SOME CONTEMPORARY ASPECTS OF THE ESPERPENTO

OF RAMON DEL VALLE-INCLAN

APPROVED:

[Signatures]

Major Professor

Minor Professor

Director of the Department of Foreign Languages

Dean of the Graduate School
Heyden, Betsy Smyth, Some Contemporary Aspects of the Esperpento of Ramón del Valle-Inclán. Master of Arts (Spanish Literature), April, 1971, 126 pp., chronology, bibliography, 63 titles.

This thesis inquires into the nature of the esperpento of Ramón del Valle-Inclán in order to understand the qualities inherent in the genre; and further, it considers the contemporaneous nature of this art form that makes it relevant to contemporary art and thought. Those works considered are those specifically designated as esperpentico by Valle-Inclán: i.e., the novel, Luces de bohemia, and the dramatic trilogy, Martes de carnaval, comprising Las galas del difunto, Los cuernos de don Friolera and La hija del Capitán.

A brief chronology of the life of Valle-Inclán with publication dates of his works is included.

The esperpento is approached by a study of its style and technique, and then of its motivational philosophy. The esperpentico style is characterized by the dehumanization and degradation of man, through the techniques of mechanization, distortion and animalization. Time and
setting are treated impressionistically in a subjective, contemporaneous manner and are expressed in an exceptionally rich valleinclanesco vocabulary. The distortions of time, setting and character lead to the world of the grotesque, and therefore, to the tragicomic.

Each work of the esperpento, as enumerated in the first paragraph of this abstract, is presented in a complete anotated synopsis which illustrates with specific examples the various stylistic techniques. Each synopsis is preceded by brief qualifying paragraphs on the individual work. Luces de bohemia is seen to express the philosophy of the esperpento, and to present in its protagonist an alter-ego for a mature, disillusioned Valle-Inclán. The masterpiece of the genre is Los cuernos de don Friolera, the most elaborately stylized of the esperpentos, and the most successful synthesis of tragedy and comedy.

The personality of Valle-Inclán and his artistic creation exist as an inseparable entity. For this reason the character of the man is next examined for its expression in personal terms of the esperpento.

The contemporary aspects of the esperpento are found in this paper to be: 1. its vision of inner, subjective
reality as opposed to historical or naturalistic reality, 2. its pervading feeling of disillusionment and alienation, and 3. the blending of tragedy and comedy into the grotesque. Through all of these aspects the esperpento is seen to have great empathy with contemporary European literature, specifically the French "theater of the absurd," and to have used similar means of expression, i.e., mechanization by turning men into puppets and things, distortion, caricature, and the use of the world of carnival, and as its essential characteristic, the grotesque through a genuine synthesis of tragedy and comedy.

These qualities of the esperpento place it within the avant-garde of contemporary art and thought.
SOME CONTEMPORARY ASPECTS OF THE ESPERPENTO
OF RAMON DEL VALLE-INCLAN

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

by

BETSY SKYTH HEYDEN, B.A.
Denton, Texas
April, 1971
TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHRONOLOGY ........................................... 11

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION. ........................................ 1

   Definition of the word esperpento
   Works included in the esperpento
   Purpose of this study

II. AN APPROACH TO THE ESPERPENTO ............... 3

   What is the esperpento?
   Style and Technique
   Themes and Motivational Philosophy

III. LUCES DE BOHEMIA .................................. 18

   A first statement of the esperpento

IV. MARTES DE CARNAVAL ................................ 35

   Significance of the title
   Las galas del difunto .................................. 37
   La hija del capitán ..................................... 44
   Los cuernos de don Friolera ......................... 55
   The contemporary tragedy of don Friolera

V. VALLE-INCLAN: IMAGE OF THE MAN AS AN ESPERPENTO . 89

VI. CONTEMPORARY ASPECTS OF THE ESPERPENTO ........ 103

VII. CONCLUSION ........................................... 111

BIBLIOGRAPHY ............................................. 114
CHRONOLOGY

1866 - October 28, born in Villanueva de Arosa, Galicia.

1877 - Educated in Pontevedra and Santiago de Compostela.

1890 - First poems, stories and articles are published.

1890 - Death of his father. Valle leaves his studies and goes to Madrid to work as a journalist.

1892 - Valle-Inclán travels to America. Works as a journalist in Mexico. Visits Cuba.

1893 - Valle returns to Galicia. Published Femeninas, a collection of short stories.

1896 - Leaves Galicia and goes again to Madrid and the life of the café. Establishes friendship with members of the Generation of 98.

1898 - Focal year of the Generation of 98. Valle makes his debut as an actor.

1899 - Gives up acting after the loss of his arm. Cenizas premiered by Benavente.

1902 - Publishes Sonata de otoño.

1903 - Continues his life at the cafés (Café de Levante). Publishes Sonata de estío, Corte de amor, Jardín umbrio.

1904 - Publishes Flor de santidad, Sonata de primavera.

1905 - Publishes Sonata de invierno (last of the four sonatas which compose the series Memorias del Marqués de Bradomín.)


1908 - El yermo de las almas, Cofre de sándalo. Los cruzados de la causa (first novel in the series La guerra carlista).
1909 - Last two novels of *La guerra carlista*: *El resplandor de la hoguera*, *Gerifaltes de antaño*.

1910 - Tours Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Chile and Bolivia as artistic director of theatrical troupe. Unsuccessful candidate for office in Galicia. Premieres *La cabeza del Bautista*, *Cuento de abril*.

1911 - *Voces de gesta*.

1912 - Premier of *Voces de gesta* and *La marquesa Rosalinda*. Returns to Galicia.

1913 - Begins the *Opera omnia*.

1915 - Petitions for family titles and is refused.

1916 - Visits the World War I front in France as a newspaper correspondent. Briefly serves as professor of aesthetics in Madrid. His good friend Rubén Darío does. Publishes *La lámpara maravillosa*, his mystical work on aesthetics.

1918 - *Mi hermana Antonia*.


1920 - Publishes the first esperpento, *Luces de bohemia*, and *Los cuernos de don Friolera*, the farces *La enamorada del rey* and *La reina castiza*.

1921 - Valle returns to Mexico at the government's invitation to celebrate the festivities in honor of Mexico's independence from Spain. Visits Cuba again.

1922 - *Cara de plata*, the last of the *Comedias bárbaras*.

1925 - *Tirano Banderas* published serially.

1927 - Published the collection of plays, *Retablo de la avaricia, la lujuria y la muerte*, farces in the esperpentesco manner.

1928 - *Viva mi dueño (El ruedo ibérico)*.

1929 - Arrested by the dictatorial government of Primo de Rivera and spent two weeks in jail.


1931 - Receives a commendation from the pretender Don Jaime for his long support of the Carlist cause. Again an unsuccessful candidate for political office.

1932 - Receives honors, but was refused entrance to the Academia Española. Elected president of the Ateneo, and a banquet was given in his honor. His income for the publication of the *Opera omnia* is cut off with the bankruptcy of his publisher. Separated from his wife.

1933 - Hospitalized for surgery. Appointed to head the Academia de España in Rome. Valle spent little time in Italy.

1934 - Health grows worse. Again rejected by the Academia Española.

1935 - Publishes his last article and a poem. Continues to work on *El ruedo ibérico*, but it is never finished.

1936 - Valle dies on January 5 in Santiago de Compostela, Galicia.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Esperpento is the name given to certain works of Ramón del Valle-Inclán, works which present a special philosophical viewpoint expressed within a specialized stylistic technique. It is considered the most brilliant achievement of Valle-Inclán's art and falls late in the stylistic trajectory of his work. Those works which are considered esperpenticó vary according to the authority. The farces—Farsa y licencia de la reina castiza and Retablo de la avaricia, la lujuria y la muerte—and the novels of the Ruedo Ibérico contain many elements of the esperpento. Tirano Banderas, Valle-Inclán's unique synthesis of art and social criticism which makes full use of all the stylistic techniques of the esperpento, is considered a masterpiece of the genre, although Valle did not label the novel as such.

1 These two farces form part of the trilogy, Tablado de marionetas. The third play, Farsa infantil de la cabeza del dracón, was written in 1909 and is not part of the esperpentesque aesthetic. Although it contains satirical criticism of the court, it is basically a fairy tale and lacks the underlying bitterness of the esperpento.

2 The novels of the Iberian cycle are: 1. La corte de milagros; 2. Viva mi dueno; 3. Baza de espadas.
Four works were specifically designated as *esperpentos* by Valle-Inclán: the short novel, *Luces de bohemia*, and the dramatic trilogy, *Martes de carnaval*, which is composed of *Lasгаласdeldifunto*, *LoscuernosdedonFriolera*, and *La hijadelcapitán*.

The *esperpento* is an aesthetic, as well as a body of work whose spirit and embryonic techniques are present in varying degree within all the later works of Valle-Inclán, and may even be traced within the *Sonatas* and other early works. The elements of Valle-Inclán's literary art have been compared to a kaleidoscope, always present, but always shifting to form new patterns. It is the purpose of this study to examine the *esperpento*, specifically with reference to those works so designated by Valle-Inclán, in order to understand what qualities and characteristics are inherent in the genre; and further, to consider the contemporaneous nature of this art form developed by Valle-Inclán in 1922 that makes it relevant to contemporary art and thought.
CHAPTER II

AN APPROACH TO THE ESPERPENTO

What is the esperpento? It is a literature of the grotesque, and as such, it falls within the tradition of the carnival, the guignol, Punch and Judy, and the traveling circus; and it takes inspiration from all of them. It is also completely unique. The word itself is a colloquialism meaning an ugly person or thing, nonsense, an absurdity. It is the term Valle himself chose to designate those works whose style and content reflect the tristeza absurda of his personal life and the grotesque panorama of tragedy which surrounded him in contemporary Spain.

An approach to the understanding of the esperpento should be made from two levels: first, from that of style and technique; and second, from that of the spirit of the genre, its motivational philosophy.

Style and Technique

Valle-Inclán was foremost and always a stylist, and nowhere more so than in the esperpento. This stylization, accompanied as it was by a mental vision that was as unusual and unpalatable in presentation as it was
unorthodox and uncomfortable in outlook, has caused some misunderstanding. Today Valle-Inclán is enjoying a new and rising vogue of acceptance. It has often happened that stylization and deep emotional and intellectual commitment have been considered mutually exclusive.¹ The key to understanding the esperpento is to realize that this aesthetic and its literary manifestation, which is technique, are integral to the deeper philosophical essence. Technique in Valle-Inclán is stylized, individual, and eventually even revolutionary. The sociological and psychological meaning is expressed by, rather than through this technique. In other words, to borrow a current catch-phrase from the plastic arts, "the medium is the message."

¹This lack of understanding is discussed by Anthony N. Zahareas in the Preface to the critical compendium, Ramón del Valle-Inclán: An Appraisal of his Life and Works. With reference to Valle's aesthetic stylization, Zahareas says: "Each work is usually examined as a stylistic tour-de-force and, inevitably, Valle-Inclán has acquired a reputation for brilliant inventiveness or artful contrivance; critics usually overlook the content of his works and often treat the action and historical background as if they were brilliant aesthetic exercises. His political views remain a puzzle. Even the social and existential implications of his later grotesque, though highly praised, has been regarded mainly as one more aesthetic exercise." A. N. Zahareas, editor, Ramón del Valle-Inclán: An Appraisal of his Life and Works (New York, 1968), pp. xiii-xiv.
Dehumanization of Character

The most obvious stylistic devices of the esperpento are those whose purpose is the dehumanization of character. It is what Díaz-plaja calls "la visión desagradadora." This dehumanizing process is accomplished by three easily identifiable means: 1. physical distortion; 2. animalization; and 3. mechanization.

Physical distortion and deformation are strikingly illustrated by the description of the venal old book-seller, Zaratustra of Luces de bohemia, who appears as some grotesque chimera, hump-backed, with a face of "rancid bacon," and a long green scarf like a green snake around his neck. Also unforgettable is the glass eye of the teniente Rovirosa that keeps popping out of its socket as the pompous military officer grimaces or laughs. The pattern is clear, a degrading ugliness.

---

2 Guillermo Díaz-Plaja, Las estéticas de Valle-Inclán (Madrid, 1965), p. 64.

3 Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Luces de bohemia (Madrid, 1961), p. 16.

4 One of the few authors to whom Valle is often compared is Francisco Quevedo. In such poems as A un hombre de gran nariz Quevedo has, in the words of Zahareas, created "an aesthetic of bodily distortion." A. N. Zahareas, op. cit., p. 96.
Valle-Inclán's second method of dehumanizing his characters is that of making them into animals, through physical appearance and movement. An officer of Los cuernos de don Friolera has "sus ojos saltones y su boca de oreja a oreja, en el de las ranas." That personification of evil, Doña Tadea, is presented alternately as a staring, flat-faced barn-owl, and as a kind of scurrying rodent. The most striking images of all appear in Tirano Banderas. The tyrant Banderas, who moves "con paso de rata fisgona" and whose gaze is like that of some night bird, is a stylized prototype of the Latin American military tyrant. Banderas is often referred to as a large skull, a calavera, whose symbolic ugliness is split by a green slash of a mouth stained with coca. The effiminate homosexual Spaniard, the Marqués de Benicarles, official representative of His Catholic Spanish Majesty, is an obscene little lap-dog.

The third method, mechanization, is the most important of the esperpento dehumanizing techniques. Characters become puppets—awkward, helpless, ridiculous and tragic. Títeres, fantoches, peleles, muñecas.

---

maniquís—that is what Valle-Inclán calls them and that is how they behave. "They react when their strings are tugged. Their expressions are exaggerated jerky movements; their gestures, scrawls; and their postures are controlled by a clever puppeteer who knows his business well."  

Anthony N. Zahareas explains this deliberate artifice:

The mechanical effect is intentional. It recalls the process by which man, in modern society, becomes a mere thing. For the individual continually loses significance as he is dealt with more and more cynically, as a tiny piece of the collective mass to which he must subordinate himself. The very concept of the hero demands an autonomous behavior that contemporary society seldom allows for.  

This sense of helplessness and loss of individuality is recognized as a contemporary phenomenon, and it is one of the keys to the esperpento.  

The process of dehumanization goes yet one step further. Occasionally the characters are no more than shadows. The rodent-like Doña Tadea is first introduced as a shadow scurrying surreptitiously among other shadows.

---

7 A. N. Zahareas, op. cit., p. 124.
Max Estrella and his friend, Don Latino, are "sombras en las sombras de un rincón." The madrileño intellectuals, already animalized in their descriptions by Valle-Inclán, become mere shadows around the casket of Max Estrella. It cannot be known whether Valle used these shadows as a further abstraction of the image of man, or whether he was carrying his technique of mechanization into the oriental shadow puppet theater. Certainly it suggests the alienation of man, just as the preceding techniques revealed his desvaloración.

It is obvious, then, that Valle-Inclán's characters will not be psychological portraits. They are, rather, abstractions created by an economical literary impressionism.

Valle-Inclán, like a theatrical or cinematographic director, emphasizes the exterior signs of popularity. He tells us of gestures, facial expressions, salient physical processes or complicated workings of the human mind. Recalling Picasso's succinct ink drawings (Don Quijote and Sancho) in which an economical visual portrait is able to convey the essence of personality, Valle never attempts to "get inside" his characters in a Proustian or Faulknerian sense.

---

In this artistic, or poetic, condensation, physical details are extremely few. These few details are exaggerated, distorted and repeated in a literary technique which compares to the plastic arts techniques of the painter, as de Tortella has pointed out.\(^{10}\)

Setting

Valle's art is, in the final analysis, a visual one, and nowhere in his work is there a tighter integration of dramatic matter with the visual than in the esperpento. Almost any acotacion of the trilogy Martes de carnaval offers excellent examples.

