude in direct contrast to the prevalent tendency, among English and American writers, either to ignore it almost entirely, or to devote undue attention to it. He recognizes sex as one of the most powerful forces in human existence, and calls it and the economic problem, i.e. the problem of obtaining the essentials of life, the fundamental questions, beside which all the other preoccupations of life are dwarfed into insignificance. In fact, he says, only the impossibility of solving one of these two problems could drive a man in his sane mind to suicide. All suicides of sane individuals may be classed either as suicides for thwarted passion or suicides caused by economic ruin.³

1. Tinieblas en las cumbres, p.10
2. Las Máscaras, Madrid, 1917, volume I, p. 128
3. Herman encadenado, Madrid, 1917, p. 151
Individuals of all types and degrees of sexual experiences are to be found among his creations, from the impossibly innocent Urbano and Simona to the dissolute libertines of Tinieblas en las cumbres. It is interesting that the characters which may be considered as examples of sexual frustration (Don Cástulo, Urbano's tutor, and Doña Iluminada, the friend and confidante of Tigre Juan) are none the less attractive individuals; while the least sympathetic and attractive characters are those in whose lives sex has assumed disproportionate importance (Bob Mackenzie in La Pata de la raposa, and the dissipated companions of Alberto on the fantastic expedition of Tinieblas en las cumbres.)

Love and sexual experience are necessary to the fullest development of the individual's potentialities, but this development requires both abandon and restraint in the proper measure. Excess of either abandon or restraint leads to unfortunate consequences to the individual, and ultimately to society as well. Love is like any other elemental force, a mortal enemy if one allows it to dominate him; heaven's best gift if he controls and directs it. This is the gist of Don Cástulo's discussion with Urbano, and his
advice to the youth is "Embrace life and love! Do not let your reading substitute for experience, plunging you into an imaginary life which will leave you useless for real life."¹

Probably as a result of his early training, Ayala has little or no sympathy with traditional and formal religion. His hatred of the Jesuit order, already mentioned, is an important factor in determining his attitude toward religion. He sees the beauty in the ritual and customs of the Church: "Truly, the liturgy of the Catholic Church is beautiful, very beautiful, very sensuous, expressly for delicately voluptuous temperaments"² but this beauty is after all only a superficial one, and scarcely suffices for the man who thinks as well as feels.

The Church is intolerant of intellectual activity. The State will permit freedom of thought, but refuses freedom of action, because that would destroy civic discipline. The Church, on the other hand, allows considerable latitude in the matter of action, but not in that of thought. The worst crimes can receive absolution, but the smallest doubt in the matter of

¹. Luna de miel, luna de hiel, Madrid, 1924, p. 183
². Belarmino y Apolonio, p. 247
faith cannot be forgiven. 1 This intolerance on the part of the Church has had the stifling effect on all science and advancement of human learning of which the doctor Don Arcadio Ontañón accuses it with reference to medicine: "With Christianity, medical science was lost. Christianity, the enemy of nudity, and therefore of the study of anatomy, was interested only in graduating, or ordaining, doctors of the soul, confessors. The progress of medicine is in inverse ratio to the progress of Christianity." 2

The Church not only crushes science and investigation whenever possible, but even twistists and warps characters, by molding everyone it can get hold of to its own narrow pattern, stifling originality and individuality, and all the natural impulses of human beings. This complaint is voiced in the passionate outcry of Padre Saqueros, the non-conforming Jesuit priest, against his superior in the convent: "You are the demon. I am generous and open by nature. I cannot bear that character of yours -- warped, hypocritical, malicious, cruel, hardened --

1. Idem, p. 38
2. Luna de miel, luna de hiel, p. 263
Are you a representative of God? Are the sons of Saint Ignatius like you?"1

Formal religion is unsatisfactory as a guide to living. Ayala turns, therefore, to a sort of philosophy of life, whose chief elements are devotion to beauty in nature and in art; a humorous, frequently ironic attitude toward circumstance and destiny; and a firm belief in the saving efficacy of work. Man is indeed the plaything of circumstance and the victim of predestination; but if he is able to smile in the face of circumstance and at the expense of predestination he is superior to them -- he rises above his destiny.2 The ideals which can serve as a guiding principle are those which Alberto Díaz de Guzmán calls "the greatest, perhaps the only, virtues...tolerance and justice."3

Ayala speaks of art as "an outlet for passionate emotions, which serves as a form of purification for them".4 He regards writing in much the same

1. A.M.D.G., p. 196
2. Las Máscaras, volume II, Madrid, 1919, p. 76
3. Troteras y danzaderas, Madrid, n.d., p. 294
4. Las Máscaras, volume II, p. 49
light as Wordsworth did poetry -- "a spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions". He considers that art is not the embodiment of theories, but that the theories are the artist's explanation or justification of his work. That is, the author does not select a theory, or formulate a theory, and then govern his writing by the principles of the theory. Rather, he writes, expressing his own ideas or emotions. Then, if he feels called upon to do so, he formulates his artistic theory or creed, explaining, and it may be, defending, his work. The function of the critic is the same -- to justify and explain the artist's work. This is true of criticism of any art, be it literature, painting, sculpture, music. The critic must base his judgment upon consideration of what the artist intended to accomplish. If he has succeeded in what he set out to do, his work is good. If not, it is bad.¹

He approves of realism in art, adding that it should be a genuine realism, seeing all sides of reality, and not a partial one, preoccupied with any one side, whether good or bad.² Artistic reality is

1. *Las Máscaras*, volume II, p. 95
2. *Idem*, p. 140
a superior, imaginative reality, of which the reader or spectator partakes with the loftiest faculties of the spirit, without requiring identity with the reality which may have served it as a model or inspiration. Any literary work will be interesting in proportion as it falls within the intellectual and emotional norms of the reader. What he does not either feel or understand does not interest him.¹

The drama seems to him the most plastic or malleable form of literary art today. All the other types have crystallized into a mold. The fundamental quality of dramatic, as of any other, art is sincerity. The drama appeals to the social sense of the spectator, and for that reason subjects and treatment which would be perfectly acceptable in other forms of art might well be considered immoral subjects for drama.

He discusses the question of morality in art, dividing art into three categories -- popular art, artistic art "not a mere redundancy", esthetic art. Popular art is the reflection and recording of life, within certain restrictions; a selection and synthesis of details to produce a desired impression in conformity with universally accepted dictates of morality. Artistic art purports to be a faithful, impersonal.

¹ Las Mascaras, volume I, p. 20
objective transcript of life, without any attempt either to select esthetic elements or to pursue moral ends. For this type of art moral and immoral acts are, indiscriminately, like deeds of courage or cowardice, like love or hate, parts of life, artistic themes. Immoral acts are committed in life, art should not be forbidden to present them. Esthetic art admits no other end to art than the creation of beauty. Popular art selects its subjects from life; artistic art admits anything in life as its subject; esthetic art maintains that life in itself is merely ugly and disgusting, tolerable only in so far as it allows itself to be made esthetic, to conform to the dictates of art. Therein lies the essential difference between esthetic art and popular and artistic art -- the latter two arise, through imitation, from life, while according to estheticism, life should come, through imitation, from art, and art alone. Estheticism, then, conforms to no pattern but that of beauty, beauty being interpreted as anything which furnishes an intense delight, whether intellectual or sensual, and nothing belonging to the normal human life, therefore, is beautiful for estheticism. The result is that the majority of the works in esthetic or exquisite art contradict
flagrantly and scandalously, not only social and ethical customs, but more, the very foundations of morality; not by chance but purposely.

Ultimately, Ayala feels, this tendency toward selection of immorality as a subject in deliberate preference to morality defeats its own ends, and cannot even be said to produce art, for art consists of two essential elements, content and form. The esthetics, when they alienate society by the content which composes their works, must appeal through form alone, and since form is a purely technical and professional aspect of art, with a limited appeal for that very reason, their works, though held in esteem by a few for their professional excellence, through neglecting the wider human appeal, cease to deserve the title of art.¹

¹. Las Máscaras, volume II, pp. 52-59
C. Political views

Spain is not yet a civilized nation; her political problem is unresolved and her citizens therefore do not enjoy freedom of spirit and strength of will.¹ A nation's political problem is resolved when it is set forth or stated in terms of common agreement, even though the solutions proposed may be different and conflicting. For a civilized nation there must be a basis of a certain minimum of political ideas common to all of the citizens; above this minimum there is a margin of divergence of opinion. But this minimum of ideas commonly held is not yet to be found in Spain.² For the present, the country is in a state of conflict and political corruption, feeling sometimes, perhaps, a common political aspiration or desire, but never sufficiently united in thought and ideas to make a step toward the attainment of that desire. Twice in the history of the Spanish people has this communal feeling risen so high that it might have been considered the precursor of a revolution -- in the uprising of the Communities of Castile in 1520, and in the general

¹. Políticas y toros, Madrid, 1925, p. 296
strike in 1917 -- and both times the general desire has failed to be realized, because the unanimity of desire was not backed up by unanimity of ideas, and was therefore a sterile thing, or at most only engendered conflict and confusion.¹

By not entering the European conflict, Spain proved conclusively her lack of universal political consciousness, feeling no obligation to participate in affairs outside of the peninsula. In the abortive revolution of 1917, she displayed her lack of any political consciousness at all. On both occasions there was manifest the most complete lack of effective unity of ideas, even though there was a general desire to effect a change of government in the crisis of 1917.²

Although there is much interest in politics in Spain, this interest is chiefly conversational, and accordingly ineffective. Perhaps the country is not yet ready for independent and democratic political activity. One of Ayala's characters says: "Why trouble ourselves to give Spain a political education which she does not need as yet, which would not even be of any benefit to her? What is needed is an esthetic education which no one has bothered to give

¹ Idem, p. 389
² Ibidem
her up to now. Take just one look around you, and to the past in our literature, and you will see a sad and unseeing race, which cannot even grope its way, because the other senses are lacking as well. A lofty task and enterprise present themselves to us -- to infuse sensibility into this blinded body, to awaken its senses and gift it with a feeling of sympathy toward the external world."¹ To another, the country presents the following aspect, in contrast to Italy: "Italy is a piece of sculpture. Spain is still young flesh, not tradition, but a blind inheritance. It is the country of possibilities. It is the virgin country, almost infant nation, for men of action and men of thought".² Here, perhaps, is the key to the problem; to develop this backward country as one might a newly discovered land, without looking to the past, looking only to the future, and not neglecting its relationship with other countries around it.

