SOCIAL IDEAS IN THE VALENCIAN AND MADRID NOVELS OF VICENTE BLASCO IBANEZ

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SOCIAL IDEAS IN THE VALENCIAN AND MADRID NOVELS OF VICENTE BLASCO IBANEZ

THESIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Vicente Blasco Ibáñez was born in Valencia in 1867. He spent his childhood in the city and the surrounding areas and became very familiar with them. Many of the traits which were to characterize him as an adult were already present at this early age. He was restless, impulsive, undisciplined. An avid reader, he attended a private school and the Colegio Valentino during his boyhood. His father wanted him to join in the operation of the family's clothing store and his mother wanted him to become a priest. The author wanted to become a sailor; but when his parents refused their permission, he enrolled as a student at the university in Valencia. During his years at the Colegio Valentino, he had made himself conspicuous as a supporter of the Spanish republican movement; and at the university he gained notoriety for his attacks on the state and the established church. In 1883 he went to Madrid, where he worked as a secretary for the romantic novelist Manuel Fernández González.

In 1884 he founded El Pueblo, a republican newspaper which enjoyed a great deal of popularity among the workmen in Madrid and the suburbs. In the next year he was
sentenced to six months hard labor for writing a poem criticizing the government; this was to be the first of many similar experiences which the author was to encounter frequently throughout his long, productive life.

Blasco Ibáñez published the works of many foreign writers, chiefly French, in his newspaper, and printed most of the novels of his Valencian period in the paper in serial form. These are *Arroz y tartana* (1894), a novel describing the middle class people of a small town who will do almost anything to maintain their petty social prestige; *Flor de mayo* (1895), a story of the poverty-stricken fishermen who live on the coast of the Valencian gulf; *La barraca* (1898), usually thought of as the author's masterpiece and an excellent work in realism which describes the fate of a man and his family who try to establish themselves in the rich Valencian huerta and are eventually driven from their farm by the hostility of their neighbors;¹ *Entre naranjos* (1900), an absorbing attack upon caciquismo, political bossism in Spain, and a detailed account of life in a small rural town; *Sómnica, la cortesana* (1901), a description of Valencia during the pre-Christian era when ancient Saguntum was besieged by the Carthaginian Hannibal; and *Cañas y barro* (1902), an account of adultery, infanticide, and

suicide among the poor fishermen along the shores of Lake Albufera in Valencia. These works constitute Blasco Ibáñez' first period of novel writing and, in the opinion of most critics, are the basis of his literary renown. They will be described in more detail in the next chapter.

Blasco Ibáñez was a very active politician, and after his election to the Cortes he began to use the novel as a means of spreading his liberal views. The series of novels which he wrote during his most active political life had for a background different parts of peninsular Spain and the Spanish islands of the Mediterranean. They are La catedral (1903), an attack upon the clergy and religion in Spain, to some extent autobiographical; El intruso (1904), a rather harsh attack on the Jesuits and the wealthy, abusive mine owners in the Biscayne area; La bodega (1905), which describes the poor laborers and their oppressive masters in the vineyards around Jerez; La maja desnuda (1916), a psychological study of the conflict between a man's love for art and for his wife; La horda (1905), a description of the gypsies, poachers, and rag collectors in Madrid; Sangre y arena (1908), probably the most complete description of tauromacy in print and one of the more harshly critical; Los muertos mandan (1909), the story of

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3 Northup, op. cit., p. 383.
a nobleman who wanted to marry a Jewess to increase his fortune, but who gave up the idea in favor of marrying an exceptionally attractive peasant girl; *La voluntad de vivir* (1907), written at the date shown but not published until after the death of the author, has little in common with either his Valencian novels or the later novels of social reform; it is a psychological study of a brilliant scientist who loses the will to live.

After he had been elected to the Spanish legislature, Blasco Ibáñez was given legislative immunity to write as he saw fit, and he did so for a while; but as the Spanish governments changed, so did his degree of literary freedom.

In 1909 he left the legislature and went to Buenos Aires, where he gave a series of lectures with the celebrated French author, Anatole France. He spent nine months visiting Argentina, Chile, and Paraguay. Although he had planned to spend about three years in visiting all of the Latin American countries, he cut his visit short and returned to Madrid in 1910. There he published *Argentina y sus granalezas*, the first of three novels dealing with the new world. He then returned to that country and founded two colonies of Spanish immigrants, both of which proved to be costly failures.

He had planned to write a novel about each of the countries in Latin America, but the political and military situation in Europe forced him to abandon the project.
During World War I, Blasco Ibáñez devoted himself to the writing of propaganda for the Allied cause. He published his most famous work, *Los cuatro jinetes del Apocalipsis* in 1916. Soon thereafter he started a movie studio, but when it was destroyed by a fire that almost caused his death, he abandoned his motion picture business. In 1917 he published *Mare Nostrum*, another war novel, and the next year he went to Monte Carlo, where he published yet another war novel, *Los enemigos de la mujer*.

Blasco Ibáñez was very popular in the United States during the first World War and was invited to visit this country in 1919. While here, he delivered a series of lectures in Spanish and received the honorary Doctor of Laws degree from George Washington University. After a short visit to Mexico he returned to the United States, where he published *El militarismo mejicano*, a work which aroused much controversy in the country with which it dealt.

The next few years were the most productive in the author's life. In 1923 he published *La tierra de todos* and *El paraíso de las mujeres*, a work reminiscent of Gulliver's *Travels* and thought by some to be a satire against the United States. The next year he wrote *La Reina Calafia*, a story of postwar Madrid. Shortly afterwards, he made a world tour and upon his return to Madrid, he published

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La vuelta del mundo de un novelista. He then began to publish a series of leaflets directed at Alfonso XIII and the hated dictator Primo de Rivera. These were among the first propaganda to be scattered from an airplane. He also completed a series of works he had begun with La Reina Calafia. These are El papa del mar (1926), a treatment of the Aragonese antipope, Pedro de la Luna; A los pies de Venus (1926), a description of Rome in the time of the Spanish Borgias; En busca del gran Kan (1927), an account of Columbus; and El oro y la muerte (1927), a story of Núñez de Balboa.

In 1921 Blasco Ibáñez ordered the construction of a beautiful villa near Mentone, France. He died there in 1928 and in the will that he left he asked that his body not be returned to Spain as long as the monarchy existed. Soon after the establishment of the Republic in 1933, his body was returned to Valencia, where it lies entombed in an imposing monument.
CHAPTER II

THE VALENCIAN NOVELS OF BLASCO IBÁÑEZ

The novels of the Valencian region constitute the author's first period of novel writing. Blasco Ibáñez was at his highest point in artistic production when he lived in and wrote about Valencia and its environs, and the novels of this period are considered by most to be his basis for a claim to literary immortality. The novels are, in part, a filial tribute to his patria chica in which he gives the reader various aspects of Valencian life and different points of view about the same subjects so that the reader will better understand Valencia and the problems of the Valencian characters in the novels. The reader can obtain a more accurate picture of Spanish life by reading the novels of Blasco Ibáñez than by reading any other fictional works.

Arroz y tartana (1894) describes the downfall of a wealthy bourgeois family in nineteenth century Valencia. Doña Manuela is the daughter of the leading silk industrialist in that region of Spain. During her youth she had two

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1 Emilio Gasco Contell, Blasco Ibáñez, (Madrid, 1925) p. 171.

suitors: Rafael Pajares, a licentious medical student, and Melohor Peña, a promising young businessman. She finally chose to marry the young merchant because his rival was an inveterate Casanova who simply would not be satisfied with one woman. After her marriage, Manuela helped her husband to operate his dry goods store. Her father died six years later, leaving Manuela to share the large inheritance with her bachelor brother, Juan. Unlike her brother, who wanted to add to his fortune by wise investments and constant frugality, Manuela wanted to leave her husband's drab store and become a persona decente by means of her newly acquired riches. She bought a luxurious home and maintained a fine carriage with a well-dressed lackey to drive it. She quickly became friends with the wives of most of the local dignitaries and provided them with sumptuous entertainment at the slightest pretext. Manuela's sober husband found her new behavior hard to bear, but he suffered it in order not to bring on certain marital discord by criticizing his spouse's wasteful spending. Constant worry weakened his body and mind, and he eventually became bedfast. Rafael, by that time a prominent physician, attended the merchant in those last days, and the ministrations of his old rival caused the patient's condition to deteriorate until he died. His death came almost exactly one year after his wife began her expensive social climbing. He left a considerable sum of money, with which his widow continued her extravagances,
and an intelligent young son, Juanito, who promised to follow his father's footsteps in the business world. The dry goods store was to be managed by Antonio Cuadros, a trustworthy employee of long service in the firm.

Immediately after the death of Melchor, Rafael resumed his courtship of Manuela, but not with matrimony as an object. At first she was reluctant to accept him, but later, as her feeling for him returned, she abandoned her old misgivings. The satisfaction of having the most eligible bachelor in town as her suitor overcame all of her resistance and she gave herself to him completely. This arrangement ended abruptly when they were forced to marry in order to legitimize their first child, Concha. In the years after their marriage, another daughter, Amparito, and a son, Rafaelito, were born. Manuela worshipped her husband during the first years of their union, although she did not approve of his methods of spending her money. He often lost large sums gambling, and he made frequent trips out of town. He eventually deprived her of many of her luxuries and spent her savings on his favorite mistresses. Manuela's love for the spendthrift gradually turned to hatred; but before a legal separation could be effected, his constant indulgence in the carnal and sensual pleasures destroyed the voluptuous physician and left Manuela, not yet fifty years old, a widow for the second time, with no prospects for a third marriage.
After the death of Rafael, Manuela's brother, Juan, intervened and rearranged the debt-plagued household. He paid off all debts and arranged all income so that his sister and her fatherless children might live a comfortable, but not luxurious, life. Rafaelito began to attend the university to prepare himself for a profession, and Juanito began to work in his family's dry goods store waiting for the time when he would become old enough to manage it by himself.

The action of the novel begins about this time. The family does well until Manuela's yearning for her old ways of life and her former friends overcomes her sense of practicality and she reverts to her wasteful spending habits. She buys a new carriage and hires a new coachman to replace those the lecherous Rafael had deprived her of in order to afford his personal pleasures. She and her two fickle daughters copy minutely the elegant dress of fashionable foreigners and provide expensive entertainment for their many friends and associates at home and at a country estate. Adorned with the best dresses or costumes appropriate to the occasion, they attend all religious and traditional festivals. Rafael leaves the university and becomes one of the local lindo set in conformity with the popular idea that education is not necessary for those of great wealth. As a reward for their efforts, the family rides along the streets on Saturday afternoons and scoffs at those who have to walk because
they cannot afford a carriage. On these same excursions, they derive great satisfaction from exchanging greetings with other families and groups whom they regard as their equals. They have a place reserved for themselves in the church and are insulted when someone unwittingly occupies their places before they arrive at the service. The other members of the family feel contempt for Juanito, who never participates in their ostentatious social activities and seldom presents himself to the frequent visitors at the home.

The wasteful spending of Manuela and her offspring destroys all financial reserves set aside by Juan when he set her house in order; moreover, it consumes the little income she obtains from her rent property. At first Manuela easily obtains funds from the usurious moneylenders, but they refuse to advance her more money after she is unable to repay the first few loans. In desperation, she begins to pawn valuable household articles, some of which are heirlooms inherited from her parents and grandparents, but the little cash these efforts yield covers only a small part of her total debt. She turns for aid to her businessman son, Juanito, and he gladly signs two notes for his spendthrift mother. A while later she again requests money from him and is astounded when he refuses to give her help because he is preparing himself financially for the family he expects to have someday. Manuela thinks of going to Juan
for help, but she realizes that this would be futile because she has not followed the advice he gave her after the death of Rafael. To make matters worse, the family's horse dies in the midst of the financial crisis, leaving the vain woman and her frivolous daughters to walk down the streets on Saturday afternoons and to be looked down upon by their more fortunate acquaintances. Antonio Cuadros, the faithful manager of the dry goods store, has grown rich recently by investing his savings in the stock market and he willingly lends his master's widow money to replace the horse. Cuadros is soon giving Manuela money for her other activities and begins to make amorous advances toward her, although he is outwardly a happily married man. Manuela is so physically exhausted and so lacking in moral convictions that she degrades herself completely and becomes the secret mistress of her wealthy employee in order to maintain her prestige among her friends and acquaintances.

Manuela's son Juanito is also an investor in the stock market. He encourages his fiancée, a poor seamstress, to invest her meager savings under the supervision of the broker he and Cuadros use. A while later, a stock market crash destroys the fortune of Cuadros and the savings of Juanito and his future bride. Cuadros flees town to avoid his creditors and leaves Manuela destitute. Juanito dies from grief over his financial reverses and from shame over his
mother's bad conduct. Manuela and her children now have to live on a meager allowance given to them by Juan.

*Arroz y tartana* was Blasco Ibáñez' first important novel. In his youth the author was strongly influenced by Emile Zola and the naturalistic school of literature; this work was apparently suggested by the Frenchman's *Le Ventre de Paris*. The poor artistic merit, the commonplace theme, and the excess of descriptive passages all combine to make this the weakest work of the author's Valencian period of novel writing.

One friendly critic explains the reasons for Blasco Ibáñez' bulky descriptions and tendency toward naturalism:

> En *Arroz y tartana* se inicia la serie de novelas de Blasco, de la región valenciana, en que como tantos novelistas, por ser la primera, volcará generosamente todo el caudal de observación y de sensibilidad acumulado durante muchos años, que hallará su forma literaria en el modelo de sus lecturas predilectas.

Although the chief fault of this novel is the tedious descriptions, this unpleasant beginning is very important because more readable descriptions play essential roles in the author's other novels of his Valencian period and the descriptions in this work are a starting point for Ibáñez' masterpiece, *La barraca*.

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5Ibid.
Doña Manuela in this novel is the first of many characters in the early novels of Ibáñez to illustrate the author's pessimistic outlook on life. One critic makes the following comment about this aspect of the novelist's philosophy:

Hambre y sexo: por ahí empieza la filosofía de Blasco Ibáñez. Y, en realidad, por ahí viene también a acabar: por el hambre convertida en voluntad de adquisición y disfrute de posesión, y por el sexo convertido en lujo de atracción, de goce, de placer. Es un dominante sentido materialista de la vida; el mundo de Blasco Ibáñez carece de dimensiones trascendentales, de fantasías y de ensueños; carece de poesía. Es un mundo de tejas abajo, un mundo donde se nace para vivir y se vive para gozar, todo ello entendido y sentido de un modo, más que material, materialista.

Pero la vida, así vista y sentida, como imperio y triunfo de la necesidad material, deja una impresión triste y trágica. Es también la impresión que la novela de Blasco Ibáñez deja más frecuentemente. Lo triste y trágico es el triunfo de ese sentido animal de la vida, como ley fatal de la naturaleza, sin utilidad final, sin otra perspective más trascendental que la de una repetida y estúpida renovación y repetición del mismo fenómeno biológico y animal.

Ibáñez criticizes the vain habits of the petit bourgeois, saying that they are "unos sachendos hambrientos de figurar, deseosos de meterse en una esfera superior a la suya aunque se pongan en ridículo." The author shows the

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6César Barja, Libros y Autores Modernos (Los Angeles, 1933), pp. 393-394.

extreme degeneracy people living in such an absurd fashion may attain as he describes Cuadros' idea of happiness:

No se podía pedir mayor felicidad. Cumplía con la conciencia y con el placer. A un lado, la esposa legítima; al otro, Doña Manuela, la satisfacción de la carne, el alimento de su vanidad; y las dos familias, de las cuales era el punto de unión, contentas, lujosas, llamando la atención del público, todo gracias a su buena suerte, que le permitía tirar a manos llenas los miles de pesetas.

One writer explains the absurdity which the pretentiousness of these middle class people may reach and justifies the title of this novel at the same time:

Es el tema del querer y no poder de la época, que en Valencia se concibe con tener "tartana y casa a la moda", a costa de no comer en casa más que un arroz, que es a veces no una succulenta paella, sino un "un arroz en perdiu", es decir, aromado solamente con una cabeza de ajos, para ir en coche, en la típica tartana valenciana, ya desaparecida virtualmente, y vestir a la moda.

