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HUMOR, IRONY AND SATIRE IN THE PROSE FICTION
OF RAMÓN PÉREZ DE AYALA.

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HUMOR, IRONY AND SATIRE IN THE PROSE FICTION OF
RAMÓN PÉREZ DE AYALA

A DISSERTATION
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BY
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Norman, Oklahoma

HUMOR, IRONY AND SATIRE IN THE PROSE FICTION OF
RAMON PEREZ DE AYALA
A DISSERTATION
APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Critics and scholars have long recognized the prominent role of humor in the fictional prose of Ramón Pérez de Ayala, but there is only one study of any length and depth on the subject,¹ and that one is limited in scope. Because humor is such an integral element in Ayala's fictional art, there is a need to relate his use of humor to other aspects of his craft, to see its function, purpose, and influence in his fiction.

It is ironic and unfortunate that scholars have concentrated so much on the tragic, or serious, half of Ayala's tragicomedies, for it is as comedian that he excels. On the other hand, any study of his humor must also bear constantly

¹R. Romeu, "Les divers aspects de l'humeur dans le roman espagnol moderne," Bullétin Hispanique, I, XLIX (1947), 47-83. Romeu bases his study on only two works: Belarmino y Apolonio and the three novelas poemáticas. His main purpose is to characterize Ayala's humor and compare him to other contemporary Spanish novelists. It is a very good but limited monograph and certainly basic to any further research on the subject.

in mind the tragicomic nature of his novels.

Ayala's humor finds its most consistent, relevant and frequent expression in five sub-divisions of the broad concept of humor. Foremost among these is irony, whose pervading spirit is of prime importance in understanding Ayala's humoristic writings. His use of language and his attitude toward it are a source of unique and original humor. Satire is found to some extent in all of Ayala's novels, revealing him as an able and insistent critic. The marvelous and multifarious characters that this Spanish novelist creates serve to display further his ability to apply humor to his craft. Finally, the various darker shades and forms that Ayala's humor assumes are also pertinent in relating humor to other facets of his fiction.

E. B. White has offered excellent advice and warning to those who would attempt to study and analyze the comic. "Humor can be dissected, as a frog can, but the thing dies in the process and the innards are discouraging to any but the pure scientific mind."¹ This study is not an attempt to dissect Ayala's humor, to show why and how he is funny. Rather, the main interest lies in illustrating the major forms that he gives to his humor and the effect and function of these forms on his fictional prose.

¹E. B. White, The Second Tree from the Corner (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), p. 173.

CHAPTER II

IRONY

Irony is a special form of the comic; its origin dates back to the Greeks. The history of its development from Greek and Latin authors¹ into modern times² is well documented. During its growth, both its meaning and application have broadened until today its usage may seem somewhat remote from the generally accepted definition.

The word irony comes from the Greek eiron and meant at first "cunning," "wily," "sly."³ It was used in Greek comedy where with comedians like Aristophanes its dominant meaning was "mocking pretense and deception,"⁴ and the eiron came to be "usually an agent of the happy ending in comedy."⁵ Later, Socrates used irony as a method of feigning ignorance

¹J. A. K. Thomson, Irony, an Historical Introduction (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1926).

²Norman Knox, The Word Irony and its Context: 1500-1750 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1961).

³Thomson, p. 3.

⁴Knox, p. 3.

⁵Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 365.

to frustrate and defeat his opponents.¹ From Greek tragedy, perhaps best exemplified by Sophocles' Oedipus Rex, comes the idea of tragic irony, wherein the tragic hero uses words "whose full significance is not perceived by himself but only by his hearers, who know, as he does not, the doom that awaits him."²

From the above concepts of irony stems the one commonly accepted today: "A figure of speech in which the intended meaning is the opposite of that expressed by the words used."³ But in modern critical use other applications have arisen, extending the meaning of the word to refer to

situations in which the two components of an ironic situation are not what seems and what is, but rather two different and seemingly contradictory aspects of reality, both equally true. Irony then blends into ambiguity, tension, paradox and ambivalence.⁴

Another sense of irony in current criticism is "the resolving of two discords."⁵

From the preceding uses of irony one can extrapolate several types. In rhetorical irony the words mean the opposite of what they appear to; dramatic irony, also called

¹Marie Collins Swabey, Comic Laughter--A Philosophic Essay (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 46.

²Thomson, p. 35.

³Eleanor Newman Hutchens, Irony in "Tom Jones" (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1965), p. 14.

⁴Alvin B. Kernan, The Plot of Satire (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 82.

⁵Hutchens, p. 21.

tragic irony or irony of fate, produces an outcome of events contrary to what the actor or viewer expects; in dialectic irony the ironist employs the Socratic method; and perceived irony is a subtle, sophisticated irony in which the author merely states and the reader must supply the irony from his own perceptions.¹ Though the different kinds of irony may at first seem too diverse to be reconciled, Hutchens indicates what they all have in common in the following concise and apt definition: "Irony may be defined as the sport of bringing about a conclusion by indicating its opposite."²

Though rhetorical, dramatic, and perceived irony appear in Ayala's fiction, his use of irony can better be ana-

¹Ibid., p. 22.

"These newer uses originate in a relocation of irony: that is, in its transfer from object to subject, from perceived to perceiver. They identify as irony what would, in older usage, have been the perception of, or response to, irony." Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 10. Her defense of this definition is convincing:

"To regard irony as necessarily the work of an agent (be the agent ever so faintly postulated) is to eliminate much of the vagueness and looseness that attend its being regarded as an attitude or a response. To hold as one of its essentials that it produce a conclusion or effect by indicating the opposite is to give a needful tightening to the definitions that would allow irony to exist in any juxtaposition or interplay of opposites; and to insist on this contradiction is also to account for the psychological shocks and vibrations set up by irony, reversing, as it does, however briefly and on however small a scale, the normal laws of causal connections as the observer expects them to operate. Finally, to see it as a sport, a game played for its own sake, is to demand that the ironist exhibit the curious detached enjoyment, even in the midst of making a serious cause, that seems to lie behind all that is generally agreed to be irony." p. 26.

lyzed by utilizing two different categories: verbal and substantial irony.¹ It is the choice of words or of tone that produces verbal irony; substantial irony is based on ironies of events and on the meaning, or substance, of the words used. These two classifications offer a more suitable method of studying the ways in which Ayala uses irony and how that use changes and develops through his novels.

Verbal irony is necessarily related to narrative technique, requiring a narrator who intrudes from time to time to make his presence felt and add ironic comments. The narrator may be either an actor in or an observer of the action.² Ayala's intrusive narrator is most often an observer.³

The intervention of an author in his work, be it called intrusive or external narrator⁴ or interior duplication,⁵ is an old narrative device. It is, as Livingstone says, "a constitutional in Spanish art."⁶ A good example in Spanish prose is the Quixote, in English, Tom Jones. It is an impor-

¹Ibid., p. 37. I have simplified and modified her system to adapt it to Ayala's use of irony.