Universal suffrage in Spain is a myth. Votes are bought and sold. The party which controls the largest amount of financial resources controls the

1. Troteras y danzaderas, p.143
2. Prometeo, Madrid, 1916, p. 33
government. The country is governed by petty lawyers, pettifoggers. With the lawyer's instinct, heightened by training and practice, they twist and distort everything to their own ends, and crush or pervert the sense of justice. All the other ills of a nation, whether social, political, economic, religious or military, are unimportant in comparison with the weakening of the sense of justice; but though it is corrupted in the administration of the government it is not corrupted throughout the entire Spanish nation. There is hope for the future of Spain in the people, who when they are finally awakened to the political ills of their land and imbued with the united desire to right them will move, slowly but irresistibly, toward the formation of a new nation, more honest and more alert in its internal and international relations.

1. Política y toros, p. 132
2. Idem, p. 109
D. Regionalism and Nationalism

Though a cosmopolitan in many senses, Ayala almost invariably chooses his home-land, Asturias, as the scene for his writings. In *La Pata de la raposa* there are scenes in London and in Florence, and throughout the countryside of Spain; in *Troteras y danzaderas* and in some of the short stories the action takes place in Madrid; but with these few exceptions he writes only of the villages and country districts of Asturias. He loves the land, and describes it with beauty and feeling. Frequently this emotion is so intense as to approach a supernatural attitude, described in the conversation between Alberto and Yiddy Warble on the occasion of the eclipse, which is the outgrowth of an exceedingly subjective attitude toward natural beauty.1 His love of nature is qualified by a sort of mysticism, which has its roots in no other mystic writing. In comparison with San Juan, Fray Luis, and Santa Teresa, he lacks spiritual fervor... Neither is his mysticism that of the modern mystics. (Carlyle,

1. *Tinieblas en las cumbres*, pp. 280-356, *passim*
Novales, Emerson, Maeterlinck), for it does not contain any transcendence to the world of ideas, it is mysticism of pure feeling. This statement can hardly be accepted, for the mysticism of Ayala is distinctly ideological in character, particularly in his poetry. The lyrical exaltation of Doce Años ha, or the Polémica entre la Tierra y el Mar, in the volume El Sendero innumerable is mysticism of feeling, but it is an embodiment of the poet's philosophical thought as well, and examples of this mingling of thought with emotion are frequent in his poetry.

The atmosphere of the region of Asturias is skilfully presented. From the poorest dwelling in the little fishing village of Arenales to the country home of the duchess, everything seems to belong, to be a representative and indigenous part of the life which Ayala is portraying. He is not conscientiously regional, like Pereda. He never waves a banner of regionalism, and certainly he never shouts against "pernicious" foreign influences -- he would be the last to deny their value. But he does seem to be

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2. Vide: Tinieblas en las cumbres

3. Vide: Belarmino y Apohonio
writing of what he loves best when he writes of simple and unaffected villagers, of characters such as Belarmino, Rosina, village priests.

But this deep affection for his own native district in no way lessens his interest in the broader aspects of Spanish life, national and international. As before mentioned, he considers a common ideal, supported by common ideas as to how it should be attained, the only method by which the Spanish nation will ever progress. One of his characters speaks thus on the subject: "The ideal is the greatest stimulus to a lofty culture. A people without an ideal is a lazy people, and lazy here does not mean that they do not work, but that they work without perseverance, method or discipline, and for useless ends, or ends of little importance. But this ideal can be built only with the imagination. The Spanish people has no imagination as yet". He speaks of the Spaniard as an "innate and predestined ascete", and grieves that he has little ambition

1. Vide supra, p. 19
2. Troteras y danzaderas, p. 260
3. Belarmino y Apolonio, p. 11
beyond the satisfaction of his bare physical needs. But in spite of this apparently gloomy view of Spain, it is still "the country of possibilities", latent at present, but some day to be awakened and to work toward the building of a greater and finer nation.
E. Summary

Ayala is a thoughtful individual, with a wide and cosmopolitan outlook and appreciation, the result of reading and varied personal experience. In the main decidedly tolerant and impartial in attitude, in one matter, his feeling toward the Jesuit order, he shows a strong personal bias, which has arisen from his own experience. In general, however, his stand on any question is that of a thoughtful and reflective man, not without emotions and prejudices, but usually able to rise above them in his judgments. His conclusions regarding estheticism may be regarded as unjust.1 Though it is probably impossible to attain Flaubert's idea of perfect form, i.e., a work all style -- no substance, writers who work with that theory as their guide should not be condemned because they choose to place form above content. The human appeal of a work is not the only thing that can rank it as art. Its art may consist of human appeal or technical perfection, or both combined, but if there is technical perfection without wide human appeal the work certainly deserves the title of art on account of its perfection.

1. Vide supra, p. 18
Ayala as a poet is represented by three volumes — La paz del sendero, 1903, El sendero innumerables, 1915, and El sendero andante, 1921. The first and last volumes are made up of poems which had appeared at intervals in periodicals before being collected. El sendero innumerables was written in its entirety during the summer of 1915. Together, they represent more than half a generation in the poet’s life, and, as he states in an epilogue to a combined volume of La paz del sendero and El sendero innumerables (1915) two phases of it — childhood and youth. “La paz del sendero is a poem of childhood or adolescence, I wrote it on the threshold of youth. El sendero innumerables is a poem of youth. It was written while I was on the threshold of maturity. The former is a poem of the earth, the latter a poem of the sea. I have two other poems yet to write, corresponding to the other

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1. With this was reprinted in the same volume La paz del sendero.
two elements, fire and air, the sun and the sky, the poem of maturity and that of old age. God only knows whether I shall come to live them and write them. Unlike the other two, El sendero andante does not represent any single period of the poet's life, but instead is made up of poems written at intervals over a period of fifteen years (1905-1929).

The similarity in titles probably does not indicate any continuity in subject matter, but rather the advance of the individual along the pathway of life. The explanation may be found in the poem El Río:

Y así corre el sendero andante desde la paz del sendero hasta el sendero innumerables.

The poems are written in varying forms, about evenly divided between free verse and rhymed poetry in more traditional meters. Ayala never employs any very conventional or rigid form such as the sonnet or any of the formal French meters. Poetry seems to be, with him, not so much an experimental art

1. Glosa a La paz del sendero y El sendero innumerables, 1915, p. 207
3. El sendero andante. Madrid, 1921, p. 11
as a living reality, a means of clarifying and presenting his own emotional and intellectual experiences and convictions. Whatever type of verse he chooses, his choice is not for purely esthetic reasons -- to develop and display his skill in handling difficult meters or attaining unusual effects -- but because that type has appealed to him as the most apt for the expression of what he had in mind. "As for the metrical form of El sendero innumerável, I have sought in every case that which best fitted the nature of the object or of the emotion. And I believe that I have done rightly."¹ A reading of the poetry will bear him out, for in all cases there is grace and delicacy of style, coupled with emotional beauty, regardless of the form.

It is a popular procedure among critics of Ayala's work to trace the influence of other writers upon his productions. Two main tendencies are usually cited as the most important sources of influence -- the classic Spanish poets, including Juan Ruiz, Gonzalo de Berceo, and the mystic Fray Luis de León; the modernistic French

¹. Glosa, p. 210
school, most particularly the work of Francis Jammes. González Blanco does not consider this archaism very important. Ayala himself is rather contemptuous of the mania for tracing influences, and in the preface to the first volume of Las Mascaras states that the ideas he expresses are his own, and have developed spontaneously in his own mind, quite regardless of the fact that someone else may have expressed the same ideas, possibly even in almost the identical words, before him. He asserts that his work has been written in absolute sincerity, and is an honest expression of his feelings and opinions at the time of writing on the subjects which he treats. It is true that his poetry is original and thoroughly characteristic of his genius. There is no question of plagiarism, but it is a fact that there are reminiscences in his verses of the work of many other writers.

Some of his lines might almost, for their antique simplicity and archaic flavor, have been

1. González Blanco, A.: Op. Cit.: "At first glance, the flavor and style of his poetry seem archaic, but this impression is controverted as one reads farther." p. 164

2. Las Mascaras, volume 1, introduction
opposed by a sixteenth century poet, as the following from the Danza universal:

Padre Adán danzó en el Edén,
y sus hijos, en tanto sobre la tierra estén,
han de seguir danzando, por su mal o su bien.
Y por siempre jamás, Amén.

or these lines from La Primera novia:

Después, las novias de blan cos de luna,
y otras tan ardorosas como Orión.
Pero, de todas ellas, ¿a ninguna
amé como a Asunción?

At other times his phrases have a thoroughly modern, or modernistic, character, as in Marinas, sketches or seascapes in the imagist manner, detailed description of a scene with the exactness of touch of a miniaturist; as the following fragment, Ocaso, reveals:

El mar está terso y brullido.
Una tersura y un brullido mates.
Es de nácar, con tonos -- púrpura, plata, malva, azul, gris, violeta, -- confundidos y suaves.
Están el mar y el cielo
come las valvas de una concha
de nácar, entreabierta. -- Y está asido en el quicio el sol, como una perla rosa.

1. El sendero andante, p. 85
2. La paz del sendero, p. 149
solo entre el mar y el cieles, frente al sol, con esta luz y este color seráficos!

Madariaga finds the influence of Francis Jammes to be strong in Ayala's poetry. "The first volume ... reveals, in spite of its apparent rustic simplicity, the assiduous reader of national and foreign poetry. The initial poem, which gives the book its title, is an excellent adaptation to modern modes of the ancient cuaderna vía ... But, side by side with this renaissance of the national vein, the first verses of Ayala cry the strong influence which Francis Jammes exercised over our poet."

To illustrate this resemblance, Madariaga quotes passages from Dos Valetudinarios and a poem of Francis Jammes which is strikingly similar:

Aquí en mi casa de campo,
Tengo una vieja butaca
De gutapercha; y es tan
Humilde la pobre anciana,
Que cuando algún visitante
Viene a verme, no repara
En ella, y me dice: -- Siempre
Tan solo, señor Ayala,
¿No se aburre sin salir?
Y yo pienso cuando marcha
Que las gentes son muy frivolas,
Muy soberbias y muy vanas
Porque no miran siquiera
A esta valetudinaria.