The author feels contempt for the Spaniards' desire to become wealthy and is aware of the general popularity of this attitude: "No te culpo por esto; es la fiebre de la época . . ." He strongly criticizes the practices of the business men of his time through the mouth of an elderly gentleman of the previous generation:

Ahora todo el mundo no piensa en otra cosa que quitar legalmente la bolsa al vecino. La ambición los devora; a los cuarenta años son más

8Ibid., p. 281-282.
9Entrambasaguas y Peña, op. cit., p. 55.
10Ibáñez, op. cit., p. 206.
viejos que yo; viven pendientes de un hilo con el afán de acaparar dinero; y todo para derrocharlo, para satisfacer esa locura de engranecimiento que todos domina.  

Blasco Ibáñez has another character try to justify the questionable business practices shown in the novel:

Los tiempos cambían, amigo don Eugenio, y con ellos los negocios. Es verdad que los afortunados arruinaban a los infelices, pero, qué remedio! . . . Había que amoldarse a las exigencias del mundo, tomar parte en la lucha por la existencia; la sociedad estaba constituida así.

Flor de mayo (1895) describes the life of the fishermen who live on the coast of the Gulf of Valencia. Tío Pascualo, who is already dead at the beginning of the book, had lived with his wife and two small sons in a little fishing village within sight of the capital. He was the most frugal of all the local fishermen and one of the better fishing captains in the Gulf region. For over thirty years he had made his living by fishing in the winter and by smuggling in the summer, frequently making long trips across the treacherous Mediterranean Sea to the African cities of Algiers and Oran. One day in late winter, the local fishing fleet was trapped far out at sea by the levante, a dreaded easterly wind. After the wind and the hurricane which it brought on subsided, everyone was accounted for except Tío Pascualo.

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11Ibid., p. 208.
12Ibid., p. 200.
Twelve days afterwards, a government cutter towed the storm-battered boat of the lost fisherman into its home port, but the cutter's crew knew nothing about the fate of the captain, a smuggler whom they had often pursued in vain. When friends of the family dragged the boat to the shallows and began to bail out the water, they were horrified to find the badly decomposed body of the missing man wedged into a hole in the boat. After the burial of the fisherman, the villagers contributed food, clothing, and money to the unfortunate widow and her children. After the donations were all consumed, the poor woman begged for a living, but this drastic measure did not yield enough to support the family. In desperation, she borrowed money from a distant relative and had her husband's wrecked craft converted into a seaside tavern which produced enough revenue for the impoverished family to have sufficient food and warmth.

Among the widow's many customers at the tavern was Señor Martínez, a handsome young shore patrolman from Andalusia. He spent most of his free hours in the tavern, often helping the owner with the serving. Although he was fifteen years her junior, Martínez took a liking to the tavernkeeper and persuaded her to become his mistress. Not very long thereafter she became pregnant and immediately she proposed marriage to the patrolman. He offered no objections to the proposal but said that he must first send to Huelva for the certificates necessary for the
married. He wrote letter after letter, supposedly to Huelva, asking for the urgently needed documents. He finally announced to the expectant mother that he had to go in person to secure the papers. A while after the departure of the young man, the widow was informed by another patrolman that Señor Martínez had been seeking a transfer in his letters and that he moved to the opposite end of Spain when the transfer was granted. The Andalusian was never again heard from, but his daughter, Roseta, grew up to be the best child in the family.

Pascaulet, the eldest son, became a sturdy man and entered the fishing business as a gato de barco, the local term for a cabin boy. He advanced rapidly in the trade and became a regular deckhand as soon as his experience and superiors would allow. He was as hard-working and thrifty as his father had been.

Tonet, the younger son, was the opposite of his father and brother, and instead of settling on one trade he tried many. For one week he was an apprentice to a cobbler. For two months he was a gato de barco. He worked in a cooper's shop for a few days. He worked as a stevedore on several occasions. Handsome and witty, he was very popular among the local girls. His mother was kept posted on all his adventures and was very proud of his popularity. Tonet had the reputation of being the village's most notorious delinquent and had often been incarcerated for his rowdiness.
and pranks. The influence of Río Mariano, a distant relative, always extricated him because the old man was a distributor of local election funds. Tonet eventually became the lover of Dolores, the pretty daughter of a local pander. Their conduct soon became the talk of the town. Tonet entered and left his sweetheart's home as though he were a member of her family. Dolores prepared his food, washed his clothes, and stole money from her father to give to her parasitic lover. One by one, Tonet moved all of his personal effects from the seaside shanty to the home of Dolores. Not long thereafter, Pascualet began to frequent the house with his brother, and apparently his presence did not inconvenience Tonet and Dolores. Eventually life became too boring for Tonet and some of his companions, and they joined the Spanish Navy in order to seek more excitement.

Pascualet quickly occupied the favored place in the home of Dolores which his brother had deserted. She began to pamper him even more than she had pampered his brother. Pascualet saved all of his earnings and turned them over to Dolores. About two years after Tonet joined the navy, his brother and his former sweetheart married. Since everyone in the village had assumed that Tonet and Dolores would marry as soon as the latter returned from his duty, the unexpected marriage caused quite a bit of gossip. The widowed mother of the two young men feared the possibility of a violent family dispute when Tonet returned. An unnamed
person wrote to Tonet, telling him of his brother's apparent treachery; but to the astonishment of all, the sailor replied that he approved of the match and that he thought it was better that Dolores marry his brother than a stranger.

When Tonet finally returned he brought with him to the small workaday world of the local village all of the enchantments of the sailor's life. He assumed his old role as the favorite of the village girls with more success than before. His mother suggested that he try to marry Rosario, an orphan daughter of a well-to-do family of shopkeepers. He agreed and soon married the heiress, and immediately began to squander his bride's money. In a few months, he spent all of it and his once-wealthy wife was reduced to working in the fish market, the most disagreeable and the lowest paying job in the area.

The action of the novel begins at about this time in the family's history. Tonet begins to be a frequent visitor to his brother's house. These visits afford the villagers ample gossip at first, but as Pascualet apparently shows no concern, the gossip soon calms down. The malicious interest is renewed when Tonet begins to go to the house when his brother is out at sea, but again, when Pascualet pays no attention to the conduct of his wife and brother, the scandal-mongering villagers lose much of their enthusiasm.
Eventually a son of dubious paternity is born to Pascualet and Dolores.

Pascualet has become a better fisherman and businessman than his father had ever been. After starting out as a *sato de barco*, it has taken him approximately fifteen years to save enough money to buy his own boat. The boat is very old and dangerous, but the craft holds together long enough for Pascualet and his crew to make a trip to Algiers and return with a full load of contraband tobacco. Pascualet uses the lucrative profit from his smuggling adventure to build a sturdy boat, the *Flor de mayo*, which is the best fishing and smuggling vessel in that region of the Valencian gulf. Pascualet, his eight-year-old son, Tonet, and three deckhands man the craft on its maiden voyage on which the nets yield so many fine squid that the captain gives a party for his friends when they return to port.

Pascualet's success is short-lived. That very night after the party, Rosario tells him that she is certain that her husband and Dolores are having a sordid love affair. She strongly suggests that Tonet is the father of Pascualet's presumed son. At first the sturdy fisherman is upset and very angry with his sister-in-law, but he soon realizes that everything she says may very easily be true. What hurts him the most is her reminder that his son does not resemble him in the least, but that on the contrary, he is
the very image of Tonet. Pascualet drinks very heavily that night in an effort to relieve his uncertainty and fears. The following morning the local fishing fleet is scheduled to go out to sea in full force, but a threatening storm makes most of the captains hesitant about sailing. Pascualet arrives at the shore and orders his crew, Tonet and his son among them, to prepare to sail. His boat is soon far out at sea and most of the other captains decide to follow suit. A violent storm catches the fleet far out at sea and many of the crewmen lose their lives. Tonet, Pascualet, and his son manage to sail the Flor de mayo to within a few hundred yards of their home port. Tonet decides to take the sole life preserver aboard the craft and to make an effort to swim to the shore. His brother contends that they should place the boy in the preserver and throw him overboard in hopes that he would drift safely to the shore. When Tonet refuses to agree to this, his brother stabs him to death. Pascualet then puts the life preserver around the boy and throws him overboard; however he is horrified to see the child crushed against the rocks a few moments later. By now the entire village population has gathered on the shore and among them the brothers' mother, their wives, and their half-sister watch as a wall of foaming water destroys Pascualet, the last male member of the family.
Blasco Ibáñez' novel of the Spanish fishermen is considered to be inferior to José María de Pereda's Sotileza and to Armando Palacio Valdés' José, but it is definitely superior to Arroz y tartana. The author describes in detail the customs, the living and working conditions, and the morals of the unfortunate fishermen who must toil in constant danger to earn their meager livings. Joaquín de Entrambasaguas notes that Blasco Ibáñez' writing in Flor de mayo is more poetic and less tiresome than that of his first novel and that the work leaves the reader with the same impresión colorista which one of the paintings of Joaquín Sorolla, a close friend of the novelist, often leaves.

Hayward Keniston has designated Pascualet and Tonet as hero and anti-hero. He notes that men of their two types appear frequently in the works of Blasco Ibáñez and, in each case, the inevitable struggle between them is basic to the plot. Essentially the hero is a hard-working, self-sacrificing man who suffers many defeats and humiliations at the hands of the anti-hero; after he has borne all the insults and affronts that he can possibly stand, he turns

13Northup, op. cit., p. 382.
14Entrambasaguas y Peña, op. cit., p. 55-56.
16Ibid.
on the anti-hero and destroys him.17 The anti-hero is exactly the opposite of the hero; he is lazy, egoistic, and a bully. The struggle which results between the hero and anti-hero is fatal to both men.18

The women in the novels of Blasco Ibáñez are usually drab, but some of them are of a decidedly aggressive nature.19 Dolores, one of the key characters in this novel, is one of the few women of action in the novels of Blasco Ibáñez. In explaining the differences between the women in the novels of this author, Barja says:

... Sí la mujer de Blasco Ibáñez, cuando no es el tipo bastante frecuente en su novela de la mujer oprímida por el trabajo, por la miseria, por la enfermedad o el vicio, o cuando no es la figura convencional y superficial de la mujer de casa o de sociedad, es también hasta cierto punto, una mujer de acción, de lucha, de conquista. Es el otro polo de esa filosofía materialista del autor en la que el hombre vale por instinto y necesidad de hambre y la mujer por instinto y necesidad de sexo. Y hambre y sexo al descubierto, no como excitan res, es cierto; el autor no cultiva la literatura pornográfica; sino como elementales a animales instintos y apetencias, sin los paliativos de una cortesía social que disfigure la lucha, sin los velos de un pudor ni personal ni social que oculte el deseo.

Hay poco de romántico en la mujer de Blasco; poco en ella y menos en la actitud del hombre frente a ella. Su atractivo está en su belleza física y en la irradiación sexual que la acompaña y que frecuentemente llega hasta la degeneración.

17Ibid.
18Blasco Ibáñez, op. cit., p. xv.
19Ibid.
Es, en resumen, un tipo de mujer vampiro, como el hombre instigado por el hambre y por la ambición de dinero, también ella, instigada por el sexo, animal de aventura y de conquista, ambiciosa de riqueza, de lujo, de placer material.

The author's masterpiece, *La barraca* (1898), describes the life of a farm family living in the *huerta* region of Valencia. Batiste, the protagonist of the novel, has had nothing but failures in his attempts to care for his family properly. He was a worker in a flour mill at the time of his marriage. Over the years, his family increased so much that he was forced to seek other employment. First, he hired out to drive mules for others, but soon he bought his own freight wagon and horses. After failing at this venture also, he quit the business and moved to a dry region of Spain and tried to make a living by farming. He soon gave up this attempt also.

Having moved to Valencia, Batiste became acquainted with the sons of one Don Salvador, a rich land owner who had been murdered by one of his irate tenants years before. They own a plot of land in the *huerta* of Valencia, the richest farming region in Spain. The land had been lying idle for several years, but the owners offered to give Batiste the use of the property for two years rent-free if he would bring the farm back to its former productiveness. After two years, if Batiste wanted to remain on the farm, he would then pay rent.

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The land which Batiste was offered had a very important history. The land at one time belonged to a powerful lord who bequeathed it to the order of San Miguel de los Reyes at his death. When the land was sold by the order, Don Salvador bought it. The tenant at the time of this purchase was Tío Barret, a peasant whose family had tilled the soil of the plot for at least five generations. Affairs between the tenant and landlord went along fine for a while, but as taxes and living expenses became higher and higher, Tío Barret was unable to meet his obligations. He became heavily indebted to Don Salvador and was ordered to vacate the farm. His crops for the season were already growing and he did not want to leave the very promising yield. Finally, the family was evicted by the officials, and was allowed to retain only their farming implements. Tío Barret's wife and children lodged for a few days with their neighbors, but he refused such charity for himself and went about at night destroying the crops he had planted and cultivated. Worry, fatigue, and anger eventually reduced him to a state bordering on insanity. During his wandering about the countryside, he arrived at the estate of Don Salvador and encountered the latter at a secluded area. A dispute erupted between the two and Tío Barret cut off the hand of Don Salvador and then killed him. The murderer was arrested, tried, and sentenced to death. When many friends, both wealthy and poor, objected to the sentence, the
punishment was commuted to life imprisonment. He died in prison a few years later. His widow was sent to a charity hospital, where she died after a brief stay. Their daughters stayed with friends and neighbors for a while, but they eventually went to Valencia, where one became a domestic servant and the other a prostitute. After the death of Tío Barret and the disintegration of his family, the entire countryside pledged that the lands which had passed into the hands of the sons of Don Salvador would never again be cultivated. These overworked tillers of the soil wanted to prove to the wealthy landowners that their lands would be invaded by weeds and brush without the labor of the poor. The peasants felt that they must take such drastic steps, for they knew that the next family ruined by the despotic land owners could easily be their own. A few brave men had tried to cultivate the lands since the expulsion of Tío Barret, but the hostility of the neighbors and the unreasonable demands of the landlords made the cultivation of the property unprofitable and unsafe. Pimentel, a local guard of the irrigation ditches and a lazy bully, has been the leader of the community in its efforts to keep the farm untilled.

The action of the novel begins when Batiste decides to try to cultivate the farm. Although he is forewarned about the peasants' animosity toward anyone who tries to farm the lands, he, a stranger, does not understand fully their ill
will and determination. He thinks that the quarrels of the past are harmless to him. He moves his family into *la barraca*, the cabin, during the planting season. They begin to cut the weeds and grass which have overgrown the long-neglected fields and to burn the rubbish and use the ashes as fertilizer for the fields. After all the planting is finished, the family sets out to repair the farmyard and *la barraca*. They do most of this with discarded materials that they find in the rubbish heaps of Valencia, in order to spend as little money as possible. After the farm is as Batiste thinks it should be, he enrolls his sons in the local school and finds work for his teenage daughter in a nearby factory.

Batiste's first trouble with his neighbors arises when he irrigates his young crops. Pimentó, the overseer of the irrigation ditches, claims that Batiste has watered his crops at an unauthorized time. Batiste insists that he has not, but he is forced to go before the famous *Tribunal de las aguas* to defend himself against the accusations of Pimentó. At the hearing Batiste becomes irritated and insults the court and is required to pay a fine for contempt as well as pay the fine for the charges. He pays his fines and then goes out and buys a new shotgun and gains thereby a great deal of respect from his hostile neighbors.

Batiste's children suffer from the ill will aroused against their father. Although the strict schoolmaster
will not allow the boys to be molested in school, he can do little to prevent the fights, rock-throwing, and verbal abuse the boys must undergo in going to and from school. Batiste's sons are usually able to defend themselves very well, but one day, Pascualet, the youngest, is pushed into an irrigation ditch and afterwards contracts a serious respiratory ailment. In the meanwhile the family's horse has died and has been replaced with another bought with money borrowed from the landlords. One evening the family calls Batiste from the field where he has been plowing, telling him that his son is critically ill. He leaves the defenseless horse alone and the bitter Pimentó steals into the field and stabs the unguarded animal very severely. The horse does not die, but he will never be as good as he was before the attack. A few hours after the stabbing of the horse, Pascualet dies. Although his brother, Batistet, would have preferred to be with him in his last moments of life, he could not because he had to care for the wounded horse, a necessity for the farming family.