²Ibid., pp. 32-33.

³Leon Livingstone in "Interior Duplication and the Problem of Form in the Modern Spanish Novel," PMLA, LXXIII, 393-406 and Frances Weber in "Relativity and the Novel: Pérez de Ayala's Belarmino y Apolonio," Philological Quarterly (1964), XLII, 253-71, have discussed point of view and narrative techniques in Ayala's novels.

⁴Hutchens, pp. 32-33.

⁵Livingstone, p. 393.

⁶Ibid.

tant part of literary tradition in Spanish and Western literature and is usually employed in humorous works. The narrator, who should not be confused with the author, for he is usually a creation of the author just as the characters in his fiction are,¹ interrupts his narration from time to time to comment on the action, on the characters or on some moral or social aspect of his tale; he may even digress at length and return to his story later. This technique allows the author ample opportunity to apply his irony, either as an interruption or as an integral part of his storytelling. In fact, if the author does not utilize the intrusive narrator technique, and if he has no ironist to relate his tale, then he forfeits the uses of verbal irony.

For the novelist who desires to treat his materials ironically, however, the abdication of the role of external narrator means relinquishment of some of his opportunities. If he merely sets down the "facts," never acknowledging the existence of a teller, he cannot use verbal irony. "After the fit had continued for five minutes, she again revived"--this he can say. But "After the fit had continued a decent time, she again revived"--this he must deny himself.²

Verbal irony appears repeatedly in Ayala's first novel, Tinieblas en las cumbres,³ published in 1907 under the pseudonym Plotinas Cueva.⁴ The novel is ostensibly the story

¹Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 212.

²Hutchens, p. 32.

³Ramón Pérez de Ayala, Tinieblas en las cumbres (Madrid: Mundo Latino, 1923).

⁴There is a touch of humor in this choice of pen name, evoking the Neoplatonism of Plotinus and juxtaposing it with

of a group of men and prostitutes who go on an excursion, a drunken, orgiastic excursion, to see an eclipse from a mountain top. While Urrutia calls it a novela lupanaria,¹ picaresque is a better classification;² the novel is definitely realistic, risqué, and at times even scabrous. But the account of the excursion is only a part of the novel, which is primarily the depiction of the state of spiritual disorientation common to many Spanish intellectuals at the turn of the century. Tinieblas en las cumbres is a serious work set in a mundane, sensual and comic frame.

Of the types of verbal irony found in Tinieblas en las cumbres, denotative irony is the most abundant. It is also the most simple type of verbal irony and consists of the use of words to indicate the opposite of what the words denote. The narrator directs much of his denotative irony toward the prostitutes or to something related to them. Thus he calls them "damas,"³ "sacerdotisas"⁴ and "las cinco niñas, recogidas, humildes, modestas."⁵ When they stoop to pick

cave, an allusion to Plato's allegory of the cave. The pseudonym suggests, perhaps, that the novel is something more than its subject matter would indicate. It portrays the low state of political, social, spiritual and cultural affairs in Spain at that time.

¹Norma Urrutia, De Troteras a Tigre Juan (Madrid: Insula, 1960), p. 24.

²Galdós, in the foreward, calls it "una obra maestra de la literatura picaresca."

³Tinieblas en las cumbres, p. 294.

⁴Ibid., p. 228.

⁵Ibid., p. 163.

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³Tinieblas en las cumbres, p. 294.

⁴Ibid., p. 228.

⁵Ibid., p. 163.

flowers, "se las hubiera tomado por dríadas de los bosques u otras criaturas líricas y virginales."¹ Yet the first man who comes by recognizes them for what they are: heavily made-up prostitutes, boisterous, shameless, obviously members of the world's oldest profession, rather crude and not overly intelligent. Referring to one of the prostitutes who has been kicked hard but playfully, Ayala recounts her reaction: "Volvíase con alguna iracundia y cólera, . . . y hasta expulsaba--acaso sin darse cuenta--expresiones repugnantes y proposiciones absurdas; pero, no bien revolaban fuera de su casta boca dos o tres de estas pecaminosas frases, . . ."² By means of this irony the reader is assured that her mouth is far from chaste and that she is fully aware of her cursing, especially in view of the fact that she does it throughout the novel. Likewise, if someone else swears or blasphemes and the narrator says the harlots are shocked, the irony is obvious: "Comenzó a patalear desaforadamente, como un ser demoníaco, y a lanzar horribles blasfemias, que a todos horro- rizaron, en particular a las señoras."³ Similarly, when the narrator calls the houses of prostitution "mansiones"⁴ and kisses given to the strumpets "besos purísimos,"⁵ the irony serves to call to mind the coarseness of the girls and their surroundings.

¹Ibid., p. 251.

²Ibid., pp. 234-35.

³Ibid., p. 247.

⁴Ibid., p. 21.

⁵Ibid., p. 38

Paralleling and complementing the narrator's ironic terminology for the girls are the ironic remarks made by characters in the novel: "¿Qué se han hecho de las otras vírgenes?"¹ or "Dad recuerdos a la ilustre y reverendísima alcaheuta."²

Besides these ironic terms involving the prostitutes, there are others that concern various aspects of religion. They reveal Ayala's less than pious attitudes towards Catholic dogma and clergy, favorite targets for his satire.³ For example, in a footnote that comments on the authenticity of Solomon as author of Ecclesiastes, the narrator says, "No ignoramos que es opinión entre los críticos heterodoxos, patentemente aguijados por un espíritu adverso a nuestra sacrosanta religión," and the whole note continues in this same ironic tone, including mentioning Renan as if his name were sacrilegious: "¡Dios me perdone!, el libro de Renan."⁵ Renan, of course, would have been anathema to most Catholics of that time. And finally, in the same footnote, he shows his disrespect for the councils of the Church: "No embargante esto, temerosos del anatema que el Concilio de Trento fulmina en su sección cuarta, De canonicis scripturis, afirmamos que el tratado dicho de Qoheleth, . . . es el del hijo de David."⁵

¹Ibid., p. 282.

²Ibid., p. 315.

³See the chapter on satire where this subject will be studied more extensively.

⁴Tinieblas en las cumbres, p. 305.

⁵Ibid., p. 306.

⁶Ibid.

He reveals, too, his own belief on the authorship of Ecclesiastes, showing by irony that he disagrees with the Church and is more convinced by the evidence adduced by secular scholars. The anti-clerical remarks are directed at a priest who joins the group of travelers and immediately becomes intimate with Ramona, one of the prostitutes. The narrator describes the relationship between these two ironically, stressing the hypocritical behavior of the priest. "El cura y Ramona persistían en su afán y piadoso intento de entregarse a consideraciones devotas, murmuradas con todo el recogimiento e intimidad que la oración requiere."¹ The author does not state what they are doing, but the reader realizes that it is improper behavior for a priest.

There is a final and interesting use of denotative irony. A discussion between the protagonist, Alberto Díaz de Guzmán, and his friend Yiddy, whom he encounters on the mountain, bears the title "Coloquio superfluo," and the following remarks preface the discussion.