1. Hadsedero innumerabte, p. 55
Il y a une armoire à peine luisante
Qui a entendu les voix de mes grand'tantes
Qui a entendu la voix de mon grand-père,
Qui a entendu la voix de mon père.
A ces souvenirs l'armoire est fidèle
On a tort de croire qu'elle ne sait que se taire,
Car je cause avec elle.

Il est venu chez moi bien des hommes et des femmes
Qui n'ont pas cru à ces petites âmes,
Et je souris que l'en me pense seul vivant
Quand un visiteur me dit en entrant:
-- Comment allez-vous, monsieur Jammes?

He considers Ayala's work, at the outset, inferior to that of Jammes, but feels that it has from the first the quality which has been his artistic salvation -- a prevailing seriousness which manifests itself in a philosophic, almost religious, preoccupation with the idea of Destiny, and a certain tendency toward basic truth and toward sobriety of expression. 1 Cejador and Agustín also remark upon this seriousness, considering it an admirable characteristic of his work. "There is subtle humor in the work, in the English manner, serious and grave at heart, though light and playful in appearance." 2 "In his poetry, Ayala makes an effort to lay hold on the supreme beauty which

1. Idem, p. 114
is essentially worthy of being enjoyed and sung... Everything in his work is serious, delicate and serene.\(^3\) González Blanco sees in him "a modern spirit, revealing in La paz del sendero characteristic subtleties, visions of things which no one has seen before, at any rate in the same way that he sees them, in short, the making of an artist."\(^2\)

For purposes of analysis, it will probably prove most satisfactory to take up the three volumes separately.

La paz del sendero

The title poem, written in cuaderna vía, is the picture of a quiet summer evening in the country, which arouses in the poet a deep emotion, half sadness, half joy. Almas paralíticas, Dos valetudinarios, and Coloquios are highly fanciful reflections, endowing respectively houses, furniture, and animals with soulful and individual characteristics. Muestra señora de los poetas describes a fair summer night in a little Asturian village, and the various

\[\text{1. Agustín; Op. cit.: p. 128}\]
\[\text{2. González Blanco, A.: Los contemporáneos, p. 181}\]
night-sounds which the poet hears breaking the stillness from time to time. The moonlight and the peace of the night recall to him his childhood. *Tu mano me dice adiós* and *Poema de tu voz* are love poems of delicate, sensitive emotion.

The predominating mood of the collection, as might be expected from the title, is one of peace. Both the joy and the melancholy which the poet sings are calm and restful. There is no tempestuous outburst of rapture or despondency, no romantic pessimism. The tone is rather more thoughtful than emotional. Feeling is subdued and subordinated to the intellect, but not banished. Ayala's poetry has been called "an overflowing of thought with a subconscious current of emotion". Thought, then, usually predominates, but never to the exclusion of emotion; two poems (*Al Poema de tu voz* and *Tu mano me dice adiós*) are conspicuous exceptions to this statement, for in them tender emotion is the single note.

Five of the poems are in regular, rhymed verse, three in free verse. Either technique is successful. "Form and matter are so harmoniously united that what might at first have seemed a

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weak concession to the prevailing fashion (free
verse) is found to be the genuine expression of
a lofty poet".

El sendero innumerável

La Playa is a series of pictures of the sea-
shore and its many aspects for the poet. The in-
tense love of nature which is one of his most
marked characteristics whether in poetry or
novel finds expression in such lines as:

Tumbado al sol; siento mi cuerpo
como rudimentario organismo,
como una esponja que se empapa
de placer inconsciente, de agua tibia y densa
de olvido.

El Parco vieja is a memorial to his father. In
Doce Años ha the poet comes face to face with him-
self in the poem he has written twelve years be-
fere. He restates a philosophy of life which he
held then, and which he has followed:

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Que con la nueva gracia matutina
mi vida sin cesar
renazca, como el prado y la colina,
y la rosa y el mar.

Sentirse obra de Dios, y recién hecha
en cotidiana creación,
y, como alondra, oír, dentro del pecho,
que canta y vuela el corazón.

Y aun mejor que de Dios, ser de mí mismo,
y por mi voluntad
obra sin fin. Las noches, un abismo.
Cada día, una edad.

Y, por el cuerdo olvido, haber vivido
 copiosa multitud
de vidas mil; porque nos da al olvido
la eterna juventud.

Raída el alma de rímoras y malas
membranzas, después
mezquino será el cielo ante tus alas,
la tierra ante tus pies.

Que tu conciencia se halle tan alerta,
tan vasta y tan plural,
que al fin encierre, por manera cierta,
la vida universal.

Y que el suceso próspero o adverso
sean tal para ti
que exclames en tu día: "El universo
halla su quicio y su razón en mí/"

Marinas is a series of descriptions of the sea
in varying moods at different times. In El Pensieroso, the poet is looking at a massive pile
of rock, in the shape of a man’s head, called
El pensieroso. Like other natural phenomena,
it may mean all things to all men:

En veces, el contorno es mudo,
como libro sagrado en cifra,
hermético para el indiferente,
todo luz para el que se inicia.

1. El sendero innumerável, pp. 45-47
2. Idem, p. 68
The title of the book is found in El Alegro. The sea is the "sendero innumerable", which encloses in itself all the divergent ways of man's life:

Abre una ruta virgen a cada peregrino...  

Las Estaciones is composed of a series of dialogues between spirits representing the seven cardinal sins and their antithetical virtues. Particularly fine are the songs of the Spirit of Sloth and the Spirit of Industry. The rhythm and the words chosen are admirably adapted to conveying the impression of utter lassitude and of extreme energy. The coros inefables, which conclude each dialogue, advocate a golden mean between the extremes described. In La Primera novia the poet philosophizes upon the transitory nature of passion and the essential sadness of life for man, the thinking animal, merely because he thinks. La Ultima novia is an imitation of Whitman's Song of Myself. The last sweetheart is death, which should be feared no more than a beautiful woman. The ending is ironical. The Man, who has sung the glory of life and vitality, in an effort to embrace life

1. Idem, p. 76
more fully, flings himself into the sea, but is unable to swim back to shore, and drowns. In the *Polémica entre la Tierra y el Mar*, Earth and Sea disparage each other vigorously, but finally express the fervent wish that they might change places "only for a single instant". *Ejemplo* is an imaginary conversation with Saint Augustine, in which the poet discusses various matters of philosophy and theology with the saint. In *Sombra negra del sauce* he looks into his own heart and searches for what he may find to be the meaning and the most desirable attainments of life.

**El sendero andante**

*El Río* is a lyric of considerable charm describing the beauties of the river. *Los Momentos* is a group of seven short poems, five nature descriptions, one a love lyric, one an "epístola a Azorín". *Los Votos* includes nine poems, most of them of purely lyric character. *En la margen del torrente* is a lament for a lost sweetheart. *Los ojos de Nireya* is a simple lyric. *Jardines* compares the human soul to a garden, in which the various plants represent various traits of character. *La condolilla que danza*, addressed to an ignorant little dancer, sees in her the symbol of
the alluring appeal of woman. La Danza universal, continuation of La Cendolilla, is somewhat more philosophical in nature than the preceding poem. Contra estos siete vicios is an allegorical fantasy, with fourteen children representing the seven cardinal vices and their antithetical virtues, in which the virtues are triumphant through their greater charm and more appealing beauty. Ditirambos invoke the enthusiasm and illusion of inspiration to make his poetry more beautiful. La Prensa is a lengthy poem extolling the wonders that contribute to the making of a modern newspaper. The last group, Doctrinal de vida y naturaleza, contains three poems, Heno de las eras, El Niño en la playa, and Filosofía, which express different angles of his philosophy.

Madariaga considers Ayala's poetry to be the clearest expression of his creed and philosophy.1 There is undoubtedly expression of various philosophical ideas and conjectures to be found in his poetry, but only a part of his philosophy is to be found there, for in many respects the novels seem

to reveal the man himself and his ideas much more fully, though possibly more indirectly. There is genuine substance in the poetry—

"His poetry is very real substance, not merely form. The morality which characterizes his poems will probably lower them in the eyes of cultivators of 'art for art's sake!" But inasmuch as Ayala himself considers such an art a narrow one, and insignificant in comparison with the wider, more human art enriched by moral intensity; it is not surprising if he has sought after the latter rather than the former in his poetical attempts. A certain moral and philosophical preoccupation, then, might be expected in his poetry, and to some extent the expectation is fulfilled.

Though in such poems as *Almas paralíticas*³, *Dos valetudinarios*⁴, *Los Ojos de Mireya*⁵ there is no expression of essentially philosophical ideas,

2. Vide supra, p.
3. *La paz del sendero*, p. 19
4. *Idem*, p. 33
5. *El sendero andante*, p. 67
in the majority of the poems in the collections there is a note of serious meditation upon life, blended with a strongly emotional feeling in the presence of nature. There is much more inspiration for Ayala the poet in nature and its many beauties than in human relationships. In contrast to the small number of poems with even an element of love is the large group of nature descriptions, all characterized by deep feeling. This intense love of nature is a recurrent theme in many of his novels as well as in his poetry, and is in part the base of what seems to represent his philosophy. The sea particularly appeals to him, in all its moods. It represents the widely varied manifestations of life:

... De pronto,
me he acordado que Esquilo
al mar llamaba la innumerable sonrisa.
Antes bien se dijera sendero innumerables;
infinitos senderos de peregrinación. ²

His view of life ranges from pessimism:

... !Oh Blas Pascal!, erraste,

... Cuando pensaste que el hombre, porque piensa, entre las criaturas todas del orbe todo por Dios fue enaltecido como la obra suprema.

1. See: Tinieblas en las cumbres, La pata de la raposa.
2. El Sendero Innumerables, pp. 75-76
¡Oh, pobre Blas Pascal! ¡Quién, de esta pesadumbre del pensar y el sentir, libertarse pudiera!... Más dichoso que el hombre es el hueco carrizo que nada siente y que no piensa.

through a sort of ironical, non-committal attitude:

Todo; lo junto y lo disperso, lo semejante y lo diverso, todo danza en el universo.