The death of the boy shocks the entire region. In all of their efforts to force Batiste to move, they have succeeded only in causing the death of an innocent child. The whole neighborhood helps in the funeral ceremony. Even Pimentó and his wife attend and the latter prepares the child's corpse for burial.
The goodwill of the neighbors is a very temporary thing, and they soon resume their efforts to make the unwanted family move. The quarrels between Pimentó and Batiste become more serious and they eventually have a gunfight. Both men are wounded, and Pimentó dies a few days later. Although everyone in the neighborhood knows that Batiste caused the death of the bully, their tradition of administering justice in their own manner prevents them from revealing the identity of the killer to the governmental authorities sent to investigate the death. A few days after the death of Pimentó a fire set by an unidentified arsonist destroys all that Batiste owns with the exception of the family's clothing. Although Batiste could have stayed in the huerta he moves rather than expose his family to any more danger. Since Batiste has killed the man most responsible for the hostility of the peasants toward newcomers, the ones who take his place on the farm will find life much easier.

While Blasco Ibáñez was hiding from political enemies during the Cuban Insurrection of 1895, he wrote a short story, Venganza moruna, which was based on a landlord-tenant dispute the author had witnessed in his youth; he later modified the story and expanded it into La barraca.21

21Keniston, op. cit., p. xii.
This novel, the first to bring the author international fame, is considered to be his best novel and it is his most widely read work after *Los cuatro jinetes del Apocalipsis* and *Sangre y arena*.22

The descriptions of life in the *huerta* of Valencia as Blasco Ibáñez gives them in this work have been widely praised for their beauty and authenticity.23 In this short novel he skillfully blends colorful descriptions of the Valencian landscape with exciting episodes in the plot. The descriptions in *La barraca* are not long and boring, as are those of his later thesis novels. Although the author used purely descriptive reporting of the speech of his characters in this and other novels of his Valencian period of writing, he was justified in doing so because the personages would normally speak the Valencian dialect instead of standard Castilian.24 Cesar Barja praises Blasco Ibáñez' ability to describe the author's *patra chica*:

> Es un artista reproductor de realidades sensibles, un pintor de escenarios, de medios naturales y sociales; no es un genio creador. Dentro de esos límites de la novela descriptiva regional alcanzó Blasco Ibáñez el punto culminante de su capacidad novelística y rindió su mejor y más sazonado fruto: una obra realmente buena y bella, en muchos aspectos, una obra admirable. Aún siendo este de la novela regional campo fértil de la literatura española del siglo pasado, la de Blasco compite con cualquiera

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22Ibid., p. xiii.  
23Ibid., p. xiii.  
24Ibid., p. xiv.
otra y no es tan evidente que deba cederle el primer puesto a ninguna . . . En estas novelas está el autor en carácter, está en su verdadero elemento. Arte el suyo eminentemente impresionista, lo que en ellas nos da son unas admirables reproducciones de tipos, medios, costumbres y paisajes valencianos; una serie de impresiones que conservan la viveza y la frescura de una sensación directa . . . Es un arte completamente sensual, un arte percibido por los sentidos y que nos llega a través de los sentidos, y como tal, excelente. Que la pintura es toda ella un poco de brocha gorda, dicho está y cierto es; finuras y sutiles delicadezas no son lo propio de este novelista; pero hay fuerza y hay vida y color en sus cuadros, visión luminosa y sensación penetrante de una naturaleza mediterránea y en grado sumo sensual.  

*Entre naranjos* (1900) describes life of the members of a politically powerful family in the province of Valencia. The men of the Brull family have been *caciques*, political bosses, in the Alcira region of Spain for about fifty years. Don Jaime Brull, the founder of the family's power, had begun life as a poor clerk for the *Ayuntamiento* of Alcira. Later he became the secretary of a local judge and finally came to hold the office of assistant-registrar of deeds. He did everything in his power to control the public officials subordinate to him and sold as many positions as possible to the highest bidder. He was adroit in the selling of justice through the manipulation of documents and the suppression of any criticism of his methods. His conniving and injustice soon enabled him to acquire many acres of the rich Valencian farmland. He was a shyster lawyer whose

richly adorned speech aroused such fear and respect among the poor that many of them sought out his advice and paid for it as though he were the best legal counsel in the area. When he had accumulated a small fortune, he began to lend money to the poor farmers and orchard workers at the rate of six per cent. He always retained some sort of public office in order to keep the respect of the poor and to maintain his influence among them. He began to deal in horses so that he might get even more than six per cent return from his money. He told the prospective buyers that the horses were not his and that he had to sell them for cash. If a man did not have the cash, Don Jaime would pretend to borrow the money from a personal friend and lend it to the peasant. The farmer was often eager to sign the notes for the purchase of the unpredictable animal. Don Jaime usually doubled his principal with the sale of a horse in this manner and at the same time also enhanced his reputation as a friend of the poor man. On Wednesdays, the market day in Alcira, crowds of farmers could be seen going to the home of the lender to renew their notes. Almost all of them left a tip for the lender which was not to apply against the principal. The usurer's ability to make greed look like kindness won for him the friendship of many poor farmers who did not realize that they were being victimized. He acquired the finest mansion in the city by lending money to the eldest son of the owner; when the debt was not paid, Don Jaime took the mansion in a foreclosure.
Ramon, a dissolute son, was the sole heir of the money lender. They boy had wanted to join the army as a young man, but the over-protective father refused to grant his permission. The young Brull attended the university in Valencia for several years, but he never advanced beyond the primary courses in law. His father decided to marry him to Bernarda, the ugly, ill-tempered, and wealthy daughter of a rich farmer. The marriage was quickly effected, and the former clerk rejoiced while thinking about the talents of his new daughter-in-law. For a while the groom spent a great deal of his time hunting, gambling, and engaging in idle conversation at the local casino, but he gradually gave up this sort of living and took an interest in politics. He won for himself a seat in the Ayuntamiento and soon became one of its better known members. He did everything he could to enhance his reputation and was elected alcalde very shortly. He soon became political boss of the region and maintained this favored position by every fair or foul means needed to combat any opposition. None of the citizens in his district dared to make a move of political significance without first consulting the feared quefe, Don Ramón.

Costly bribes and the buying of political favors devoured most of the wealth of the family, but as the fortune dwindled, the reputation of Ramón rose to new heights. When Don Ramón died, he left all of his property to his son Rafael, a child who was so meek that he irritated his
hard-hearted mother. He was never able to get along with other children, and his only friend was Don Andrés, a trusted friend of the family. When the young man attended school, his studies were so successful that everyone predicted that he would become one of the foremost politicians in Spain. He finished his preparatory education with high honors, and went on to the university in Valencia. During his years at the university, he was chaperoned by Don Andrés and a clergyman friend of the family. He won many academic prizes and distinctions and obtained the degree of Doctor of Law as soon as possible.

His mother, Doña Bernarda, was quick to introduce the younger Brull into the political arena. He won his seat in the Cortes before he had reached the age needed to hold the office, but his party arranged matters so that he was seated with the fully qualified members. He was successful, but very unhappy at the Cortes. He had always outwardly proclaimed allegiance to the traditional Spanish government, religion, and way of life; but, in reality, he believed in many of the progressive ideas that he had noted while reading the literatures of foreign countries. He could never reveal his true feelings for fear of political ruin; moreover, his mother and Don Andrés kept such close check on him that he was reprimanded for the least deviation from their deeply-rooted convictions about how a young man should behave. Long after he was elected to the Cortes, he was
compelled to do things his mother wished in order to prevent serious discord within the family. For him it was drudgery to leave the freedom he knew in Madrid to return to his native town, because he sensed that the ambitions which his mother had for him would force him to do many things that he had no desire to do.

On one of these trips home, Rafael met Leonora, a young woman who had been his neighbor in their youth. Her father was a physician who embraced the theory of evolution and publicly proclaimed his beliefs to the astonishment of the clergy and of the conservative laity such as Rafael's mother. Doctor Moreno was the best physician in the area and was held in high esteem by the poor whom he often treated without charge. He sometimes actually gave the poor money instead of charging fees and he occasionally refused to treat the wealthy who were careful to get the permission of their confessor before coming to the heretical doctor for treatment. During the Revolution of September, this republican physician had the audacity to stand upon the public squares and speak about his conception of human rights. When a republican form of government was finally adopted, the townsmen nominated him as their representative to the Constituent Assembly, but he refused their offer in order to stay at home and treat the sick.

The only known pleasure that the physician had was music. He lived in a modest cottage with his sister and
Leonora, whom he had named after an opera by Beethoven, his favorite composer. As a child the daughter had been meek and had suffered much abuse and teasing from other children because of her father's reputation as an evolutionist and as a friend of the poor. When the Federal Republic fell, the doctor's practice dwindled to almost nothing. In his spare time from his business, the doctor taught Leonora to sing and to play the piano.

Doctor Moreno and his daughter moved to Milan so that she might have a chance for further study. Here a favorite voice teacher raped the young singer; but she, afraid to tell her father about the matter, kept on going back for lessons, and, in effect, became the teacher's mistress for about a year. Finally her father succeeded in launching her into the professional world without the aid of her teachers. Her first engagements were in the theaters of the small towns and in village fairs. Her first real opportunity for advancement came with a contract to sing the entire winter in Padua. Here she starred with a famous tenor, Salvatti, with whom she fell in love and whom she allowed to dominate her completely. She fled from Padua with Salvatti when her father objected to the illicit relationship between the two lovers. Her beauty and talent, aided by the experience of Salvatti, made her renown increase rapidly among musical circles. Although her singing was defective at times, she had other qualities which more than offset the fault and she
was skillful enough to use every point in her favor to gain the goodwill of the critics.

Leonora left Salvatti to become the mistress of Count Selivestroff, a handsome and wealthy captain in the Czar's Imperial Guard. They moved to his luxurious castle in a remote area of Russia, where they lived happily for a year. She was unable to stay away from the applause and bustle of the stage for long, and they moved to St. Petersburg, where they remained for about six months. The Count was killed in a fight occasioned by the insulting remarks of a man seeking the favor of Leonora.

Leonora was eventually expelled from Russia as a result of an amorous affair with a grand duke who wanted to marry her. A while later she posed in the nude for one of her admirers who was sculpting a statue of Venus. Soon thereafter, a scandal erupted when the model's identity was revealed. She later visited Salvatti in Italy and, after getting him very drunk, gave him a severe beating. She was charged by the magistrates for this deed, but she left for the United States before they could do anything about it.

In the United States she quickly became friends with a young conductor, Hans Keller, who was a pupil of Richard Wagner. The pretty singer traveled widely with the orchestra leader and became his mistress. The two made an unbeatable team, he being the foremost interpreter of Wagner and she being the most celebrated prima donna. After a while,
Keller tired of his young admirer and abandoned her. She was very upset and thought that there was nothing left for her to do except to retire from public life and live in the one house which remained for her and her aunt in the village of Alcira. She knew that she could not live in that small town for the remainder of her life, and she planned to stay there only until she could decide what her next moves should be.

The action of the novel begins when Rafael meets Leonora. He is fascinated by this strange woman who, without the slightest hesitation, tells him the most intimate details of her life. He falls in love with her, but she is very reluctant to return his affection. Finally she gives in completely to him and the two are happy for a while.

Gossip soon spreads that the junior deputy from Alcira is keeping company with a strumpet. Doña Bernarda and Don Andrés warn Rafael about the serious consequences that can result from his relationship with Leonora. Finally the young deputy rebels against his mother and her advisor and flees to Barcelona with Leonora. Don Andrés follows and finds Rafael and persuades him to abandon his mistress. Rafael does this without telling Leonora. The two do not meet again for many years, and, in the meanwhile, Brull marries and has a family. His political career reaches its peak and he becomes one of the outstanding members of the Cortes. Leonora eventually goes to Madrid and attends a
meeting of the Cortes where she meets Rafael. He tries desperately to renew their old relationship, but she refuses and laughs at him. She does this because at the session of the Cortes which she attended, he had made a speech praising the moral standards of the Spaniards. The novel ends abruptly with Leonora's refusing to have anything more to do with Rafael.

Entre naranjos is to a certain extent autobiographical. Rafael Brull suffers many of the unpleasant experiences of a beginner in politics similar to those which the author had undergone in his earlier years. They were both figureheads for higher authorities whom they were obliged to please or suffer political ruin. When Rafael tries to rebel against his superiors, his mother and Don Andrés, he is convinced by the latter that he should give up the plan. Later, when Leonora refuses to renew their relationship, Rafael realizes that his following the advice of Don Andrés has kept him from finding true happiness although it has given him political success. In reality, the author was persecuted more than once for his political convictions and had to flee the country on several occasions.

26 James O. Swain, Vicente Blasco Ibáñez: general study, special emphasis on realistic techniques, (Knoxville, 1959).
27 Ibid., p. 47.
The character of Leonora was patterned after a woman Ibáñez knew. She appears in various of the author's works under different names. She is always an outsider to the environment of the majority of the characters in the novel or is a native who has been estranged from her birthplace for a number of years. She is usually a singer with a command of several foreign languages and sufficient culture to set her apart from the other characters of the work. Although Blasco Ibáñez has created many outstanding women characters from the lower strata of society, he has always had great difficulty in making the women of higher stations in life appear natural to the reader. In Entre naranjos, Blasco Ibáñez probably intends Leonora to be a personification of the freedom to follow one's chance for happiness.

The entire novel is a satire against caciquismo. In the work, Blasco Ibáñez shows that the caciques as well as those whom they oppress are victims of the vicious political bossism. If Rafael had been someone from a lower social class, he would probably have been able to follow the dictates of his own conscience to a greater degree. The

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29 Swain, op. cit., p. 82.
30 Ibid., p. 288.
The author also complains of the monarchy (which was still in existence at the time the book was written) and gives some evidence which might shock those unfamiliar with nineteenth-century Spain:

En el mantenimiento de la casa real se gastaba más que en la enseñanza pública. El sosténimiento de una sola familia resultaba de más valía que el despertar a la vida moderna de un todo pueblo. 31

The author had some hopes for the abolition of the state religion and of the establishment of a democracy, for he said of a republican opposing the conservative Rafael in a debate in the Cortes:

Hablaba en nombre de la España del porvenir, de un pueblo que no tendría reyes porque se gobernaría por sí mismos; que no pagaría sacerdotes porque respetando la conciencia nacional, permitiría todos los cultos sin privilegiar alguno. 32

Sónnica, la cortesana (1901) is a novel of life in the Valencian region about two hundred years before the birth of Christ. Acteón, the protagonist of the novel, was born in Athens about 250 B.C. When he was about six years old, he accompanied his father, a mercenary soldier, on a Carthaginian expedition to Sicily. There he became good friends with the young Hannibal, who was then about four years old. A while later, the mercenaries in the service of the Carthaginians revolted in such a violent and persistent manner

32 Ibid., p. 288.
that the skirmishes which ensued between the North Africans and their hired soldiers became known as the War Without Truce. Acteón's father remained loyal to the Carthagians, but a faction of them headed by the leader Hanno asserted that the Greek was guilty of treason and sentenced him to death. He was arrested, tried, condemned, and crucified without the knowledge of his friend and protector Hamilcar, the father of Hannibal. Hamilcar did manage to save the life of the child from the cruelty of his rivals by secretly placing him on a ship bound for Athens. While he was in Athens Acteón was protected by relatives and by the ever-present influence of Hamilcar.

Acteón received the education customarily given to prospective Greek soldiers. He was a distinguished athlete and won many prizes and public honors by his skillful wrestling, discus-throwing, and riding. He became modestly proficient in the fine arts and achieved some renown as an amateur poet and musician. After finishing his other studies, Acteón was sent to a frontier outpost to complete his military training. Although his tasks there were not difficult, he suffered much from the monotony of his life at the lonely fort, and began to feel that his mind would become unbalanced if he did not return to a more civilized existence. Therefore, he deserted from the desert outpost and began to work in a fishing fleet, soon becoming a trader with extensive holdings on the seas and land.
His business increased until he had property in Europe, Africa, and Asia. As his wealth increased, so did his number of fair-weather friends. Among these new admirers were several kings and potentates. Many of them were tyrants of city states and municipalities who enjoyed seeing him drink a large bowl of strong liquor as if he were a German from the North and watching him defeat the giants of the royal guard in a wrestling match. He built a luxurious seaside mansion on the Isle of Rhodes, where his banquets were among the most celebrated of the Grecian and Roman social world; some of them lasted as long as three days and nights.

The earthquake which destroyed the Colossus of Rhodes also destroyed Acteón's home, his warehouses and their contents, and his ships. There was nothing left for him to do except to wander about looking for an opportunity to better himself as he had done after abandoning the desert outpost. At times, he was a singing master, and at others, he was a military instructor. He enlisted in a Greek army headed by Cleomenes and fought under the latter until his army was defeated and he was forced to withdraw to Alexandria to save his men.