Calificamos este coloquio de superfluo porque sabemos que, en virtud de cierta transcendencia que en él va imbuida, ha de parecerles frío, baladí, y por ende innecesario, a la mayoría de nuestros lectores. Suplicámosles, pues, que lo pasen por alto, asegurándoles, desde luego, que nada tiene que ver con el asunto central de esta historia, y que pueden dejarle de lado en la lectura, sin que la preterición perjudique el interés de los acontecimientos, antes el contrario.²

The irony here lies in the very real importance of his conversation, which gives the reader his best understanding of

¹Ibid., p. 243.

²Ibid., p. 259.

the disoriented state of the protagonist's mind and soul, as well as Alberto's views on beauty, nature, faith and death. This dialogue is then quite essential to the "asunto central de esta historia," and only the reader concerned solely with the mere sequence of events or who, with prurient curiosity, searches for the more scandalous sections, will fail to read this section or will consider it superfluous. To such readers the warning is not ironic but sound advice, and Ayala was no doubt aware that there would be many such readers attracted to this novel. Even so, the elevated vocabulary (coloquio, transcendencia, imbuída, preterición) contains a certain ironic tone mocking the kind of reader who would passively or naively accept the narrator's counsel and omit this chapter.

The second type of verbal irony, referential, is more complicated; it consists of the use of terms that pertain to a certain discipline, profession or tradition to describe a scene or person to which those terms do not logically or appropriately apply. By this transferral of terms, the author stresses how little two areas have in common. For example, by describing the quarrel of two women in legal or judicial terms the author can indicate through irony that the argument is far removed from the logical, calm process of a law trial. Single, isolated examples of this appear to be the same as denotative irony, as when Ayala calls the madam a "papisa,"¹ her house a "conventico"² and the lewd songs of the inebriated

¹Ibid., p. 26.

²Ibid., p. 241.

revelers "sagrados coros."¹ When, however, he concentrates these religious terms in a paragraph while applying them to the houses of ill repute in the town, then it is more clearly seen as referential irony.

La jerarquía de las vestales no se instituye de numerosos grados. Fundase su clasificación en los derechos de pie de altar, Este noble ministerio del placer ejercitase en todas partes conformes a dogmas ya seculares.²

Referring to the first seduction of one of the prostitutes, the narrator says: "Y se amaron. ¿Qué palabras emplear en estos medios de que el amor se sirve. . .?" He replies to the question with a quotation from Santa Teresa: "Deshaciéndome estoy, hermanas,--escribe Teresa Cepeda--, por daros a entender esta operación de amor."³ Naturally, this is not the same kind of love Santa Teresa was writing about and was desirous of explaining to her fellow nuns. Ayala, it is to be noted, calls her rather covertly by her family name instead of her more widely known saint's name, secularizing her, so to speak, for his own purpose.⁴

¹Ibid., p. 313. ²Ibid., p. 23. Italics mine.

³Ibid., p. 104.

⁴Such ironic use of other authors' writing is referred to in the epilogue, written as if by a Jesuit priest who calls it sacrilege.

"Horrorizóme, como no podía por menos, el cúmulo de maldades y desatinos que en sus cuartillas aparece, y especialmente cierto sacrilego empréstito que el autor hizo al vocabulario y sintaxis de Santa Teresa, San Juan de la Cruz y Fray Luis de León, siempre que trata de informarnos, por lo menudo y cabal, del acto más repugnante y asqueroso de cuantos ejecuta la animal naturaleza, y que

Not all the religious terms are used on the prostitutes. A circus donkey named Pionono is also described in terms better suited to his namesake. "Pionono, con papal continente, encaminóse a su vaticano."¹

Another field of reference is medicine. When one of the men enthusiastically and gallantly embraces the brothel's owner, she calls him crazy, but Ayala puts it in terms more fitting a psychiatrist and patient. "Esta le respondió con un empujón suave; sonrió, complacida, y por epílogo juzgóse en coyuntura de dar su diagnóstico acerca del estado mental de Jiménez: '¡Eres un loco!'"²

At another point, the narrator describes a very obese woman as if she were a bundle of cargo or merchandise and only later does the reader discover it is a woman.

En la estación de Pardaliego, a la luz ilusoria de insignificantes candiles, advertíase una mole desaforada y ciclópea, que casi tocaba en los linderos de lo maravilloso, y en torno de la que rebullían las siluetas de dos hombres. No es lógico suponer que aquello fueran mercancías, porque Pardaliego no es villa que por su industria o desarrollo comercial ponga en tráfico productos de dimensiones tales. Fardo sí lo parecía, y hasta andaba muy cerca de serlo, pero no lo era.

Nosotros, curando de que el lector no se desvane los

al propio tiempo es uno de los más feos y por desgracia más frecuentes pecados." p. 334.

The irony here is evident to those who have read Ayala's Luna de miel, luna de hiel and Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona, in which he attacks such views on sex as the one espoused here by the alleged Jesuit.

¹Ibid., p. 81.

²Ibid., p. 33.

sesos en múltiples e intrincadas hipótesis, diremos, sin amañadas dilaciones, recurso empleado por otros novelistas cucos como acicate de interés, que aquel majestuoso--porque sí lo era--volumen integraba la respetable encarnadura o envoltente corpórea de la personalidad psíquica de doña Romyalda Céspedes de Gómez, alcaldesa nata de Pardaliego.¹

Ayala titillates the reader's curiosity by describing a mysterious bulk then says, ironically, that he will reveal what it really is without further delay, but he is enjoying his joke and extends it with parenthetical expressions, digressions and a learned vocabulary. It is in such passages that one perceives irony as a sport, a sport that the author enjoys and delights in for its own sake.

Ayala also avails himself of science as a reference point. First he discusses some aspect of prostitution, in very unscientific terms, and then changes to a scientific vocabulary. After commenting on the physical appearances and ages of the girls, he ponders as to their origin in a paragraph replete with allusions to scientific disciplines.

Y de la patria de estas prostitutas arcaicas, ¿qué diremos? El más docto antropólogo o el más sagaz psicólogo se estrellarían contra la falta de caracteres étnicos y espirituales de las simpáticas jóvenes. . . . Si la hipótesis no fuera muy aventurada, nos atreveríamos a decir que nacieron, por generación espontánea, en ignotos espacios, desde los cuales han caído en cualquier prostíbulo, prostitutas hechas y derechas. Pero, repetimos, esta hipótesis es algo aventurada dentro del estado actual de las ciencias biológicas, y los sabios nos anatematizarían sañudamente.²

Again Ayala is at play. The narrator pretends not to know where the girls come from, though he does give a complete

¹Ibid., p. 183.

²Ibid., p. 156.

account of how one of them came to be a prostitute. He then invokes the aid of science while paradoxically indicating that even science could not answer his question, and then he becomes entirely unscientific in proposing a spontaneous generation theory.