Todo es saltante y todo huye todo es danzante y todo fluye,... y ya nada se restituye.

Nada corrige, nada inmuta esta gran danza universal. Dios es quien lleva la batuta, yo no digo si bien o mal.

to a hope and confidence approaching a positive optimism:

Porque, no olvides, alma, que eres como heno de las eras verde a la aurora y por la tarde mustio. Y al mustiarte, tu esencia volará libre, ¡por fin libre! ¡Y que hasta Dios ascienda!

He finds his greatest happiness in the contemplation of natural beauty and old, familiar surroundings (Dos valetudinarios, Almas paralíticas).

1. El sendero innumerável, pp. 123-124
2. El sendero andante, pp. 81, 85
3. Idem, p. 177
and in conversation with simple kindly village folk (Coloquios).

The thirst for knowledge is very desirable, and the eager quest of it admirable; though it can lead too far:

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---Hermano mío, o hijo mío, escucha:
Que tu sed de saberlo todo
nunca se apague. Con furor omnívoro,
del árbol de la sabiduría, verde o serondo,
muerde y degusta el fruto. Con osadas
manos, desgarra el velo con que el torso
envuelven las verdades, y desnúdala.
De las verdades todas mira el rostro
con altivez. Pero si te aparece
la gran Verdad, que lo ilumina todo,
La que tú esperas que es la verdad última,
no la quieras mirar, cierra los ojos.
Los ojos cierra, hijo o hermano mío,
si no quieres quedarte ciego
o acaso volverte loco.
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Life seems to the poet to include much sadness, but more joy, and always beauty. One should meet all contingencies of mortal life with calm resolution. Then the threat of the unknown will be dissipated and will vanish as it is boldly faced. He should meet the last threat, death, as one would a beloved sweetheart:

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---¿Por qué habré de
temor la muerte, la última novia que tú me
depares. ¡ Oh Padre! ¡ Oh Padre!
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1. El sendero innumerabe, p. 205
2. Idem, p. 152
B. Essays

In his four volumes of essays\(^1\) Ayala reveals a wide range of interests, embracing the theatre and dramatic art, politics in Spain and Europe, bullfighting and bullfighters, sculpture and painting, the history of Italian language and literature, the European war and its importance in the civilization of today.

His writings in poetry and the novel are undoubtedly of more importance than his essays, at least as regards their literary value, but there is much of the man himself in his essays, and they represent fairly his attitudes and opinions about many subjects which he discusses. Gómez de Raquero thinks him most important as a novelist, then as a lyric poet, and least, as an essayist, though entitled to a high place among his contemporaries even in that field. His essays are distinctly literary in form, though critical in substance, characterized by constructive theorizing.\(^2\)

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1. Las máscaras, volumes 1 & 2, 1917 & 1919, Madrid
   Herman encadenado, Madrid, 1917
   Política y toros, Madrid, 1918

2. Gómez de Raquero, Eduardo: El Renacimiento de la novela en el siglo XIX, Madrid, p. 170
Particularly in his novels, although to a large extent also in his poetry, there is a pronounced strain of philosophical thinking, sometimes implied, at others more or less fully expressed. One group of his novels will develop one or several phases of his speculative thought, while another will embody other aspects of it, and still others will appear in the poetry. In the essays, glimpses of every side of his intellectual nature appear and reveal the author.

The first volume of Las Náscaras is composed entirely of dramatic criticism (with the exception of an essay on Villaespesa) on the works of Galdós, Benavente, the Quinteros, Arniches.

Galdós, Ayala feels, cannot write for the popular taste in the theatre because his attitude toward the work is too serious, and he considers the fiction of the theatre a reality, writing his dramas as if it were such. He calls Galdós the greatest Spaniard of our days and compares him to Cervantes, in that Cervantes created the genre of the novel, while Galdós, he feels, has carried it to the highest point of perfection and maturity. Benavente seems

1. Las Náscaras, volume 1, p. 62
to him too given to summary judgments in his critical writings, to superficial and lightly formed opinions.\(^2\)

The body of Benavente's dramatic work appears to occupy a sort of middle ground between passion and fantasy, and is characterized by versatility and elegance, to some extent artificial.\(^2\)

In the second volume, he treats of Oscar Wilde, Don Juan, and Schopenhauer, and discusses morality in art,\(^3\) the functions of prose and verse in the drama, and the moral conceptions implied in the terms "good" and "virtue". His conception of Oscar Wilde is a man "favored with the rarest gifts of intelligence and sensibility, personal ability and social position; kept from becoming a great man only because he was a spoiled child who took himself too seriously, and everyone else too little seriously. In prison he wrote his De Profundis, which pretends to be an act of humility and contrition, but is nothing but a fresh attitude of affectation. In his life and in his works he appears as a child whose intelligence was spoiled by thoughtlessly exaggerated praise; character, by his having always

1. Las Mascaras, volume 2, p. 120
2. Idem, p. 160
3. Vide supra, p. 18
had his own way; heart, by his having over-concentrated upon himself."¹ Don Juan appears to Ayala to be a reversal of the conventional theory of love, descending from the Provencal troubador school, that attraction resides in woman and man is attracted. Don Juan, rather, is the center of attraction and women are drawn to him. He is the personification of the Semitic conception of love, which exalts the man and debases the woman, holding her to be merely an instrument for man's pleasure. He is essentially Spanish, it is true, but this is only because Spain was the country of all European nations which was dominated by the Moors. Not affected by the finer sense impressions of sight, hearing, and smell, -- for to him all women are the same, provided that they gratify his animal desires -- he compensates for this lack by the greater exercise of the senses of touch and taste, accredited ministers of sensual love.² The discussion of Schopenhauer adds nothing to the information or theories already available regarding his philosophy.

Ayala's dramatic criticisms are lucid, frequently witty, and very decided in tone. He is superficial

1. Idem, pp. 15-31
2. Idem, pp. 257-273
in his criticism, frequently picking rather trivial and unimportant details of a dramatic work as the object of his criticism, and exaggerating their importance. He discusses the various plays which he criticizes pleasantly enough, but adds nothing of great value or originality to other literature upon them. He is inclined to be rather verbose, and spends more space than necessary on a given play.

Política y toros, as the name indicates, is a discussion, or series of discussions, of politics and bullfighting. Política is a collection of political articles, published in periodicals at the time of the occurrence of the various events described, which set forth Ayala's attitude on the public questions involved.¹ Toros includes eulogies of the great bullfighters Belmonte and Joselito, lengthy discussions of the art, technique and history of bullfighting, and the title essay, Política y toros, which correlates the important phases of the Spaniard's feeling for politics with his addiction to bullfighting. This is a tour de force which does not accomplish anything worth the effort.

¹ Vide supra, pp. 19-22
Ayala's political views are those of an intelligent, cultured man with a cosmopolitan attitude toward things political. He is intensely patriotic, but he also feels that it is an urgent necessity for the political welfare of the country that its citizens should take a more active interest in other nations. He is disappointed in the lack of interest in politics shown by supposedly cultured and intelligent Spaniards.\(^1\) He hopes for a Spain of the future in which the field of politics and government will be one of absorbing interest to enlightened minds.

Herman Encadenado is an account of his trip to the three Italian fronts during the war. It is a mildly interesting account, with detailed descriptions of the operations of warfare in the trenches, and lengthy aesthetic reflections which he indulges in in the different Italian cities which he visits, but is not very indicative of the personality or opinions of the author, and advances no very original ideas.

Ayala's style in his essays is pleasantly informal, almost conversational; but invariably polished, artistic, and correct. The author appears here as a man of reflective nature. His ideas are interesting,

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\(^1\) Vide supra, pl 22
occasionally original, though not profound; and his reasoning is usually lucid, and for the most part sound.
Chapter III  Short Stories

Ayala has left no literary genre untried except the drama. In the field of the short story, or more accurately, perhaps, novelette, he has published three volumes -- Prometeo, 1916; Bajo el signo de Artemisa, 1924; and El Ombligo del mundo, 1924 -- which cover virtually the entire duration of his career as a writer, for Bajo el signo de Artemisa, though published in 1924, contains stories which were written over a period of several years. Some of these the author now looks upon as youthful efforts, perhaps of some slight interest on that account, but relatively unimportant. He feels no desire to withdraw them from circulation, however, for they do represent a period in his artistic development, and are honest efforts of a serious writer.¹ In a consideration of the three volumes, therefore, Bajo el signo de Artemisa would logically appear first;² although it was published eight years later than the next volume, Prometeo. Before dis-

1. Bajo el signo de Artemisa. Madrid, 1924, prologue, p. 5
2. Some of these stories are written as early as 1902
cussing the general aspects of the author's work in these collections, it will probably be best to look at them separately.

**Bajo el signo de Artemisa**

The first story, *El otro padre Francisco*, which the author characterizes as a "cuento drolático," is a sardonic tale of the unconventional monk, Rabelais, dealing with one of his amours and a scandalous escapade in which he indulges during the religious observances of the more pious brothers. It is conspicuous for its vivid, sensual description, and a sort of cynically pagan attitude on the part of the monk which is perfectly sustained throughout the tale. There is no plot; sardonic humor is the important element. *Cruzado de amor* is the lengthy account of the love and wanderings of Godofredo de Rudel, a royal troubador. The substance is taken, Ayala states, from Víctor Balaguer's *History of the Troubadors*.\(^1\) The style is deliberately, almost laboriously, archaic. The vocabulary, though not obsolete, is suggestive of that of Fernando de Rojas and other sixteenth century writers.\(^2\) This account is called a "novela romántica". *Artemisa*, a "novela dramática".