The action of the novel begins as Acteón arrives in the small republic of Saguntum where he hopes to gain a livelihood. Here he quickly becomes friends with the town's most celebrated citizen, Sōnnica. This woman has had a life even
more interesting than that of Acteón. She was born on Cyprus, the daughter of a prostitute and a sailor. She spent her childhood on board ship and became the mistress of the captain before she reached puberty. Soon thereafter she was sold to Boetian, a pander who reaped enormous profits from the customers who preferred the young girl. She tired of that evil life and ran away to become the mistress of a wealthy poet. The latter died two years after they established their relationship, and left her as the sole heir to his vast fortune. A few years later Sónnica married a rich trader, Bomaro. The two combined their fortunes and settled in Saguntum with their wealth, since in this small country they were free from the prying eyes of the Athenian tax collectors. Bomaro was killed in a ship wreck about four years after their marriage and left all of his money and property to his pretty widow. Since his death, Sónnica had lived a life of luxury and has maintained a status as a self-made woman of very high estate and ample culture.

Acteón begins to serve Sónnica as an aide. She has complete confidence in him and apparently is falling in love with the handsome Greek. At this point external events interfere with their lives. Hannibal brings a huge Carthaginian army to invade the small republic after the elders refuse to pay tribute to the Africans. The citizens are very confident that their army is strong enough to repel
the invaders and that, should the need for help become grave, Rome would send the troops needed to defeat the Carthaginians. This early sense of security is lost when Hannibal besieges the fortified city for about eight months. Sónnica and Acteón fight together to the end although they do have a quarrel after he reveals that he has fallen in love with another woman. They are slain very near one another in the last moments of the siege just after the North Africans have scaled the walls.

Blasco Ibáñez wrote Sónnica, la cortesana to complete the picture of Valencia that he had begun in his novelas valencianas. He thought it pertinent to give a description of ancient Saguntum, the site of one of the greatest battles in Valencian history. Although the author states that he used only one source in writing the book, his historical data are as good as or better than those used by other authors of the period who wrote works in which they tried to reconstruct the fall of the ancient republic.

Sónnica, la cortesana has little in common with the author's other works of his Valencian period. Although Blasco Ibáñez tried earnestly to make this novel truly Valencian, he could not keep the work from seeming unreal and exotic. This effort has little to do in ideas or content with the author's later novels of thesis.

33Pitollet, op. cit., p. 310. 34Ibid., p. 311. 35Swain, op. cit., p. 49.
Cañas y barro (1902) describes the life of a family of fishermen who live in a fishing village on Lake Albufera in the province of Valencia. Tío Paloma, the oldest living member of the family, is one of the better fishermen on the lake although he is also one of the poorest. He has spent his entire life there in the fishing business and has always shown contempt for those of the younger generations who chose to become farmers or merchants rather than fishermen.

As a young man, Tío Paloma had been forced by his father to give up his bohemian existence on the lake and devote himself to the rearing of a family. Tío Paloma had grudgingly complied with his father’s demand, but continued to rely upon fishing as the principal means of support for his family. On rare occasions, he had the pleasure of serving as a guide for some wealthy noblemen and public servants who came to the lake region to fish and hunt. He boasted of knowing many of them personally and of having saved the life of General Prim by concealing him on the lake after the General had led an unsuccessful barracks mutiny in Valencia.

Of the many children born to Tío Paloma and his wife, all except one died from tuberculosis or malaria. Tío Paloma thought that the death of so many children was justified by the theory that if the population was not controlled in one manner or another, it would become so large that the lakeside dwellers would be forced to veritable
cannibalism. They were already so near starvation that their diet was often supplemented by rats and other vermin. Tío Paloma maintained that his neighbors should thank God for this protection from starvation and should scorn those families that multiplied without check. Tono, the sole survivor of the enormous brood to which his mother had given birth, was seven years old when his mother died. He already was as skilled and as industrious as his mother and was very intelligent. He cooked for himself and his father and did what little housekeeping that was done in the tiny lakeside shack. At the same time, he was becoming one of the most promising young fishermen on the lake.

After a few years, Tío Paloma became bored with the silence which pervaded his household; he was very bored because there was no one to talk to at home, for Tono was a quiet person. To find company, Tío Paloma had to go to the tavern to be with his lifelong friends. The old man decided, just as his father had done before him, that his son should get married in order to supply the house with the much-needed presence of a woman. He was very pleased when he learned that his obedient son had chosen a wife who refused to allow herself to be browbeaten by her father-in-law. He respected her independent spirit and enjoyed the verbal opposition that she frequently gave him in their arguments. A great disappointment also came to the old man when his son married; Tono insisted that he should farm in
order to make a better living for his wife and future family. Although Tono was certainly correct in his reason-
ing, his father maintained that a farmer was a mere slave to those who owned the land and that a free fisherman was a fool to commit himself to such drudgery. Finally, Tío Paloma did relent somewhat in his objections when he saw that his son dared to oppose the iron will of his tradition-
al Latin father, and when he saw that the lake might not yield enough food for the family. He was astonished to find out later that his son had rented some land on shares from some wealthy ladies in Valencia. One of these fashionable women went so far as to give the future farmer a plot of untillable swampland which he eventually reclaimed by haul-
ing a few buckets of dirt at a time in his boat and dumping them into the mire. Tío Paloma tried to have nothing more to do with his son and daughter-in-law, but he was very fond of his new grandson and boasted to his friends about the child's future as one of the better fishermen on the lake.

As this boy, Tonet, grew up, he began to help his father and grandfather. For a while he aided in filling the swamp, but this task grew very boring and tiring. After this, he began to accompany his grandfather when he went fishing and hunting. Tonet also worked in the local tavern run by Cañamel. There he renewed his acquaintance with Neleta, his childhood sweetheart, who was working as a waitress in the tavern. The local scandalmongers told of
sordid love affairs between Cañamel and his pretty employee and later spread the word that Tonet and Neleta were also having an affair. The gossip subsided when Neleta and Cañamel married. Tonet enlisted in the army and was sent to Cuba, during the Spanish-American War.

As the novel begins Tonet has just returned from Cuba, where he had been a prisoner of war for quite a while. He starts to frequent Cañamel's tavern and the gossip soon spreads over the village that Tonet has renewed his attentions to his former sweetheart, Neleta. Her husband, Cañamel, takes little stock in the loose talk and does not do much to prevent the two from seeing each other. When Cañamel dies, he stipulates in his will that Neleta shall be his sole heir as long as she has nothing to do with other men. Tonet and Neleta have a secret affair, and the former is forced to drown the young son which is born to them in order to prevent the relatives of Cañamel from demanding a share in the estate. A few days later, Tonet discovers the badly decomposed body of the child in a remote section of Lake Albufera and commits suicide when he fully comprehends the enormity of the crime he has committed.

Cañas y barro, the last novel in Blasco Ibáñez' Valencian period, is considered by one critic as the most thorough adaptation of French Naturalism to be found among
Spanish novelists. The author was attracted to the writings of the Frenchman Zola by the vitality and the sensationalism of the latter's art. Since Blasco Ibáñez was not restrained by religious convictions, he plunged wholeheartedly into the spirit of Zola's exaltation of primal natural forces, and by doing so produced a more authentic version of naturalism than had Emilia Pardo Bazán.

Both Pardo Bazán and Blasco Ibáñez understood that a concept of oneness between nature and man underlies Zola's tenet that the earth is man's source and destiny, and both give the reader pictures of man as a victim of nature. Although Pardo Bazán sometimes tries to stay aloof from the grim Zolaesque view of life, Blasco Ibáñez portrays man as a being crushed by nature, not because he is apart from it but because he is a part of it. Eoff maintains that Blasco Ibáñez has achieved an unusually strong effect by considering man a part of nature, and that for this and other artistic reasons, *Cañas y barro* is a gem among modern Spanish novels.

37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
CHAPTER III

THE MADRID NOVELS OF BLASCO IBANEZ

During his terms at the Cortes Blasco Ibáñez began to use the novel to spread his social and political views. He stopped writing about Valencia and commenced a new series of novels, each of which was a study of a problem in a specific region of Spain or a problem which was nationwide. These works are artistically inferior to his novelas valencianas because he was very busy in politics and business and had little time to devote to writing for art's sake. Moreover, Caña y barro and La barraca from his Valencian series had established for him a ready market for his novels and he wished to capitalize on this as much as possible. The Madrid novels are the works which made him the most translated Spanish writer of his time.

La catedral (1903), Blasco Ibáñez' first thesis novel, describes the life of those who cared for the Cathedral of Toledo in the nineteenth century. Gabriel Luna, the protagonist of the novel, is the son of the cathedral gardener.

1 Federico Carlos Saínz de Robles, La novela española en el siglo XX (Madrid, 1957), p. 87.
He had been a child prodigy and very devout. When the boy was four, his mother declared with fanatic faith that he was a living image of the Christ Child which one of the cathedral's sculptured virgins held in her arms. His devotion to the images in the cathedral amazed his family and the many clerics who were associated with the cathedral. His progress in school was phenomenal. He was able to read before he could walk well, and began serious Latin studies when he was only seven years old. He mastered that language so well that he could speak it better than many of the clergy. When he was only ten, the priests were disputing religious matters with him and were often astounded at the clarity and depths of his answers. His outstanding scholarship earned him the privilege of studying theology at the local seminary without paying tuition. At the seminary, Gabriel easily mastered humanities, theology, canons and the other studies. Although his personal life was colorless and boring, his precocious intellect enabled him to win many debates and scholarly prizes and earned for him the respect and esteem of his teachers and fellow students. Many compared him to the Church Fathers who had been noted for their intellectual feats when they were children.

Gabriel was eighteen when the September Revolution broke out in Spain and many of the rebels declared war against God and the Church. Gabriel was excited and confused, and as a result, he neglected his studies, stopped
serving in the mass, and shunned his family. He became obsessed with the idea of defending the Church against its enemies, and tortured by the thought that he might lose his promising clerical career if the rebels won the war.

He and a friend left the seminary and joined a group of conservative soldiers who were harassing both rebel soldiers and innocent civilians in Murcia. Later they went on to Catalonia and Valencia, where they defended the cause of the Church by stealing work animals and extorting funds from the wealthy. Gabriel soon became an officer because of his good education. He relished the freedom and adventure of the war but was shocked by the depravity and abandon of most of the soldiers who were ostensibly defending the Church. He had expected to fight in a modern crusade, in an expedition based on religious faith and guided by pure ideals. Instead, he found himself a participant in the destruction, plunder, and abuse which his army dealt to the opposition and to the civilians.

When Gabriel's faction lost the war, he was given the choice of accepting the new regime or leaving the country. He replied that he could never pledge allegiance to a usurping power and that he would emigrate instead of renouncing his political ideals. This was the official purpose of his emigration, but his true motive was to visit other countries and to compare them with Spain. He went to France, where he lived for more than a year in the cantonments for emigrants.
He supported himself there by giving instructions in Spanish and by the patronage given to him by a wealthy old Countess. He eventually saved enough money to go to Paris, where he supported himself by working in a monastic library. His duties as a proofreader in the library brought him in contact with the main currents of French Catholic ideas. Although his traditional Spanish education had taught him to hate all physical sciences, he found himself admiring the tolerance and positive attitude which the French clergy had for human progress and the sciences. He was astonished to find entire books written by priests in efforts to reconcile the discoveries of science with the tenets of Christianity. He suddenly found himself with an insatiable desire to read the many books which had been prohibited in the schools of Spain. After obtaining a better job at a public printing house, Gabriel had much more time to read and study and he did little else for about two years.

Ernest Renan, a teacher at the College of France, exerted an immeasurable influence over the young Spaniard who was astonished to hear this distinguished teacher first support all of the doctrines of the Judeo-Christian theology and then tear them down by logical reasoning until there was little left except an all-powerful unknown force which somehow controlled the world. Renan's influence and his own extensive readings caused Gabriel to renounce all of his religious beliefs and become almost an atheist. For him
religions were institutions created by man to explain the unknown and to console those in distress. He felt that contemporary religions had served their purpose long ago and that they were now only hindrances to human progress.

Gabriel went to England. In London he quickly became friends with a young lady who was intensely dedicated to the ideals of a complete social revolution. She spent hours every day passing out revolutionary propaganda to anyone who would accept it. The two were ardently desirous of destroying all existing social order. Although Gabriel and his friend never married, they lived together. They went to Holland, then to Belgium, and then to Germany. When they finally reached Italy, they had no money and were forced to support themselves on the alms given them by those laborers and visionaries who longed for a social revolution. Both Gabriel and his companion suffered from tuberculosis, and the constant struggle with the elements weakened her body and spirit so much that she succumbed to the disease.

Gabriel returned to Spain when some of those who sympathized with his ideas offered him the management of a printing press in Barcelona. In that city, he became one of the central figures in the struggle for a social revolution. There was little done to prevent the spread of revolutionary propaganda and ideas as long as it was done in a peaceful manner. When some of the advocates became violent and hurled bombs into the streets, Luna was the first of the
revolutionaries to condemn the act, and he was the first of the men to be sent to prison although he had had nothing to do with the bombings. He was tortured and abused in the prison, but he refused to incriminate himself in the matter of the bombings. He was released after serving a two year sentence for crimes which he had not committed.

Gabriel then returned to England. He often met with his former companions who wanted to take physical vengeance on those who were responsible for the oppressive nature of the nineteenth century society, but he always refrained from this radical view and advocated peaceful settlement of any quarrel. In England, a land of seemingly absolute liberty when compared to his native country, he could live as he pleased. After about two years there, he was forced to return to Spain because the English climate aggravated his already advanced case of consumption. On the peninsula, he was always fearful that he might be persecuted for his activities with the revolutionaries. Gabriel was able to return to the Cathedral of Toledo without much difficulty. There he was welcomed by his family and the friends who had known him in his youth. The friendly clergymen advised him that he must not resume his preaching against the Faith (as he had done after living in France) and that he must remain silent so that the public would not find out that there was a militant heretic living within the walls of the cathedral.
It is about this time that the scanty action of the novel begins. Gabriel is able to do as the clergy advise for a while, mainly because he is already dying from tuberculosis when he returns to the cathedral. Later, as his health improves from the nutritious food that he receives at the cathedral, he begins to advocate and expound certain of the revolutionary doctrines. As he is working at his job as a nightwatchman in the cathedral, he is astounded when a group of workmen who have listened to him preach that property should belong to those who care for it enter and offer to let him be their accomplice in robbing the jewels of the cathedral. Gabriel refuses and they kill him. In his last moments of consciousness, he realizes that his efforts to help others have accomplished nothing but violence.

Gabriel, the protagonist of La catedral, is a type found in several of Blasco Ibáñez' novels of thesis. His characteristics are intellectuality, a humanitarian mysticism, and occasionally a predilection for anarchy.3 Barja makes the following comment about Gabriel and the philosophy of Blasco Ibáñez:

"Gabriel--el héroe de La catedral--había encontrado su nueva religión y se entregó por completo a ella, soñando en la regeneración de la humanidad por el estómago." Es la ideología que de un tal sentido de la vida acaba por derivar Blasco Ibáñez. Lleva esto consigo una

3César Barja, Libros y autores modernos (Los Angeles, 1933), p. 397.
protesta contra el actual orden social, contra la injusticia en la distribución de la riqueza; contra el dolor humano que de eso resulta. Es decir, una cierta ideología revolucionaria de espíritu y alcance comunistas que Blasco Ibáñez ha vertido aquí y allí en sus novelas de crítica y reformas sociales. Lástima tan sólo que sea una ideología también desnuda de personal idealidad, y de personal espiritualidad; de espíritu poético. Son ideas, doctrinas de uno u otro escritor sobre el particular, de Proudhon o de Kropotkin y repitidas con más o menos entusiasmo. 4

Gabriel fought for a better world through his words and deeds, but the only apparent results were the turning of respectable workers into desperate criminals. Blasco Ibáñez often suffered at the hands of those he tried to instruct in political matters, and his failures may have prompted him to show the difficulty reformers often encounter in their attempts to make the world a better place to live.

*La catedral* is an attack upon the clergymen and their supporters. They are accused of not only demanding from their parishioners the contributions which the latter need for their own existence, but of corrupting the thinking of the Spaniards to such an extent that Spain's progress as a modern nation has been seriously retarded. For this reason, the clergy and the reactionary politicians have always been

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4Ibid., p. 393.
the most hostile critics of the author. Blasco Ibáñez uses the Cathedral of Toledo in this work to represent Spanish Catholicism.