The settings receive a distorting treatment when they pertain to the mechanical manifestations of modern life; i.e., the telephone upon a desk does not ring, it urinates; an accordion is a serpent slithering. Nature, however, remains as a contrast to this fesmo. The stars shine in cool, distant beauty upon the strawman of Don Friolera.

Time

Time in the esperpento has shifted from the past, imagined or real. The world reflected in the distorting

\(^{10}\) Another painter to whom it is natural to compare Valle-Inclán is Francisco Goya. Valle himself mentions the grotesque of Goya as an inspiration for the esperpento.
mirrors is not the nostalgic evocations of the Sonatas, not the legendary mists of the Galician works, nor the recent historical past of the Carlist cycle; it is the Madrid contemporary with Valle-Inclán. Yet there is a denial of time. The action of Lúces de Bohemia takes place within a few hours. In Los Cuernos de don Friolera time is indefinite within the plastic structure of its three parts. In Tirano Banderas, Valle-Inclán has annihilated time, treating his story fragmentally. Time becomes part of the form, which is patterned and structured so that it, too, becomes a literary abstraction.

Language

Language in the esperpento changes to suit the style and theme, but remains as it is in all of Valle-Inclán's works, "linguistic pyrotechnics." The valleinclanesque vocabulary is disconcerting in its richness, drawing upon archaisms, colloquialisms, and in the esperpento, upon the madrileño slang, vulgarisms, and a synthesis of regionalisms from throughout Latin America, especially Mexico. Valle-Inclán was fascinated by words, by the

---

11Guillermo Díaz-Plaja, op. cit., p. 69.

12A comprehensive Valle-Inclán lexicon does not exist, but a helpful list of Latin American regionalisms used in Tirano Banderas can be found in Emma Speratti-Piñero, La elaboración artística en Tirano Banderas (Mexico, 1957), pp. 151-189.
sound and the form of them, by the evocations that extend beyond their meanings. When words did not exist for his purpose, he made them up, for as Max Estrella says, "Soy poeta y tengo derecho al alfabeto."¹³

From this consideration of techniques--of character, setting, time, and language--it can be seen that the esperpento is a literary form which distorts apparent reality.¹⁴ As Amado Alonso says, "Todo aparece en Valle-Inclán estilizado, transportado de la vida a la dimensión artística como mundo autónomo." And he continues:

Es notable la amalgama de realismo y de extrema estilización. Sus temas, concretos, los toma


¹⁴José Rubia Barcia could take issue with this statement. He has said, "To consider the esperpentos as deformed reality would imply a contradiction in terms, and for them to be a stylization would require a pre-existent pattern or model to serve as a basis. The esperpentos are new artistic structures, formed--or conformed--according to a new concept and a new vision of reality." José Rubia Barcia, "The Esperpento, A New Novelistic Dimension," Valle-Inclán: Centennial Studies, edited by Ricardo Gullón (Austin, 1968), p. 88

[The esperpentos are unquestionably "new artistic structures," but the contradiction in terms implied in "deformed reality" forms part of the paradox which is central to the new reality of the genre. Stylization presupposes a form or pattern, but it does not negate the application of a new aesthetic to it.]
Valle-Inclán de la vida misma, de los choques del vivir auténtico con el mundo circundante y aún acabará por preferir los específicamente modernos. Pero luego no pretende presentar el vivir y el experimentar esos choques, sino que los toma de verdad como temas, los estiliza y los transporta al plano autónomo de la literatura. 15

This "amalgama" of irreconcilables introduces one of the basic paradoxes of the esperpento, and one of its most important ties with the contemporary—the creation of a deeper, truer reality through the use of the unreal. A discussion of reality in the esperpento will serve as a bridge from the study of style to thematic analysis.

Themes and Motivational Philosophy

Historical Reality

Time in the esperpento, as has been noted, was the historical present for Valle-Inclán, Spain of the 1920's and 1930's. It was a time of defeat and humiliation, of labor strikes and political coups, of violence and hunger, of tragedy that was grotesque because it was meaningless. Sumner Greenfield has called this Spain "absurd," and a "vast grotesque mural." 16 In his article on La reina


castiza, Greenfield calls the esperpento, "a grotesque vision of national life."\(^{17}\) Valle's \textit{mundo circundante} is the subject of the esperpento, and its bitter inspiration.

In Valle-Inclán's case, it was perhaps his awareness of this historical reality, present in him since the twenties, which turned him toward the esperpento. \(...\) \textit{Luces de bohemía} contains the reality of a world Valle-Inclán inhabits, not the reality of a world he imagines, as was the case with \textit{La guerra carlista}. Bradomín, Montenegro, and \textit{Cara de Plata} belong to a world where heroism could seem possible (at least to them), a world with feudal overtones, recreated freely by the author's imagination since he had never really known it. Max Estrella and Captain Chuletas de Sargento are farcical "heroes" because like their creator, they live in a society where the individual—and consequently heroic acts—have lost their meaning. \(^{18}\)

What are the "héroes clásicos" and "imágenes bellas" which have lost their meaning in an absurd world? What is the apparent reality which Valle-Inclán holds up to the concave mirror? \(^{19}\)

This reality is Spain as a national entity, an anachronistic grotesque upon the shoulder of Europe, the


\(^{19}\)For the significance of the "concave mirror," see the introductory paragraphs on Chapter III, \textit{Luces de bohemía}, page 19 of this paper.
official Spain of a decadent Bourbon monarchy, and of institutions distorted by cruelty and hypocrisy. It is the golfería of Madrid, a galaxy of ineffectual intellectuals, scoundrelly bureaucrats, prostitutes and bums. It is the military; the press; and the bondage of anacronistic ideas such as the mundonor. It is the small, absurd tragedies of Max Estrella and don Friolera.

Inner Reality

In subject the esperpento marks a dramatic shift from the private fictional world of Valle-Inclán to what has been called "historical reality," but it is reality in the contemporary sense. This is no naturalistic re-creation but an inner reality which is reached through techniques that are thoroughly unrealistic. Ricardo Gullón has expressed this aptly:

The esperpento, certainly, has the unreal reality of art. But if we speak of reality in more inclusive terms, we may say that the esperpento reveals it. Contrary to common opinion, the esperpento, either as Valle-Inclán or as others conceived it, was used to approach reality in a more lucid and open-eyed way than the so-called realistic way. The idea was to discover what we might call the "essence" of reality. 20

In considering the contemporary character of the esperpento, both in technique and in intent, it is

interesting to note some of the striking similarities it shares with the French Theater of the Absurd. The following excerpt from Leonard Pronko's *Avant-Garde* in his chapter on the theater of Eugène Ionesco shows a similar approach to reality:

The essence of theater, he (Ionesco) claims, is enlargement. To go beyond that twilight land that is neither life nor theater, we must exaggerate, push our characters, our stories, and even our settings beyond the bounds of the true or even the likely in order to arrive at something that is truer than life itself, the amplified and theatrical image of life which strikes deep below the surface of reality.  

That this approach leads to similar stylistic techniques is evident in Pronko's paragraph which immediately follows the one cited above:

The world created by Ionesco is strange and nightmarish, but at the same time familiar, for it is our own little world, and the grotesque figures moving upon the stage remind us of ourselves. We have become gigantic puppets, often moving senselessly back and forth, with little apparent meaning in our words or actions. This theater recalls the Punch and Judy show, as is natural, for Ionesco had his first lessons in dramatic art at the *guignol*.  

The close relationship between the techniques of the two literary genres is significant, because technique in

---


22 Ibid., p. 61.
the esperpento is no mere literary exercise. It is both a means and an end, a deeply felt stylistic achievement whose power results from its union of technique with Valle-Inclán's personal vision of the human condition. Anthony N. Zahareas has pointed out the deep, personal commitment involved in the esperpento aesthetic:

The changes (stylistic and thematic) are crucial for they manifest a new and vital integration of style with moral, psychological, aesthetic, and social substance. Moreover, such stylization reflects the existential and aesthetic crises of the twentieth century. Formally, Valle-Inclán reacts against clichés, conventionalism, and tricks which correspond to no authentic reality, outer or inner, and are neither the fruit nor the seed of any truly aesthetic experience; thematically, he dramatizes the tragic evils, social cruelties and incongruous behavior which distort mankind and in particular Spain. If Valle-Inclán mocks his own contemporaries, it is because their insistence to justify tragic inevitabilities and to avoid the difficult responsibility of an absurd circumstance seem hallucinations or "gestures in a tragic carnival." 23

This personal vision of Valle-Inclán leads us to a strange world where comedy and tragedy are jarringly juxtaposed and finally become inseparable. "Estamos ante un mundo disconcertante donde la tragedia y la farsa existen lado a lado, mientras que la angustia y el desatino del hombre están constantemente en juego la una contra el otro." 24

23 A. N. Zahareas, op. cit., p. 599.

The tragicomic vision is contemporary. Every art form, as well as every national literature, offers examples of this thematic and aesthetic synthesis. It is a "disconcerting world," where tragedy is grotesque and all our heroes are puppets and fools. The comedy in this world of disillusionment evokes a very uncomfortable laugh.
CHAPTER III

LUCES DE BOHEMIA

The first statement of the esperpento is found in the short novel Luces de bohemia, Valle-Inclán's study of the Bohemian life of Madrid. The chief protagonist of the novel, the blind poet Max Estrella, makes the following comment, "Los héroes clásicos reflejados en los espejos cóncavos dan el Esperpento."\(^1\) The values and conditions which formerly created heroes have been warped so that the reflections are now grotesque. What Valle-Inclán sees within the distorting mirrors are his own world and himself.

There is a close psychological identification of Valle-Inclán with the character of Max Estrella. In the prison cell in Madrid, a prisoner speaks to Max:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>El Preso</th>
<th>Usted no es proletario.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Max</td>
<td>Yo soy el dolor de un mal sueño.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Preso</td>
<td>Parece usted hombre de luces. Su hablar es de otros tiempos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max</td>
<td>Yo soy un poeta ciego.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Preso</td>
<td>¡No es pequeño desgracia! --En España el trabajo y la inteligencia siempre se han visto despreciados. (^2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\)Valle-Inclán, Luces de bohemia. (Madrid, 1961), p. 106.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 54.
Like Max, Valle-Inclán was a poet, an intellectual, a "man of lights" who spoke with a speech from other times, and a disappointed and disillusioned man who suffered degrading poverty. The identification of Valle and Max Estrella is that of sympathetic similarity, but the actual historical basis for the character of the poet was probably Alejandro Sawa. As his alter-ego, Valle-Inclán has Max express many of his ideas—the esperpento aesthetic, religious agnosticism, his fights with the press and the Spanish Academy, and the many nights of literary and political conversation in the cafés of Madrid.

In discussing the Madrid of the esperpento, Sumner Greenfield has said, "Max serves Valle-Inclán as an ethical observer of the city's inhumanity through his sharp-witted intellectuality and his enormous compassion for human dignity." He also serves as its victim.

---

3 The connections between Max Estrella and Alejandro Sawa, as well as the historical background for other characters in Luces, are discussed in detail in Allen Phillips' article, "Sobre Luces de bohemia y su realidad literaria," Valle-Inclán: Centennial Studies, edited by Ricardo Gullón (Austin, 1988), pp. 601-614.

4 Valle-Inclán, Luces de bohemia, p. 89.

5 Ibid., p. 40.

6 Ibid., p. 20.

"Visually and dramatically he is part of the grotesque image of the city: morally he is not, for his cry of indignation, anger and impotence before the human spectacle is that of Valle-Inclán himself." 8

Synopsis

The story takes place within the time span of a single evening, from the "hora crepuscular" until the church clock strikes five the following morning. Within these hours the pover-stricken blind poet, Max Estrella, will face the tragic absurdities of his life in contemporary Madrid, and his own helpless deformation by them. He will carouse, be thrown into jail, be beaten, mistreated and released, and he will die.

Escena I 9

At dusk in an attic room Max Estrella and his wife, Collet, are discussing a letter of rejection on his latest book. Collet's meaningless encouragement, "otra puerta se abrirá," is answered by Max with a proposal of family suicide as their only solution.

8 Sumner Greenfield, op. cit., p. 262.

9 Valle-Inclán calls the divisions of his novel "escenas," rather than chapters. To make this distinction, the Spanish escena will be used in this discussion, whereas in Chapter IV, where these divisions refer to a play, the word "scene" will be used.
This mood of tragedy is interrupted by the arrival of Max's friend and drinking companion, Don Latino de Hispalis, admirer and loyal friend up to the limit of his own material interests, at which point venality wins without contest. The advent of Don Latino triggers resentful vulgarities from Max's ragged, scarecrow daughter, Claudinita. Don Latino has just returned from pawning some books for Max, and when the old man learns they have brought only a pittance, he insists that Latino lead him to the bookseller to "deshacer el trato." Claudinita cries out after him; "¿Sabes cómo acaba todo esto? ¡En la taberna de Pica Lagartos!"

Escena II

The old bookseller among his books, his car, his dog, and his parrot, is an esperpéntico spectre.

Zaratustra, abichado y giboso--la cara de tocino rancio y la buganda de verde serpiente--, promueve, con su caracterización de fantoche, una aguda y dolorosa disonancia muy emotiva y muy moderna. Zaratustra, winking at Don Latino as he secretes Max's books away from the counter, tells the blind man that they have already been sold.

10 Valle-Inclán, Luces de Bohemia, p. 15.
11 Ibid., p. 16.
At this moment a new character arrives, Don Peregrino Gay, traveler, Anglophile, and ridiculous poseur who speaks a Spanish that is "rancio y animado." Gay does not reappear in the book, and serves only to present a madrileño type, and as an opportunity for some valle-inclanescos observations upon religion in Spain. At the end of the scene a girl appears asking for news of some characters in a serialized novel that her mistress is reading. This is an example, fairly rare in the esperpento, of Valle-Inclán's habit of interweaving his works with continuing characters and overlapping details. The girl's mistress is "Doña Loreta, la del coronel," wife of the Colonel in Don Friolera, and the girl's errand is the connecting link in the two works.

**Escena III**

At the tavern of Pica Lagartos. Enriqueta la Pisa-Bien, "una mozuela golfa, revenida de un ojo, periodista y florista,"\(^{12}\) cheats Max out of a lottery ticket filled with "lucky" numbers. Actually, Max merely let her take it, as he has ceased to react to his own personal financial misfortunes. Max then pawns his cloak for money to drink with, even though he knows that he is in so weak a condition that he may die from exposure without his cloak.

\(^{12}\)Valle-Inclán, *Luces*, p. 27.
The sounds of fighting draw La Pisa-Bien and her companion, "el cabrito viudo, El Rey de Portugal," into the streets while Pica Lagartos and the other shopkeepers bang down their iron grills to protect their shops. Throughout this scene a drunkard make a refrain by an ironical compliment to Max, "Cráneo privilegiado!"

**Escena IV**

Max and Don Latino are walking the streets of Madrid. There are sounds and shadows of soldiers patrolling the strike-bound city. From La Buñoleria come seven men, intellectuals, "descendants of the Modernist Parnassus." While the carousers are having a friendly but noisy argument, a patrol arrives and Max's boldness in talking back to the officers results in his being arrested.

**Escena V**

At the office of the secret police. Max is questioned by the authorities, in the guise here of the sarcastically named Serafín el Bonito, "un pollo chulapón de peinado".

---

13 The musicality which was so apparent in the Sonatas is not abandoned completely in the esperpento, although it is no longer an integral part of the style because of the change in mood. Highly musical passages do occur, however, in the acotaciones, as the following excerpt describing the two inebriated men as they begin their night's journey through Madrid:

"Max y Don Latino, borrachos lunáticos, filósofos peripatéticos, bajo la línea luminosa de los faroles, caminan y tambalean." Valle-Inclán, *Luces*, p. 36.
reluciente, con brisas de perfumería." Don Latino protests that they are mistreating one of the glories of Spain, but Max is ordered to a cell. When he refuses to go, he is beaten, and amid his cries for help, the group of Modernistas leave precipitously—"chalinas flotantes, pipas apagadas, románticas gregas."  