There are several footnotes in this novel in which Ayala cites old texts as if he were a historian attempting to prove a point. The point is made ironically; the authorities quoted are not always respected, and the notes often carry a barbed comment of satire. Cerdá, one of the men who goes on the excursion, believes that virginity is a figment of the imagination. To substantiate this idea, the narrator ironically cites an 18th century Jesuit dictionary: "Nuestra imparcialidad de historiadores nos impele a manifestar que el insigne leridano, [i.e., Cerdá] sosteniendo esta opinión, marchaba en la mejor compañía, cual es la compañía de la Compañía de Jesús."¹ The words imparcialidad, insigne, and mejor compañía are all ironic, as is the whole footnote and its presentation as a scholarly tool. Unfortunately, Ayala sometimes becomes excessive in his use of footnotes, using them solely for the purpose of a joke or comment with no bearing on the point at hand. The following exemplifies such excess.

Que la prostitución se remonta al origen de los pueblos e infancia de las sociedades nos lo demuestran sugestivos textos que hasta nosotros han llegado del antiguo Egipto, Caldea, Fenicia y Asiria. Nuestro

¹Ibid., p. 12.

patriotismo ha de sentirse satisfecho al conocer que las mujeres gaditanas, juntamente con las siriacas, disfrutaban incomparable reputación en toda la antigüedad.¹

The ironic or comic footnotes that appear in some of Ayala's novels are the work of the intrusive narrator and not the author's comment to the narrator's text. The tone and vocabulary are identical, although the footnotes are somewhat pedantic at times; they are written in first person plural as is the main text, and content similar to that found in the footnotes is often incorporated directly into the text. The footnotes are another manifestation of the intrusive narrator, and many kinds of irony are to be found in them.

Connotative irony consists of words whose denotation is literally true, but whose connotation reveals a different and opposite meaning, the one the author really intends. Unlike denotative and referential irony, there are few instances of connotative irony in Ayala's prose fiction. Because what the words denote has application and is true in at least one sense, connotative irony is quite subtle and blends in more smoothly and stands out less abruptly than the other two kinds. Still, the conclusion the author desires is the opposite of what he states. One of the men in the traveling group kicks a prostitute just for fun, and the words "inocente moza" and "débil y delicado sexo"² are literally true. But it is hard to imagine this prostitute

¹Ibid., p. 23.

²Ibid., p. 234.

as belonging to a weaker, more delicate sex, and instead of innocence, she reveals a strong masochistic strain; after each of the kicks that she receives she soon joins the others in laughing. Ayala ironically describes her as possessing "un dilatado caudal de bondad y sencillez,"¹ but she participates too heartily in the sado-masochistic play of the revelers.

The comic possibilities of connotative irony are great. Ayala describes Cerdá's head in this fashion: "Sur-gía desde la planicie de los hombros a modo de obelisco o columna, totalmente cilíndrica, formando un solo cuerpo con el cuello, pues la sobarba y el pestorejo eran tan carnosos y abundantes que, corriendo en redondo, rellenaban la depresión que por debajo del cogote, orejas y barba suele hacerse en las personas que tienen cabeza humana."² Cerdá, as a human being, has a human head, but the stress here is on how inhuman that head appears. The description of it dehumanizes his head, and the irony reinforces the dehumanization.

The above examples show how extensively Ayala uses verbal irony in Tinieblas en las cumbres, his first novel. In none of his later novels is there such an abundance of verbal irony, and in none is the narrator quite so intrusive. But the intrusive narrator is present to some degree in the next three novels that Ayala wrote, too,³ which are A. M. D. G.,

¹Ibid., p. 235.

²Ibid., pp. 9-10.

³Nora points out that the author is always present in these four novels. Eugenio G. de Nora, La novela española contemporánea (Madrid: Gredos, 1958), Vol. I, Part I, p. 474.

published in 1910, La pata de la raposa, in 1912 and Troteras y danzaderas, 1913. These four novels are part of a roman fleuve that Ayala never finished,¹ which centers around Alberto Díaz de Guzmán, Ayala's alter ego. A. M. D. G. shows Alberto in a Jesuit school. Poorly treated, he loses his faith. La pata de la raposa begins where Tinieblas en las cumbres ends and traces Alberto's abortive attempt to find love and stability with his fiancée, Josefina. Troteras y danzaderas, which actually takes place before the final pages of La pata de la raposa, is set in Madrid and is a roman à clef about the political, cultural and social life of the capital.

In La pata de la raposa² verbal irony appears in another ironic admonition to pass over a section. This is an important section, however, that contains poems, random thoughts and favorite quotations of the protagonist; these writings help illuminate Alberto's inner being, thoughts and sensitive, creative nature. The narrator's notice to the reader is not actually to omit the chapter entirely, but to pass over it and return to it later. "El autor aconseja al lector que deje de lado este capítulo, verdadero cajón de sastre, y vuelva sobre él, a revolverlo y examinarlo, si

¹Urrutia, pp. 20-21.

²Pérez de Ayala, La pata de la raposa (Madrid: Mundo Latino, 1923).

así le place, en concluyendo la novela."¹ Though the reader is invited to read the chapter eventually, the effect, without irony, would be to belittle the chapter, indicate it is not an integral part of the novel and make the reader wonder if it would be worth reading then or later.²

Ayala employs referential irony in the other novels, too. In A. M. D. G.,³ Conejo, one of Alberto's Jesuit teachers, disciplines the children by punishing them if they disobey his command to keep their faces toward the front of the room. In one scene he deliberately sets off fireworks in the back of the room.

. . . el ingenioso Jesuita quema una tanda de fuegos artificiales, los cuales derraman por los ámbitos del estudio infinitas chispas. Se les queman las orejas y chamusca el pelo a unos cuantos, entre ellos Manolito Trinidad, que suspira como una tórtola y vuelve la cabeza,

¹ Ibid., p. 43.

² Even much later, in 1921 in Belarmino y Apolonio (Madrid: Editorial "Saturnino Calleja," 1921), Ayala still uses the same type of warning. The intrusive narrator in this novel only tells part of the story, and even his part is told in a way closer to a first person narrator. At one point he attaches this note to a chapter: "El lector impaciente de acontecimientos recorra con mirada ligera este capítulo que no es sino el escenario donde se va a desarrollar la acción." p. 43. Of course, the chapter is very essential to the novel because it sets forth the ideas on relativity so germane to the structure and content of this novel. It also describes the scene where most of the novel takes place. A further irony is that there are many other chapters that provide no more action than this one, so any reader who wanted only "acontecimientos" would have to pass over much of this novel. Suffice it to say that the wise reader will not follow Ayala's advice but see the irony intended and read such sections carefully.

³ Pérez de Ayala, A. M. D. G. (Madrid: Mundo Latino, 1923).