1. *Ibidem.*

2. *Vide: Bajo el signo de Artemisa*, pp. 64, 74
is a psychological study, but too fantastic to be taken seriously. The heroine kills her boorish and overbearing lover, Tomás, while out on a boar hunt, because he accuses her of being in love with her brother, and then lets herself be killed by a wild boar because she realizes that what he has said is the truth. *Exodo*, "noveda pastoral", seems rather inappropriately termed "pastoral*. An old hidalgo, Don Cristóbal, burns his house to get rid of the fleas. The whole troop of domestic animals and servants emigrates at the same time. There are some extremely vivid descriptions, permeated with the same sardonic humor as those in the first tale. *Padre e hijo*, termed a "tragicomedia", is the story of Don Cristóbal, a wealthy old roué, who is declared incompetent to manage his estates, through the machinations of his deceased wife's family. He hates his son Ignacio, but endures him until he discovers that he is his wife's son by another man. Then he revenges himself upon Ignacio for his insolence and disobedience by killing most of the members of the boy's mother's family. The story is fantastic and grotesque. The character of the world-weary, embittered old libertine is well done, and recalls the figure of Valle-Inclán's Don Juan Manuel Montenegro, of the *Comedias bárbaras*.
although Balseiro considers it an unsuccessful attempt to present this type of character. Since it is a much briefer characterization than Valle-Inclán's, which spreads through several volumes, it must of necessity be less ambitious, but within the narrower scope it is a moderately impressive piece of work, vivid enough to be convincing. The last story of the collection, *El Anticristo*, is called an "ejemplo", and is an amusing description of a struggling little religious order which finally ends on the rocks in literal shipwreck. One of the sisters is rescued by the man whom the nuns have all reviled as the "antichrist", and who convinces her without difficulty that she should not renew her vows, which are of only five years duration, for he believes that she should be happy, and "would make a man happy" -- and he is the man. There are some excellent descriptions of the sea voyage and of various passengers.

Prometeo

Ayala describes the three stories contained in this volume as "noveles poéticas de la vida española". The first, *Prometeo*, is considered by many to introduce the period of his fullest
artistic development. The plot is identical with that of Unamuno's *Amor y pedagogía*, but the treatment is entirely independent and original, superior artistically and realistically to Unamuno's. Juan Pérez Setián, a humanistic professor of Greek, believes that it is reserved for him, the man of thought, to beget Prometeo, the man of action, destined to be the "living link between leaven and mankind". By happy chance, he meets the woman who seems to him the ideal mother for Prometeo. He marries her, and rejoices when he learns that they are to have a child. The son is born, an ugly, deformed weakling. He develops abnormally, and is so unhappy in life that at the beginning of adolescence he hangs himself.

The second story, *Luz de domingo*, concerns two lovers, Cástor and Balbina. Cástor sees in the sky on Sunday a peculiar light, more beautiful than any that is ever there on the other days. He and Balbina look at the Sunday sky the week before their wedding, and see the promise of happiness. They are surprised by seven brothers, the Becerriles, who form the gang.

1. Atkinson, William: *Ramon Pérez de Avala, Novelist, in Modern Languages*, V. XII, June, 1931, p. 167

which dominates the district. The oldest brother, for political and personal reasons, has arranged the assault. They tie Castor, and violate Balbina before his eyes. The two lovers leave the village, but wherever they go, someone learns the story of their misfortune, and they finally decide to go to America. They are shipwrecked, but make no attempt to save themselves, and die in each other's arms. The third story, La Caída de los Limones, is a tragedy of village life. Enrique Limón, the cacique of a little village, has held power there for years. His younger daughter, Dominica, is to marry a young lawyer, Próspero Merlo. Shortly before the wedding, a widow and her daughter are found murdered in their little cottage, and circumstantial evidence points to Merlo as the murderer. He is arrested, but several weeks later Dominica's brother, Arias, confesses to the murder, and Merlo is released. He very cruelly throws over Dominica, and leaves the town. Arias is sentenced to hang.

El Ombligo del mundo

This is a series of sketches concerning the little valley of Congosto, a rather backward and primitive district, and its inhabitants. The first tale is the slight and moderately amusing account
of Grano de pimienta y Mil Perdones (the nicknames of the two suitors for the hand of the maiden Cerecina). Grano de Pimienta, the more bombastic and self-assured of the two, wins her after a long delay. In the second story, La Triste Adriana, Adriana is dissatisfied with herself and with her husband for no particular reason. She pretends to be carrying on an adulterous affair, and manages to have Federico, her husband, see the letter from Pachín Cueto, the would-be lover. She succeeds in her object to arouse jealousy and anger in Federico, tells him the truth about the love affair, comforts him, and convinces herself that she is really living at last. Don Rodrigo y Don Recaredo is another presentation of the same type of character as Don Cristóbal, in Padre e hijo. The plot is negligible. The fourth story, Clib, is the lengthy account of the destruction of a young man by gambling. Generoso and his wife, Rebeca, were very happily married. Each was so eager to do just what the other wished that they finally decided to draw lots each time a question arose in order to decide what to do. Rebeca's luck was so good that Generoso, angry at his own ill success in the drawing, began to fre-
quent the village casino and to spend most of his time there gambling. When he needed more money he took from the municipal funds. This was discovered and he was arrested. He was killed by a prison guard while trying to escape. The last story, El Profesor auxiliar, is an amusing and pathetic tale of Don Clemente, a substitute professor, who was hard put to it to earn enough to keep himself and his seven daughters from starvation. His students played practical jokes on him without mercy. Close to the end of the term, one of the worst trouble-makers came to his house to make sure of a passing mark in his course. He had planned to threaten Don Clemente, but when he sees one of the daughters he forgets all about the purpose of his visit, is finally overwhelmed with remorse, and begs the professor not to turn in any mark at all for him until the next term, when he will take another examination over the course.

There is great variety in the types of the stories. Some are slight tales, almost invariably of a humorous nature. El Otro padre Francisco and Don Rodrigo y Don Recaredo are of this description, without any plot at all. El Profesor auxiliar
and \textit{Anticristo}, equally light, have well constructed plots. Except for the final story of the collection, there is little plot development to be found in \textit{Olvido del mundo}. The attention is concentrated upon a humorous, usually ironical, treatment of a long list of characters, who, with their various idiosyncrasies, exemplify different aspects of life in the little Asturian village of "Reicastro". The final effect of the book is a good picture of the village, with its self-centered, antiquated attitude toward what is going on in the outside world. For its inhabitants, Reicastro is beyond dispute the center of the world. They have no desire to see and know anything outside of their little native district. They do not wish to go to the world; the world, if it wishes, may come to them. The prevailing tone of the volume is ironical, with an impersonal, detached irony which is mild and unobtrusive. The effect of most of the stories is somewhat marred by obscurity -- their outline and significance are blurred by a rather careless presentation. \textit{La Triste Adriana} and \textit{Clib} are unnecessarily long, and the latter is particularly tiresome on account of the many lengthy speeches indulged in by several aspiring philosophers of the village.
Bajo el signo de Artemisa is named for Artemisa, patron divinity of boys and girls, because, as the author explains, some of the stories in the collection were written when he was scarcely past boyhood.

El Otro padre Francisco, which Ayala wrote when he was twenty-two, has an exuberance of style which is often found in youthful attempts. His vocabulary, which is rich, occasionally runs away with him.

Cruzado de amor is exceedingly imitative, a compound of archaic styles. The handling shows immaturity of technique and lack of independence, but indicates as well familiarity with the legendry of the troubadours and the traditional literature of Spain. Artemisa is close to melodrama. It is over-labored and not thoroughly convincing psychologically, because of the mixture of fantasy and psychological study. El Anticristo is the best piece of work in the collection, characterized by a delicate irony combined with sympathy and insight, and written in a style showing a considerable advance in artistry and competence over the earlier stories.

1. Bajo el signo de Artemisa. Prologue, p. 6
Prometeo is generally considered the most significant of the three volumes of short stories. Here for the first time, according to Balseiro, his art reaches perfection. "All his virtues as a writer, delicate humor, charming dialogue, transparent, rhythmic, perfect prose, and none of his defects appear here embodied." In fact, Balseiro considers Luz de domingo one of the three best short novels in modern Spanish literature, the other two being Hernández Catá's Los Muertos and Unamuno's Nada menos que todo un hombre. The same opinion is held by another critic, Atkinson, who calls Luz de domingo "one of the most poignant and one of the most powerful short stories in recent Spanish letters." The story is written in a beautiful style, but is too polished, too exquisite. The deliberate attempt of the author to make it "poematic" is evident, and some of the stylistic devices are too obvious. Repetition is one device of which Ayala is very fond, using it to excess in this story to produce an effect. Too much of an artist to forget the bounds of restraint requisite in writing, he comes very close to

an exaggerated style, without quite passing the limits of delicate good taste. The purpose of the story seems to be to illustrate the force of public opinion and censure upon even those who are, and feel themselves to be, entirely innocent. There is no didacticism in the presentation. The situation is shown, and its tragic implications, that is all.

The prevailing tone in the volume Prometeo is serious, much more so than in the other two volumes. There is no humor apparent in any of the three stories, except for an undercurrent of irony in Prometeo. The other two are tragic -- Luz de domingo with a romantic tendency, La Caída de los Limones with a sort of incomplete psychological realism, slightly tinged with poetic fantasy. There is a tentative study in the latter of a case of abulia, a weakness treated at much greater length in the series dealing with Alberto Díaz de Guzmán. This unfortunate development in a youth's nature, upon which the dénouement of the plot depends, is little more than suggested, but the suggestion is clear and definite, particularly interesting in view of the fact that the same subject is presented elsewhere in the author's work. Arias, the youth who is about to confess to the murder of an
elderly widow and her daughter, speaks thus in explanation of his action:

I was in love with that woman ... And mine was an impossible love. Impossible, why, I don't know. It was something superior to my will. I did not dare to disclose it to her. I tried to write her a thousand letters, and tore them all up. I wanted to look at her, to make her understand, and I could not, sister, I could not, I could not. At the mere suspicion that she might not love me, my blood froze and then bubbled in my temples, in my eyes, in my tongue.¹

The conspicuous characteristic of almost all the stories is irony, sometimes mild, sometimes almost bitter.

¹. Prometeo, p. 219
Four of his novels, Tinieblas en las cumbres, A.M.D.G., La Pata de la raposa, and Troteras y danzaderas, deal with a central character, Alberto Díaz de Guzmán, whose life and temperament are to some degree Ayala's own. To determine if possible to what extent these novels may be considered autobiographical is the purpose of this chapter.