**Escena VI**

A bloodied but impenitent Max is still shouting insults at his tormentors as he is thrown into a prison cell. He finds himself, not alone, but in the company of another prisoner. For universality, Valle-Inclán calls this man simply, "El Preso." They speak of the revolution, the Prisoner believing in a solution of the destruction of wealth, while Max answers with typical valleinclanesco cynicism:

> Los obreros se reproducen populosamente, de un modo comparable a las moscas. En cambio, los patronos, como los elefantes, como todas las bestias poderosas y prehistóricas, procrean lentamente.

Finally, the real anguish beneath the sarcasm and

---

14 Valle-Inclán, Luces, p. 48.
15 Ibid., p. 52.
16 Ibid., pp. 55-56.
alejamiento breaks out:

Los ricos y los pobres; la barbarie ibérica es unánime. ¿Dónde está la bomba que destripe el terror maldito de España? 17

The prisoner, guilty of nothing but having gone on strike against his employer, is "tachado de revolución."

He tells Max that he is going to be shot, and that they will pretend he tried to escape. As the guards come for the prisoner, he and Max exchange these few last words:

El Preso: Van a matarme ... ¿Qué dirá mañana esa prensa canalla?
Max: Lo que le manden.
El Preso: ¿Está usted llorando?
Max: De impotencia y de rabia. Abracémonos, hermano. 18

Escena VII

The young modernistas and Don Latino go to the office of the newspaper, El Popular. Between jest, sarcasm, and indignation they protest Max Estrella's arrest. The newspaperman hedges, but places a call to the Minister. After a while the phone rings and Don Filiberto announces that Max has been released from prison. Valle-Inclán satirizes Don Filiberto's hypocritical self-satisfaction in this manner, "Reaparece el

17Valle-Inclán, Luces, p. 57.
18Ibid., p. 58.
Escena VIII

At the office of the Minister. Max, rumpled but completely uncowed, demands to see the Minister. The secretary, Don Diego del Coral (Valle-Inclán uses the depreciatory diminutive and calls him "Dieguito.") tries to get Max to leave, but he has come to make a protest to his former friend. The Minister and Max were students together, and the Minister was once also a man of letters.

The conversation between the two men reveals much of Valle-Inclán's personal bitterness at his own poverty and lack of recognition in Spain. In spite of his pride, the old poet finally accepts the Minister's offer of a monthly stipend. It is the last defeat for the destitute poet, but he does not live long enough to collect any material advantage, only to experience the humiliation.

Escena IX

The scene is a room at the Café Colón filled with shadows, music and smoke, and the mirrors which multiply the cafe in an "absurd geometry." Max, who earlier in

\[19\] Valle-Inclán, *Luces*, p. 70.
the evening had pawned his overcoat, now can ask Rubén Darío, 'the famous poet of Modernismo, to dine with him. The two poets speak of death. Rubén wishes to believe in some life after death, but Max does not vary from his nihilistic disillusionment and refuses to accept this consolation.

Escena X

In a district of gardens and parks, Max Estrella and Don Latino continue their odyssey. Two prostitutes accost them. While Latino goes off briefly with "la vieja sordida," Max talks to the younger prostitute. She is only fifteen. She smells of tuberoses, the flower of death.

Escena XI

Reunited, the two friends continue their walk and arrive at a street in "el Madrid austriaco." Max is stunned by the anguished sound of a woman's voice. In the midst of a crowd of neighborhood women, one woman is holding in her arms her dead child, shot through the forehead, an innocent victim of a recent disturbance or uprising in the street. The mother, completely distraught, screams insults at the civil guards, while the shopkeepers and other bystanders concern themselves only with the protection of their property and make
comments on "el principio de Autoridad."

Finally Max cries out:

¡Me muero de rabia! ... Estoy mascando ortigas. Ese muerto sabía su fin ... no le asustaba, pero temía el tormento. La Leyenda Negra, en estos días menguados, es la Historia de España. Nuestra vida es un círculo dantesco. Rabia y vergüenza. Me muero de hambre, satisfecho de no haber llevado una triste velilla en la trágica mojiganga. ¿Has oído los comentarios de esa gente, viejo canalla? Tú eres como ellos. Peor que ellos, porque tienes una peseta y propagas la mala literatura por entregas. Latino, vil corredor de aventuras insulsas, llévame al Viaducto. Te invito a regenerarte con un vuelo. 20

Don Latino answers this suicidal desperation with oriental passivity and indifference, the other side of the Spanish coin.

"¡Max, no te pongas estupendo!"

Escena XII

It is early dawn; the serrenos have been rung. The beauty of Nature stands above and serenely away from Man and all his works. "Sobre las campanas negras, la luna clara." The two old men, by now completely inebriated, "filosofan" as they sit propped up within the portals of the still closed door to the church.

This tragicomic climactic scene contains the first

20 Valle-Inclán, Luces, p. 102.
statement of the esperpento. Stylistically, its mixture of humor and pathos is a further statement of the esperpento.

Max: ¿Debe estar amaneciendo?
Don Latino: Así es.
Max: ¡Y qué frío!
Don Latino: Vamos a dar unos paseos.
Max: Ayúdame, que no puedo levantarme.
¡Estoy aterido!
Don Latino: ¡Mira que haber empeñado la capa!
Max: Préstame tu carrik, Latino.
Don Latino: ¡Max, eres fantástico!
Max: Ayúdame a ponerme en pie.
Don Latino: ¡Arriba, carculo!
Max: ¡No me tengo!
Don Latino: ¡Qué tindo eres!
Max: ¡Idiota!
Don Latino: ¡La verdad es que tienes una fisonomía algo rara!
Max: ¡Don Latino de Hispalis, grotesco personaje, te inmortalizaré en una novela!
Don Latino: Una tragedia, Max.
Max: La tragedia nuestra no es tragedia.
Don Latino: ¡Pues, algo seré!
Max: El Esperpento.

Max realizes that he is dying but he cannot make the drunken Don Latino understand. He keeps telling Max to "stop making faces." Max never drops his attitude of sardonic joking. Valle-Inclán uses the dog in the acotación to express a feismo as a sarcastic commentary on the unheroic death of the noble old poet.

Máximo Estrella se tiende en el umbral de su puerta. Cruza la costanilla un perro golfo que corre en zigzaf. En el centro, encoge la pata y se orina, el ojo leganoso, como un poeta, levantado al azul de la última estrella.

21 Valle-Inclán, Luces, pp. 104-5.
Max: Latino, entona el gori-gori.
Don Latino: Si continúas con esa broma macabra, te abandono.
Max: Yo soy el que se va para siempre.
Don Latino: Incorporáte, Max. Vamos a caminar.
Max: Estoy muerto.
Don Latino: ¡Que me estás asustando! Max, vamos a caminar. Incorporáte. No tuerzas la boca, condenado. ¡Max, Max! ¡Condenado, responde!
Max: Los muertos no hablan.
Don Latino: Definitivamente te dejo.
Max: ¡Buenas noches! 22

The blind poet's night and life are over. Don Latino takes Max's wallet from the dead body, saying:

Max, estás completamente borracho y sería un crimen dejarte la cartera encima, para que te roben. 23

Escena XIII

The tragicomedy of Scene XII is followed by the full measure of the grotesque. Collet and Claudinita watch and grieve over the body of Max Estrella. The "tropel de Modernistas" are there to pay their homage. Don Latino arrives with drunken effusiveness, and is led away by Dorio de Gadex. Latino's deformed, earless and tailless dog jumps over the casket, twisting one of the candles. "En la fila de fantoches pegados a la pared queda un hueco lleno de sugestiones." 24

---

23Ibid., p. 110.
24Ibid., p. 117.
In the doorway a tall man appears. It is the equivocal character named Basilio Soulinake, "un fripón periodista alemán, fichado en los registros policíacos como anarquista ruso."²⁵ Soulinake argues that Max is not really dead, but merely in a state of catalepsy. The two grieving women are distraught and do not know what to do, while Soulinake and the Portera argue.

Portera: ¡Que no está muerto! ¡Muerto y corrupto!
... Ustedes sin salir de este aire no perciben la corrupción que tiene. ²⁶

It is a cruel, absurd scene which pushes the grotesque beyond the limits of humor.

Escena XIV

At the cemetery after the burial, two gravediggers discuss the funeral and their own lives and work. Their crude remarks form one more contrast with the tragedy.

Two men arrive—Rubén Darío and the Marqués de Bradomín. Valle-Inclán again uses the historical personage of Darío for one side of a religious and philosophical debate, while for his alter ego, instead of the blind poet Estrella, Valle makes use of another fictional character closely allied to himself, the Marqués de Bradomín.

²⁵Valle-Inclán, Luces, p. 119.
²⁶Ibid., p. 122.
Escena última

At the tavern of Pica Lagartos. Don Latino de Hispalis, suddenly solvent, invites Follo del Pay-Pay to have a drink with him in memory of Max. Bragging that he is his "fideicomisario" and will publish his works at his own expense, he pulls money from his overcoat. It is a very large amount which immediately draws the attention of La Fisabien. She insists he has won the money of the number 5775 lottery ticket which she sold after taking it from Max. She attempts to get part of it back by seducing Latino, and here Valle-Inclán uses the most vulgar language of the book to further degrade his characters. Don Latino tries to sneak away, but Pica Lagartos grabs him by the collar and demands the payment of a large bill left unpaid by the indignant Max. At this point an old celestina comes by hawking a newspaper which tells of the mysterious death of two women on the Calle de los Bastardillos. Collet and Claudinita have been asphyxiated. The tavern boy immediately wagers that it was a suicide.

Absurd! counters Latino. Why should they kill themselves?

"¿Fatigas?" ventured the boy.

"Estaban acostumbradas," philosophized Latino. And just when he would have helped them!

Don Latino: ¡Naturalmente! ¡Y con el corazón que yo tengo, Venancio!
The significance of *Luces de bohemia*, apart from purely aesthetic considerations, lies in its mark of the definite philosophical turn the novel signals in the works of Valle-Inclán. Before *Luces* Valle-Inclán had looked to the past, as an artist with "intención estéticamente de pintor que echa la cabeza hacia atrás para ver cada pincelada." Fernandez Almagro, with reference to Valle's *Aromas de leyenda*, wrote the following:

> Voces ancestrales llaman a Valle-Inclán desde muy lejos, y un sentimiento profundo de nostalgia invade este libro, como tantos otros del autor, y la vida del autor mismo; porque cuando deriva actitud semejante de un criterio puramente estético, la Estética es, o punto menos, la razón vital de Valle-Inclán, la sangre de su espíritu. La Estética, en efecto, le lleva al tradicionalismo.  

Aesthetics also lead Valle, through the increasing bitterness of his satires, to the esperpento. With *Luces de bohemia* Valle turns to look at the Spain of his own time in an agonizing vision.

> It is more than a shift from the past to the present,

---


It is the artistic solution to a moral problem of interior rage.

...el escritor debió de sentirse insatisfecho con una estética que no se ajustaba ya al momento ... y que no era arma adecuada para expresar la indignación moral, la sátira, la violencia. Por estética y por ética, Valle-Inclán debió decidirse a cambiar.30

With Luces de bohemia Valle-Inclán has made the fusion of ethics and aesthetics that characterizes the esperpento.

CHAPTER IV

MARTES DE CARNAVAL

The trilogy Martes de carnaval is composed of three plays which were originally published separately: Las galas del difunto (1927), Los cuernos de don Friolera (1921), and La hija del capitán (1926). Published in its definitive form in 1930, Martes de carnaval is a mature statement of the esperpento, where Valle has taken the esthetic and ethical theories proposed in Luces de bohemia and created a full expression of esperpentismo in the drama.

The significance of "Martes de carnaval" is quickly obvious. The masks and false faces, the grotesque disguises, figures half-human and half-animal dancing through the streets in a revelry that has always expressed the ambivalence of good and evil, sensuality and penitence, comedy and tragedy—such a spectacle is esperpético, precisely as Valle-Inclán has defined it.  

---

1 This artistic regrouping is very characteristic of Valle-Inclán, as in Las guerras carlistas, Las comedias bárbaras, El ruedo ibérico, and others.

2 The aptness of the carnivalesque unreality of Valle's creation with the historical reality of Spain is pointed out in the following passage of Ramón Casalduero:

"El carnaval que en la Edad Media lucha con la cuaresma..."
There is, however, a further significance in the title as the trilogy treats as a special target the ridiculous and venal army officers so grotesquely caricatured within each of the plays. "Martes" is here taken in its historical philological sense of "warlike," --i.e., men of Mars,-- and these officers are truly "Martes de carnaval." The title, therefore, serves to introduce the main theme of the work, which is Valle's bitter parody of the military caste, their ideals and the evils for which he considered them responsible.³

³Valle-Inclán's attacks upon militarism can be traced through his earlier works. The same theme is treated farcically in La cabeza del dracón, and with growing sarcasm in Farsa y licencia de la reina castiza. But it reaches its full esperpentic force in Martes de carnaval.
This and other themes—such as criticism of the press, the power for evil and cruelty in a narrow-minded society and the demythification of the Don Juan legend—will be pointed out through the three synopses which follow. The techniques of desvaloración—animalization, mechanization, etc.—will be noted at various points as they occur in the texts, for this is the full "mueca sarcástico" of the esperpento.

Las galas del difunto

The first, and probably least appealing work of the trilogy, is a grotesque of little humor. It is black comedy whose moral monstrosities are basically repugnant. Its effectiveness, however, is reinforced by a completely nondidactic treatment. It is a moral esperpento.

The basic theme of Las galas del difunto is the demythification of donjuanismo. The form is a clear parody of Zorilla's Don Juan Tenorio. In Valle's esperpento a classic Spanish hero is downgraded and deformed, as Don Juan becomes the first to pass before the distorting mirrors of Luces. It is not a long trip. The replacing of romanticized descriptions with unflattering ones, and an extension of the don's amorality into the realm of the grotesque accomplishes it.

Enter Juanito Ventolera!
Synopsis

Scene I

It is early evening in the front of a dock area whorehouse. La Daifa, one of the "ladies of the evening," hands a letter to the bruja de los mandados. It is a plea to her father for money to escape the bondage of her degrading life. The bruja advises La Daifa that her father, who had turned her out in the streets, will reject this plea as he had rejected all of her letters in the past. It is, in other words, the timeworn story—or, in this case, parody—of the fallen woman betrayed by love and cast out by society and family.

As the bruja leaves, a repatriate soldier just arrived from Habana appears in the acera across the street. It is Juanito Ventolera. La Daifa propositions him, but the soldier's ready compliance is thwarted by lack of funds. When she discovers he is from Cuba, she eagerly tries to learn of her ex-lover, the cause of her disgrace. The soldier assures her he knew the man and saw him fall in battle.

The Madame appears and impatiently orders La Daifa to come inside.

Scene II

The old errand-woman, the classic trotaconventos, arrives at the apothecary shop of Socrates Galinda.
Un vrote, a "prig" or "stuffed-shirt," is alone in the
shop pounding medicine in a mortar. When la bruja
learns the apothecary is out, she asks for some ergot and
sneers as the assistant refuses to dispense the forbidden
drug. He also refuses to take the letter for Socrates
Galindo. The old man is at the office of the mayor trying
to secure the cancellation of an order requiring him to
billet a soldier at his apartment.

The bruja places La Daifa's letter upon the counter,
but as she turns to go, she is barred by the figure of the
enraged boticario. Don Galindo stands with his cane
raised over his head in an uncompleted threat. The old
man shouts to the bruja to take back the letter, and when
she pleads for an answer, he throws the letter inditch.
Shouting insults at each other, the boticario denies the
existence of his daughter and the old witch disappears
with the words, "Ahf se queda (la carta) para tu sonrojo."