A peculiarity of the novels in which Blasco Ibáñez deals with the theme of social reform is that they apparently show the author to be not very hopeful about the chances of success of the very reforms he advocates. Although Gabriel in La catedral preaches the latest theories on the improvement of the lot of the poor and never uses his knowledge to make monetary or political gains, all that results from his efforts and self-denial is violence and crime.

Barja describes the trend of Blasco Ibáñez' thesis novels:

Son, con todo, novelas interesantes. Y son, no por la técnica, ni por la sensibilidad, pero sí en parte por el espíritu que las inspira, novelas modernas, de contemporanea actualidad. Están en la corriente de mucha de la literatura crítica y revisionista de 1898, y, sin duda, influidas por ella. Es el mismo sentido trágico y triste de la vida, el paisaje y el arte españoles; el mismo o semejante sentido de protesta contra realidades de la vida circundante; la misma o semejante obsesiión por el problema de la decadencia nacional.

El intruso (1901) describes the life of the miners and the mine owners in the Biscayne region of Spain. Luis

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5James O. Swain, Vicente Blasco Ibáñez: general study, special emphasis on realistic techniques (Knoxville, 1959), p. 50

Aresti, the protagonist of the novel, was an orphan who was reared by an uncle. When he was fourteen years old, Luis decided to study medicine and entered a school in Madrid. Although the uncle who was paying for the education was not very enthusiastic about the young man's choice of careers, he did not hesitate to supply the money because he believed that his nephew obviously had the talent to succeed in the medical field. Aresti had almost completed his studies when his uncle died. Sánchez Morueta, the uncle's son and a close friend of Luis, took the student under his protection until he finished his work at school. He then paid for the young physician's three years of residence in Paris, where he was privileged to practice with some of the most celebrated physicians of the time.

Upon completion of this work in Paris, Luis returned to his native city of Bilbao, where he was assured of a good practice because of the influence of his cousin Sánchez. Sánchez' wife, Cristina, became friends with the young doctor because of his unpretentious stories about his stay in Paris and because he rarely talked of business, as did most of the other men in the family. Her only misgivings about Luis were occasioned by the latter's critical attitude toward the pious devotion of many of the local people and his ridicule of the clergymen who became the favorites of many of the women. She thought that he might be a learned man and yet retain his religious faith as many of the Jesuits
had done; but since he refused to do this, she decided that marriage to a good woman would bring about the desired change in his attitude. She took it upon herself to find a young woman who would conform to her ideals and to introduce the girl to Luis. Her choice was Antonieta Lizamende, a relative of hers and a member of one of the most prominent families in the Biscayne area. The two were introduced and allowed to see each other in the homes of Sánchez and the girl's widowed mother. Luis considered the girl, because of her prudery and orthodoxy, to be a woman altogether different from what he would choose if he were absolutely free to do so, but thought that he would be able to change her into the gentle understanding wife that he longed for. He decided that Antonieta was as good a choice as any if he had to marry in order to stay in the good graces of Cristina, the wife of his protector.

The marriage was soon arranged and the newlyweds moved into the home of the bride's mother. They did this because the widow wanted to keep her daughter near her and because the family felt that the presence of a promising young physician in the household would add much to its prestige. Luis came to love his wife and made every effort to please her and to prove his devotion. He noticed that after all of his efforts, his wife became even more dependent upon the clergymen who frequented the house. Their influence upon her was unquestionably greater than that of her husband.
The religious devotion of the widow and another daughter still at home were in part responsible for this unjust treatment which Antonieta gave the doctor. Luis was forced to occupy a place apart in the household, not unlike that of a servant. The women were friends with almost all of the nuns in the local convents and took a lively personal interest in all of the Jesuits in the city. Whenever a nun or a priest became ill, the family thought it only proper that Luis minister to the patient's needs because he was now recognized as one of the best physicians in Bilbao, and they naturally felt that such patients deserved the best medical attention, for which the doctor was not expected to collect a fee. He hated this work because most of those who sought his treatments were the same ones who condemned science and all of its benefits and urged the faithful to rely much more upon religion than upon medicine for healing. Matters were not helped any by his wife's family's constantly reproving him for his lack of religion.

It took two years of marriage to prove to Luis that his wife did not love him and that she never had. Her highest aspirations in life were to conform to the demands of the Church and to dress in such a fashion as to incite the envy of her friends and acquaintances. She and her family even told him that his unhappiness was caused by the differences in their social rank—she being a descendant of aristocracy and he an orphan of low class ancestors. His wife carried
religious fanaticism to almost unbelievable extremes: she often refused his caresses, saying that she must prepare her conscience for a visit to her confessor, and more than once she carried her abstinence into the bedchamber because she felt that carnal pleasure which she might experience would vitiate the spiritual benefits of the self-discipline she or her confessor had imposed. After Antonieta finally confessed to her husband that she did not love him, he asked Morueta to send him to the mines as a physician.

Once at the mines, Luis enjoyed his work more than ever before. Although the enmity brought on by the split with his wife almost broke his life-long friendship with Sánchez, the latter frequently asked for treatments and advice from the doctor. It was in one of these conversations that Sánchez revealed to Luis the trouble which was entering his marriage. Cristina was becoming very fanatical in her religious life and refused to participate in anything which might give her carnal pleasure. She had arrived at this extreme by following the advice of the Jesuit fathers. A while later in another interview, Sánchez told Luis that he was keeping a young mistress much to his liking in another town; moreover he had a son by her. Later he went to his mistress's home and found her and their son missing. To make matters worse, Sánchez learned that the child he thought was his son was really that of the man who had fled with his mistress.
Although Sánchez is one of the wealthiest men in the Biscayne territory, he has failed in every attempt to gain happiness. Both his wife and his mistress had turned against him and he has found out that he has had no son; moreover, his wife has found out about the affair with the young woman. He decides that all of his misfortunes are due to his lukewarm religious attitudes and that his wife and daughters may have found the secret of a happy life through their piety. He begins to attend church regularly and goes as far as to spend several days in a monastery to prepare himself for a general confession. After this confession, he completely submits himself and his wealth to the Jesuits. Although Sánchez feels that he has become a different man, Blasco Ibáñez portrays him as a man having even more serious problems because he lets the Fathers dominate himself and his family completely.

When the miners revolt, the Jesuits are the first to call for immediate suppression of the effort because most of the rebel leaders call for the destruction of the established religion; or at least, they advocate a separation of Church and State. In a huge public meeting and during a subsequent riot, Luis openly supports the rebels, and Sánchez Morueta and his family are present to ally themselves with the other mine owners and the Jesuits. The novel ends with Luis remaining in the plaza after the riot treating the wounded. There he thinks only of *el intruso*, Jesuitism,
which has destroyed everything he has ever wanted: wife, family, medical practice, and his friendship with Sánchez. He regards it as even worse that the force is still very much at work destroying the happiness that others seek by impeding the workmen in their efforts to obtain better wages and working conditions. He believes that as long as el intruso is still a potent force in Spain, it will be very difficult for the poor to gain much advancement of either economic or social nature.

El intruso is Blasco Ibáñez' most severe attack on Spanish religious practices and an especially bitter satire against Jesuitism, el intruso, which he describes as exerting a powerful influence over the lives of the rich Biscaynes and any other Spanish group which has wealth. He contends that "Ahora el católicismo ya no significaba más que una palabra; la verdadera religión era el jesuitismo." 7 He says that the Jesuit power is not a recent innovation in Spain:

Pero hablar de libertad absoluta en este país, que es célebre en el mundo por la Inquisición y por ser patria de San Ignacio! Llevamos sobre las costillas cuatro siglos de tiranía clerical. Vivimos en la guerra religiosa permanante. 8

The author complains that religion causes a great deal of unhappiness in Spain:


8 Ibid., p. 133
... la vida estaba momificada en su país.
Era un cementerio muy hermoso, en el cual no había más seres vivos que pájaros negros que lo cubrían con sus alas. Sólo en las últimas capas sociales existía algo de alegría, allí donde llegaban amortiguadas o no llegaban las influencias de la religión.9

Blasco Ibáñez charges specifically that the wealthy use religion to keep the poor content:

Los privilegiados empleaban la religión como un escudo. Nada de esperar en la tierra la justicia para todos. Estaba en manos de Dios, y había que ir a la otra vida para encontrarla. Mientras tanto, el pueblo podía ser feliz en su misería, con la esperanza del paraíso después de la muerte, dulce ilusión, suprema consuelo, que los revolucionarios sin conciencia le quieren arrebatar.10

He complains also of the cold, unloving attitude the devout women under the spiritual direction of the Jesuits develop toward their marriages:

Para ella, la pasión matrimonial no debía ir más allá de la intimidad fría y casi mecánica de sus primeros tiempos de vida común. El matrimonio era para que el hombre y la mujer viviesen sin dar escándalo, procreando hijos que sirvieran a Dios, y también, para que no perdiese la fortuna de la familia. Lo que llamaban amor las personas corrompidas era un pecado repugnante, propio de gentes sin religión ... La esposa cristiana había de ser casta en el pensamiento, cuidar de la salud material y moral del esposo, aconsejarle el bien y dirigir el hogar. Más allá, sólo iban las mujeres perdidas.11

The writer goes further and censures el intruso for other intrusions in the lives of the women of Spain and states some bad effects of this:

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9Ibid., pp. 173-174.  
10Ibid., pp. 259-260.  
11Ibid., pp. 111-112.
El doctor se indignaba ante esta intrusión, que había acabado por cambiar a las mujeres de su tierra, matándoles el alma, convirtiéndolas en autómatas que aborrecían como pecado todas las manifestaciones de la vida y llegaban al hogar las exigencias de una dominación acapadora.12

The writer blames the Jesuit domination of Spanish education for causing his native land to be one of the most backward countries of Western Europe and says that Spain will have to come up to modern standards abruptly and with violence instead of developing gradually as the other European countries have done:

Pero en esta tierra había que dar un salto violento, pasar sin auxilio alguno desde las creencias de cuatro siglos antes, todavía en pie y poderosas, a la vida moderna . . . Había que tener en cuenta la raza, la herencia triste que pesa sobre este pueblo: su educación intolerante, que data de ayer.13

He makes it clear that the Jesuits enjoy great popular support in Spain, but, at the same time, he argues that the influence of the order must be drastically curtailed before Spain can make any progress as a modern nation:

¿Querer luchar con aquellas gentes en la amplitud de la libertad, cuando llevaban como ventaja luengos siglos de dominación, la incultura del país, la servidumbre de la mujer, encadenada a ellos por el sentimentalismo de la ignorancia! Contaban además con el apoyo del rico, de tradicional estolidez, que, atormentado por el remordimiento, compra un trozo de su fortuna la seguridad de no ir al infierno . . . Mientras estos enemigos existiesen, serían estériles todos los esfuerzos para reanimar el país. Sólo ellos podían aprovecharse del progreso nacional.14

12Ibid., p. 122  
13Ibid., p. 132.  
14Ibid., p. 137.
The author, in his customary defense of the underdog, elaborates upon the idea that the poor are, in effect, victimized by the established religion: "El cristianismo había engañado al pobre, manteniéndolo en su triste situación con la esperanza del cielo y la amenaza del infierno."\(^{15}\) He insists that Christian morality has done nothing to help the poor:

Veinte siglos llevaba de experiencia la moral cristiana, dando de sí todo lo que tenía dentro. Su fracaso era visible por todas partes. Desconocía la justicia en la tierra, dejándola para el cielo; pasaba indiferente ante el derecho de los oprimidos, queriendo consolarlos con la esperanza de que en una otra vida que nadie ha visto, encontrarán satisfacción a sus dolores.\(^{16}\)

He even attacks organized Christian charity:

-¡La caridad!--contestó el médico sonriendo con sarcasmo--. Es el medio de sostener la pobreza, de fomentarla, haciéndola eterna. Los desgraciados la odian por instinto, evitan el buscarla mientras pueden, viendo en ella una institución degradante que perpetúa su esclavitud. Ese es otro de los grandes fracasos de la moral cristiana.\(^{17}\)

He affirms, as he has many times, that the poor can be helped most by justice rather than by religious charity:

"Lo que necesita es justicia, ocupar el sitio que le corresponde, ser dueño de lo que produce."\(^{18}\) Blasco believes that science can help a person to become morally sound:

El hombre emancipado por la ciencia se preocupa de la suerte de la humanidad tanto o más que de

\(^{15}\textit{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 260.\)
\(^{16}\textit{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 250.\)
\(^{17}\textit{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 259.\)
\(^{18}\textit{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 101.\)
la de su individuo. Sabe que es un componente de una familia infinita, siente la solidaridad que le liga a su especie, está seguro de que su pensamiento vivirá aún después de habérse corrompido su cerebro, y no se considera satisfecho con tener saciados sus sentidos... En vez de querer immortalizarse, como los devotos, en su bienestar celeste—aspiración egoista que ningún beneficio proporciona a los demás—, desea sobrevivirse en la especie, que es eterna, procurando a esta un nuevo aumen to de felicidad con el trabajo de su vida. ¿Qué moral más generosa? ... El ensueño individual y egoísta de un cielo falso e inútil lo sustituye el hombre moderno con el ideal colectivo, que está de acuerdo con razón y le procura las más altas satisfacciones morales.  

Blasco Ibáñez gives some consideration to class distinctions in El intruso. A young man educated in a Jesuit university says, in defending the Jesuits' custom of dealing almost exclusively with the rich: "La igualdad es un mito de los impíos; hasta en el cielo hay jerarquías, los Padres se dedicaban al cultivo de los de arriba."  

A haughty woman who has married a man of a lower social class and does not love him, but follows precisely the instructions of the Jesuits in her personal life, has this to say:

"Bastante se sufre viviendo con gentes que son de otra clase."  

A young man who is losing his sweetheart because he has less money than her family and because the Jesuits are advising her to marry a graduate of a Jesuit university says: "La diferencia de fortuna, la maldita ley de clases, les podía cerrar el camino, separándolos." 

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19Ibid., p. 262.  
20Ibid., p. 260.  
21Ibid., p. 87.  
22Ibid., p. 191.
separated from his wife because of her intolerant attitude toward him which is due to the Jesuits' sway over her, wants to be able to marry another woman but puts the idea out of his mind, saying that, "Ya no podía unir su destino al de otra mujer, dentro de una sociedad gobernada por las leyes más que por los afectos."23

La horda (1905) describes the life of the people of the lower classes in Madrid. Isidro Maltrana, the protagonist, is the son of a poor bricklayer. The boy spent much of his early childhood with his parents as they wandered from one part of Castile to another looking for work. When Isidro was about six, his father died as the result of a construction accident. For a while, the boy and his mother lived with different relatives in Madrid, but as time went on, she was forced to find work. She eventually became a domestic servant so that she and her son could eat the leftovers from her employer's table. One kind lady for whom the widow worked became interested in Isidro and was able to obtain his admission to the Hospicio, a home and school for orphans. There he distinguished himself by his excellent work and soon became the favorite of the teachers. If a dignitary came to visit the school, Isidro was always pointed out as the best pupil the school had ever produced.

23 Ibid., p. 88
Isidro was very lonely at the school, but his studies and two weekly visits from his mother helped to make his cloistered life bearable. One day his mother came to see him and introduced him to her companion, Don José, a bricklayer and friend of Isidro's father. The two had begun to live together out of necessity. He could bring in some extra money for her, and she could do his laundry and cooking. Not long after they began to live together, a son was born to them. Don José wanted to marry her, but Isidro's mother refused his proposal, saying that if they were married, her son would lose his status as an orphan, and would be expelled from the school, something she did not want to happen no matter what the cost in shame to her.

When Isidro received his bachillerato, his protectoress took him into her home so that he might continue his studies. He began to study for a degree in the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters at the University Central in Madrid. All went well for the young scholar until his protectoress died suddenly, leaving him penniless and at the mercy of her greedy heirs. One of her nephews, Don Gaspar Jiménez, a senator and a marqués, gave the boy three thousand pesetas and ordered him out of the house.

Isidro moved to a rooming house near the university. There among the students and no longer under the watchful eyes of his protectors, he learned to drink, smoke, and to associate with low women. Nevertheless, his studies at the
university were successful for a while. In the meantime, much work, little food, and inadequate living quarters had sapped the strength of his poor mother to the breaking point, and she was confined to a charity hospital. In order to move his mother to decent quarters and to secure proper medical attention, Isidro spent a large portion of his money. In spite of all of his efforts, she died, leaving him almost penniless.