. . . creyendo sin duda que se trataba del fuego de Sodoma y Gomorra. Nueva imposición de castigo. Esta vez el único causante ha sido Trinidad, y como Conejo no ha tenido a bien otorgar indulto, el joven confrade de la mujer de Lot, . . . sufre en las narices un balonazo que así como por casualidad Coste le aplica, dejándole exánime y ensangrentado.¹

The priest's cruelty and the severe punishment he gives indicate he may consider the boy's action as sinful as the crimes charged to those infamous Biblical cities, but when Ayala compares Trinidad to Lot's wife, the irony assures the reader that the lad is quite innocent and unjustly punished. In La pata de la raposa there is a classical rather than a Biblical reference. Leonora, Josefina's sister, has a husband who is unfaithful; her family tries to keep her from discovering his philandering. The narrator calls the hairdresser who finally breaks the news to Leonora "el Mercurio portador de las infaustas nuevas."² Rather than a regal messenger of the gods, the hairdresser is just a commonplace, gossip woman with no sensitivity, interested only in revealing that she knows the most recent scandal.

Ayala seems to delight in giving ironic titles to chapters. The chapter titles and inscriptions of Troteras y danzaderas³ may serve to illustrate this point. The first chapter bears the names "Sesostris y Platón."⁴ The name of

¹Ibid., p. 117.

²La pata de la raposa, p. 234.

³Pérez de Ayala, Troteras y danzaderas (Madrid: Mundo Latino, 1923).

⁴Ibid., p. 5.

Sesostris, a great political and military leader of ancient Egypt, of whom Herodotus wrote,¹ would seem to indicate the presence of a great leader engaged in feats of military or political prowess, and Plato's name might lead one to expect philosophical discussions from a fine philosopher. These expectations are rudely defeated when it is learned that Sesostris is only a turtle and Plato but a fish.

These names have a symbolical function, too, since they also allude to two characters introduced in this same chapter. This allusion is also very ironic since Sesostris refers to Sabas Sicilia, a minister in the Spanish government; he is really a petty politician who has never done anything significant in politics and possesses no great gifts nor talents for his position. His mistress is Rosina, one of the prostitutes in Tinieblas en las cumbres; she owns the fish and turtle referred to above. The Plato of the chapter is Teófilo Pajares, a modernist poet of mediocre talent and unexceptional intellect. Teófilo is in love with Rosina and visits her frequently, though Sicilia is unaware of it. At her apartment he sees the turtle and the fish that, ironically, Sabas Sicilia has named Sesostris and Plato. Just as Sicilia is far from being a Sesostris, so is Teófilo far from being a philosopher; his only serious philosophic endeavors consist of a rather inept and insincere attempt to convince

¹"Sesostris," Encyclopedia Americana, International Edition (1966), Vol. XXIV.

a fellow boarder that he, Teófilo, is an anarchist.

The second chapter is entitled "Verónica y Desdémona"¹ and is slightly ironic, for, rather than a saint, Verónica turns out to be a prostitute. In this well-known chapter, Alberto Guzmán reads his translation of Othello to Verónica, whom his roommate has brought to their apartment. The title links a real prostitute with an imagined one.

A later chapter, "Hermes Trimegisto y Santa Teresa,"² juxtaposes the names of the Egyptian god and author of pseudoscientific and mystical works³ and the famous Spanish mystic. These names might excite the reader's imagination and curiosity, but they concern parts of the novel of relative unimportance. Two prostitutes and a young girl about to marry read from a book of fortunetelling, allegedly found in an Egyptian tomb and written by Hermes Trismegistus. The following section, concerning Santa Teresa, is more ironic. Alberto is reading from Las siete moradas when Rosina arrives and tells about a young girl from the provinces who has just come to Madrid. He reads out loud passages from the saint's book that tell of a girl seeking a dowry so she can enter a convent, which is what he thinks the provincial girl wants. Alberto is wrong, though, for what she wants is to be a pros-

¹Tróteras y danzaderas, p. 73.

²Ibid., p. 209.

³"Hermes Trismegistus," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1962, Vol. XI.

titute, not a nun.

Again, the title has another application, also ironic, for during this chapter there are discussions of secular philosophy, Kant and the social and political situation in Spain. The chapter also includes a visit to several brothels, a seduction and an anarchist bombing. Nothing of a religious or mystic nature is to be found, though. The ironic title serves to reinforce the picture Ayala paints of a Spain devoid of religious values and beliefs.

Denotative irony is the most prevalent form of verbal irony in Ayala's novels, and referential irony is the most comically effective. By limiting the use of connotative irony, Ayala sacrifices opportunities to be more subtle and to better integrate the irony into the text. More important than the frequent occurrence of the different kinds of verbal irony are its specific functions in the novels. The first of these functions is related to the narrative technique. In these early novels Ayala is still seeking the best way to construct his novels, still learning the novelist's craft. He and his contemporaries, Valle-Inclán, Azorín, Baroja, Unamuno, were all attempting to break away from the limits of the novel as established in the nineteenth century and find a form and style better suited to their times and artistic goals and talents. Ayala shared in this search and his concern can be detected in his continuous experimenting.¹

¹In El curandero de su honra (Madrid: Editorial Pueyo, 1926), Ayala's last novel, he is still experimenting.

His search for a narrative technique was undoubtedly influenced by the semi-autobiographical nature of the material. A technique that would provide a first person narrator who was not the protagonist would permit Ayala a certain distance from the personal quality of the subject. Here, then, was an accepted literary technique that would allow ample outlet for Ayala's irony and also opportunity for experimenting with form and style. The verbal irony made possible by the intrusive narrator is a more facile form of irony than Ayala later employed wherein he arranged his materials so that the reader perceived the ironic patterns. In his later works the direct ironic comments give way to a more integrated irony, a subtler, less jolting irony that actually affords a greater ironic texture to the novels.

A second function of the verbal irony has already been intimated in conjunction with the autobiographical content of these four novels. The intrusive narrator gives a certain subjective tone that Ayala undoubtedly desired, and the verbal irony exerts an objective force that insulates the author, allowing him proper perspective to portray people and events in correct focus. The subject matter is, at times, quite sensual and indecorous. The author, rather than joining in and taking a subjective part, watches at a distance

To portray the simultaneous thoughts and actions of the protagonist and his wife, the author writes a section of the novel in two parallel columns, (pp. 95-152) and he includes a long poem to express the hero's final feelings. (pp. 213-16).

from his ironical viewpoint. He may enjoy a laugh, but it is the detached laugh of an impartial viewer.

Besides the sensual element, the novels contain much autobiographical material since Alberto Guzmán is the author's alter ego.¹ Ayala needed a buffer between the doubts, spiritual disorientation, anguish and inner struggle he himself had experienced and the artistic representation of that experience in the character of Alberto. Verbal irony helps Ayala convey the spiritual torment of his alter ego with detachment and calm. In this way he controls his material and does not let it control him.²

The third function of the verbal irony is related to the novels' reception by the Spanish public. The anti-clerical satire, the comments on religion and dogma, and the sexual jokes and frank realism might all offend Catholic sensibility and lead to possible censure or even censorship. The verbal irony veils much that might be offensive; it could also serve to throw many readers off their guard, to convince them that the novels are really just a game, not to be taken seriously. This would partially explain why Inie-

¹This is not to imply that Alberto is Ayala or that the novels are highly autobiographical. The anguish of the protagonist does closely parallel that of Ayala at one period in his life.