In her place at the door appears the sorche repatriado,
Juanito Ventolera. "Entra en la clara de la luna, la
manta terciada, el gorro ladeado, una tagarnina atravesada
en los dientes ..." a vulgarized travesty of Don Juan.

Juanito has come to see if he is to be billeted with
the apothecary. Don Galindo tells him he will receive
"piso y fuego" and that is all. Juanito in the meantime

4Valle-Inclán, Martes de carnaval (Madrid, 1964), p. 25
has picked up the letter and taunts the old man with it before he gives it to him.

There follows a long acotación in which Valle-Inclán describes the epileptic seizure and death of the old apothecary. Don Galindo has gone behind the curtain to remove his "galas,"—his Sunday suit, his new boots "with two crickets that sing." The description that follows as the old man's face and body are distorted in his fatal seizure is full esperpento, and the pathos of the scene is an essential element of the style.

From this point on the esperpentic vision is dominant

---

and unmistakable: "la abstracción gesticulante"—
"la mueca torcida"—"el fantoche doblado"—life and death
"a una sensación de espejo convexo."

Scene III

The scene shifts to a vegetable garden where three soldiers are stealing vegetables for a gazpacho. As they continue, they arrive at the cemetery where they perceive the shape of a figure searching among the gravestones. It is Juanito Ventolera, who has come to rob the dead man of his clothes. Juanito's mocking disrespect of the dead makes his companions uneasy, but Juanito, like El Tenorio, has no fear of the dead. He will leave the corpse naked and join the soldiers for some carousing at the Casa de la Sotera.

In this scene Valle makes a sarcastic jab at the ambivalent morality of the military man. Juanito reminds Pedro Masicde that they all despoiled corpses in battle; but it's not the same, they argue. Certainly not. The camposanto is sacred ground.

"¿No se me había ocurrido este escrúpulo!" 6

Scene IV

At the Casa de la Sotera, in the grape-arbor, the three soldiers are talking and waiting for Juanito

6 Valle-Inclán, Martes, p. 31.
Ventolera. He arrives wearing "la propia montaja del fiambré." The men make a cruel bet that Juanito cannot carry out his boast of claiming the old man's bowler hat by seducing his widow. The parallel with Tenorio is obvious with only details changed to underline the basic absurdity.

Scene V

However, before the esperpéntico Don Juan can reach the widow, she is already being victimized by two other scoundrels, the barber and the sacristan. The barber has come to collect money for preparing the body for burial, and the sacristan to collect more money for the saying of masses. The insensitive crudities of the barber and the crass venality of the sacristan mix with their hypocritical sympathy to form another element in this disillusioned view of humanity.

Scene VI

The climax of this esperpénto comes in the sixth scene, repellent in its moral ugliness, of the rape of the apothecary's widow. Every element of the scene--the cowardice of the assistant, who helps Ventolera; the sardonic insensitivity of Juanito; even the cries of the
widow which are only ridiculous clichés, "formularios de novela,"—are all presented without apparently the slightest involvement on the author's part. There is no emotional intensification, but rather the opposite, and the effect of the scene rests mainly on the disconcerting aspect of this incongruity between content and presentation. It results in a true grotesque, and therefore, accomplishes its purpose.

Scene VII

The last scene returns to the setting of the first, la Casa de la Sotera. Juanito has come with his stolen money and dressed in the galas of the dead man, ready for a night of debauchery. La Daifa jokes with Juanito about his new clothes, but says she is not so "chuleada" that he can have her without pay. Juanito boasts that he is "piloto de todos los mares," and he will pay for the whole house for the evening. To prove the reality of his sudden wealth, Juanito opens his vest and La Daifa's letter to Don Galindo falls out. Ventolera begins to read the letter aloud, and La Daifa recognizes it as her own. The girl collapses completely as she realizes her father is dead.

Ventolera continues the cruel joke and finishes reading the letter. It is a pitiful letter recalling her
abandonment and begging for money to go to Portugal where she may better her lot. "Dicen que allí las españolas son muy estimadas."

The esperpento ends here, with two prostitutes commenting on how well-written the letter was, and the house madame calling for a round of drinks.

La hija del capitán

The strongest attack upon the dignities and persons of the "heróicos príncipes de la Milicia" is found in the comedy La hija del capitán. The political barbs hit their target. The effectiveness of Valle's invective can be judged by the following account:

En 1923 el General Primo de Rivera asume el poder. Valle-Inclán se convierte desde luego en enemigo decidido y vociferante del nuevo régimen en su obra. En una carta pública protesta por el destierro de Unamuno a Fuerteventura. El ataque llega tal vez a su punto más alto en 1927 cuando se publica La hija del capitán, fuerte y sarcástica denuncia del ejército y la política en general. La edición de esta novelita fue secuestrada por el gobierno que con este motivo publicó la siguiente nota oficiosa: "La Dirección General de Seguridad, cumpliendo órdenes del Gobierno, ha dispuesto la recogida de un folleto, titulado La hija del capitán, cuya publicación califica su autor de "esperpento," no habiendo en aquél renglón que no hiera el buen gusto ni omita denigrar a clases respetabilísimas a través de la más absurda de las fábulas. ...

The play is genuinely funny and should play well to an audience capable of understanding its political and

---

7 Unpublished notes on the life and works of Valle-Inclán by Allen W. Phillips, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, the University of Texas, Austin, April, 1970.
social significance, and of accepting its irreverent attitudes and unorthodox technique.

Synopsis

Scene I

The setting is laid in the outskirts of "modern Madrid." A vagabond is passing through the streets when his attention is caught by a cry, "Cubanita canela!" of a large, ultramarine parrot which is sitting in the mirador of one of the houses. The organ-grinder knows he has found the house of Captain Chuletas el Sargento, the "sargento mambis." La Sinibalda, the captain's daughter, was the organ-grinder's sweetheart when he was a student, before he had abandoned his studies to become a vagabond, a golfante.

In the street, at the stand of a Levantine fruit vendor, three "pícaros de los afueros" are discussing the captain's affairs in a heavily jargonized madrileño slang. In trouble with the military because of a murder he had committed, the captain is managing to stay out of prison through the amorous liaison of his daughter with her uncle, a general in the Army. As the street cynic says, "La dormida de la hija por la dormida

---

8 I.e., a veteran of the government forces which had fought against the Cuban insurrection.
La Sinibalda, or La Sini as she is called, comes to the window to talk to her former lover. Yes, she still loves him, but what does he expect? She would have fallen to another if not to her uncle—she loves a life of luxury. Still, she would go away with him if he had some means of support. La Sini agrees to meet with El Golfante again that night if she can, explaining, "la mujer en mi caso, con un amigo que nada le niega," she must be even more circumspect than a married woman.

Valle's acotación at the end of this scene is illustrative of his skill at creating a vivid mental picture with few words, and "el gachó" evokes a deglamorized image of Don Juan.

The parrot repeats his cry, "Cubanita canela!"
Scene II

In the drawing room of the Captain Chuletas de Sargento, decorated with sea shells, carved coconuts and other exotic memorabilia from his days as a colonial campaign officer, the captain and the general are playing cards with five old friends. Don Joselito, "el Pollo de Cartagena," announces he has lost all his money for the game. The captain gives El Pollo his personal draft so that the game can continue.

The general ("el vencedor de Periquito Pérez," as Valle sarcastically calls him) after hinting that Chuletas is dealing himself the best cards, gets up from the table, and winking and rolling his head, tangoes around the room. An irate La Sini is ready to strike him with the heel of her shoes, she is so irritated by the awkwardness and stupidity and the gambling and drinking habits of her "tío tan ganso." 12

Four of the gamblers get up from the table and arrange to meet later that evening for supper. El Pollo

12The description of the general is an excellent example of the desvaloración that Valle imposes upon all of the military figures of La hija del capitán: "Vinoso y risueño, con la bragueta desabrochada, levantó su corpulenta estampa el vencedor de Periquito Pérez. Saturnal y panzudo, veterano de toros y juergas, fumador de vegueros, siempre con luces alcohólicas en el campanario, marchoso, verboso, rijoso, abría los brazos el pachá de la Sinibalda." Valle-Inclán, Martes, p. 186.
agrees to treat, and they leave.

La Sini and the general quarrel, and Chuletas exclaims loudly, though ineffectually, that he will not tolerate such impudent talk from his daughter. (The language throughout the play is of verismo vulgarity.)

At the height of the quarrel the anguished voice of El Pollo is heard, "¡Socorro!"

As the general and Chuletas rush out the door, the organ-grinder enters through the window.

"¡Mal sabes lo que has hecho! Darle pasaporte a don Joselito," cries La Sini.

"¿El Pollo? ... ¡Vaya una sombra negra!" bewails El Golfante. He is ready to give himself to the authorities, but La Sini chides him for cowardice and says she will run away with him.

Scene III

In a scene of flickering shadows the captain and the general inspect the body of Don Joselito, "que vierte la sangre por un tajo que tiene en el cuello." There is no attempt at pathos for the dead "Chicken," as the two officers discuss how to get rid of the fiambre. Above all, the press must not hear of it, or they will be compromised. If they bury it in the garden, the neighbors will come out to investigate. "Para eso mandas imprimir esquelas." 13

13 Valle-Inclán, Martes, p. 197.
The solution? Put the body in a trunk and check it, "un expediente muy aceptado en Norteamérica." (In a small jab at the hispanicistas, Valle has El General object to the captain's plan "a estilo de Norteamérica" because they are "¡siempre en deuda con el extranjero!".)

The most immediate thing, they decide, is to carry the body down to the cellar and wash off the blood; and then, "para los gustos del finado nada mejor que tomarle un billete de turismo."

At this point an "aciclonada" La Sini comes flouncing down the stairs with her clothes tied up in a bundle. The captain is ready to prevent her departure by breaking his daughter's neck, if necessary, but La Sini defiantly reminds him that her shouts would mean discovery. Discovery means public disgrace, the real "moral force" behind these characters. The immorality of the preoccupation and moral surrender to the qué dirán is recurrent in Martes de carnaval, especially in Los cuernos de don Friolera, where it becomes the major theme.

---

14 Valle-Inclán, Martes, p. 198.
15 Ibid., p. 198.
La Sini removes the wallet from Don Joselito's corpse, and the argument breaks out again. Street insults fly back and forth as La Sini leaves the stage.

Scene IV

At a corner by the Universal Café, La Sini is waiting for El Golfante, and when he arrives they discuss what gain they can come to from the contents of El Pollo's wallet: two I.O.U.'s with the signature of PachyBumbum, a letter soliciting lodgings, and the captain's gambling chit for five thousand beatas. They can only burn the I.O.U.'s, but how can they cash the note without compromising themselves?

The organ-grinder has brought with him a companion known as El Sastre, who advises them they need someone experienced in such matters, someone with "relaciones" in the ministry. He recommends El Batuco who has an agency set up to handle such matters. "Tiene padrinos hasta en la Gran Peña." At this moment he is upstairs at the café playing billiards.

Don Arsenio, an archetype of vulgarity, "chato, renegrido, brisas de perfumería y anillos de jugador, caña de nudos, bombín, botas amarillas con primores."

---

16 Valle-Inclán, Martes, p. 207.
comes down the stairs waving his cigar in greeting. In a very few minutes El Batuco has understood the situation. He explains that he himself is merely un maleta, a second-string bullfighter, but he has "buenas relaciones." He knows the man to help them, Don Alfredo Toledano, director of the Madrid newspaper El Constitucional. "En manos de un hombre de pluma, estos papeles son un rfo de oro."^17

It is agreed. They will do it.

Scene V

In the street the newsboys are hawking the newspaper with cries of a scandal that happened the night before in Madrid, and in the mirador of the Bellas Artes three Army officers are discussing the story. The "rubia opulenta" of the story was obviously the blonde seen in the café that afternoon, and Chulapo remarks that El Camastrón had been very friendly to her.

Enter "un babieca funebre," a cartoon character in appearance, another esperpento. He brings the news that the murdered man was their comrade, El Pollo de Cartagena. A reporter enters with a new bombshell. He has it verified that the General Miranda and Don Joselito had

a duel the night before--over the blonde?

El Camastrón is indignant—a quartered corpse, a buxom blonde, and now a duel! Such scandal must not be permitted in the military.

Scene VI

In a setting of official elegance and bad taste in red velvet in gilt, the general is taking his ease drinking whiskey. The bumptious Chuletas de Sargento appears, raging against the newspaper. The general agrees: it is infamous, it is blackmail, but they must act calmly. In one of his few utterances in understatement the general remarks, "Necesitamos un diplomático y usted no lo es."  

Valle continues to have fun with the military concept of honor. Although El General has always maintained that the military should never enter into affairs of the government, he now feels absolutely compelled to change his position. But of course! While he agrees with the agitated captain that a corpse in the cellar is a large compromise, he has a strategy. He will issue a manifesto against the government, "Me sacrificaré una vez más por la Patria, por la Religión y

---

18 Valle-Inclán, Martes, p. 221.
A commission arrives from the military establishment. They have come to give their support to their slandered fellow officer. The leader, Colonel Camasa, explains; "Mi general, la familia militar llora con viriles lágrimas de fuego la mengua de la Patria. Un príncipe de la Milicia no puede ser ultrajado, porque son uno mismo su honor y el de la Bandera."²⁰

The general is touched by this show of brotherhood and "viriles lágrimas." He explains the scandal is merely a campaign to discredit him, because the government knew he intended to draw up a manifesto against them. But, "si los amigos son amigos," this will be the last night of the government. (Friends are indeed friends in this professional fraternity.)

"Mi general, mande usted ensillar el caballo!"²¹

Scene VII

At the railroad station, La Sini and El Golfante are waiting and disputing the division of the money they expect to receive for El Pollo's note. While they

---

¹⁹Valle-Inclán, Martes, p. 222.
²⁰Ibid., p. 227.
²¹Ibid., p. 227.
exchange insults the royal train arrives.

The scene is *esperpentismo* in its lightest vein, a wonderfully funny satirical caricature.

Waiting at the station for the arrival of the Monarca are a bishop and a delegation of ladies from the Red Cross and a crowd of curiosity seekers.

El humo de una locomotora que maniobra en agujas infla todas las figuras alineadas al canto del andén, llena de aire los bélicos metales de figles y trombones, estremeces platillos y bombos, despepitá cornetines y clarinetes. Llega el tren real. 22

The ridiculous Dofía Simplicia, delegate of the Feminist Club, president of the Wives of San Vicente, president of the Ladies of the Red Cross, and Elder Sister of the Beatas Catequistas, has come to pay homage to a still more ridiculous El Monarca. It is a mutual exchange of clichéd stupidities.

The simple-minded extravagances of Dofía Simplicia are answered by the appearance of the king's head, puppet-fashion, at the train window. Valle lets his sarcastic vision focus upon the king, as he gives this description of the Bourbon monarch's hereditary lack

---

of attractiveness, "... contrafa con una sonrisa belfona la carátula de unto, y picaadeaba los ojos pardillos sobre la delegación ... ."23

El Monarca claps his hands at the speech praising him, and his reply deepens the irony:

Ilustrísimo señor Obispo; Señoras y Señores: Las muestras de amor que en esta hora recibí de mi pueblo son, sin duda, la expresión del sentimiento nacional, fielmente recogido por mi Ejército. Tened confianza en vuestro Rey. El antiguo Régimen es un fiambre y los fiambres no resucitan! 24

The crowd cheers their peerless monarch, and La Sini can only exclaim, "¡De risa me escachó!"25

Los cuernos de don Friolera

Los cuernos de don Friolera, by general critical opinion the masterpiece of the esperpento drama, is a parody of the Calderonian drama of pundonor, and is based upon the archtypal situation of triangular love, jealousy and the crimen de honor. The tragicomedy of Don Friolera is told three times within the beautifully balanced framework of this esperpento, using three different mediums: the puppet show, the drama, and the romance. Each telling contains cutting, desagradadora satire, each

23 Valles-Inclán, Martes, p. 231.
24 Ibid., pp. 231-2.
with a shift in emphasis and perspective that reflect upon each other and develop circularly the esperpento attitudes expressed within the play.