The novel A.M.D.G., which is logically the first of the series, although its actual publication was later than that of Tinieblas en las cumbres, is the story of Alberto's life in a Jesuit school of secondary instruction. Left an orphan very early, he is taken by his uncle to a Jesuit boarding school, where he spends three unhappy years in a slow crescendo of mistreatment from the priests, whom the author depicts as a very sorry lot indeed, with the single exception of the kindly Padre Saqueros. Instruction is desultory and irregular, interrupted by frequent infliction of punishment or penances, in many cases undeserved. The priests are ingenious in their devices of torment. Bertuco (Alberto), a sensitive child, finally breaks under a particularly severe punishment, and his uncle removes him from the school.
The work is too bitter and violent in its attack and too intensely partial to be entirely convincing. It is of course probable that the preparation of the instructors would in many cases be inadequate. It is not surprising that in Spain at the close of the nineteenth century, when modern reforms in education were still in the future, the general run of teachers in a religious school should have had not quite all the training that might be desired in preparation for their work. According to the educational theory of the order, the inculcation of religious doctrine would be the most important duty of the teacher anyway, and other instruction must be secondary to that. As for the cruelty of the priests, it is so exaggerated for the purpose of supporting Ayala's thesis that it loses even propagandistic value. His theory that the Jesuit schools are a positive influence for bad upon the youths who attend them is probably not completely groundless, but must be considered as an exaggerated or distorted conclusion from the grounds upon which he bases it.

The book serves another purpose, however, for

1. Vide supra: p. 9
it introduces to the reader the child Bertuco, in whom may already be seen the man he will later become. He is a precocious child, deeply interested in literature and other arts, and already trying his hand at poetry and drawing. His sensitive nature, wounded repeatedly by the treatment of the fathers, has turned in upon itself for amusement and refuge from external reality. He becomes introspective. He is terribly frightened when he is locked up alone in penance for some slight misdemeanor, and maltreated by the fathers who come in at intervals to see whether he is properly repentant. When he is finally released, after several days of this punishment, his nerves are so shattered by the physical deprivation and mental terrorization that he collapses completely. It is at this juncture that his uncle comes and removes him from the school.

In Tinieblas en las cumbres Alberto appears as a young man, only a few years past his boyhood. He has written and painted in a desultory fashion, and, having sufficient money to indulge his tastes, is not actively unhappy, though he could not be called happy. He joins a group of dissipated companions who are going on a fantastic expedition to see an eclipse from the mountain top. They take with them
five prostitutes, among them Rosina, a beautiful girl from a fishing village, who had started on her career of prostitution as the result of a real love for a young circus athlete, Fernando. She is of a very different type from the other women, and Alberto finds interest in talking with her and trying to discover the explanation for her being where she is. He also holds a philosophical conversation with an Englishman, called Yiddy Warble, on the mountain top, and here many of his ideas on life and art are set forth. To him the only reality in life is beauty and the pursuit of beauty. All the ordinary illusions of men, religion, science, morality, justice, "vital lies", mean nothing to him. They are abstractions, shadows of shadows, and serve no purpose in the life of a thinking man. He feels a deep, almost pathological, love of nature, which, together with his sense of disorientation in life and his longing for beauty, has sometimes produced in him such deep emotion that he has wept with the sheer intensity of it. ¹ He decided to become an artist through the hunger for glory, which seemed to him the only possible immortality.

In his third year at the Jesuit school, his love

¹ Tinieblas en las cumbres, p. 310
for belles lettres was awakened, and at the same time he began to think seriously about the shortness of life. He decided to seek the immortality of glory, and cast about for the best field in which to attain it. Literature and music were alike unsatisfactory, the former because too limited in its appeal, the latter because too limited in its power to express. Painting seemed to him the ideal province. Beauty exercises over him absolute control, and consideration of the shortness of life turned him to art. His belief in a life after death is vague. He believes in "eternal life, something mysterious ... which animates our bodies and will survive them... That we will ascend to a loftier existence is to me indisputable, but shall we retain the memory of our earthly and bodily experience?"

Alberto feels a strong nervous tension and thrill of horror as the eclipse becomes complete. His mind is overwhelmed by doubts and terrors. He says to Yiddy that the last peak of his soul has been shrouded in clouds of darkness, and that he will never be able to see the light again. He repeats this to Rosina, and says that up to this time

1. Idem, pp. 324-328
he has kept the one ideal of glory, but now even that is lost to him.1

After the eclipse the adventurers return to the city. Alberto is in such a state of intoxication that he barely manages to reach his lodgings, taking Rosina home with him, and then collapses in a drunken sleep.

La Pata de la raposa continues the story from where Tinieblas en las cumbres leaves it. Alberto wakes at his home the morning after the debauch to a life without savor or incentive. His one ideal of beauty, to which he has clung for years, has vanished, like all his childhood illusions, and left him nothing. Life is quite meaningless; even art no longer holds any appeal for him, so he definitely renounces all intentions of seeking a career as an artist. Rosina has disappeared, slipping out before he awoke. He goes to see his sweetheart, Josefina, but her father breaks off their engagement when he sees in the newspapers that Rosina is being sought by the authorities, after her mysterious disappearance, and that Alberto is suspected

1. Idem, p. 372
of having killed or hidden her. Alberto is arrested on the suspicion, and remains in jail without any attempt to free himself, until Rosina herself appears and the charge is dismissed. He then joins a group of travelling circus players, with whom he remains for a few months, later going to England, where he visits friends in London. He returns to Spain, goes to see Fina again, but soon breaks off his relations with her a second time, because he feels himself unworthy of her, and unable to commit himself definitely to a formal bond with any woman. He travels to Italy, where he again visits his London acquaintances, the MacKenzie, who are staying in Florence. Their daughter, Meg, falls in love with Alberto, and for a while he plays with the idea of this love, but the girl finally proves too ardent for his taste, and he returns to Spain. He again seeks out Fina, only to learn that she has died while he was in Italy. A few days after this blow comes a second; he has lost all his money through the mismanagement and dishonesty of the husband of Fina's sister. Alberto, dismayed, casts about to discover some way of earning his living, but sees none. He is not prepared to do anything.
He set himself to examine coldly his social capacity. What good am I? He answered himself: You are no good at all. Then he looked at himself in the mirror, full of self-pity. And his conscience said to him: you are no good at all, because you are rotten with laziness, because the solitary delight of dreaming and thinking as if for a game has eaten you to the bone, because in your wretched sluggishness you believe that life is worth nothing in itself, but only in its ornaments. Mechanically he murmured aloud:

And that is true; it is worth nothing in itself, but only in its ornaments.

He feels that he must do something, but what, he has no idea, and he soon slumps inertly back into his former existence, without his former security, because he has no money or assurance of it in the future.

Troteras y danzaderas, the fourth of the group, treats the subject of Alberto only incidentally. The author seems to have lost interest in him, and Teófilo Pajares, the impoverished and consumptive poet, is the figure on whom he spends most of his efforts. Teófilo is in love with Rosina, who is now the mistress of a wealthy man. She is pleased with his admiration, and quite willing to give herself to him, but he feels himself too poor even to ask her to become his mistress. She finally leaves her official lover for her first lover, the athlete.

1. La Pata de la rancea, p. 241.
Fernando, who still holds her affection. Teófilo dàes of consumption not very long after.

The treatment of Alberto, although slight, is by no means without importance. Here he appears in the bohemian surroundings which he has entered after his financial disaster. He lives from hand to mouth, utterly impoverished but cheerful, and probably enjoying his existence much more than before his loss. The following summary of his character presents him as he appears in the final volume of the series:

His character was sedentary, dreaming, indifferent; his was not a pedestrian spirit, because it lacked the two feet with which the spirit goes forth into the world to undertake and complete actions: it lacked hope and ambition. Neither did it possess wings, because these had been cut for Alberto. He aspired to mediocrity, in the classical sense of moderation and measure. The great love and suffering of his youth had dissipated his ego.1

Here is a detailed, though unfinished, study of an individual whose characteristic traits are delineated and accounted for with minuteness. The development of the character is so intimate, so real that Alberto becomes very familiar to the reader who follows his story through the four volumes.

Bertucio is a brilliant, or at least a very

1. Troteras y danzaderas, p. 83
bright, child, precocious and alert. He was friendly and sociable when he entered the Jesuit school, but he learned through bitter experience there to encase his feelings in a shell of seeming indifference, which developed into cynicism and occasional flippancy. The Alberto of Tinieblas en las cumbres is a well-mannered, quiet, aloof young man, with a habit of detached, ironical observance of people and things which is probably the key to an explanation of his character. His analytical attitude toward everything he or anyone else does is carried too far. He sees, not both sides, but all sides, of any question or problem; and, appreciating all sides, is unable to take any one side and hold to it as a course of action.

He imagines himself quite without personal attractiveness, though he is actually not unprepossessing. He is consequently diffident, even shy, in his manner toward those whom he meets. He feels an inquiring, experimental curiosity about people which approaches a genuine scientific attitude, particularly in his relations with women. Rosina is to him not only a woman -- she is also a social phenomenon to be observed and studied. When he makes love to Fina, half of him only is making love -- the other half is watching the process
with analytical observation, and studying the girl as a psychological entity. The same tendency toward a division in his personality is commented upon by the author in his capacity as author. Alberto has composed a short poem which he divided into two parts. Ayala meditates upon this action:

Why did the author divide this composition into two parts, and dramatize it, dividing himself into two persons? Perhaps Alberto himself did not notice it, merely obeying the instinct of bifurcation which, in such crises, cleaves the human heart in two portions; one weeps, and the other laughs meanwhile.

When he performs his impromptu psychological experiment, reading Othello to the ignorant Verónica, he is entirely absorbed in the experiment and its results, but this is because he is considering Verónica as a possible source of interesting psychological reactions, not as a woman.

Because he sees all sides of questions, no single side can appeal to him as essentially superior to all others, and from this fact arises the condition of abulia which becomes accentuated in him as he advances in life. He is unable to determine upon a definite course of action, so he follows the path of least resistance and takes none. He realizes the defects in his scheme of living and the faults in his character, and understands fully in what
direction they are leading him, but observes the progress quite calmly and continues to do nothing about it. In his decision to break off his relations with Fina, probably a stronger factor than his feeling of unworthiness is the fact that marriage would require a complete change in his mode of living, a readjustment and alteration of his whole personality, -- in short, an effort of will which he is not prepared to make. He attempts to break through this quasi-paralysis of will only once, and then unsuccessfully. After the death of Fina, and the loss of his fortune, he realizes that he is totally dependent upon himself for the first time, and it is his responsibility to provide for his own future. He admits the fact, accepts the responsibility, and does nothing.