²The obvious exception is A. M. D. G., where there is the least irony and the least detachment. Critics have dismissed A. M. D. G. as propaganda: Nicolás González Ruiz, "La obra literaria de don Ramón Pérez de Ayala," Bulletin of Spanish Studies, IX-X (1932), 27, and as "literatura comprometida": Nora, pp. 476-79.

blas en las cumbres, the most scabrous and shocking of the four, has the greatest quantity of verbal irony. Further substantiation is found in the fact that Ayala wrote the novel under a pseudonym with an epilogue¹ that is supposedly written by an anonymous Jesuit priest, Padre X. The priest claims to have received the novel's manuscript from a dying man. The latter had known the priest as a schoolteacher. Plotinas Cuevas, the moribund man, desires confession and implores the father to publish his book as an example to others of what happens to an immoral man, led from his belief in God by bad books. The irony seems evident but may have deceived many readers in its time. Cuevas hands the Jesuit a box that contains

el más repugnante engendro que haya concebido nunca la mente humana. Son las cuartillas de un libro que en mal hora pensé y en peores instantes desarrollé, al correr de la pluma; esto es lo cierto. Abominaciones y liviandades que andan sueltas por el mundo, aprisionadas están entre esas páginas. Yo no muero tranquilo si usted no me promete que las ha de publicar, con un prefacio aclaratorio, a fin de que la mocedad se mire en ese espejo, conciba horror y huya de la mala senda; lo que el proverbio dice: "escarmentar en cabeza ajena."²

The book disgusts the priest, but his superior tells him to keep his promise and publish the manuscript as a moral lesson against the dangers of prostitution. If such irony helped Ayala publish his first novel, it served a good purpose. Ayala never used a pseudonym again, but after this novel he

¹In the first edition it appeared as a prologue, in subsequent editions as an epilogue.

²Tinieblas en las cumbres, p. 333.

was an established author.

Of the novels written after the first four, only in Prometeo is the intrusive narrator used to any extent.¹ Instead, Ayala relates his later novels through an omniscient, objective narrator, eliminating the opportunity to use verbal irony. Gone are the ironical asides about characters and their actions; gone are the humorous, ironic footnotes, replaced by notes that merely serve to translate the local idioms. The absence of verbal irony does not imply any lessening of the ironic content in Ayala's fiction, though. In its place is substantial irony which is irony of plot, of characters, names and myths.

The change from verbal to substantial irony is not abrupt. Indeed, substantial irony is found hand in hand with verbal irony in the initial works, and there is a decrease in the amount of verbal irony after the first novel. The process of changeover can be observed in Prometeo, published in 1916, which is one of three "novelas poemáticas" collected in one volume.² The three stories constitute a work of transition between the early novels and the mature novels.³

¹The narrative method in Belarmino y Apolonio is one of multiple point of view. The intrusive narrator only tells part of the story, and he uses little verbal irony.

²Pérez de Ayala, Prometeo. Luz de domingo. La caída de los Limones. (Madrid: Renacimiento, 1924).

³Ayala himself recognized this fact in the division he made of his novels in the prologue to the Latin American edition of Troteras y danzaderas (Buenos Aires: Losada, 1942), pp. 5-21, cited by Urrutia, pp. 14-15.

Prometeo is also a transitional work in Ayala's use of irony.

The plot of Prometeo concerns the efforts of Marco de Setiñano to have a son who will be a Prometheus bringing a new fire to incite man to greatness. He marries Perpetua Meana, and they have a deformed son who eventually commits suicide.

The verbal irony is concentrated in the initial chapter, in which the intrusive narrator is most in evidence. There is also verbal irony in the short poems that introduce each chapter.¹

The first of the five chapters is a parody of Homer's Odyssey and its epic style. The beginning sentences indicate that the modern epic will proceed much as its model did.

La aventura aconteció, sobre poco más o menos, como la refiere el aeda Homero, de los ojos sin luz. Los lances, tan pronto afortunados como adversos, que precedieron a la aventura, así como las circunstancias con que se acompañó, repiten la fábula antigua, si bien la mudanza de los tiempos introdujeron ligeras variaciones.²

The variations are not slight, however. The narrator calls on Minerva to inspire and help him tell his tale just as Homer did, but now the goddess is a "diosa cominera de estos días plebeyos; diosa de la curiosidad impertinente y del tedio fisgón"³ and a "diosa chismorrera y correveidile."⁴

¹The "poematic" aspect of these novels stems not from a poetic quality in the prose, for they are not prose poems, but from the introductory poems, which foreshadow poetically that which the following prose passages reveal more explicitly.

²Prometeo, p. 9.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 10.

As the narrator elaborates the comparisons between the ancient and modern versions, the irony of the opening statements becomes apparent. Calypso is now a rich widow, her cave a country house, nectar and ambrosia vino y aguardiente,¹ Odysseus a professor of Greek, Circe a mercenary woman in Seville and Scylla and Charybdis merely a period of time when Marco is without money.

The presence of the narrator is revealed frequently in the first two chapters by his comments on the story he tells. "Quizás a más de un lector se le antoje esta invocación tan prolija como misterioso."² The understatement conveyed by the word quizás is continued in the use of the subjunctive in the following verb. Then in the second chapter the narrator returns to his comment on the style of his prose and attempts to shift the onus of the parodic style to his acquaintance with Marco, whose speech is full of Homeric locutions. Thus the "estilo alegórico, épico y desaforado"³ is due to Marco's influence on the narrator. The narrator's pretense that he cannot control the plot or the style of his tale is, of course, very ironical.

Most of the remaining verbal irony points toward the eventual failure of Marco's ambition and the manifestation of that failure in the crippled body of his son. The poem at

¹Ibid., p. 14.

²Ibid., p. 12.

³Ibid., p. 25.

the beginning of chapter IV is a hymn to the beauty of the human body.

¡Cantemos la hermosura de la vida
corporal! En el cuerpo se concentra
toda la vida. ¡Robustez del cuerpo;
sumo bien y ventura de la tierra!¹

Both Marco and Perpetua are excellent physical specimens, but the irony extends the passage to include the hunchback form of Prometeo, too.

There is a diminishing of the verbal irony, but where it stops the substantial irony continues. Most noticeably there is the irony of the myths involved. The title would lead the reader to expect a story based on the myth of Prometheus, but Marco soon abandons hope that he will be Prometheus. In mythology Prometheus is punished for stealing fire from the gods and delivering it to man, but in Prometeo Marco's Promethean ambitions are sufficient to bring about the punishment. Marco is really an Odysseus type, but he has no Penelope, is making no homeward voyage, marries his Nausicaa and meets, not success, but abject and total failure. Only the irony prepares the reader for the scene in which Prometeo is rejected by the milkmaid and hangs himself, culminating the ruin of Marco's hopes.