After his mother's death, Isidro left the university and began to make his living as best he could. He translated foreign books and worked for various scholars and researchers. This brought him in so little money that he was forced to move in with Don José and his son, Pepín.

As the action of the novel unfolds, Don Gaspar Jiménez has decided to write a book in order to gain some recognition in the political and literary circles of Spain. He chooses Isidro to write the book and offers to pay him a substantial sum. Once Isidro finishes the work, the senator intends to edit the manuscript and add his personal touch to Isidro's writing. Isidro quickly agrees because he needs the money desperately.

Since leaving the university, Isidro has become acquainted with many of the people of the lower classes in Madrid. One of these is Mosco, a daring man who makes his living by poaching. Isidro greatly admires this man, who continues to poach although he has been wounded in the back.
and legs by many pellets from the guns of the Civil Guards. The young man quickly makes friends with Mosco because the poacher eats well and because he has an attractive daughter, Feliciana. After the senator advances Isidro some money for the beginning of the book, the youth makes his plans to run away with the poacher's daughter as soon as possible. She quickly agrees to the plan and they go away to live together unmarried in an apartment far removed from her father's hut.

The young people are happy for a while, but a series of unfortunate events soon brings an end to their felicity. First, Isidro's half-brother Pepín becomes a criminal with little or no hope of reform. Next, Feliciana's father is killed by the Civil Guards on one of his poaching excursions. Then Isidro's stepfather is killed in a construction accident. Isidro and Feliciana find themselves in financial straits from which they have little possibility of escaping; moreover, she is now pregnant. The young couple soon move to a very poor section of Madrid, where they almost starve. The wife is taken to the hospital, where a son is born to them. The father, in attempts to get money, spends entire days away from the hospital where his undernourished wife is fighting for her life. She finally dies, and her body is dissected by some medical students before Isidro is able to claim it. The motherless baby is taken care of by a grandmother and a wetnurse. The novel ends with Isidro's
promising himself to do everything possible to help his son have a much better life than his parents have had.

In La horde Blasco Ibáñez continues his attacks against social injustice which he began in La catedral and El intruso. When he contemplates leaving the university Isidro thinks to himself:

La universidad era una mentira, como todas las instituciones sociales . . . Los solitarios como él, sin protectores, sin atractivo social, estaban desarmados para la lucha diaria: su destino era morir. 24

Blasco describes the attitude of the wealthy classes toward the very poor:

Era hermosa y sin piedad. Arrojaba la miseria lejos de ella, negando su existencia. Si alguna vez pensaba en los infelices, era para levantar en sus afueras monasterios, donde las imágenes de palo estaban mejor cuidados que los hijos de Dios de carne y hueso; conventos de monstruosa grandeza, cuyas campanas tocaban y tocaban en el vacío, sin que nadie las oyese. Los pobres, los desesperados, no entendían su lenguaje: adivinaban lo falso de su sonido. Tocaban para otros; no eran llamamientos de amor; eran bufidos de vanidad. 25

The author goes further in his criticism of the rich as he records Isidro's thoughts:

Y las gentes felices temblarían de pavor ante las caras amenazantes, las vestiduras miserables, las miradas de famélico estrabismo, los anhelos locos y criminales de destrucción. ¿Dónde se habían ocultado hasta entonces aquellos monstruos?


25 Ibid., p. 366.
¿De qué antro surgían? . . . Y bien, gentes dichosas, habéis vivido con ellos sin saberlo.
Acampaban junto a vuestros muros, pasaban todos los días ante vuestra puertas a la hora de vuestru sueño. No les habían visto porque eran débiles, porque se arrestraban humildes. Negabais su existencia porque no proferían amenazas. Ni piedad ni misericordia tuvisteis con ellos cuando aún era tiempo.26

Blasco Ibáñez suggests a way in which the common people of Spain might better themselves:

Maltrana examinaba mentalmente esta avalancha de miserias, odios y desperaciones, que podia transformarse en un ejército. ¿Qué le faltaba a la horda? Jefes, pastores audaces que le guiasen a las alturas, conociendo el camino. ¡Ay, si los que nacían en su seno armados con las potencia del pensamiento no desertasen, avergonzados de su origen! ¡Si los siervos de la pobreza, como él, en vez de ofrecerse cobardemente a los poderosos, se quedasen entre los suyos, poniendo a su servicio lo que habían aprendido, esforzándose en regimentar a la horda, dándola una bandera, fundiendo sus bravias independencias en una voluntad común! . . .27

La bodega (1906) describes the life of those who own the vineyards of Jerez and of those who till them. Luis Dupont, a central figure in the novel, is the son of a well-to-do winemaker. His father died when the boy was young and left him in the custody of an uncle who decided that the orphan should study law. Luis traveled all over Spain looking for unscrupulous professors who would allow themselves to be bribed to give a student acceptable marks on failing work. Luis was often forced to seek the help of

26Ibid., p. 367.
27Ibid.
moneylenders to augment the meager allowance allotted to him by his uncle. When the boy obtained his majority and inherited his father's estate, he quit school saying that he did not wish to waste his time, money, and effort on something which meant little to him. As soon as he obtained his money, he began to indulge in all of the excesses which he had dreamed of during his days as a poor student living on a very stringent budget. He traveled throughout Spain showing himself to be the greatest aficionado of his favorite matador. During the winter when there were no bullfights, Luis went to the local casino and defended his matador against any criticism anyone might have to offer. He did a great deal of gambling and associated with disreputable women. He also bought many fine horses, thinking that all of the women sighed from behind the window gratings when they saw him riding by on his spirited steeds. Furthermore, he associated with people of criminal character and offered food and money to any ex-convict who would come to the tavern and tell him of his crises and agree that the rich young man was quite virile and potentially violent in his own right.

Luis decides to give a party for several of his friends on a pleasant summer night during the harvest season. He invites some of the young farm girls who are helping in the harvest and feeds them sumptuously and makes certain that they become drunk. After all of the men and women are
drunk, Luis decides to amuse his friends at the expense of the country girls. He orders a young bull turned loose among the crowd, which disperses to all sides upon seeing the vicious beast charge at full speed. One gypsy girl, Mari-Cruz, is not so fortunate as the others, and the bull tramples her. She is rescued by Rafael, the steward of the farm, and taken to the gypsy quarters, where she dies from shock a few days later. Luis thinks that his party has been a tremendous success because his friends were immensely entertained by the fright of the women in the path of the charging bull. The gypsies and other farm laborers are unable to do anything about the death of the girl because they are afraid of the power Luis, their master, has over them.

Spain begins to be torn by agrarian riots. The workers demand higher wages and better working conditions. Some of the more radical advocates of reform call for a division into small farms of the large tracts of land owned by the wealthy so that the poor may have a better chance to make a living. Luis calls all such plans utopias which will never work practically. He swears that the riots are the work of false prophets and that the poor should seek consolation in religion. He proposes to give the workers a little charity at first, in order to predispose them to the counsel of the ecclesiastical authorities. If there are workers who rebel after this treatment, then the
all-powerful hand of the government will have to intervene and give out stiff penalties to all of those who do not comply. Luis even begins a campaign to have himself elected deputy for his area. He receives some backing from the wealthy landowners and the clergy, but he never succeeds in getting elected.

Luis returns to his country estate to supervise the harvest. He gives a party in honor of some of the peasants and a few of his friends, at which everyone drinks and eats a great deal. María de la Luz, the pretty young sister of Fermín Montenegro, a chief clerk in the Dupont's wine business, becomes very drunk and decides to conceal herself in an obscure room until the effects of the alcohol wear off. While she is there Luis enters and takes advantage of her drunken condition to satisfy his own passions. Little is said about the matter in the first few days after it occurred, but when Fermín finds out that his sister has been victimized, he goes to Luis' uncle in an effort to make the old man force Luis to marry María de la Luz and thereby remove the stain on the honor of the Montenegro family. The uncle objects violently to the suggestion, saying that his family would never intermarry with the common people.

In the meanwhile, the riots of the workers have grown more severe. A mob of more than four thousand men gathers near Jerez with a plan to invade the city and kill the
wealthy who have oppressed them so long. This province of Cádiz has been torn by revolution before, and the insurgents are confident that the militiamen and the men of the Civil Guard will join forces with them in an effort to gain better working conditions for the laborers in the city as well as those on the farms. When the mob reaches the outskirts of Jerez, they learn that many of the revolutionary leaders who are supposed to be with them are absent and that there is little possibility the government's forces will desert and join the rebels' ranks. The mob dwindles to about a thousand men as it reaches the heart of the city. A volley of shots from a group of hidden guardsmen disperses the mob into small groups which the troopers soon capture. Fermín goes to Jerez and looks for Luis among those who are fighting the rioters. He finally finds him and tries to persuade him to marry María de la Luz. A quarrel and a fight follow when Luis refuses, and Fermín kills him, but the killer escapes punishment for the crime because of the confusion of the rebellion. María de la Luz marries a former suitor and they set sail for America to start a new life.

Late in the novel, Blasco Ibáñez justifies the discontent of the landless farm laborers and their desire for repartition of the lands of the wealthy:

Y la tierra, Rafae, es jembra, y a las jembras pa que sean agradecias y se poten bien, hay que querelas. Y el hombre no pue querê a
una tierra que no es suya. Sólo deja el sudor y la sangre sobre los terrones de que puede sacar el pan. ¿Digo mal, muchacho? ....

¡Qué aquella inmensidad de tierra se repartiese entre los que la trabajaban, que los pobres supieran que del surco podía sacar algo más que un punado de céntimos y los tres gazpachos, y ya se vería si los del país eran holgazanes! Resultaban malos trabajadores porque trabajaban para otros, porque tenían la obligación de defender su vida miserable unos cuantos años más, huyendo el cuerpo a la faena, prolongando los ratos de descanso concedidos para fumar un cigarro, llegando al tajo lo más tarde posible y retirándose cuanto antes. ¡Para lo que les daban! .... Pero que tuviesen su parte de tierra, y la cuidaran, peinándola y acicalándola a todas horas como una hija, y antes de clarease el día estarían ya en ella con la herramienta en la mano. En medio de la noche se levantarán para las faenas urgentes; aquellas llanuras serían un paraíso, y cada pobre tendría su casita, y los lagartos no irán arrastrando su lomo rugoso y polvoriento días y días sin tropezar con una vivienda humana.28

Blasco is of the opinion that the problem of the landless poor cannot be solved by the traditional charity which he says merely aggravates the plight of the working class:

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

La caridad era el egoísmo disfrazándose de virtud; el sacrificio de una pequeñísima parte de lo superfluo repartida a capricho. Caridad, no: ¡justicia! a cada cual lo suyo.29

Here, too, as in several of his other books, is the direct attack of Christianity:

28 Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, La bodega (Valencia, 1919), pp. 238-239.

29 Ibid., p. 306.
El cristianismo era una mentira más, desfigurada y explotada por los de arriba para justificar y santificar sus usurpaciones. ¡Justicia, y no caridad! Bienestar en la tierra para los infelices, y que los ricos se reservasen, si la deseaban, la posesión del cielo, abriendo antes la mano para soltar sus rapinas terrenales.30

When Fermín asks Don Pablo to force Luis to marry María de la Luz, the elderly gentleman takes the occasion to explain the various social classes and their origins as Blasco sees them:

"-¡Ta, ta! ¡Ya salió el cristianismo a gusto vuestro! Los que sois verdes y no conocéis la religión más que por fuera, os fijáis en ciertas exterioridades, para echarlos en cara cuando os conviene. Claro es que todos somos hijos de Dios, y que los buenos gozarán igualmente de su gloria; pero mientras vivimos en la tierra, el orden social, que viene de lo alto, exige que existan jerarquías y que éstas se respeten, sin confundirse. Consulta el caso con un sabio, pero un sabio de verdad; con mi amigo el padre Urizabal o algún fraile eminentemente te contesta: lo mismo como yo. Debemos ser buenos cristianos, perdonar las ofensas, auxiliarnos con la limosna y facilitar al prójimo los medios para que salve el alma; pero cada uno en el círculo social que le ha marcado Dios, en la familia que le destinó al nacer sin asaltar las barreras divisorias con intentos de falsa libertad, cuyo verdadero nombre es libertinaje.31

La maja desnuda (1906) describes the life of a Spanish artist. Mariano Renovales, the protagonist, was the son of a blacksmith in a small provincial town. During his childhood, Mariano disliked school and attended as little as

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30 Ibid., p. 238.
31 Ibid., p. 311.
possible. At this stage in life, he was able to distinguish himself by virtue of his talent for sketching. Eventually his father allowed him to quit school and devote all of his time to making charcoal sketches on any suitable surface. His reputation as a gifted boy soon reached Don Rafael, an artist who painted saints for churches in the capital of the province and who spent his free time on an estate near Mariano's home. The boy's father allowed Don Rafael to take Mariano to the capital in order to study both with him and at an art school. There the two lived and worked in accord for a while, but as the boy developed, great differences arose between them. Don Rafael, a religious man, thought that the youth should paint only religious works, and at the same time, Mariano thought that he should paint things as he saw them and not as he thought them to be. The gulf between them gradually widened, especially after Don Rafael found nude portraits in Mariano's quarters. The older man advised Mariano to go to Madrid, where he might expect to find other youths who were interested in the type of art he produced.

Mariano, then only sixteen years old, moved to Madrid. There he spent his mornings in the Museo del Prado copying the heads of many of Velasquez' pictures and passed the afternoon and evenings in additional practice. His work was excellent and his masters and fellow artists were so enthusiastic about it that they raised enough money to send
him to Rome for further study. He spent six months in Rome doing little other than going from one museum to another copying the faces on some of the pictures of the famous masters. In addition, he became convinced that a good artist had to be a good athlete and began to spend much time in body building exercises. In Rome he was unpopular among his compatriots because he was the son of a blacksmith, but other foreign art students admired him. There he painted *La victoria de Favía*, a work that quickly brought him renown in Italy and Spain. After that, he returned to Spain to capitalize on his popularity.

In Madrid, the despised son of a blacksmith began to appear regularly in high social circles. In one of these, he met Doña Emilia, the widow of an ambassador, and her pretty daughter Josefina. The two women had once been wealthy but now were reduced to a state bordering on poverty. Josefina and Mariano soon fell in love and wanted to marry. Doña Emilia was reluctant at first to permit the marriage, but later, as she thought of her poverty and the resultant impossibility of marrying her daughter to anyone of their social standing, she began to consider favorably the idea of having a famous and prospering young artist as a son-in-law. The young people married and moved to Rome. Until his marriage Mariano had always despised those artists who painted for money, but, upon seeing himself married to a lady of high estate whom he loved, he decided it would be
best for him to paint rapidly as many pictures as possible
and sell them for as much as he could get. His works were
good and he found a ready market for his paintings in
Europe and America. The prices his works commanded brought
him enough money to assure the couple financial security as
long as he was able to paint.

In the midst of this success, a family quarrel opened
a breach in the marriage which was never to close. Josefina,
a very pious and devout woman, found her husband painting
a model in the nude. Although he had done this many times
before, she had never witnessed such a thing and objected
violently and threatened to return to her mother in Madrid
if he did not promise to desist from such practices.
Mariano quickly agreed to her request, fearing that she
would carry out the threat.

Sometime later the young couple moved to Castelgandolfo.
Here, after many entreaties, Mariano persuaded his wife to
let him paint her in the nude. The painting took several
days, and upon completion, Josefina tore it to pieces be-
lieving that she had done something very evil by posing in
such a manner. Furthermore, she became convinced that her
husband was attracted only by her physical beauty, and that
he had no regard for her spiritual or intellectual qualities.

The couple moved from Italy back to Madrid and then
returned to Italy. There a daughter, Milita, was born.
The wife, although by nature a very weak woman, insisted on nursing the child herself instead of employing the customary wetnurse.

Milta matures and marries the son of a wealthy industrialist. Josefina is again obsessed with the belief that her husband is interested in her only with regard to her physical beauty, and she refuses to have much to do with Mariano. When the artist becomes romantically involved with a pretty countess his wife worries a great deal about this and sinks into a state of neurasthenia. After a few years she dies as the disease destroys her already frail body. Mariano then realizes that he had wronged Josefina and tries to make amends. He visits her grave frequently, he sleeps in the bed she slept in, and he drives himself to the brink of insanity by his excess of penitence and remorse. After this, he begins to believe that women he sees in crowds are Josefina and even invites one such woman to his house. He persuades her to remove her clothing and tries to paint her, and when he finds that he cannot concentrate on his work, he tries to assault the woman. She flees unharmed and the book ends with his thinking to himself that there is nothing left for him to do except to die.