The form, an unusual and interrelated three-part geometry, is the most immediately obvious, and one of the most impressive, aspects of the artistic elements of Los cuernos de don Friolera. It is a symmetrical structure of delicate interior balances whose three parts form a kind of literary triptych: the Prólogo and Epílogo serve as side pieces for the triptych and frame the larger center section, which is the drama itself. Each section has its purpose within the work, and a study of these purposes offers the best example of the importance of perspective in the esperpento esthetic. The prologue offers much of the valleinclanesco philosophy of esthetic perspective. In the discussion of the work itself, these changes in perspective as they apply to each of its three separate parts will be identified.

Synopsis

Prólogo

The first medium for the story of Don Friolera is that of the puppet show which occurs in the prologue. The puppet show is preceded and followed by the philosophical commentary of two wandering intellectuals,
Don Manolito and Don Estrafalario, so that the prologue is seen to have an interior three-part structure similar to that of the work as a whole. The perspective of the puppet show is always "de arriba abajo," as the little puppets live their only reality through the manipulation of their strings. The significance of this perspective Valle-Inclán comments upon through the conversation of Don Estrafalario, who, like Max Estrella in Luces de bohemia, is the voice of the esperpento esthetic; and therefore, also serves as the voice of Valle-Inclán.

It is fair time at the city of Santiago el Verde on the Portuguese and Spanish border, "con entrar y salir de gentes, tratos, ofertas y picardeo,"—in other words, a setting traditional to Spanish literature, and to the personal Hispanic worlds of Valle-Inclán's fiction. Don Manolito el Pintor, "expresión mínima de lago franciscano," and his companion Don Estrafalario, "un espectro de antiparras y barbas, el clérigo hereje que ahorcó los hábitos en Oñate," are excitedly discussing a new painting Don Manolito has found, "un cuadro muy

---

26 Don Manolito is generally considered to be the fictionalized representation of Valle-Inclán's close friend, Ricardo Baroja, a brother of Pío Baroja, the novelist. One of the most colorful descriptions of the estrafalario appearance of Valle-Inclán was made by this Ricardo Baroja, as quoted by Rubia Barcia:
malo, con la emoción de Goya o del Greco." It is a depiction of a sinner who is hanging himself while a devil watches, winking and laughing sardonically, one of those folk paintings of technical naiveté which can reach an impressive level of expression. As Don Manolito says, "se siente la carcajada."

The picture impresses Don Estrafalario:

La verdad es que tenía otra idea de las risas infernales; había pensado siempre que fuesen de desprecio, de un supremo desprecio, y no. Ese pintor absurdo me ha revelado que los pobres

"... there sat a dark young man, with a long beard and a great mane, thin as a mummy. He was dressed in black; he had on his head a grayish plush chambergo, with a tall cone-shaped crown and wide brim. The corners of his high, starched shirt collar stuck out threateningly on both sides of his extremely black beard, which was trimmed in the fashion of the Ninevites of the XIXth Century B.C. Beneath the beard one could just barely make out the dangling ends of a wide black silk cravat. The cravat so dear to romantic spirits!

"I did not dare to look directly at him. The strange character responded to the curious glances of those in the café with a brazen and insulting air and flashed the gleam of the dark-rimmed glasses astride his long nose at anyone who stared at him a bit insistently." José Rubia Barcia, "The Esperpento: A New Novelistic Dimension," Valle-Inclán: Centennial Studies, edited by Ricardo Gullón (Austin, 1968), pp. 67-68.

27 See page 8 of this thesis for a note on the role of the painter Goya in the development of Valle-Inclán's esthetic principles of the esperpento. It should be noted that Valle-Inclán has also mentioned El Greco, whose stylistic distortions are considered the forerunner of modern expressionism in painting, but whose predominant emotional tone is that of a deep spiritual anguish.
humanos le hacemos mucha gracia al Cornudo Monarca. 28

It is Estrafalario's opinion that the devil is amused in the picture because he is on the same plane with the sinner, and therefore, cannot be a true devil.

No crea usted en la realidad de ese diablo que se interesa por sainete humano y se divierte como un tendero. Las lágrimas y la risa nacen de la contemplación de cosas parejas a nosotros mismos, y el diablo es de naturaleza angelica. 29

Don Estrafalario makes an example that sentimentales who identify with the horses disemboweled in a bullfight suffer with them, but they are unmoved at the sight of rocks stripped from the bowels of a quarry.

Manolito: ¿Y usted supone que no se conmueven por estar más lejos sensiblemente de las rocas que de los caballos?

Estrafalario: Así es. Y paralelamente ocurre lo mismo con las cosas que nos regocijan: reservamos nuestras burlas para aquello que nos es semejante.

Manolito: Hay que amar, don Estrafalario. La risa y las lágrimas son los caminos de Dios. Esa es mi estética y la de usted.

Estrafalario: La mía no. Mi estética es una superación del dolor y de la risa, como deben ser las conversaciones de los muertos, al contarse historias de los vivos. 30

28 Valle-Inclán, Martes, p. 67.
29 Ibid., pp. 67-68.
30 Ibid., p. 68.
A few lines later:

Estrafalario: Yo quisiera ver este mundo con la perspectiva de la otra ribera. Soy como aquel mi pariente que usted conoció, y que una vez, al preguntarle el cacique, qué deseaba ser, contestó: "Yo, difunto." 31

At this point the bululú plinks out the melody of a fandango, and his helper, "rapaz lleno de malicias," hides behind the curtain so that he can move the little dolls. The puppet show has begun.

The bululú, the blind Compadre Fidel, stands outside the small boxed theater, as is traditional, and begins to talk to the puppet, el teniente Don Friolera. The puppet master is a completely detached, sardonically amused Iago as he taunts the little puppet with a story that his wife has cuckolded him with the olive vendor. The end of the miniature drama is more than foreseeable, it is inevitable, and because the puppets act out the emotions and tragic actions which are too large for them, tantamounty absurd.

El fantoche reparte tajos y cuchilladas con la cimitarra de Otelo. La corva hoja reluce terrible sobre la cabeza del compadre. La mona cae soltando las horquillas y enseñando las calcetas. Remolino de gritos y brazos aspados. 32

31 Valle-Inclán, Martes, p. 69.
32 Ibid., p. 73.
The compadre Fidel unconcernedly begins to play his fandango once more, and the presentation of the "trigedia"\(^\text{33}\) of Don Friolera is at an end.

The two wandering philosophers resume their conversation, discussing the presentation, "ese donoso buen sentido, tan contrario al honor teatral y africano de Castilla."\(^\text{34}\)

Again speaking for Valle, Don Estrafalario extols the virtues of this "burla de cornudos," which must be, he feels, from some other region or nationality because it is outside the Castillian tradition. He begins an attack upon "el honor calderoniano."

Estrafalario: La crueldad y el dogmatismo del drama español solamente se encuentra en la Biblia. La crueldad sespiriana es magnífica, porque es ciega, con la grandeza de las fuerzas naturales. Shakespeare es violento, pero no dogmático, La crueldad española tiene toda la bárbara litúrgica de los Autos de Fe. Es fría y antipática. Nada

\(^\text{33}\)There is a question as to the significance of this spelling of "trigedia." Dr. Allen Phillips has suggested that the spelling could be an equivalent in the drama to the "nivola" invented by Unamuno. Allen W. Phillips, "El Esperpento de Los cuernos de don Friolera," Humanitas, I (1968), 315.

However, Rodolfo Cardona points out that there exists a popular pronunciation "trigedia." Notes on "Los cuernos de don Friolera: estructura y sentido," Ramón del Valle-Inclán, edited by Anthony N. Zaharias (New York, 1968), p. 668

\(^\text{34}\)Valle-Inclán, Martes, p. 74.
For the troubles that beset Spain, or only for a personal answer to the world as he sees it, Don Estrafalario recommends the example of Compadre Fidel with his puppets. The bululú is superior to Iago because he is above, occupying a philosophical position which Rodolfo Cardona has described as "supra-fantoche."

"Ese bululú, ni un solo momento deja de considerarse, por naturaleza, a los muñecos de su tabanque. Tiene una dignidad demiúrgica."  

This is the position that Valle-Inclán takes for the esperpento, but the cause of the significance of this position is not found in the derisive laughter of the devil, nor even in the superior alejamiento of the puppet master, but in Don Estrafalario's words already quoted within the context of this chapter, "una superación del dolor y de la risa."

Valle-Inclán, as author, now takes the strings, and presents La tragedia de don Friolera.

---

35 Valle-Inclán, Martes, p. 75.

36 Rodolfo Cardona, op. cit., p. 642.
The Play

Scene I

It is evening in the port of San Fernando de Cabo Estrivel, and the Lieutenant Pascual Astete, known as Don Friolera, can be seen framed in the square of the guardhouse window. Outside, a crouching shadow moves up stealthily, throws a stone into the room, and moves away again. Inside the guardhouse, the piedra de escándalo\(^37\) has fallen at Friolera's feet. His world is shattered. His wife Loreta has been accused of infidelity with the barber Pachequín, and he, Friolera, the soldier, the military man, the Carabinero, has had his honor attacked. The story of Don Friolera, the esperpento parody of the pundonor, relentlessly and ridiculously unfolds.

As Cardona points out, Friolera's reaction is immediate and automatic—"reflejo condicionado."\(^38\) Loreta is doomed.

Don Friolera: ¡Esto es un rayo a mis pies! ¡Loreta con sentencia de muerta! ¡Friolera! ¡Si fuese verdad tendría que degollarla! En el Cuerpo de Carabineros no hay cabrones. ¡Friolera! \(^39\)

\(^37\)The phrase "piedra de escándalo" refers to the stone which Doña Tadea threw into the guardhouse window. The stone was wrapped in the slanderous note which precipitates the action of the play.

\(^38\)Rodolfo Cardona, op. cit., p. 640.

\(^39\)Valle-Inclán, Martes, p. ??.
The comical extravagance of Friolera's conversation is emphasized by his puppet-like gestures and grimaces, by the palabrotismo of his speech, and by his constant cries of "¡Friolera!" This constant note of self-pity is scattered through all of Don Friolera's speeches like a humorous discord in a satirical song, so that the mere sounding of it will produce the desired laughter, no matter how closely the preceding words had approached pathos. The first act is almost entirely a monologue by the distraught Friolera as he reacts to the fatal situation in which society and tradition have placed him. It is, essentially, a tragic situation which has been distorted into comedy by the esperpento perspective.

Friolera's next reaction is also automatic. He will attempt to deny the reality of his disaster by refusing to admit the possibility of its being true. It is a lie, a vile calumny! There is no proof, and he, Friolera, does not seek a divorce because of an anonymous note! The irony is that there is, indeed, no proof; and, as we shall learn later, the accusation is, at least technically and for the moment, untrue. A society of canallas are victimizing Friolera and the man-puppet is thrashing helplessly at the end of his strings.
Don Friolera: ¡Pueblo de canallas! Yo no me divorcio por una denuncia anónima. ¡La desprecio! Loreta seguirá siendo mi compañera, el ángel de mi hogar. Nos casamos enamorados, y eso nunca se olvida. ¡Matrimonio de ilusión! ¡Matrimonio de puro amor! ¡Friolera! 40

The carabinero gazes mistily at a locket and a picture of his "puro amor," and immediately wonders if the accusation could be true, "la mujer es frágil... ¡Friolera!... ¡Y era público que su esposa le coronaba!"

The basis of Friolera's disgrace is that the scandal is public. The first theme of Friolera's story is now established: the "oficial pundonoroso" must not, cannot tolerate public scandal.

Friolera's anguish precipitates him into another attempt to find an escape. Loreta might have been taken against her will! ... surprised asleep! ... made ill with alcohol! "Solamente en estos casos admito yo la caída de Loreta. Y en estos casos tampoco podría perdonarla. Sirvo en activo. Pudriera hacerlo retirado del servicio. ¡Friolera! 41 [The emphasis is the writer's.]

The object of this scornful sarcasm is the military. The treatment of the código militar as something

40 Valles-Inclán, Martes, p. 78.
41 Ibid., p. 79.
ridiculous, hypocritical and cruel is the second theme of *Los cuernos de don Friolera*. Valle-Inclán repeatedly emphasizes the effect Friolera’s being a military man has upon his conception of the *pundonor*.

With all his escapes closed, Friolera collapses into comical and pathetic self-pity. If this is true, he would rather not have known. "Una vida rota . . . ¿Adónde voy yo con mis cincuenta y tres años averiguados?"

Friolera is now facing the basic reason he cannot accept or ignore the attack on his honor, whether it is true or not. Society will not let him.

Don Friolera: ¡Este mundo es una salsuf! ¿Qué culpa tiene el marido de que la mujer le salga rana? Y no basta una honrosa separación. ¡Friolera! ¡Si bastase! ...La galería no se conforma con eso. El principio del honor ordena matar. ¡Pim! ¡Pam! ¡Pum! ...El Mundo nunca se cansa de ver títeres y agradece el espectáculo de balde.

The third theme, the force of public opinion, which is cruel and insensitive and even actively desirous of being entertained by the misfortunes of others, serves as a background to the story of Don Friolera. The incarnation of this cruel and malicious spirit is the beata Doña Tadea.

42 The nonsense words, "Pim, Pam, Pum" refer to a carnival game of chance played in the parks of Madrid.

43 Valle-Inclán, *Martes*, p. 79.
The last few words of this scene, exchanged between Don Friolera and the guard, resume and reflect all that has preceded it.

Don Friolera: ¿Qué haría usted si le engañase su mujer, cabo Alegría?

Carabinero: Mi teniente, matarla como manda Dios.

Don Friolera: ¡Y después!

Carabinero: ¡Despues, pedir el traslado!

Scene II

In a suburb of the port, with whitewashed houses and flower gardens, Pachequín, "cuarentón cojo y narigudo," is seated below the reja of Loreta's window serenading her in a shrill, off-key voice. After the degraded, scoundrelly Don Juan of Las galas del difunto, Pachequín is an absurd one. Cardona has called the scene "una broma picaresca." It is a parody of a seduction, as Pachequín tries to convince la tenienta to be his.

Loreta puts a carnation in her teeth and enjoys the flirtation. Life is sweet, however, and she does not wish to risk being murdered by a jealous husband. [Valle-Inclán never has Loreta seriously consider betraying her husband. Her decision to leave with Pachequin in Scene XI is to save her life. Neither does he ever base her "virtue" on anything higher than self-interest.]

44 Valle-Inclán, Martes, p. 81.
As the couple exchange carnations with each other, they are spied upon by Doña Tadea.

The acotación presents an ominous description of Doña Tadea. The technical choice for her characterization is not mechanization, but animalization. She walks "atisbando," her head is a "cabeza de lechuza."

Doña Tadea pasa atisbando. El garabato de su silueta se recorta sobre el destello cegador y moruno de las casas encaladas. Se desvanece bajo un porche, y a poco, su cabeza de lechuza asoma en el ventano de una guardilla. 45

Scene III

The setting of the third scene is the cemetery of Santiago el Verde, and thereby introduces once again the motif of death recurrent throughout the work of Valle-Inclán. By its contrast with the actions of the characters, the macabre setting helps to intensify the atmosphere of the grotesque.

The action of the scene is divided into three parts, the first an encounter of Don Friolera with Pachequín at the grave of the merchant sea captain whose corpse Pachequín had been called to shave. This encounter reasserts the tragicomic mood by having Friolera give one of his characteristically extravagant

45 Valle-Inclán, Martes, p. 86.
outbursts. In answer to urging him to "abre su pecho a un amigo," Friolera cries, "Verfais el Infierno!" He walks away, "haciendo gestos," a gesticulating puppet.