Suddenly, as if under a mysterious influence, he rose, arrogant and determined, from his own weakness. He was thirty-two years old, and through misfortune empty-handed and idle. Until that time he had dreamed; it was now time to act, to act quickly, for his progress in the world was backward. What to do? Anything, what difference does it make? Act, act... "I must hurry", he murmured aloud...

But in spite of the formula I must hurry, which he had set as his rule of action, he did not succeed in breaking through the net of deliberations and trivialities which enveloped him, rather, he seemed to occupy himself in making it more complicated.

1. Idem, pp. 236 & 243
The study is not completed. Ayala leaves his character at the end of *Troteras y danzaderas*, scarcely more defined than he was by the three preceding novels. There is a sense of disappointment when he drops the study, and a feeling that Alberto still shows possibilities which are far from being developed as yet, but which may be realized in the future.

How far is Alberto Ayala? The obvious similarities immediately suggest themselves -- an intense hatred of the Jesuit order and schools, an equally intense love of nature, a passion for beauty, a thoughtful irony in the way of looking at life, complete sincerity in all relationships and attitudes, a position of aloofness and remoteness, not without sympathy, in social relationships.

The bitterness which Ayala feels toward the Jesuit schools is not merely a characteristic with which he has endowed a figure in his novels, it is an integral part of his own character, and he loses no opportunity to express it with vigor.¹ It is the conspicuous, possibly the only, example of his allowing his emotions to run away with his judgment.

1. *Vide supra*, p. 2
The love of nature,amounting to an almost mystic exaltation, which is one of the most striking traits of Alberto's nature, is also dominant in the author, an important note in poetry and in prose. Particularly in the poetry of Ayala is this deep kinship with nature expressed, and the most beautiful poems are those which deal with nature subjects or nature as symbolic of something in the life of man. Together with his turning to thought and reflection, his kinship with nature gives him a refuge from reality, or the harsher aspects of reality, and strengthens him to meet whatever comes to him. His passion for beauty is an early development. Alberto began while yet a boy in school to hold beauty as his only ideal, and consciously to direct his efforts toward the attainment of this ideal.

The boy Ayala, according to Cejador, one of his early teachers, was characterized by this same longing for beauty, or strictly excellence. And as excellence is identified in his mind with beauty, beauty (which to Ayala expresses both a physical

1. e.g. *La Paz del sendero*, *El Sendero innumerables*, *El Sendero andante*, *El Pensiero*, *La Señora de los poetas*, *Marinas*, *La Playa*, *El Río*, etc.
and a moral or spiritual condition) may be considered as his ideal from boyhood. It is with this ideal of physical and moral beauty in mind that he expresses his ideas on the subject of art, which to him must meet standards of content (or moral beauty) as well as of form (physical beauty).

The quality of sincerity is conspicuous in Alberto; sometimes it is possibly a little disconcerting, but it is attractive.

...Precisely one of the necessities of Guzmán's spirit, which had been cherished with particular care and satisfied on every occasion, was sincerity with himself, as with everyone else...

Sincerity is likewise one of Ayala's cherished ideals. He expresses this ideal in his preface to the first volume of Las Máscaras; it is implicit in his poetry and his fiction.

The detachment and impersonality which are prominent in Alberto are also notable in Ayala. He looks at a question from all sides, weighing evidence and values, often not reaching any definite conclusion with regard

2. *Vide supra*, p. 18
3. *La Fata de la raposa*, p. 243
to the matter which he is considering. This tendency is of better effect in his novels than in his critical writings. In criticism, the result of considering a problem impartially from various angles is likely to be an appearance of vacillation, as if the critic were unable to decide anything about the thing which he is studying. In the novel, however, this detached attitude tends to produce a convincing air of reality, though it might easily grow annoying if carried very far.

In the above-mentioned respects, Ayala's character is apparently an exact parallel of that of Alberto. But these are only isolated qualities, not the total of his character. The sum of these characteristics, so far as the reader is able to determine from the information which the novels supply, is Alberto's character. Ayala's own character must be the sum of these qualities, plus an additional something, will or force or whatever one chooses to call it, which has carried him to genuine accomplishment. It may be that Ayala, like his hero, feels that he has accomplished nothing, that he has not by any means fulfilled his promise and developed his possibilities to the fullest extent, or to as great an extent as he should have. The facts of his career
would scarcely corroborate this opinion, if he does hold it. Alberto, at the age of thirty-two, regarded himself as a failure. He had done nothing in life, and was apparently unable to begin to do anything. Ayala, however insignificant he himself may have considered his achievements, had published three volumes of prose and poetry and established himself as a writer of dramatic and literary criticism for various periodicals by the time he reached the age of thirty-two. His literary productivity was unflagging for a period of at least twenty years; and though he has published nothing since 1926, the year of the publication of *Tigre Juan* and *El Curandero de su honra*, he has continued to write for *La Prensa*, and serves at present as Spanish ambassador to London.

The most logical assumption to make regarding the identification of Ayala with his character seems to be that Alberto represents Ayala not as he is, or was for any great length of time during his life; but rather Ayala as he might have been, had the several qualities which are most conspicuous in his nature, or which appear so to him, developed in a direction, which he has presented in the creations of his own imagination, quite different from that which they actually followed.

1. *La Paz del sendero*, 1904; *Tinieblas en las cumbres*, 1907; *Akyd. G.*, 1911
Chapter V  Philosophical and Psychological Novels

Five novels\(^1\) may be considered as either philosophical or psychological or both. The term philosophical is descriptive of a certain character of speculative meditation upon a character or situation which the author has set up for observation. These novels are more thoughtful, though less affective, than the four earlier novels. The author has become purely the observer, dispassionate and impersonal, who is interested, but not absorbed, in his characters, who is sympathetic toward them, but aloof from their trials and perplexities. The exuberance and even occasional flippancy of his earlier work (e.g. Tinieblas en las cumbres) have been restrained and refined. The experience which was too wide for him to handle always with full artistic success in his first work now provides a rich material for the exercise of his growing literary skill. He is able to handle his varied material with greater competence and a surer delicacy of taste. The result is a harmonious com-

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1. Belarmino y Apolonio, Madrid, 1921
   Luna de miel, Luna de hiel, Madrid, 1924
   Los Trabajos de Urbano y Simona, Madrid, 1924
   Tigre Juan, Madrid, 1926
   El Curandero de su honra, Madrid, 1926
bination of form and matter which reaches its greatest perfection in Belarmino y Apolonio, the most philosophical and at the same time the most artistic of Ayala's novels. This tale of two extraordinary shoemakers, Belarmino and Apolonio, is a strange mixture of the fantastic and the commonplace, the trivial and the profound, which results in a work of unusual charm.

Summary:

Belarmino Pinto and Apolonio Caramanzana, rival shoemakers in the little village of Pilares, have for years been enemies. Apolonio, a bombastic orator, feels envy of Belarmino, which he attempts to disguise as scorn. Belarmino, a self-contained philosopher, feels an indifference and mild disdain toward Apolonio which he does not attempt to disguise or conceal. Belarmino's niece and foster daughter, Angustias, elopes with Apolonio's son, Pedro, who is studying for the priesthood. Apolonio separates them, and Angustias falls into a life of prostitution. Belarmino and Apolonio, impoverished, enter the home for old men. They never speak to each other until the day when Apolonio receives a telegram from Pedro, who has just inherited a large sum of money; and Belarmino receives another from Angustias.
saying that Pedro has rescued her from the life she has been leading. The two old men suddenly realize that they no longer hate each other, and from that day are the closest of friends.

The most important thing in the novel is the conception of the two characters of Belarmino and Apolonio. They are differentiated and at the same time dovetailed in so skilful a manner that they are not really antagonistic, but complementary, as the two men eventually realize themselves. When they finally appreciate this fact, they can see that it has always been true, but they were very long in learning it. Apolonio is a pompous, conceited, amusing sort of person, with a streak of selfish unkindness in him, and a great deal of ambition. Belarmino is a much more pleasing type, with a gentle, kindly nature, and a thoughtful, almost mystical philosophical attitude toward people and life. Like Socrates, he is above consideration of material things; also like Socrates, he is blessed with a shrewish wife. His niece, Angustias, and his linguistic system are his two passions in life. He withdraws more and more from actuality as he studies the dictionary, which for him is the real
meaning and interest of life. All language, however, seems to him unsatisfactory as it is today:

In the cosmos -- that is, in the dictionary -- are the names of all things, but they are badly applied, because they are applied according to mechanical custom and in a form which, far from provoking an act of recognition and of creation, favor routine, ignorance, stupidity, garrulous pretense and vulgar, empty, and parrot-like conversation. The words are in the cosmos -- that is, in the dictionary -- like birds in a cage, or like living beings under the influence of narcotics and hidden in sepulchres with seven seals. Belarmino found a sort of mystic pleasure, a sort of direct communication with the absolute, and intimate perception of the essence of things when he broke the sepulchral seals of things so that those who were buried alive might arise, opened the cages that the birds might fly forth. The meaning which custom and tradition have given to words rarely is the meaning which the sounds of the words express to Belarmino. Words, then, come to him virtually out of the air:

He read the words of the cosmos, -- that is, the dictionary -- being most careful that his eyes should not see the definitions which accompanied them. He read a word; in strict fact, he did not read it, he saw it, materially, escaping from the pages, walking upon the pavement, or flying in the air, or floating nebulously upon the roof.

Their meaning develops before him, almost invariably different from that which the dictionary has assigned to them. The obvious fallacy of his theory is the impossibility of communication by means of words if

1. Belarmino y Apolonio. p.144
2. Idem, p. 144
their significance is determined purely by the individual's concepts. No two people would receive the same concept from the sound of the word; standardization and formula are absolutely necessary.

The other citizens of the village adopted various attitudes toward Belarmino. Most of them considered him crazy, though some admired him very much. The confectioner, Colignon, held him in such esteem that he made a genuine effort to understand his own explanation of his theory:

"Astonishing, astonishing, my dear Belarmino", replied the confectioner with delighted amazement, "I understand you. I am an epicurean and you a stoic, isn't that it?"