Although there are no explicit ideas of social reform in *La maja desnuda*, as there are in the author's other novels of his Valencian and Madrid periods, Blasco does attack the Spanish church's attitude toward art which is not
of a religious nature. Here the writer comments upon the difficulty encountered by Mariano in attempting to produce paintings of which the Church did not approve:

Era el odio al desnudo, la cristana y secular abominación de la Naturaleza y la verdad, que se ponía en pie instintivamente, protestando de que se tolerasen tales horrores en un edificio público poblado de Santos, reyes, y ascetas.32

In the following excerpt, Blasco Ibáñez expresses regret because of the Spanish Church's intolerant attitude toward secular art:

... La presión religiosa había entenebrecido el arte durante siglos. La humana belleza asustaba a los grandes artistas, que pintaban con la cruz en el pecho y el rosario en la espada. Los cuerpos ocultábanse bajo el sayal de pesados y rígidos pliegues o el grotesco mirínque palaciego, sin que el pintor osara adivinar lo que existía debajo de ellos, mirando al modelo como el devoto contempla el manto hueco de la Virgen, no sabiendo si encierra un cuerpo o tres barrotes sistenes de la cabeza. La alegría de la vida era un pecado; la desnudez, obra de Dios, una abominación. En vano brillaba sobre la tierra española un sol más hermoso que el de Venecia; inútilmente se quebraba la luz sobre la tierra con mayor billo que en Flandes; el arte español era oscuro, era seco, era sobrio, aún después de haber conocido las obras del Ticiano. El Renacimiento, que en el resto del mundo adoraba el desnudo como la obra definitiva de la Naturaleza, cubriase aquí con la capucha del fraile o los harapos del mendigo.33

La voluntad de vivir (1907) describes the moral breakdown of a well-known Spanish medical research worker.

33Ibid., p. 24.
Enrique Valdivia, the protagonist of the novel, was the son of a poor provincial physician who devoted so much of his time and effort to study and research that his family often lacked the basic necessities of life. Later the couple and their son moved to Madrid in hopes of making a better living. There the doctor died within a short while, leaving his wife and son barely enough money to enable them to escape abject poverty. After his basic education, Enrique chose to follow the footsteps of his father. He and his mother managed to get enough funds to pay for his medical education in Spain. After receiving his diploma, Enrique practiced in small provincial towns for a while, but he gave up this unprofitable way of life in order to go to Paris to do graduate work in medicine. He remained in the French capital for about two years and became very proficient in his field. He had at least one chance to marry, but he chose to avoid matrimony so that he might devote more time and money to research. His decision greatly upset his mother, who was afraid that Enrique would do as his father had done and spend too much time in research and too little in making a living. Enrique never took patients and lived upon the meager stipend paid him by the university where he worked. The young physician's labors were successful and he soon began to publish monographs about his theories and discoveries. Soon after his first publications were made, Enrique's mother died. Since there was now no one to
object, he devoted all of his time to research. He was still living on his salary from the university, and since there was not enough money to hire a maid, the doctor kept a very untidy house and his person was not always so neat as that of a man who has a woman to look after him.

Finally Enrique hired an assistant, Juan Noreña, to help him with his scientific investigations. The two traveled over Spain together as the physician obtained one chair of medicine after another. The doctor finally managed to get a chair of medicine at Madrid, and from that time on, his reputation was rather good in foreign countries because of the originality of his studies and because of his discoveries which attracted the attention of the foreign investigators. The Spanish press refused to print anything about him, apparently because he was a known atheist. This refusal on the part of the press greatly annoyed Noreña, who had a high regard for the physician, and considered him practically omniscient.

Lack of funds for equipment caused Enrique to concentrate on the study of histology, but later, his interests broadened, and he decided to make an extensive study of the nerve centers in the human body. He learned methods of using in his own investigations certain materials stained with industrial dyes which he had altered and developed for his purposes. Such time as Valdivia did not spend in the classroom or laboratory, he employed in writing about
his discoveries. He made the drawings himself which accompanied the text in order to insure that the reader would get the true picture of what the author was explaining. The books were very informative, but because of the writer's religious sentiments, they almost always ended up on the desk of some medical worker rather than on the shelves of a library or in the classroom. This life of constant reading, research, and publishing forced the physician to live in semi-poverty because of his inadequate salary.

Valdivia's reputation grew among foreign scientific circles until the Spanish press had to recognize him. Although very few of the public actually knew what his celebrity was based upon, everyone paid him respect and a few gave him contributions so that he could live better for a while. Many came seeking his treatments, but he turned most of them away. Some of the citizenry thought it only fitting that a man of Enrique's caliber should run for a deputyship. He did this, almost against his will, and easily won his seat in the Cortes. After going to the meetings for a few times, Valdivia made the comment that at least one half of the four hundred members of the legislature were mentally or emotionally unsuited for their responsibilities, and he refused to attend any more sessions or to run for re-election. After renouncing his deputyship,
the doctor was asked to be minister of Education, but he refused this offer saying that he preferred to return to his scientific investigations.

When Enrique was about forty years old, General Valenzuela, the former dictator of an unnamed Latin-American republic, came to Europe to travel and to seek medical treatment. He soon located Enrique and asked his advice, and the physician, contrary to his custom, treated the ailing man. The doctor became very well acquainted with Lucha, a girl who traveled with the dictator and posed as his niece. Everyone was certain that she was in reality his mistress, but no one said anything about the matter because the dictator still wielded considerable power in Europe. Enrique and Lucha fell in love. The doctor was now convinced that his former life as a research worker was not a happy one and now, with the love of Lucha, he had regained the will to live and be happy. To the astonishment of Noreña and other colleagues, he gave up all of his investigations in order to be as near as possible to Lucha. As she traveled to different cities in Europe, he tried to follow her and frequently succeeded. They had many happy times and a few quarrels together, but they managed to maintain the relationship for about a year. Finally the two had a serious disagreement, and Lucha told Enrique that she did not want to have anything more to do with him. He retorted that he would commit suicide if she carried out her
threat. They parted and she soon returned to look for him in his apartment and was unable to find him. A while later she learned that he had actually committed suicide by remaining on a park bench during inclement weather and dying of exposure. Lucha then felt responsible for his death and went to a nearby church, where she prayed for long hours for forgiveness for her part in condemning his soul to hell.

In La voluntad de vivir the author reveals the same sympathy and enthusiasm toward science that he does in El intruso and La bodega. He says the following about science:

... ¡La vida! ... Una gran cosa; especialmente para los que la dedicaban al estudio, para los que la ponían al servicio de la ciencia. ¡Qué voluptuosidad ensanchar cada día, cada hora, el límite de los conocimientos, leer y leer, estudiar y meditar, dando nuevos pasos. ... 

The writer suggests, however, that those who dedicate themselves to science may come to regret their choice of career and long to return to their youth so that they might live in a fashion which would prove more rewarding in their later years:

... ¡La juventud! Jamás habían turbado este período de su vida los pensamientos que ahora le atormentaban. La falta del instinto de conservación le había arrastrado como a todos, a comprometer vida y salud en cosas insignificantes, derrochando sus actividades como el

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34 Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, La voluntad de vivir (Barcelona, 1957), p. 21.
prodigio que, satisfecho de sus riquezas, no las cuenta y cree que jamás pueden agotarse.35

Blasco Ibáñez again makes the kind of heretical remark for which he is so well known:

No existía en la tierra ni en los cielos nada real y positivo que pudiera consolar al hombre de la muerte ni librarse de la angustia que inspira la nada aguardándole al final de su camino. Todo eran dulces mentiras inventadas por el miedo, estados de ilusión creados por la necesidad del engaño.36

He goes on to give a very pessimistic view of life, "La vida es triste, Juanito—dijo el doctor—. Dolores, desilusiones y nada al final, como resultado de tanta inquietud."37 For him, life is a futile, an unrewarding search for a non-existent happiness: "El amor y la muerte! Las preocupaciones que nos siguen hasta el último momento y nos entierran."38

Many women in the novels of Blasco marry wealthy men or become their mistresses to escape from poverty. Lucha explains her condition before she caught the eyes of the powerful dictator: "Yo era muy pobre, ñsabe, Valdivia? Pobre, no más como una rata."39 And she goes on to give her reason for becoming the companion of the dictator:

. . . Además, estaba cansada de ser pobre, no porque la pobreza me asuste, pues aquí donde me ve, yo soy un soldado, yo soy de fierro,

sino porque me irritaba tanta sonrisa
de las amiguitas hijas de mineros ricos,
y de las zringas, que se apiadaban viéndome
mal vestida y me peleaban por la libertad
de mis costumbres. «Ahora me toca a mí»,
me dije. Y acepté, y todos bajaron la
cabeza, y las que peor me habían tratado
vinieron a hacerme la pata.40

Sangre y arena (1908) describes the life of a bull-
fighter. The protagonist is Juan Gallardo, the son of a
well-known cobbler in Seville. Although his father made
ample money to support the family, there was never enough
for the necessities because he squandered about two-thirds
of his income on liquor, bullfighting, and the entertain-
ment of friends. His wife, Angustias, tried to supplement
the family's income by working as a domestic servant, as a
vendor of clothing and as a cigarette maker. During the
last two years of his life the shoemaker suffered from
phthisis and was an invalid totally dependent upon his wife
and children for support. The three managed to make a
living for themselves and to give the ailing man some
medical treatment, but in spite of all their efforts, he
died in a charity hospital. Although the basic cause of
the death was the phthisis, the disability which this dis-
order brought on kept him from enjoying the Andalusian
wines and the bullfights, and this deprivation was a major
factor contributing to his death. Angustias' life became

40 Ibid., p. 70.
much easier after the death of her husband because she had more liberty in her choice of jobs and had no more costly hospital bills. Through the influence of some friends, the widow was able to secure a job at a tobacco factory for her sixteen-year-old daughter, Encarnación. She took her twelve-year-old son out of school and found for him an apprenticeship in one of the best cobbler's shops in Seville. The son, Juanillo, did not adjust to his new trade at all. He very seldom went to the cobbler's shop, and when he did, he did little or nothing to make himself useful. He preferred to frequent the vicinity of the slaughterhouse with a group of young boys about his age. Here he talked and teased the herdsmen and spent much time observing the cattle. He began to wander around Sierpes and Campana streets in Seville, where he met and admired many bullfighters who were out of work. Their boasting and fine clothing aroused a great deal of enthusiasm in him as it had done in his father, but he did not realize that the men were completely out of money and in many cases were living on alms handed out by their admirers. Juanillo began to travel a great deal, either on foot or on rides stolen on freight cars. He went to Tocina, where he was allowed to fight the bulls as an amateur, and where the skill of the thirteen-year-old boy attracted the attention of the aficionados. He was slightly injured by a bull and many of the local dignitaries paid him a visit, and the alcalde even paid his train fare
home. He arrived in Seville just as his mother was about to depart for Tocino to visit him in the hospital. He immediately went to the section of Seville where the bullfighters stayed and bragged about his wound and greatly exaggerated its severity. He was especially gratified when some of the professional bullfighters inquired about the healing of the wound.

Juanillo began to travel about Spain with Chiripa, a young vagabond who had the same tastes and ambitions that he had. One afternoon as the two were placing the banderillas at a small bullring in Estremadura, Chiripa was gored severely and died within a few moments. This tragedy almost caused Juanillo to give up all hopes of becoming a bullfighter and to return to the cobbler's shop; however, when he returned to Seville, he found himself the center of attraction because the death of his friend Chiripa had been widely publicized. Everyone wanted to know all of the details of the accident, and each time that Juanillo told of the misfortune, he exaggerated the details and eventually tried to cast himself in a heroic role by saying that he had tried to save his wounded comrade and had almost succeeded. With this newly found importance, based upon the death of his friend, the youth firmly resolved to become a bullfighter at all costs. After a few regular bullfights in which he distinguished himself, he was given the title of matador in a gala ceremony and set out upon a
very promising career. He worked in Seville and the nearby towns for over a year and then went to Madrid, where he was very successful. After his performances at Madrid, he received enough contracts to assure a large income for the future. He became the idol of many aficionados and a favorite among the girls of all social classes before he was twenty. He also dropped his nickname because he thought it unworthy of a bullfighter to be called Juanillo instead of Juan.

He soon fell in love with a pretty Sevillian girl, Carmen, and began to send her love letters every day and to visit her between bullfights. This love affair greatly perturbed Encarnación's husband, who was the unofficial manager of the bullfighter's financial matters and who hoped to make personal gain from his triumphs in the ring. Juan built a home for his bride-to-be and they were married in a very sumptuous ceremony. Their wedding was so widely publicized that it was considered by some to be a national event. They lived happily together for about two years, but after that Carmen sank into a state of melancholy. The couple was childless and Juan had to spend a great deal of time away from home in pursuit of his dangerous trade; both factors make the wife wish that she had never married him.

About four years after getting married, Juan met Doña Sol, the pretty widowed niece of the Marquis of Mariome,
an enthusiastic supporter of Juan's career. Although the bullfighter entered into a love affair with the young woman, he did not desert his wife and made considerable effort to keep her happy. Soon after meeting Doña Sol, Juan suffered a goring in the ring, from which it took him some time to recuperate. After he had partially recovered, he made an effort to show his former skills in the bullring, but he was not very successful. After many tries at a comeback, he was killed during the first fight in which he shows his former greatness.

_Sangre y arena_ is an attack upon bullfighting. The matadores and members of their troop have always been from the lower classes of people. Blasco Ibáñez explains why this is by having a bandit talk to Juan:

---Yo he visto lo que es la gente--- continuó el bandido---. El mundo está dividio en dos familias; esquilaos y esquillaores. Yo no quiero que me esquilen; yo he nasío pa esquilaor, porque soy muy hombre y no tengo miedo a nadie. A usté, señor Juan, le ha pasado lo mismo. Por riñones se ha salio der ganao de abajo; pero su camino es mejó que el mio.º

The amoral bandit goes further and compares himself with Juan, and at the same time, explains the rewards which make many poor fellows turn to bullfighting:

---Ca uno sabe su ofisio, señor Juan---dijo el Plumitas, como si adivinase lo que pensaba---. Los dos vivimos de mats: usté mata toros y yo personas. No hay más que usté es rico y

se yeva las parmás y las buenas jembrás,  
y yo rabio muchas veces de hambre, y acabaré,  
si me descuido, hecho una criba en medio der  
campo, pa que se me coman los cuervos.42

The outlaw goes yet further and expresses the author's  
thoughts about the results of poverty: "Los probes son  
güenos, pero la miseria es una cosa fea que quèrve malo  
al mejor."43 Later in the book the criminal says:

... A los de abajo no nos quea otro recurso  
que rabiar trabajando pa otros o seguir la  
útil carrera que da dinero y nombre: matá.  
Yo no servía pa matá toros ... Por eso maté  
personas.44

The bandit then gives his explanation of some of the  
ills of the Spanish poor:

--Repito que hemos nacido tarde, señó Juan.  
El guen camino está cerrao a los probes.  
El español no sabe que haser. No queda ya  
asónde ir. Lo que había en el mundo por  
repartirse se lo han apropiado los ingleses  
y otros extranjos. La puerta está cerró, y  
los hombres de corazón tenemos que pudrirnos  
dentro de este corral, oyendo malas palabras  
porque no nos conformamos con nuestra suerte.  
Yo, que tal vez hubiera llegado a rey en las  
Américas o en cualquier otro sitio, voy pregona y  
los caminos y hasta me llaman ladron. Úste,  
que es un valiente, mata animales y se leva  
parmás; pero yo sé que muchos señores miran lo  
del torero como oficio bajo.45

The author has a simple-minded banderillero in Juan's  
troop say that the poor need to learn how to read and write

42 Ibid., p. 215.  
43 Ibid., p. 207.  
44 Ibid., p. 218.  
more than anything else. However the outlaw feels that education alone is insufficient to solve the problems of the poor:

\[ \text{Yo sé leído y escribí. ¿Pa qué sirve? Cuando vivía en el pueblo, me servía para hacerme señala y pa que mi suerte me pareciera más dura. Lo que el pobre necesita es justicia, que le den lo suyo; y si no se lo dan, que se lo tome. Hay que ser lobo y meté miso. Los otros lobos le respetan a uno y las reses hasta se dejan comer, agradecidas.}^46 \]

The writer describes in very uncomplimentary terms the attitude of the crowd of aficionados toward a favorite bullfighter:

\[ \ldots \text{Todos creían que estaba destinado a morir en la plaza de una cornada, y esto mismo hacía que le aplaudiesen con entusiasmo homicida, con un interés bárbaro, semejante al del misantropo que seguía a un domador a todas partes esperando el momento de verle devorado por sus fieras.}^47 \]

At the end of the book, while Juan is dying from a goring, Blasco Ibáñez again speaks of the spectators:

\[ \text{¡Pobre toro! ¡Pobre espada! \ldots De pronto, el circo rumoroso lanzó un alarido saludando la continuación del espectáculo. El Nacional cerró los ojos y apretó los puños. Rugía la fiera: la verdadera, la única.}^48 \]

Los muertos mandan (1909) is a censure of the authority of tradition, especially with regard to the idea of marriage between members of different races or social classes. Jaime Febrer, the protagonist of the novel, is a

\[ ^{46}\text{Ibid.} \quad ^{47}\text{Ibid., p. 44.} \]
\[ ^{48}\text{Ibid., p. 396.} \]
descendant of one of the most illustrious families of Palma de Mallorca. As the last male member of his lineage, he desired to distinguish himself as a soldier, as many of his ancestors had done; but his mother strongly opposed the wish and sent him to Valencia to study law when he was sixteen. From there he went to Barcelona and several other universities without accomplishing much in his studies. He did, however, make himself known as a gambler and an associate of low women. At about twenty, he quit school and returned to Palma for a while, but he was forced to leave because of his scandalous conduct among the peasant girls. He returned to Barcelona and then went on to other Spanish cities, doing little to bring credit to himself or his family. He visited London, Paris, Norway and other places on the continent. In Munich he met Mary Gordon, a young Australian woman who had come to Europe to finish her musical education. The two fell in love and she proposed marriage to him. Jaime, at first, was eager to marry, but later he changed his mind and deserted his fiancée. His profligate life had practically exhausted the capital formerly held by his family, and he returned to Palma de Mallorca in an effort to rearrange his financial affairs.