In the second section Pachequín is joined by three "sujetos marchosos," smugglers or matuteros, who deal in contraband with the Army. Their conversation reveals that the pundonoroso Don Friolera has profitted by their illegal operations, in order to preserve his "honor" and the honor of a military service whose ethics are as elastic as his own. The social convention of Spanish honor requires obedience to a cruel and unreasonable código de honor from a man whose moral principles stretch without strain to include cheating the laws of his country. The implications, however, go still further, as the matuteros refer to the "Época de los disturbios." Contemporary Spain is corrupted by the same moral contagión.

The four matuteros move off. The acotación for this scene is a good example of the esperpento technique, as the figures of the men become shadows in the wind, and the vision of the beata is further animalized.

Sobre las cuatro figuras en hilera ondula una ráfaga de viento. Anochece. El teniente, con gestos de maniaco, viene bordando la tapia, pasa
Friolera realizes Doña Tadea must be the anonymous slanderer and begins to accuse her of destroying his life. The beata's self-righteousness intimidates the jealous Friolera, however, and he ends by pathetically asking if Pachequín is "el ladrón de mi honra." Doña Tadea advises Friolera to watch the couple "para dar a los culpables su merecido."

"¡La muerte!" cries Friolera.

"¡Virgen Santa!" replies the beata.

**Scene IV**

The dehumanization of the character of Doña Tadea continues in the acotación of Scene IV, whose visual descriptive powers reveal why Valle's drama is often considered "teatro a leer."

La última beata vuelve de la novena. Arrebujara en su manto de merinillo, pasa fisgona metiendo el hocico por rejas y puertas. En el claro de luna, el garabato de su sombra tiene reminiscencias de

---

46 Valle-Inclán, Martes, p. 91.
vulpeja. Escurridiza, desaparece bajo los porches y reaparece sobre la banda de luz que vierte la teja de una sala baja y dominguera, alumbrada por quinqué de porcelana azul. Se detiene a espiar. 47

Valle’s sardonic alejamiento is reflected in the description of the stars which "hacen guifios sobre los tejados," but there is a glimpse of genuine pathos. Friolera sits disconsolately gazing at an old photograph album and listening to a music box. He has become "un fantoche trágico." It is as if the audience at a puppet show could see the doll shedding real tears. Friolera cries out at the beata, "¿Por qué ha encendido esta hoguera en mi alma? ...Sólo usted conocía mi deshonra! ...Yo soy un militar y haré un disparate."

The old woman withdraws into the ever-present shadows, and the perspective changes. Loreta comes in and begins to fight with Don Friolera. The pathos changes into the purest carnavalesque comedy. The illusion of Punch and Judy is inescapable—-with their arms outstretched and flailing, bobbing up and down, shrieking and attacking each other in mock puppet fury.

Don Friolera blande un pistolón. Doña Loreta, con los brazos en aspa y el moño colgando, sale de la casa dando gritos. Don Friolera la persigue, y en

47 Valle-Inclán, Martes, p. 95.
el umbral de la puerta, al pisar la calle, la sujeta por los pelos. 48

At the sounds of domestic battle, the third fantoche in the love triangle appears.

Abrese repentinamente la ventana del barbero, y éste asoma en jubón de franela amarilla, el pescuezo todo nuez.

Pachequín: ¿Va el pueblo a consentir este maltrato? Si otro no se interpone, yo me interpongo, porque la mata. 49

Rodolfo Cardona makes a sarcastic answer to the barber's question. "Naturalmente que sí lo va a consentir, es 'lo que pide la galería,' en las palabras mismas que anteriormente había pronunciado el teniente." 50

While the three puppet characters continue their outrageous parody of violence, jealousy and murder, Valle-Inclán tilts his concave mirror to reflect another comic vision. Loreta begins to call Friolera by his pet name in an attempt to mollify the "oficial pundonoroso."

Dóña Loreta: ¡Pascualín!

D. Friolera: ¡Pascual! Para la esposa adúltera, ¡Pascual!

Dóña Loreta: ¡No te ofusques!

D. Friolera: ¡Os mataré a los dos!

48 Valle-Inclán, Martes, p. 98.
49 Ibid., p. 99.
50 Rodolfo Cardona, op. cit., p. 647.
Dona Loreta: ¡No des una campanada, Pascual!

D. Friolera: ¡Pido cuentas de mi honor!

Dona Loreta: ¡Pascualín!

D. Friolera: ¡Exijo que me llames Pascual!

Pachequín: ¡No lleva usted razón, mi teniente!

D. Friolera: ¡Falso amigo, esa mujer debiera ser sagrada para ti!

Pachequín: ¡Así la he considerado siempre!

D. Friolera: Loreta, ¿quién te dió esa flor que llevas en el rodete?

Dona Loreta: Una finezza.

Pachequín: No vea usted en ello mala intención, mi teniente.

Dona Loreta: ¡Pascualín!

D. Friolera: ¡Pascual! Para ti ya no soy Pascualín!

Dona Loreta: ¡Rechazas un mimo, ya no me quieres!

The ridiculous quarrel comes to a climax with Loreta's throwing herself on her knees in the traditional "Kill me ... I am innocent" gesture.

Here Valle-Inclán makes two dextrous changes in emphasis, from comedy to pathos and back to parody again. It is this juxtaposition of opposing moods and elements which most characterizes the spirit of esperpento. The little daughter of Friolera and Loreta, Manolita, appears

---

51 Valle-Inclán, Martes, pp. 99-100.
at the window:

... una niña, como mona de feria, descalza, en camisa, con el pelo suelto, aparece dando gritos en la reja ... Don Friolera arroja el pistolón, se oprime las sienes, y arrebatado entra en la casa, cerrando la puerta. Se le ve aparecer en la reja, tomar en brazos a la niña y besarla llorando, ridículo y viejo. 52

The pathos exists for a moment, and the reader senses the sympathy and sorrow that Valle-Inclán feels for his little puppets. The mood then returns to scornful laughter.

Dona Loreta has been locked outside and has fallen swooning at the door; Pachequín sees the way open to his amorous conquest. While the scandalized public, appearing "en retablo" at their windows look on, the barber cries defiantly, "El mundo me la da, pues yo la tomo, como dice el eminente Echegaray!"53

Doña Tadea has the last word, "Piedra de escándalo!"

**Scene V**

Scene V is a parody of the type of love scene found in very early movies, the vulgarization of romanticism, as the virtuous heroine refuses her tempter in hand-to-

52 Valle-Inclán, Martes, p. 102.
53 Ibid., p. 103.
brow emotionalism. Loreta's motives may be less than idealistic, but she is adamantly pure. Pachequín finally agrees to return her to Don Friolera. Significantly, the acotación for this scene depicts the symbolic pelele, the man of straw, standing with outstretched legs under the evening stars.

Scene VI

Friolera is practicing his speech of exoneration with which he will explain the "necessary" murder of his wife and Pachequín:

¡Pim! ¡Pam! ¡Pum! ... No me tiembla mi la mano! Hecha justicia, me presento a mi coronel: Mi coronel, ¿cómo se lava la honra? Ya se su respuesta. ¡Pim! ¡Pam! ¡Pum! ¡Listos! En el hogar no puede haber nubes. Me presento voluntario a cumplir condena. Mi coronel, soy otro teniente Capriles. Eran culpables, no soy asesino. Si me corresponde pena de ser fusilado, pido gracia para mandar el fuego: Muchachos, firmes y a la cabeza! ¡Adiós, mis queridos compañeros! ¡No consintáis nunca el adulterio en el Cuerpo de Carabineros! ¡Friolera! ¡Eran culpables! ¡Pagarón con su sangre! ¡No soy asesino! 54

As Loreta returns, the quarrel between the couple begins again. Loreta decides to make Friolera more tractable by getting him drunk and seducing him. She is completely successful. Sad and funny, the scene is

one more step down in the degradation of Friolera, the little puppet-man.

Scene VII

At the billiard hall of Doña Calixta, decorated symbolically "con pinturas absurdas, de un sentimiento popular y dramático," the smuggler Curro Cadenas and Doña Calixta are discussing the rumor that Friolera is to be dismissed from the service. The unfortunate teniente himself arrives, thin and haggard and without money, the picture of hen-pecked masculinity. "Tuvimos una nube en el matrimonio, y no he querido pedirle a mi señora la llave de la gaveta." Curro sympathetically offers to buy the drinks, but his concern is soon revealed to be his interest in getting the house Don Friolera will have to vacate.

The disillusionment and bitterness that forms the basis of the esperpento comedy is seen in a remark of Curro Cadenas. In answer to a philosophic question of Friolera, "Para qué nacemos?" Curro says, "Para rabiari Somos las consecuencias de los buenos ratos habidos entre nuestros padres." 55

55Valle-Inclán, Martes, p. 121.
Scene VIII

Upstairs at Doña Calixta's cafe, the military have met to discuss what should be done about the scandal in their ranks. "La visión desagradadora" is turned toward the Army. The three officers, described with esperpúntico deformations, form a most unmilitary lampoon:

... levitines azules, pantalones potrosos, calvas lucientes, un feliz aspecto de relojeros. Conduce la discusión don Lauro Rovirosa, que tiene un ojo de cristal, y cuando habla, solamente mueve un lado de la cara. Es teniente veterano graduado de capitán. Los otros dos, muy diversos de aspecto entre sí, son, sin embargo, de un parecido obsesionante, como acontece con esas parejas matrimoniales, de viejos un poco ridículos. Don Gabino Campero, filarmónico y orondo, está en el grupo de los gatos. Don Mateo Cardona, con sus ojos saltones y su boca de oreja a oreja, en el de las ranas.

Valle's technique of degradation can be seen to full advantage as the Army and some of Spain's most cherished ideas and prejudices take a satirical thrashing.

"Se trata," says the lieutenant Rovirosa, "de condenar un compañero de armas." They are assembled not

---


57 Valle-Inclán, Martes, p. 129.
a juzgar but a condenar. To emphasize the strictness with which the military must deal with dishonor in its ranks Rovirosa grimaces so fiercely that his glass eye pops out and rolls around the table. Popping the eye back in place, Rovirosa continues unabated with the question of military honor. This thought brings the soldiers to the consideration of their Spanish bravery, and then to the question of bravery in the French.

Teniente Rovirosa: A mí personalmente los franceses
me empalagan.

Teniente Cardona: Demasiados cumplimientos.

Teniente Rovirosa: Pero hay que reconocerles
valentía. ¡Por algo son latinos, como nosotros!

Teniente Cardona: Desde que hay mundo, los españoles
les hemos pegado siempre a los gabachos.

Teniente Rovirosa: ¡Y es natural! ¡Y se explica!
¡Y se comprende perfectamente!
Nosotros somos moros y latinos.
Los primeros soldados, según
Lord Wellington. ¡Un inglés! 58

Valle-Inclán takes a satirical thrust at the English at Gibraltar, the wars in Morocco, and Spanish service in the colonies (the teniente Rovirosa’s eye was lost, not as the result of a wound but of a mosquito bite).

Memories of food and drink and sex so stimulate the officers that their laughter shakes the room, and the

58 Valle-Inclán, Martes, p. 131.
scene takes on a jerky, esperpentic irreality as cups dance in their saucers, the canary jumps in its cage, and the lieutenant holds his eye in place with his hand.

Talk of sexual escapades recalls the officers to the task at hand, and reminds them of their "primordial deber,"—that is, to condemn Friolera. It is harsh to condemn a man without a hearing, but to fail to do so would mean turning the affair over to the authorities with a resultant public scandal for the Army. They will ask Friolera to tender his resignation.

Scene IX

In Friolera's orchard, the dejected teniente is sitting staring at his album again, as his little daughter tries to cheer him. Manolita, with her stockings fallen down and her shoelaces untied, "tiene el aire triste, la tristeza absurda de esas muñecas emigradas en los desvanes."\(^{59}\) At the little girl's urging, Friolera begins to play his guitar.

At the first copla, the owlish head of Doña Tadea pops up puppet-fashion over the rooftops. The blood rite, "el espectáculo de títeres," has not taken place, and naturally, she is scandalized. How can he play and sing when he should be avenging his honor? When

\(^{59}\)Valle-Inclán, Martes, p. 138.
Friolera answers her by singing an insulting *copla*, the old woman disappears, gets her guitar, and reappears at the window. She replies to Friolera in kind, singing a *petenera* about "los cuernos de don Friolera." The *teniente* begins throwing rotten oranges which Manolita has been bringing him from the orchard. The scene is traditional puppet mayhem as Dona Tadea pops up and down screaming insults and Don Friolera tosses his oranges, *pim, pam, pum*.

**Scene X**

It is night at the guardhouse, and Friolera is walking up and down in front of the window. "Una noche de luceros en el recuadro del ventanillo. Un fondo divino de oro y azul para los aspavientos de un fantoche." Lieutenant Rovirosa arrives to deliver the Army's decision that Friolera must ask for retirement. Friolera refuses. What would the Lieutenant Rovirosa do? Would he not wash his honor, and with blood?

"¡Evidente!"

Don Friolera responds predictably and inevitably, "Mañana recibirá usted en su casa dos cabezas ensangrentadas."

The strings have been pulled on the sad little

---

60 Valle-Inclán, *Martes*, p. 149.
puppet, and he will obey. "Fim! Pam! Pum!" The derisive call of Luna Park is heard again.

**Scene XI**

The illusion of Puppet Theater established in Scene X continues throughout Scene XI. While the scarecrow stands arms outstretched under the starry night, Pachequín comes to persuade Loreta to go away with him. Fearing for her life, Loreta finally agrees and runs to get Manolita, who can be heard weeping inside the house. As Pachequín climbs the ladder and the three figures come together at the window, Friolera rushes in the room waving his pistol. He shoots, and all the figures fall and disappear, like puppets from their little stage.

Loreta rises up, "los pelos de punta, los brazos levantados."

**Doña Loreta:** ¡Pantera!

Nuevamente se derrumba. Algunas estrellas se esconden asustadas. En su buharda, como una lechuza, acecha doña Tadea. Y se aleja con una arenga embarañada el fantoche de Otelo.

**Don Friolera:** ¡Vengue mi honra! ¡Pelones! ¡Villa de cabrones! ¡Un militar no es un paisano! 61

---

The final scene is a small masterpiece of irony, but irony of a special kind. It begins with a nineteenth century comedy cliché. Friolera comes bursting into the private quarters of the Colonel Don Pancho Lamela and finds the Colonel sentimentalizing over the latest issue of *La Época*. His wife, Doña Pepita, is dressed only in her underskirt and corset. Amid cries of "Cierre los ojos, don Friolera!" and "Cúbreste con el periódico, Pepita!" Friolera tries to make the Colonel understand that something has happened. Aware finally that something is amiss, the Colonel orders his wife from the room, but the curious Doña Pepita continues to poke her head around the door and interject comments. The furious Friolera demands that the Colonel control Doña Pepita, for a military man is responsible for the behavior of his wife!. Colonel Lamela finally understands that Friolera has come to tell him he has killed his wife "para lavar su honor." Just as Friolera is receiving the approbation of the Colonel for upholding the military code of honor, this music-hall parody changes abruptly into a cruel esperpento. Doña Pepita comes into the room choking, fanning herself, and waving her arms. She tells them that Friolera has killed not his wife, but his little daughter.
The distraught Friolera cries in disbelief, "¡Maté a mi mujer! ¡Mi hija es un ángel!" But the news is true, and the Colonel orders Friolera's arrest.

El Coronel: Teniente Astete, pase usted arrestado al cuarto de banderas.

Don Friolera: ¿Me estoy muriendo? ¿Podría pasar al hospital?

El Coronel: ¿Puede usted hacerlo!

Don Friolera: ¡A la orden, mi coronel!

El Coronel: Indudablemente ha perdido la cabeza. Explícame tu, Pepita: ¿Quién te ha contado ese drama?