Belarmino fixed in his memory those two words, epicurean and stoic, in order to transmute them later by the alchemy of meditation and find out their true meaning.\footnote{1}

The priest, Padre Alesón, regarded him as a "born idiot"\footnote{2}, which was the common attitude toward him, and led some of the students in the town to play a rather cruel trick upon him. The students persuaded him to formulate his system and deliver an address on it, which they took down on a phonograph record. A few weeks later they played the record in

1. \textit{Idem}, p.150
2. \textit{Idem}, p.133
an adjacent room, while Belarmino listened, believing it to be another philosopher, who had come from France, but who was delivering his discourse in the universal language of philosophy.

Belarmino's language reached five-hundred words, some of which are appended to the novel.¹

Ayala's custom of presenting a subject from several points of view is most pronounced in this volume. Some of the action we see through Belarmino's eyes, some through Apolonio's, some through the eyes of Pedro, the Duchess, the priest, the confectioner, the author himself, as the omniscient observer. The different viewpoints are all combined into a harmonious whole, blended together with a subtle humor and gentle feeling which produce a most pleasing effect. The novel is not exactly to be classes as "Realistic", but the effect is more intimate, more appealing than a more literal realistic treatment would have produced.

Luna de miel, luna de hiel presents the first part of the adventures of Urbano and Simona.

Summary:

Micaela, her views on life distorted by

¹ Idem, pp. 327-339
unfortunate youthful experience, determines that her son, Urbano, shall grow up in absolute ignorance of sex. She agrees with the mother of Simona, a girl of Urbano's age, that the two shall marry, Simona having been brought up in the same beatific state. They are married without any further enlightenment, and very slowly begin to understand what their marriage means; but Micaela separates them, on account of financial disaster, and wishes to annul the marriage, which has never been consummated.

The sequel, Los Trabajos de Urbano y Simona, continues the story.

Urbano is instructed by a priest in the meaning of sex. This is a terrible shock to him at first, but he adjusts himself to his new outlook of greater knowledge, and determines to make himself a man first, and then recover Simona, whom he loves deeply. She has been put in charge of the seven sisters of her mother's lover, and Urbano tries to form some plan to abduct her. He sees her secretly, but when this is found out, she is put in a convent, from which he eventually steals her.

If the premise could be accepted that Micaela could keep a normally intelligent boy in such a state of ignorance as Urbano is presented to us (an impos-
sible assumption, considering that he had completed his studies to be a lawyer), the result might be regarded as natural and quite logical. The awakening of the two lovers is probably not abnormally slow, once the fundamental hypothesis is granted. But the situation is hardly acceptable as logical or artistically probable, so the novel must be considered as the treatment of an essentially fantastic theme, and judged accordingly.

The treatment is impersonal and objective; the characters of the novel are presented with abundance of detail. The first volume has been compared to the Daphnis and Chloe of Longus, but though it is the same situation, the presentation is naturally very different. The Greek tale is purely pastoral, with a biblical simplicity of language. The modern novel is a more sophisticated account, in language sometimes almost erudite. But both stories are characterized by an appealing charm, and excellent taste. This delicate restraint which Ayala uses in Luna de miel, luna de hiel is a profound contrast to the crude realism of Tinieblas en las cumbres, or the sophisticated, almost cynical, attitude he adopts in Traseras y danzaderas.

The character of Doña Micaela, the mother of Urbano, is convincing. If anyone could have accom-
plished the feat of bringing up a son in perfect innocence, she could. Her determination and force of will were insuperable, and she was absolutely secure in her convictions. Doubts as to the wisdom of any course she pursued did not trouble her:

Doña Micaela possessed a still rarer gift -- the sense of orientation in life. She had become orientated, when she had scarcely gained the use of reason, never after to stray from her path, because, in addition to the idea which guided her and the eagerness which impelled her, she was aided by the subordinate qualities of ambition: an eager temperament, cold passion, strong will.¹

"You can clearly see that my will to annul the marriage is the will of God". Doña Micaela judged of the will of God, having previously consulted her own will, and found that they always coincided.²

The characters in the first volume are convincing artistically and psychologically. Doña Micaela is an unusual figure, but only in the intensity of her purpose and the peculiar direction which it takes. The fundamental element, the desire to spare her child that from which she herself has suffered, is a common enough trait in parents. Urbano and Simona seem normal enough in all respects but their abnormal ignorance. Don Cástulo, Urbano's tutor, and Doña Rosita, Simona's grandmother, who

1. _Luna de miel, luna de hiel_, p. 25
2. _Los Trabajos de Urbano y Simona_, p. 19
are the most important secondary characters, are also well done. But in the sequel to this volume, we are asked to believe that Urbano changes almost overnight from a gentle, submissive child to a man of strong purpose and an iron will. The change presented in Urbano is great, but could be accepted, for he is shown as an intelligent youth, with a good education and lively sensibilities. When the one vast gap in his education was bridged, he might well have developed with a rapidity that at first sight might seem incredible. But the change which Micaela undergoes is more radical, much less prepared for, and psychologically improbable, to say the least.

In Luna de miel, luna de hiel, she is presented as a woman of indomitable will and determination, quite lacking in feelings of even mild affection, and absolutely devoid of sensuality:

A primary characteristic of her character was the absence of sensuality. Her senses did not dominate her. She almost had no senses, considering that she did not use them to enter the world or take pleasure in its beautiful spectacle, but only as spies, which brought her notices from outside to the inner tribunal of her intelligence, which almost always pronounced disapproving judgments.¹

But this woman suddenly changes, after a lifetime of coldness and austerity, self-sufficiency and

¹ Luna de miel, luna de hiel, p. 28
domineering command, into a clinging, sentimental wife, who is not satisfied with the quiet affection which her husband offers her, but demands passionate love. Poor Leoncio, whose passion for Micaela has all died long ago, is at a loss what to do with this wife who demands more than he can possibly give her. Without explaining very clearly how or why, the author has Micaela suddenly change her entire character:

... I have been just the opposite of that ideal wife which you paint. That is what you mean. A presumptuous, domineering, haughty, unbearable woman. But don't condemn me. That woman had died. I myself condemned her. Don't you see, Leoncio, that I am telling you the truth?

The change is too unmotivated and abrupt to be convincing.

Urbano and Simona, in the almost idyllic atmosphere of Luna de miel, luna de hiel, are charming, but the attempt to bring them into the world of actuality is almost a complete failure.

It seems probable that Ayala intended Luna de miel, luna de hiel, in part, at least, as an ironical commentary upon conventional ideas of sex education for children. He seems to feel that, although formal education cannot substitute for experience,
still the attempt to keep boys and girls in ignorance of sex as long as possible is to be condemned, and the absurd situation shown in the honeymoon of Urbano and Simona is only an exaggeration, not an essential falsification, of the natural result of such a restricted education.

_Tigre Juan_, the first of another series, deals with a misogynistic doctor who has murdered his first wife when he was a young man in the Philippines because he suspected her of unfaithfulness. He marries again, years later, and half expects his second wife to betray him. Herminia, the wife, labors under a martyr complex, believing that she is being sacrificed and inhibited in her marriage to Juan. She persuades Vespasiano, a Don Juanesque individual, to run away with her, against his will. In the sequel, _El Curan-dero de su honra_, the farcical elopement takes place, and Herminia returns of her own free will, never having been actually technically false to Juan. They have a child, and Juan is so delighted that he loses his misogynistic outlook on life and finds a content in living which he had never known before.

There is a satire on the type of Don Juan, whom Tigre Juan idealizes as the savior of the honor of mankind. Woman betrays man, Don Juan avenges man.
The characters are not very good. Juan is very oratorical, and exaggeratedly moody and pessimistic. Herminia is vague, sentimental, and foolish.

The device of following the divergent currents of two lives in parallel columns on the page proves unsuccessful, though an interesting experiment.

This is much poorer than the three novels immediately preceding; the style has become rhetorical, the characters rather wooden, and too verbose. The fundamental idea is fairly interesting, but Ayala has not done justice to it.
Conclusion

Because of his productivity, his polished urbanity of style, and the philosophically reflective character of his work, Pérez de Ayala holds an important place among the writers of the first quarter of the twentieth century. His versatility is great. In style and subject matter he ranges from the flippant manner and risqué situations of Tíbias las cumbres to the serene and delicate irony and charm of Belarmín y Apolonio. He has tried nearly every literary field, and has been entirely unsuccessful in none. His best work, probably, is in the novel.

His realism tends to have a philosophical quality, except in the case of Tíbias las cumbres, where he uses a sketchy naturalistic technique throughout the greater part of the book. But even here the philosophical element is present, and the occasional serious note redeems the lightness of the rest of the volume. A.N.D.G., a novel of propaganda, contains some good realistic sketches, done in a quite simple and straightforward manner, and other sketches which are melodramatic. On the whole, his realism may be said to be one of ideas
and concepts, to which realism of characters and situations is incidental.

He inclines to present characters which are the embodiment of ideas, but not to such an extent as that described by Cansinos Assens, who considers that none of his characters is human, that each one is nothing but the incarnation of an idea.\(^1\) Alberto, the character studied at greatest length, is real. It is true that he is almost a personification of abulia, but this does not prevent him from being a genuinely human individual, who suffers, rejoices, gropes about in the world, in short lives, like other human beings. Teófilo Pajares, a minor character, but sufficiently important to serve as an example, is a real figure, and not at all the embodiment of an idea.

He frequently develops situations which are fundamentally unreal, or at least unusual. But once this fundamental conception is accepted, the subsequent development can be considered realistic. \(\text{Luna de miel, luna de hiel, and Belarmino y Apolonia}\) are the most conspicuous examples of this combination of fantastic situation and realistic treatment. The

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result is artistic, because the author keeps the work within the bounds he has marked out for it.

Since the publication of his first four novels his work has shown a development in the direction of greater technical skill, greater delicacy, and a more spiritual conception of reality.

His ideals are high, but he does not force them upon his readers. There is little of the didactic in his work, and what there is usually lies concealed beneath an exquisite irony, the outcome of his impersonal manner of looking at life.

There is a certain stateliness frequently to be found in dialogue of his novels, which, though it may detract somewhat from the realism of the work, is not without charm, and which produces, in combination with the prevailing note of irony, an effect of remoteness, though not entire aloofness, from humanity. At other times, the dialogue is more realistic, but it never approaches the almost complete realism of such a style as Baroja's.
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