Marco is an ironic character who fails to see the impossibility of the fulfillment of his desires. In these lines

¹Ibid., p. 53.

from one of the poems, he speaks metaphorically about the happiness he and Perpetua will share and how the future of mankind rests on them. He is sure of success.

Somos las hercúleas columnas
donde el orbe apoyado está.
En torno nuestro, cual guirnalda,
se ha enroscado la eternidad.¹

In the fifth chapter the narrator, now telling the story objectively without intruding, describes the hopes and faith of Marco and Perpetua when they learn she is pregnant. "Sentía ella en sus entrañas, colmadas de ventura, la trepidación de la grande vida venidera, y el también creía sentir el armonioso bullicio de los gérmenes, comunicado a través de las dulces y laboriosas manos conyugales."² Later in the same chapter, when Marco begins to wonder if the child will be born deformed, he receives an inner assurance that all will be well, "prometiéndole un robusto fruto de bendición para el huertecillo familiar."³ There is a special irony about these words, a tragic irony, for the first poem has already indicated the outcome: "jamás lograrás tu destino."⁴ The story is, in fact, constructed like a tragedy. It is divided into five parts, and the chorus functions much as the chorus in Greek tragedy.⁵ The play's denouement was known beforehand by all the spectators of Grecian tragedy; in Prometeo, the

¹Ibid., p. 45.

²Ibid., pp. 77-78.

³Ibid., p. 79.

⁴Ibid., p. 7.

⁵Nora, p. 494.

opening poem foretells the resolution of the plot. There is much of humor and humorous irony, but the basic structure is tragic.

The varieties of substantial irony, merely adumbrated up to this point, are well represented in Ayala's fiction. Ironies of plot abound, both in the large plot and in the many minor twists and turns in the action. One of the chief manifestations of irony in the large plots is in the way Ayala uses myths. He retains some features of the original myth and changes other features in his mythic reconstruction, as seen in his treatment of the Prometheus and Odysseus myths. The reader knows of these myths, and he expects a certain pattern of events, certain actions and characteristics to reappear in modern versions. Ayala, ironically disappoints many of the reader's expectations when he reconstructs the myths, giving them often a different outcome.

In "Artemisa," a short story in Bajo el signo de Artemisa,¹ the protagonist, Gloria, is a young Spanish girl of a wealthy family. When her fiancé becomes the kind of strong, forceful type she has claimed to want, she shoots him while on a wild boar hunt and then flings herself in the path of an onrushing boar to sure death. Ayala, and several characters in the story, constantly call Gloria Artemis and

¹Pérez de Ayala, Bajo el signo de Artemisa (Madrid: Renacimiento, 1924). In spite of the publishing date of 1924, the stories were written before 1913. Only one, "Cruzado de amor," is not dated, but its style, content and amateurish tone betray a young hand. "Artemisa" was written in 1906.

compare her to the goddess of the hunt and of chaste love. Unlike her predecessor, she is unsuccessful in hunting animals, though she does shoot her fiancé, presumably a modern Actaeon. She remains chaste, though there are strong indications that she has incestuous desires toward her brother, who is an Apollo type.

Of the several myths that Ayala treats to some extent, only his version of the Daphnis and Chloe legend faithfully follows the original. In the two novels built around this legend,¹ Urbano (Daphnis) and Simona (Chloe) are completely innocent, the setting is pastoral in much of the first novel, the male discovers the facts of sex first, and the lovers are separated and happily united at the end. Ayala does introduce two minor novelties: the young couple get married at the beginning of the story, and their parentage is known from the tale's inception. Since the legend fitted perfectly with Ayala's purpose of satirizing contemporary sex education and ideas on rearing children, no radical or ironical departures from the famous story were needed.

The novels not based on myths also have ironies in the large plots. In La pata de la raposa, Alberto finally feels that he has arrived "al soberano bien, al equilibrio, al imperio de sí propio, a la unidad."² Then he immediately

¹Pérez de Ayala, Luna de miel, luna de hiel (Madrid: Mundo Latino, 1923), and Los Trabajos de Urbano y Simona (Madrid: Mundo Latino, 1923). It is really one novel divided into two parts.

²La pata de la raposa, p. 305.

has a foolish, pointless love affair with a girl half his age. He recovers in time to end this affair, sure now that he has really conquered himself, that he is ready to return home to marry Josefina, and he is confident she will be waiting for him. The ironical thing is that she is dead, killed by his cruel treatment of her.

The caciques in Luz de domingo represent a family nearing the end of its power. They rape the heroine in the presence of her fiancé. The young couple try to escape from the memory of that horrible act and die en route to America. As a result of the scandal caused by the rape, the caciques are overthrown, but only to be replaced by a more tyrannical family. This ironical turn adds bite to the satire of local Spanish politics.

In "Clib,"¹ Generoso Vigil, the protagonist who ruins his life by his compulsive gambling, takes the first fatal steps toward gambling in an apparently innocent ritual with his wife, Rebeca; they hold a drawing to determine all their minor decisions. "Del vicio del juego, que más adelante contrajo; de las subsiguientes desdichas; del desamor, casi odio, que su mujer llegó a inspirarle, la hacía a ella responsable, recordando la invención de las papeletas y la frivolidad cruel con que Rebeca, poco a poco, mediante menudos alardes e insolencias de gananciosa, le había ido enardecendo el

¹One of the five short stories in Ombliqo del mundo (Madrid: Renacimiento, 1924), pp. 173-251.

apetito de dominar el destino."¹

There are myriad minor ironies of plot in Ayala's novels, too. The rape in Luz de domingo goes undiscovered because the music of a band covers the girl's screams; the band is playing to celebrate the coming wedding of the girl and her sweetheart. The last of the novelas poemáticas is La caída de los Limones; it concerns the Limones, a family of caciques whose reign ends when the youngest male, Arias, brutally attacks and kills a young girl and her mother. When still a small boy, Arias and his sister planned a big excursion in a boat, but the boat ran aground before they could go far. That ended the trip and also ended their acting out their desires and dreams; Arias' mind then turns inward, and he suppresses his wants and fantasies till he explodes in violence and lust. The plot of "Grano de Pimienta y Mil Perdones," from Ombligo del mundo, reveals that one of the characters who is supposed to be so chaste and virtuous really has syphilis. Another allegedly virtuous man, in Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona, is discovered to be the father of an illegitimate child. The innocent newlyweds in Luna de miel, luna de hiel are to be instructed on sex by the two people most unlikely to achieve success: a bashful, inexperienced tutor and a widowed, old-fashioned grandmother. Apolonio, of Belarmino y Apolonio, owns expensive gamecocks with heroic names, but they are inevitably defeated by cocks

¹Ibid., p. 189.

with more prosaic names. The money lender responsible for sending Belarmino to the poorhouse has to enter that same poorhouse. Alberto lends his servant ten thousand pesetas and refuses a receipt. Later, when he attempts to collect on this loan, the servant will not pay it back and asks Alberto for proof that the money was lent him.