Doña Pepita: ¡El asistente!  

The accidental death of the little girl at the hands of her father is a tragedy which transcends the ordinary limits of satire. It is an esperpento. But since the esperpento is a double vision, of both tragedy and of comedy seen "de arriba abajo," Valle leaves his characters with a gratuitous remark which, by its place as the last words in the play, throws suspicion that the Colonel is being cuckolded by his wife.

Epílogo

The ambiente of the epilogue is the same as that of the prologue, a market square at fair time. This time the fair takes place in a port town symbolically facing

---

Valle-Inclán, Martes, pp. 167-168.
the shores of Africa. A character returns from Valle's medieval Galician world to the world of the esperpento. El Ciego, the blind story-teller and singer of romances, to sing the ballad of Don Friolera.

The setting, usually an element of contrast in the esperpento, this time undergoes a degree of debasement of its own. The fondo is a former Franciscan monastery which has become a jail. El Ciego's audience is composed of the prisoners with their shaved heads at the window to listen.

The romance del ciego, with magnificent sarcasm, converts the tragicomedy of the pathetic man-puppet Friolera into a traditional, inflated tale of honor avenged and courage rewarded. Loreta has become "una coqueta piedra imán de su desgracia," and Doña Tadea, an alcahueta; Friolera himself, "una propia pantera de Arabia." He leaps through a window, fires ten bullets, "creyendo lavar la mancha de su honor," but again it is his little girl whom he kills. The "oficial valiente" then chops off the heads of the mother and her lover with an ax, and grabbing the bloody trophies by the hair, presents them to his Colonel. For his "heroic" deeds, Friolera is decorated and given another pension from the army. Friolera begins to sound like another El Cid as honors are heaped upon him:
Valle-Inclán creates a subtle crescendo of sarcasm with Friolera's honors:

> El Rey le elige ayudante,
> La Reina le da una banda

And in a scornful jibe at the Infanta's adulterous habits, Valle has Isabel give Friolera a tie pin. To crown his many glories, Friolera's picture appears in the "Revistas Ilustradas!"

The two wandering philosophers, Estrafalario and Don Manolito, now reappear, two heads behind the jail-house bars. (Again Valle finds a new way to make his characters puppets.) They, too, have become victims of official stupidity and repression. "Huelga decir que son huespedes de la trena, por sospechosos de anarquistas y haber hecho mal de ojo a un burro en la Alpujarra." Modern Spain has imprisoned them for "suspicion of anarchy" and for putting the "evil eye"

---

64 Valle-Inclán, Martes, p. 171.
65 Ibid., p. 172.
66 Ibid., p. 172.
on a jackass.

Don Estrafalario speaks again for Valle. In spite of Cervantes, an inspiring example of great art and liberal humanism, and in spite of the colonial wars—a tragic example of stupidity, repression and defeat—Spain is still contaminated by traditions which are cruel, doctrinaire and irrational. The literature of the people, the romances and the libros de caballería, "esa literatura jactanciosa como si hubiese pasado bajo los bigotes del Kaiser," passes on the contagion.

Spain can regenerate herself, says Don Estrafalario, only through the dolls of Compadre Fidel.

The Contemporary "Tragedy"

of Don Friolera

There is an inevitable comparison between Don Friolera and Othello, the Shakespearean prototype of tragic jealousy, and this relationship is acknowledged by Valle-Inclán in two references in the prólogo and in the play. One approach to understanding the special nature of tragedy in the esperpento, therefore, can be the consideration of these different tragic visions.

Othello fought personal psychological shadows. His

67 Valle-Inclán, Martes, p. 173.
downfall was the result of individual, biographical circumstance and neuroses. Except for the insecurities and latent jealousy deeply rooted within the personality of Othello, the machinations of Iago would have been ineffective, and the tragedy could have been prevented.

The nature of tragedy for the heroes of the Spanish classical drama is completely different. They faced, not private hells of jealousy, but public dishonor. The calderonianos were confronted by a rigid social concept, the pundonor, whose intrinsic reality and "honorableness" were unquestioned even when the exterior circumstances which triggered the operation of this code were false, clearly and demonstrably lacking in factual reality, and were recognized as such by its victims. These tragic heroes were fatally trapped by an "ideal" whose independent reality was capable of destroying them.

Consider what happens to this tragic situation, however, if the ideal itself is false. The heroes cease to be heroic and become comic grotesques. They become dehumanized figures, puppets manipulated by forces which are as irrational as they are cruel. Tragedy becomes grotesque if the principle itself is absurd.

Valle-Inclán is writing of a society where it is not necessary for a sin to have been committed, merely that it be suspected in order to condemn the victim.
but Friolera falls as much a victim to his own weakness as he does to the pressures of society. Don Friolera tries to rationalize against the forces of a false morality. His attempt at acceptance is based on self-pity occasioned by his own misfortune rather than on principle, and his eventual capitulation to the laws of mundonor in Scene X is caused by the pressure of society (in the form of Hovirosa) rather than by genuine outrage.

Friolera se ve obligado "racionalmente" --dentro de un racional absurdo--a cumplir con este código y si mata a su mujer no es porque se vea poseído de una pasión ciega que le arroste "irremisiblemente" a esa conclusión, sino porque se ve atrapado en una sociedad que espera esta solución de él. 68

The ironic humor comes from the acceptance of "irremisiblemente" in the face of a social convention which is basically absurd. Valle's cynical disillusionment comes from the fact that society's acceptance of this absurdity forces Friolera's helplessness within the limitations of his own moral concepts as much as from society's. But it is tragedy in the contemporary sense, not the classical.

68Rodolfo Cardona, op. cit., p. 640.
CHAPTER V

RAMON DEL VALLE-INCLÁN:

IMAGE OF THE MAN AS AN ESPERPENTO

The literature of the esperpento exists as the complete and unique creation of a highly individual artist. It also exists as a fascinating precursor to the literary currents of Europe and America which are still unfolding and developing fifty years after the conception of the vision in the concave mirror by Valle-Inclán. This is not intended in any way to imply a connection by influence between the two. Edwin T. Williams makes this distinction in his doctoral dissertation on avant-garde elements found in the theater of Valle-Inclán.¹

The fact remains that the esperpentos reflect the spirit and philosophy of much that is fundamental to the contemporary creative experience, and its expression has created similar technical means. That this should be

¹"In no sense is this a study of influence. The thesis of the essay is that much can be learned about the esperpentos by juxtaposing them with the works of experimental playwrights who lived and wrote a generation following the death of Valle-Inclán." Edwin Thurman Williams, "Avant-Garde Elements in the Theater of Valle-Inclán (1866-1936)," Dissertation Abstracts 28, 3692-A.
so, that the iconoclastic fury of an intensely Spanish individualist anticipates so much that is now pervasive throughout the cultural Western world is both a fascination and a puzzle. Any attempt to trace these beginnings to a whole explanation is clearly beyond the scope of this paper; and yet it leads inevitably to a question which must be answered sooner or later in any study of the works of Don Ramón del Valle-Inclán. There is a choice involved between considering these works as completely autonomous, or considering them in some relation to the extraordinary quality of the man himself, a choice made necessary by the strength of Valle's personality and, more so, by the pervasiveness of his legend.

Ramiro de Maeztu, writing upon the occasion of Valle's death, condemns the valllnclanesco histrionics disdainfully, and Ramón Gómez de la Serna prefers simply

---

2 Rubia Barcia discusses what he calls "the priority of Spanish experimentation with the novel" in his article for the University of Texas Centennial celebration of Valle-Inclán. He points out the knowledge and influence of the German phenomenological philosophers such as Husserl, Max Scheler, and Hartman; and concludes, "There was something in Spanish traditional culture strangely akin to the tendencies now becoming dominant, as if the modern man were beginning to look at himself with Spanish eyes." José Rubia Barcia, "The Esperpento: A New Novelistic Dimension," Valle-Inclán: Centennial Studies, edited by Ricardo Gullón (Austin, 1968), p. 72.

to separate the extravagant, anecdotal Valle from "the pure worth of his writings." But Francisco Ayala has asked the question again and given a different answer:

To ignore Valle-Inclán's character in order to concentrate solely on his works is, in my opinion, totally absurd since personality and creation, in his case, form an inseparable whole... Don Ramón deliberately and artfully designed an image for himself. There is no dichotomy at all between the man and his work; what he wrote began with the stylized projection of his inner self... His greatest creation was his personality from which followed his written works. Hence the legend that surrounds him. 5

The question of character, of "inner self" to the consideration of contemporary elements in Valle's work has special relevance at two points: involvement (the French engagement), and disillusionment, the force of "desengaño" as cause, as expression, and as a link with the contemporary.

It will therefore be necessary to look briefly at Valle-Inclán the man.

The Life and Character of Valle-Inclán:
A Brief Analysis

Valle-Inclán was born on October 28, 1866, in the province of Galicia. The influence of the Galician

---


5 Francisco Ayala, op. cit., p. 31.
countryside—an evocative land of wind and mist and chiaroscuro coloring—the influence of its insistent rhythms and love of melody; of heroic Celtic tales, folk traditions of brujería and mysticism, and the taste for the macabre—all these would remain with Valle-Inclán and form an inseparable and consistent element in his life and work. Valle spent a formative part of his childhood listening to stories of heroism and witchcraft told by his nurse, and undoubtedly these stories inspired the sensitive imagination of a frail and unhappy child. Valle would remain "entrafáblemente gallego" throughout his life.

His name, Ramón José Simón Valle y Peña, he later changed to the "more hidalgo and sonorous" Don Ramón María del Valle-Inclán y Montenegro. Valle's family was of the petty nobility, and Valle merely chose what he wished from his family's past. His appropriation of it illustrates Valle's habit of creating his literary world and his personal world simultaneously. Montenegro


is also the name of his long-lived literary symbol of Spanish hidalguía, Don Juan de Montenegro, who first appeared in Sonata de estío and last in Luces de bohemia, and whose character forms the central theme of the Comedias bárbaras. It was one step in the creation of his own character, which he was to maintain with the greatest severity throughout his life. 9

The three physical realities of Valle's life are Galicia, Madrid and the café, and "peripecia." In 1890 upon the death of his father, Valle left his formal studies at the University of Pontevedra—where he had already established a reputation for fierce verbal partisanship of literary and political causes—and set out on his first journey. He went to Madrid as a journalist and there he entered the world of the café, the second world of Valle-Inclán.

In 1892 Valle left Madrid to begin his travels again, his third world. His romantic imagination led him to discover America, to find Mexico, and Cuba. The Mexican experience, in particular, had a lasting effect upon Valle, recurring in his works from the Indian girl

---

9The desire to add the lustre of nobility to himself led Valle in 1915 to petition for titles left vacant by his predecessors, but like most of Valle's personal dreams, it was denied him. "Valle had to content himself with the vague grandeur of his adopted sobriquet, with the ruined family estates, and with an imagination inspired in history," Robert Lima, op. cit., (pages unnumbered).
of *La niña Chola* to the expressionistic *mélange* of language, setting and character found in the last novel, *Tirano Banderas*.

Valle-Inclán returned to Pontevedra in 1893 and published his first book, *Femeninas*, there in 1895. But Valle returned a very different looking man from the dapper, bowler-hatted journalist of the early days in Madrid. When he returned from Mexico, Valle had created the bizarre physical image he would maintain for the rest of his life—a wide-brimmed black felt *chambrero* on his head, a flowing black tie at his throat, and his thin figure enveloped in a long, black robe. Intense black eyes peered through round, horn-rimmed spectacles set low on his nose, and he wore a long, pointed black beard. With age the beard would turn white, the eyes soften and sadden, but the masquerade of the "grown-up human *especroento"* was never abandoned. In Valle's own terms, "*Si!! El poeta debe ser un hombre absurdo!!*"

---

10 Jose Rubia Barcia, *op. cit.*, p. 77.


12 Ramiro de Maeztu, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
"Es seguro que ni en París, ni en Berlín, ni en Londres, ni en Nueva York se ha visto en los tiempos modernos nada semejante a Valle-Inclán." This strange spectral scarecrow walking their streets was too much for the comprehension or the tolerance of the pontevodranos, and their continued harassment finally drove the odd-looking, frail poet once again to Madrid.

Madrid would remain the center of Valle's life, despite frequent excursions to America (in 1910 Valle toured most of South America as artistic director for a theatrical troupe with which his wife was an actress) and throughout the provinces of Spain. From the cafés of Madrid—Café de Leveante, Café Regina, Café de Madrid, Granja de Herrar and many others—poured the stories of Valle-Inclán, seemingly as endless and rich as the valleinclanesco lexicon. His companions in the café were writers, politicians, bullfighters, actors, painters, philosophers, the whole spectrum of the intellectual life of Madrid. These men are the primary source of the legend of Valle-Inclán. They found him "la mejor máscara a pie que cruzaba la calle de Alcalá." Admirers like

12Ramiro de Maeztu, op. cit., p. 16.

Melchor Fernández Almagro or Ramón Sender, or detractors like Pío Baroja and Unamuno, all were fascinated. An understanding of this fascination and its source can be had by reading the following account:

Todo el que haya conocido a Valle-Inclán en plena embriaguez de su charla, de su fabulosa disertación, lo reconocerá ascendido a una espléndida categoría de estilización lírica en estas palabras con que termina Juan Ramón Jiménez:

"Y al final de su perorata polícroma, musical plástica, había siempre una frase dinámica, ascensional, de espesa caudal de oro vivo, que subía, subía, entre el coreo y el vórtor generales y daba en lo más alto de su poder un estallido final, el trueno gordo, como un gran punto rojondo, aúreo y rojo un instante, negro luego y desvanecido en lo más negro. Valle-Inclán se quedaba abajo enjuto, oscuro, ahurado, en punto a su frase, como un árbol al que un incendio le ha volado la copa, un esparatapájaros con rostro de viento, como el castillo quemado de los fuegos de artificio. 14

The anecdotal in Valle-Inclán is a labyrinth created by its quantity, its hyperbole and its inaccuracy. There were inaccuracies both by false attribution to Valle of anecdotes that were not his15 and by his own constant reworking of facts in his life. Valle worked as creatively in his conversation as he did in his fiction.


15 Stories of or by Valle-Inclán became a separate journalistic genre. Anecdotes originating elsewhere were sold to periodicals as "valleinclánescas," because "sienten bien a don Ramón." Ramón Gómez de la Serna, op. cit., pp. 173-4.
According to Fernández Almagro the story of how Valle lost his arm is as follows: one July night in 1899 at the Café de la Montaña, Valle was arguing heatedly with the Portuguese artist Leal de Camara and "un vulgar muchacho." The subject was the relative courage of the Spaniard and the Portuguese (a burlesque reflection of this quarrel is surely the quarrel among the officers of Los cuernos de don Friolera). A friend of Valle's who had just arrived, Manuel Bueno, attempted to cut short the debate, but angered the volatile Valle-Inclán. In a brief scuffle Valle accidentally received a blow on the wrist from Bueno's cane. The blow, though inconsequential itself, made a small wound which would not heal, and eventually, Valle lost an arm by amputation. Valle's dreams of becoming an actor were ended, but he still had one arm left with which to shake the hand of Bueno, and thereby prove the generosity of his own hidalguía. The incident appealed to Valle's sense of drama, and he spun so many versions of the loss of his arm, some delightfully facetious,17 that Gómez de la


17. "En ratos de buen amor, dio referencias como ésta: explorando una vez la selva mejicana, advirtió que le acercaba un león, cuya mirada trasluce hambre. Valle-Inclán requirió fulminantemente un cuchillo y se cortó el brazo, arrojándolo acto continuo a la riera, que, satisfecha con el regalado manjar, dejó al explorador seguir su camino," M. Fernández Almagro, op. cit., p. 60.
Serna collected them as the subject for an article. 18

Trying to reconcile the extravagant public figure with the artist as he is reflected in his writings, critics like Azorín have considered Valle to have two personalities—a peripheral exterior one which was trivial; the other, an inner one, profound and meaningful. But for later critics like Francisco Ayala, the man and the mask were one. He explains:

Valle-Inclán was a closely integrated and self-conscious personality, who expressed himself equally in his life and work. . . . In Valle-Inclán the mask is the man, and the bizarre legend which accompanied it and which he encouraged is likewise an essential element of his personality—a personality thoroughly and completely committed to aesthetic values.