The action of the novel begins with Jaime's return to Mallorca. He is at first despondent and even contemplates suicide as he thinks about his wasted life and fortune. He
is now in his late thirties. Two Jewish friends, Pablo y
Benito Valls, help him to overcome some of his financial
difficulties, and the wealthy Benito, who is old and ailing,
offers Jaime the hand of Catalina, his only heir. Jaime
at first rejects the proposition of marrying a chueta (the
Mallorcan term for Jew). He then realizes that he has
nothing to lose by the marriage because he is almost
penniless and because el dinero no tiene sangre ni raza.
Although Catalina and her father approve of the proposed
marriage, Pedro firmly opposes it, insisting that a marriage
between a Christian and a Jewess would break the traditional
racial segregation on the island. He adds that it had taken
centuries to build up these social customs and it would be
very risky to disturb them. Toni Clapés, a smuggler friend
of Jaime, offers to lend him money rather than to see him
marry a chueta to mend his finances. Jaime then goes to an
aunt in hopes of obtaining a money gift or at least a
marriage blessing. The aunt refuses both requests, saying
that she has no money to give him and that she would disown
anyone in her family who mixed his blood with that of low
people. Jaime gives up the idea of a marriage with Catalina
and goes to live in a lighthouse on the island of Ibiza.
This lighthouse is the last part of the vast estate which
Jaime inherited and later squandered on riotous living.

There on Ibiza Jaime is an aristocrat among the rugged
peasants of the islands. Capellanet and Margalida, the
son and daughter of a former tenant, befriend the despondent nobleman and bring him food quite often. When the season for courtship arrives, Jaime competes with the rustic youths for the hand of Margalida in marriage. A jealous suitor shoots Jaime from ambush and the wounded man is taken to the home of Margalida to recover. With the approval of the parents, the two agree to marry and move to Mallorca, where Jaime will try to make a living for his wife and future family.

In the first part of *Los muertos mandan* Jaime believes that the dead have an ever-present and all-powerful influence over the living:

... No; los muertos no se van aprisa, como cree el refrán popular. Los muertos se quedan inmóviles al borde de la vida espiando a las nuevas generaciones, haciéndolas sentir la autoridad del pasado con un rudo tirón en su alma cada vez que intentan apartarse del sendero marcado por la rutina.\(^{47}\)

Jaime finally concludes in desperation that:

... El alma de los muertos llenaba el mundo. Los muertos no se van, porque son los amos. Los muertos mandan, y es inútil resistirse a sus ordenes.\(^{48}\)

After Jaime goes to Ibiza he is little troubled by the prejudice which has separated him from Catalina, but there he finds another prejudice just as evil, the traditional

\(^{47}\)Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, *Los muertos mandan*, edited by Frederick Augustus Grant Cowper and John Thomas Lister (New York, 1934) p. 34.

\(^{48}\)Ibid., p. 35.
enmity toward the Mallorcans on the part of the natives of Ibiza. He feels the weight of dead hands in the persistence of the traditions shaping the lives of the people of Ibiza:

... Ya que los muertos no querían que fuese hombre, fuese parasito. Aceptaría la orden sin rebelarse: partiría. Los muertos mandan, y él era su siervo inerme.49

Jaime solves his differences with the other suitor without leaving Ibiza, and he falls even more in love with Margalida; his attitude about the authority of the dead has changed completely and he says: "No; los muertos no mandan: quien manda es la vida, y sobre la vida, el amor."50

Luna Benamor (1919) describes the unhappy love affair between a Christian and a Jewess. Luis Aquirre, one of the central figures in the novel, lands on Gibraltar en route to Australia. Before this time, Luis, the orphan son of a well-to-do family, has served in various consulates in Europe. Now, at twenty-five, he is the new Spanish consul to Australia, a position which he received because of the influence of an uncle and because of family friends who wanted to see the young man have a successful career in the foreign service. On Gibraltar the natives are so familiar with everyone's activities that Luis' new position and destination are known before nightfall on his first day on

49Ibid., p. 110. 50Ibid., p. 127.
the island, and within two days, many of the shopkeepers and merchants are able to greet him by name when he passes their establishments. It becomes very apparent to him that people are known by their religions and not by their nationalities on this island fortress. He is a Catholic rather than a Spaniard; others are thought of as Protestants and not merely English.

Luis arrives on Gibraltar with the intention of sailing for Australia as soon as possible, but he stays there several weeks. He writes a number of letters to the government and to his uncle saying that he is delaying his departure because of illness or because he cannot obtain the exact itinerary of any of the vessels which he wishes to take. He himself does not really know why he is remaining on the island.

Luis soon meets Luna Benamor, a very attractive Jewish girl of about twenty-two. Her family is now thoroughly Anglicized and has practically abandoned its former Spanish customs and ideas. One member of the family had been a treasurer of a Spanish king and others had been very prominent medical workers. The family is now engaged in extensive banking business in Western Europe and the Mediterranean coasts. Luna is a native of Rabat, Morocco, where her father had been a very influential man in the Jewish community. In her early years Luna was given the customary education which Jewish women of her class enjoyed.
She learned to speak several languages, to dress in the latest fashions of Western Europe, and to play the piano. Although she is from a wealthy family, Luna has suffered some hardships in her life. When she was young, the Jews in Morocco were frequently the prey of marauding bands of Moorish tribesmen who burned their homes, took their money and valuables, raped the women and then usually killed them. She was often disguised as a slave girl during these attacks so that she would not be assaulted, and it was in one such attack by the Moors that she received her name. Until that time she was known as Horabuena. After an especially severe attack by the Moors, Horabuena and her sister Asibuena went into a state of shock from which Asibuena died. The girls' mother called Horabuena Luna in a superstitious effort to save the life of this child. She called out to a supposedly evil spirit saying that Horabuena, the child he was trying to kill, was not there and that he should leave. When Horabuena recovered, she was known as Luna officially because her mother actually believed that she had saved the girl's life by changing her name. The author neglects to explain the existence of such primitive superstition in a family of Jews unless the reader is expected to infer that the mother had become mentally deranged from grief over the loss of the first daughter. After the death of her parents, Luna came to Gibraltar to live with her grandfather and an uncle, whom she assisted by running errands.
Luis and Luna spend much time together and frequently take long strolls through the city and countryside. He soon learns that she is betrothed to a man of about forty who is in Buenos Aires setting up a business. After Luis finds this out, he offers to marry Luna, but she rejects the offer. In desperation, Luis suggests that they run away to live together, but again she rejects his proposal. Her future husband returns and she has to stop meeting Luis in public. They finally arrange a meeting and she definitely ends their relationship. She sets sail with her fiancé for Tangiers, and Luis books passage on the next ship for Australia. He believes that there was never a possibility of his marrying Luna.

Eleven short stories are bound together with the novel Luna Benamor, but these do not contain enough social ideas to place them within the scope of this study.

In Los muertos mandan, Jaime decides that religion and tradition do not have as much influence over the lives of people as many think. The opposite is true in Luna Benamor; in this novel, the reader gets the impression that religion and customs have a very significant effect upon the behavior of the characters in the novel. When Luis asks Luna to marry him, she thinks, "¿Qué locura! Novios, para qué? No podían casarse: eran de diferentes creencias."\(^{51}\)

The author is quick to point out that it is not only Christians and Jews who do not readily intermarry. Luis jokingly suggests to a Hindu friend that he marry a Spanish girl. The Hindu reacts in this manner:

No; cada uno con los suyos. El era de su raza, y vivía aislado voluntariamente en medio de los blancos. Nada puede el hombre con las simpatías y repulsiones de la sangre. Brahma, que era el resumen de la divina sabiduría, separó a las criaturas en castas.\(^{52}\)

Luna shows that she is very dedicated to her race as well as her religion as she tells Luis that she will not marry him: "No. Es imposible. Tu Dios no es mi Dios; tu raza no es mi raza."\(^{53}\) He then replies, "Olvída eso; todos somos iguales ante la vida"\(^{54}\), but his argument fails to shake her convictions.

\(^{52}\)Ibid., p. 61. \(^{53}\)Ibid., p. 95. \(^{54}\)Ibid., p. 96.
Blasco Ibáñez despises all forms of traditional religion; however, at no point does he profess or advocate atheism. He claims that religions are institutions created by early man to explain the unknown and to comfort the downtrodden. In his opinion, contemporary religion has long since served its purpose and should be discarded because at present in its derision and suppression of modern science, a blessing which could benefit all mankind, it constitutes a serious hindrance to human progress.

He criticizes religious intolerance which has so long been a prominent national characteristic of Spain, and says that the Spain of the future, a republican democracy, will have no established state religion and will have religious liberty such as that found in most English-speaking countries. He goes to great length to point out the horrors and hypocrisy prevalent in the Spanish religious wars and is quick to show that the established church will do anything in its power to combat dissenters and to maintain the status quo. Spain itself has suffered much because the Church not only tries to suppress the advance of science, but also the rich use religion as a means of consoling the
poverty-stricken, and by doing so, help create a state of perpetual poverty among many Spaniards.

In *El intruso*, the author specifically attacks the Jesuits for their desire to dominate Spanish religious life, and, at times, politics. He states categorically that the Jesuits are the enemies of the Spanish people and that before Spain can make any progress as a modern nation, these men whom he regards as religious parasites must be stripped of all their power and influence.

Blasco Ibáñez goes to great lengths in *Entre naranjos* to describe *caciquismo*. He shows that this vicious political bossism has had detrimental effects upon the caciques themselves as well as upon the poor who suffer the most from the abuse of power inherent in the system. He makes it clear that he believes that the very wealthy and the ostentatiously religious are the most ardent supporters of this system of governing which has done a great deal to prevent the development of Spain into a modern, progressive nation. Not only does this bossism foster ignorance and promote injustice among the poor; it also causes much rivalry and frequent bankruptcy among those who are directly involved. He thinks that in order for his country to become modernized, both the monarchy and its supporter *caciquismo* must be eliminated from politics.

*Sangre y arena* is considered one of the most complete descriptions of bullfighting ever published and one that
contains the most adverse criticism. Blasco Ibáñez points out that the majority of bullfighters are poor youths looking for a fast way to make a fortune—a charge similar to that made by many critics of boxing in the United States. He further shows that a successful bullfighter is constantly drained financially by supporting a group of hangers-on and by gambling, which the matador usually considers a necessity to maintain his social standing. Furthermore, the constant preoccupation with death which weighs upon the torero both before and during a fight causes a gradual deterioration of his mental and emotional equilibrium. These are merely some of the matadors' problems; for every torero who becomes a matador, there are several aspirants who have dropped along the way to inferior positions or men who have been matadores and who have fallen from public favor because of age, injury, or loss of courage. These men work around the bullrings and are exposed constantly to danger for a salary which hardly supports a family. Finally, Blasco Ibáñez indicts the crowd of aficionados, the spectators, as being the beasts which actually kill the fighters because it is their approval which offers the chance of fame and fortune that induces many poor youths to dedicate themselves to bullfighting.

Blasco Ibáñez believes that the present educational system in Spain is very outdated and, to a certain extent, is responsible for Spain's backwardness among nations of
Western Europe. The government of the Spain of which he writes spends more on the maintenance of the royal family than it does on all forms of education. The entire educational system must be taken from the control of the Jesuits and wealthy caciques and freed from the discrimination imposed by wealth and religious practices. The author considers education as the most effective means of curing the perpetual poverty which is present among a majority of the Spanish people.

Blasco Ibáñez attacks the moral standards among the middle-class people of Spain. He takes a great deal of effort to show that insincerity, hypocrisy, and preoccupation with outward appearance may easily lead to financial and moral ruin. For him, the best system of personal values is honesty and sincerity combined with a reasonable degree of sophistication in education, politics, and national culture.

Sex plays a major role in many of the writer's novels. It is used for pleasure, profit, and as a means of social climbing. Many of the women in the novels discussed in this study use it to raise themselves out of poverty or to maintain a station in life which they might otherwise lose because of declining fortunes. The partners of such women are men who like to think of their mistresses as playthings or a compensation for the debilities of advancing age. Indulgence in illicit relationships over a period of time always ends with the complete moral or physical breakdown
of one or both of the participants. The author, on the
other hand, chides those women who deny themselves and
their husbands carnal pleasures in order to comply too
rigidly with the restrictions imposed by their puritanical
beliefs. He affirms that such attitudes are a beginning of
marital difficulty.

Almost all of the novels of the Valencian and Madrid
periods in the author's writing career end with a note of
pessimism. Most of his characters are engaged in an endless
struggle to survive, and in the case of those who have
wealth, their primary goals are social position, power, and
mundane pleasures. Furthermore, there is always the
triumph of the rich, the powerful, and the sensual at the
expense of the poor, the weak, and the virtuous. The good
lose all of their battles; the bad may lose part of theirs,
but they always win at least a relative victory. Not one
of the author's novels of the periods considered in this
investigation ends with the success of a protagonist who
is a morally sound person.

Blasco Ibáñez believes that people should be free to
choose their own mates. In his opinion, marriage forced on
one by relatives or one occasioned solely by the promise of
financial gain is almost certain to lead to unhappiness if
not to infidelity. He argues that in the upper classes of
Spain almost all marriages are arranged with more attention
to money and social position than to love. The author does
not condemn those who desert their mates or commit adultery after being made a partner to a forced marriage. Although he does not advocate infidelity as a means of pursuing happiness denied by a forced marriage, he tacitly condones it. He condemns those ultra-religious women who believe marriage is only a legal method of procreation and that the carnal and sensual side of marriage ought to be indulged in a little as possible. As noted earlier, he feels that such women cause many husbands to be guilty of indiscretions and infidelities which they might have avoided if their wives had been less rigid in their interpretation of the meaning and purpose of their conjugal life.

In two of his novels, the author suggests agrarian reform to help the peasants. He does not advocate physical violence or armed revolt as a means for the oppressed to free themselves from the oppressors. He thinks that the unequal distribution of wealth is a major factor in the persistence of poverty. He gives examples of meetings, individual efforts, and revolutions and shows that these have all failed to bring lasting relief to the poor in Spain. In his novels, the churches, the schools, and many other social institutions are lies and fantasies which do not help the poor. The toiler who has no protector or personal attractiveness is unequipped for the daily battles in life and is destined to defeat. The poor need good leaders from among themselves who will stay with them and
act as guides instead of deserting their peers and working for the rich. In order for this leadership to do the best job in uplifting the poor, Elasco Ibáñez suggests that the peasants must have a better education, more freedom to govern themselves and a system of justice which treats all alike regardless of social or political status. This must be the solution to the problem, because all efforts until now, including charity, have served only to keep the poor at their low level and to perpetuate their kind.
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