. . . Valle-Inclán saw the world through aesthetic values; all other values were to him less compelling and therefore subject to artistic interpretation. 19

While acknowledging the deep levels of interrelation between the life and works of Valle-Inclán, Ramón Martínez-López stresses an autonomy which each should retain. To Martínez-López the vital duality in Valle-Inclán is the "confluence of aesthetics and ethics." 20


If Valle-Inclán constructed his life as so many pages of literature, he remained unshakable to an aesthetic ideal of creative endeavor as he conceived it.

This dedication brought Valle very little in financial success or any real acceptance of his work. His personal ambitions mostly thwarted, and forced to live in a degrading penury, what Martínez Barbeito called "su permanente y orgullosa hambre española," his body was tortured by illness and his spirit by an acute awareness of the sickness of Spain. Valle had thought the New Republic "un consuelo y una esperanza," but the violence of the Revolution disturbed him deeply. Years


22 Ibid.


24 Ramón Gómez de la Serna, Don Ramón María del Valle-Inclán (Buenos Aires, 1944), p. 169.
pass and its ideals do not materialize; the Republic becomes "el estreno que no acababa de ser estrenado." 25

Valle's response, "la única respuesta posible para Valle-Inclán ante tan ingratas realidades es deformarlas, desintegrarlas—gracias al esperpento." 26

The most important thing to remember about the esperpento in relation to the life of its author is that it is an engaged literature—the stylized fury of "un desesperado destructor de ideologías." 27 Valle-Inclán was a man who cared deeply enough to attack his country's most bitterly held shibboleths because they were hypocritical and unjust.

Valle parecía un extremado negador, un anacrónico anarquista y en realidad, era solamente un outsider, un desplazado, un marginal. Un hombre que está y no está en el mundo circundante . . . Que entiende y no participa. Y porque entiende, juzga. Y porque juzga, condena. De ahí el aire de balcón al que el escritor se asomaba para ver, contemplar y repudiar. 28

This feeling of **alejamiento**, the "aire de balcón," is an essential part of Valle's personality, and as part of the aesthetic of the esperpentó, links it to the objectivity of men like Jean Anouilh and Thomas Beckett, as well as to the distorting techniques of the grotesque, as they are used by Ionesco. The perspective of distance is both an aesthetic and an emotional alternative to despair.

Valle-Inclán dies with "a dignity and decorum that can best be described as aesthetic." While Valle continued to care for his children himself, and while he continued his nightly vigils at the café, "se ha salido del tiempo y de la ciencia médica," a cancer ate his life away slowly and painfully. His courage and pride never faltered, but his disillusionment was a mounting force. Ramón Gomez de la Serna remembered his good friend "tenía frases de desengaño que me llegaban al alma." "Tengo la estrella perdida." ... "No ha fallado la época, ¿Qué le voy a hacer?"

---

29 Francisco Ayala, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
Valle's answer to himself, to his epoch, was always his literary creation. "De la herida brota el esperpento." 33

The integration of Valle-Inclán's life and work carried even beyond his death. Because of Valle's outspoken sentiment against the organized Catholic Church—he had refused the last rites as he lay dying, "ni cura discreto, ni fraile humilde, ni jesuita sabihondo" 34—a follower in the funeral cortège resented the placing of a cross upon the master's casket. As the casket was lowered into the ground the man sprang forward to snatch the cross away, but slipping, he fell into the open grave, and the boards of the cheap box broke open revealing the dead man to the eyes of the horrified onlookers. Even the funeral of Valle-Inclán was a small, perfect esperpento.

33 Pedro Salinas, op. cit., p. 172.
34 Francisco Ayala, op. cit., p. 42.
CHAPTER VI

CONTEMPORARY ASPECTS OF THE ESPERPENTO

"When we read La hija del capitán and other works by Valle-Inclán, we are filled with wonder. They almost appear to have been written in our own day by some dramatic commentator who knows our deepest wounds." ¹

It is this feeling of "now" within the esperpento which gives it special relevance for the contemporary reader. It is hardly surprising that a genre which relates to the experimental theater of France from 1950 to 1960 would find little acceptance in its own day. Some of the reasons for this lack of acceptance, such as the technical problem of the impossibility of reproducing Valle's marvelous acotaciones in which reside much of the force of the drama, and the lack of a metteur-en-scene capable of realizing the unusual visual quality of this drama in a production, have been discussed by several dramatic directors for the homenaje to Valle-

Inclán in Insula. There remains the fact of Valle's iconoclastic attacks upon the traditional social and political myths of Spain, which would not make for widespread popular or official acceptance. And most of all, these works represent a vision that was before its time in outlook and in technique.

It is in the contemporary theater of the avant-garde where a deep empathy exists with the esperpento. This literature is considered to have had its first example in Alfred Jarry's Ubu Roi in 1895, which used caricature, exaggeration and the use of unpleasantness or shock to reach theatrical effects. "With Fère Ubu's resounding 'Merde!' Jarry's revolt against bourgeois morality and prevalent theater values" heralded the birth of a new type of drama.

For a half century afterward, despite some efforts in the field of dada and surrealism, the new theater seemed extinct. "It was only in 1950, with the performance of Ionesco's Bald Soprano, and three years later with Beckett's Waiting for Godot, that it became clear that the spirit of the avant-garde was still alive in the theater."^2

---


4Ibid.
Clear ties of spirit and of technical device exist between Valle's literary creation and the theater of "the absurd" of Ionesco and Beckett, the "pièces gringantes" of Anouilh, the "théâtre de la cruauté" of Jean Genet. Equally, Valle's aesthetic theories can be linked with those of the theorist of the avant-garde, Antonin Artaud.\(^5\)

The key for understanding the underlying cause of this relevance are Cano's words, "our deepest wounds."\(^6\) We have looked at the personal disappointments, the political defeats and contemporary violence which haunted Valle-Inclán. The avant-garde springs from a similar background of disenchantment and defeat—the fall of France and the German occupation. "Defeat and occupation" run like a leitmotif through studies of the avant-garde.\(^7\) These political realities coexisted with the fall of moral and ethical values which previously sustained man. The combined psychological forces produced a modern spiritual illness whose classic literary interpretation was Jean Paul Sartre's \textit{La Nausée}.


\(^6\)José Luis Cano, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 119.

\(^7\)Leonard Pronko, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 18.
The philosophical implications of this contemporary experience are reflected in the vision of the absurd. The avant-garde theater presents this vision in several individual manners—Ionesco, Beckett, Sartre, Cocteau, Genet, Anouilh, Ghelderode—all moving away from traditional realism, toward some primitive kind of spectacle, adopting the form or spirit of some unliterary theater, medieval farce, circus, music hall in the case of Beckett or Ghelderode, the guignol with Ionesco, ceremony in the theater of Genet, and ballet or pantomine in Adamov's. 8

In Anthony Zahareas' excellent article on the elements of the grotesque and the absurd in Valle-Inclán, he sees each of Valle's works as "a link in the whole that ultimately evolves into a self-contained but historically relevant fictional universe." 9 This evolution, which corresponded to an interior evolution within the man, is seen by Guillermo de la Torre as progressing inversely to the usual. Valle-Inclán began as a traditionalist and ended a revolutionary. 10

8 Leonard Pronko, op. cit., p. 198.


Hay dos maneras de innovar. Hacia adelante en el espacio, rompiendo normas heredadas, presagiando o inventando el futuro. Y hacia atrás, en el tiempo, resusitando formas prestigiosas, infundiendo nueva vida y prestancia a temas y estilos tradicionales.

Joyce Cary is speaking of much the same thing when he says, "The original artist either accepts that (traditional) beauty, that formal construction of feeling and idea, as a matter of course, and takes off in a new direction, or he reacts violently against it." In the esperpentos, and in his later works which are very closely related—the later farces, Tiranó Banderas and El ruedo ibérico—Valle-Inclán has reacted and violently. In this new direction he is "presagiando y inventando el futuro."

A turning point in the evolution of the art of Valle-Inclán was La reina castiza. Sumner Greenfield points out in a memorable way the significant change that occurs in this work:

Valle-Inclán turns to his setting, a palace garden, green and rose-coloured, with fountains and nightingale-like violins—basically no different from the Modernistic gardens of the languorous ladies found everywhere in the early Valle-Inclán. But as

---

11 Guillermo de la Torre, op. cit., p. 1

the royal palace whitens in the moonlight which pierces the foliage, its image somersaults absurdly in the waters of the lake.

Valle-Inclán has entered the world of the absurd and a new dimension of reality.

It is this new vision of reality which underlies the technical changes in the esperpento and in the theater of the avant-garde. To reflect a world which was irrational and grotesque, Valle-Inclán conceived the esperpentesco aesthetic and the stylized distortions which were detailed in Chapter II. The description of the avant-garde as a result of "attempting to find a more faithful reproduction of the content in the form itself" can be applied equally to the esperpento.

The introduction to the Panorama du Théâtre nouveau, Volume 2, Le Théâtre de la Cruauté contains an excellent paragraph on the approach of the avant-garde to reality:

Le premier canon du théâtre nouveau contemporain maintient que l'art n'étant ni un simple organe d'enregistrement ni un claqué de la réalité, sa fonction essentielle consiste non pas à restituer mais à recréer celle-ci au-delà du mot, de la psychologie et du physique. En même temps ce théâtre se propose de faire éclater le mensonge d'une culture qui, au lieu d'intégrer l'homme à la vie


109

pour qu'il y puisse sa nourriture spirituelle, le détruit en faisant de sa personne une espèce d'automate ou de fantoche ridicule égaré sur une planète sans repère. À la limite, ce théâtre d'avant-garde, tout en créant le double douloureux de cet aliéné, s'efforce de secouer l'inertie de la chair et de l'esprit dans le dessein de redonner aux hommes une idée de leurs possibilités. 15

It is the recreation of ordinary reality with the purpose of reaching its essence. Within this vision of reality fell a new conception of time—fragmented, immobilized or circular. It underlies the revolt against language and cliché. It leads to the mechanized man, "the puppet condition," 16 to the "fantoche égaré sur une planète sans repère."

Most of all it creates a detached perspective, "forging an unsentimental aesthetic that could reach beyond tears and laughter," 17 a perspective which reveals a tragicomic carnivalesque world.

Leonard Pronko considers this mingling of tragedy and comedy the most characteristic element in all the

---


16Anthony N. Zaharias, op. cit., p. 83.

... they blend the amusing with the disquieting. Those who are the most clearly metaphysical are often the most laughable, perhaps because their pessimism leaves them no recourse but laughter. if everything is so futile and meaningless, and yet life is all we have, we may as well make the best of it we can, laughing not only at the ridiculous spirit of seriousness of others, but at our own disillusionment. Obviously, this bitter, if diverting, lucidity is not every man's cup of tea. 18

The esperpento—this last bitter laughter of Don Ramón—could be described in the words of Max Estrella, "una aguda y dolorosa disonancia muy emotiva y muy moderna." 19 It certainly is not to every man's taste. It does undeniably foreshadow much that finds expression in the contemporary art world, where mechanized puppet-like figures act our modern farces of disillusionment.

18 Leonard Pronko, op. cit., p. 204.
19 Valle-Inclán, Luces de bohemia, p. 16.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The esperpento can be seen to be an individual creation resulting from the moral and artistic commitment of Valle-Inclán. Its elements of stylization and its motivational themes link it to the contemporary theater, the visual arts and current philosophical moods. Rooted in nostalgic traditionalism and Spanish individualism, the esperpento passed through a crucible of personal suffering and disillusionment to become a new literary form.

The first element of this new form was seen to be its extreme stylization, but in a manner not conceived before. Through a systematic process of dehumanization man is degraded. He becomes a puppet, a helpless and foolish mechanical toy, or he becomes animalized. These techniques of Valle-Inclán were not accepted popularly in his own day. Yet within an autonomous contemporary literary development, the avant-garde theater, beginning in France and spreading in influence throughout the world, Valle's vision was born again.
Men like Eugène Ionesco and Thomas Beckett, reacting to their own aesthetic and psychological stimuli, and in their own historical frame, created a tragicomic literature of alienation and exaggeration. They share with Valle-Inclán a vision of the absurd.

The first work of the esperpento, the novel Luces de bohemia, turned Valle's artistic view from the romanticized distant past, or even the satirized near past, to the violent, dehumanizing present. It is his "visión desagradadora" of contemporary man. His personal and aesthetic solution was the perspective distance. The psychology of alienation links Valle-Inclán to the essence of current philosophy.

The elements which are characteristic of the esperpento are equally characteristic of much contemporary literature. These elements are: first, mechanization —man is seen as helpless, a puppet—myths, heroes belong to the past; secondly, the carnivalesque vision—the mixture of pathos with laughter—comedy fuses with tragedy to form a genuine synthesis while faismo and shock punctuate its "black comedy" and attack the senses; thirdly, a new reality—as the result of the techniques and outlook of the first two points—there is a new vision of reality which can be expressed through
distortion and abstraction more deeply than through the most painstaking realism. This vision of reality, and the techniques which Valle explored in the esperpenti culminated in the novel Tirano Banderas.

Lastly, the idea was explored in this thesis that this artistic vision was integral and inseparable from Valle-Inclán the man, the "aestrafalario" character and "human esperpento" so deeply committed to the ideals which had genuine meaning for him—a concern for humanity and for art. Valle-Inclán the man and artist was in every way as much a synthesis as his creation, the esperpento.

El poeta ha de esperar siempre en un día donde su verso enigmático sea como diamante de luz para otras almas de cuyos sentimientos y emociones solo ha sido precursor.

Don Ramon del Valle-Inclán
La Lámpara maravillosa
Books


Madariaga, Salvador de, Escenas literarias contemporáneas, Barcelona, Editorial Cervantes, 1924.


Salinas, Pedro, Literatura española: siglo XX, México, Editorial Séneca, 1941.


Zamora Vicente, Alonso, La realidad esperméntica, (Aproximación a "Luces de bohemia"), Madrid, Editorial
Articles

Alonso, José Luis, Trino Trines and others, "Encuesta sobre el teatro de Valle-Inclán," Insula, Nos. 236-7.


Beals, Carleton, "Valle-Inclán in the Café," The Bookman, VII (November, 1930), 257-262.


Gómez de la Serna, Ramón, "Algunos versiones de cómo perdió el brazo Valle-Inclán," Huesmario, VIII (enero, 1918), 273-287.

"La personalidad fantasmagónica de don Ramón," La Pluma, VI (enero, 1923), 78-81.

Greenfield, Sumner, "Madrid in the Mirror: 'Esperpento de la hija del capitán'," Hispania, XLVIII (May, 1965), 261-266.


Reyes, Alfonso, "Valle-Inclán y América," La Pluma, VI (1923), 30-34.


Varela, José Luis, "Melodía galáica a través de la prosa rítmica," Cuadernos de la literatura contemporánea, XVIII (1946), 485-502.


Publications of Learned Organizations


Arraco, Jesús, Datos biográficos; Autobiografía (Visión de Rubén Darío, Juan Ramón Jiménez, Francisco Villaescusa, Francisco Madrid), México, Secretaria de educación pública, 1947.

Departamento de letras, Ramón María del Valle-Inclán, 1866-1936 (Estudios reunidos en conmemoración del centenario), La Plata, Universidad de La Plata, 1967.


Unpublished Material


Phillips, Allen W., unpublished notes, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, University of Texas, Austin, Texas, 1969.