The tightly woven ironic texture achieved through the addition of small plot ironies to the large ones helps to replace the void caused by the lessening of verbal irony in the later novels.

Even more abundant than the ironies of plot are the ironies to be found in the names, words and thoughts, actions and psychological traits of the characters who people Ayala's fiction.

Many of the characters have ironic names. Urbano, the epitome of naïveté, is certainly not urbane; Arias, in La caída de los Limones, is named after an ancestor who was a famous conquistador; a frail priest in "Artemisa" is called Don Robustiano; a man with an enormous stomach is nicknamed Panzina; Caligula, Alectryon and Sesostris turn out to be only animals' names, and these animals have no traits in common with their namesakes.

When the characters make a statement that proves to be ironic in view of later events, the reader perceives the irony of the statement as he often knows of or senses those future events. In "Exodo" and "Padre e hijo," two stories

from Bajo el signo de Artemisa that are actually two parts of one story, don Cristóbal is a profligate father whose son turns against him and gains control of the family fortune only to lose it when the father discovers the boy is not really his son and disinherits him. Before making this discovery, don Cristobal innocently remarks that the boy "no parece hijo mío"¹ several times. Before Marco of Prometeo gets married, he discusses deformed babies with his future wife and mentions a philosopher who advocated killing all defective children, an idea Marco accepts until his own son is born deformed. Don Enrique, the father of the Limones in La Caída de los Limones, brags that "gracias a la exquisita tutela de los Limones, dos mujeres pueden vivir solas y seguras en Guadalfranco, aunque sean ricas."² Yet that very night the two women to whom he is alluding are murdered by Arias, Enrique's son. In Tigre Juan the protagonist claims "tigre soy y tigre seré hasta que muera,"³ though later it is he who says he has become "Juan Cordero."⁴

When the irony stems not from the character's lack of knowledge but from a character fault, either irrationality, misapprehension or self-deception, then the irony is

¹Bajo el signo de Artemisa, p. 186.

²Prometeo. Luz de domingo. La caída de los Limones, p. 240.

³Pérez de Ayala, Tigre Juan (Madrid: Editorial Pueyo, 1926), p. 50.

⁴El curandero de su honra, p. 185.

more telling and more effective. It produces a double irony, the irony perceived by the reader and not the character, and the irony stemming from the disappointment of the character's expectations.¹

Misapprehension on the part of a character can have very humorous and tragic results. Naïveté is one of the causes of this misapprehension. In A. M. D. G., a group of local women and a priest pay a visit to the local madam to call her to repentance and induce her to abandon her house of ill repute; they actually believe she will do it. She pretends to agree with them, then, in a falsely pious way, tells each of the women how her father or husband behaves in the house of prostitution and how those men never miss even one night. Teófilo Pajares' mother, Juana, comes to visit her son in Troteras y danzaderas. The boarders where Teófilo lives try to prevent his mother from discovering that one of the boarders is a prostitute, but the evidence is strong. Juana does not realize the truth, and at one point she enters the prostitute's room to pray. Ruth, an Englishwoman, is studying to join the Catholic church, and she thinks that all

¹Hutchens attempts to reduce this to a single ironical effect on pages 46-47:

"When a character thinks irrationally or misinterprets a situation or a set of facts, readers may feel that the irony lies in their perceiving that he is doing so while he does not perceive it. Actually, however, the irony lies in the defeat of his own expectation. He is following a chain of logic which he believes to be based on true causality, but he is deceived. . . . It is only when reason itself has led to an unreasonable conclusion that there is irony in irrationality or misinterpretation."

the Jesuits are saints. One in particular, Padre Ulano, has a good reputation:

¡Cuán entera su reputación! ¡Cuán pulquérrima su fama! Su prestigio, ¡cuán creciente! Ciertamente que era muy madurito de años, poco agraciado de rostro y nada aseado de su persona; mas, no por estas menudas circunstancias se ha de entender que se mermase en un ápice su virtud y fortaleza.¹

All of the Jesuits at the school have bad qualities and are not saints at all, but Padre Ulano even goes to the extreme of trying to seduce Ruth. The strong verbal irony in the above passage warns the reader what to expect of Ulano and that his character does not equal his reputation.

Several of the characters' misapprehensions stem from a nearsightedness that leads them to false concepts and conclusions. A poor streetwalker longs for the Bohemian life, not realizing that hers is a Bohemian existence. Alberto corrects her vision.

No te molestes en quedarte con nosotros a hacer vida de bohemia, porque toda tu vida la has estado haciendo sin saberlo. No tener dinero, hija mía, no puede ser un ideal, y menos no tenerlo y desearlo, que esto es la bohemia,² y ser perezoso e inútil para conseguirlo o crearlo.

There is the case, too, of don Recaredo in "Don Rodrigo y don Recaredo," a story in Ombliqo del mundo. He is a priest who fears his family line is about to cease because his brothers have no male heirs. The family is an ancient one, in continued existence since Gothic times, as the brothers'

¹A. M. D. G., p. 201.

²Troteras y danzaderas, p. 96.

names suggest. Recaredo believes that the only way to assure a family continuity is to convince his brother Rodrigo to remarry. Rodrigo has no desire to marry, but, sensing that what Recaredo really yearns for is paternity, self-continuity, he sends a very attractive young lady back to the city under the priest's care. The ending leaves no doubt that Recaredo himself will carry on the family line.

The self-deception practiced by Ayala's characters is not complete, but limited to one or more aspects of their lives. Cerdá of Tinieblas en las cumbres conceives of himself as a great lover, a real Don Juan, irresistible to women. Yet all his conquests have been prostitutes. The one time he does venture outside a professional establishment, the girl he seduces is not the virgin he thinks her to be but the mother of several children and a woman of loose morals. The modernist poet in Troteras y danzaderas, Teófilo Pajares, is convinced that at last he has found a woman, Rosina, who loves him for himself, not because he is a poet. Ayala informs the reader of the true situation. "Si algún amigo o la propia Rosina, le hubiera dicho 'esa mujer te quiere porque te considera gran poeta, y un poco también por simpatía a que tu pobreza le mueve,' Teófilo recibiera al oírlo el desencanto y amargura mayores de su vida."¹ Urbano's mother, Micaela, in Luna de miel, luna de hiel, does not consider her son's tutor to be a man but rather of a neuter gender. She

¹Ibid., p. 117.

is actually much more neuter than he, since she has rejected all femininity; she is a mixture of masculine aggressiveness and sexual neutrality. Don Sabas, the politician in Troteras y danzaderas, is shocked to learn that his children have grown up as failures since he gave them such a fine upbringing, educating them "de una manera filosófica, según decía él, y para hombres perfectos, guiándoles desde la niñez según los dictados de la razón humana, defendiéndolos contra el ataque emboscado de los prejuicios religiosos e inculcándoles el culto a la vida como supremo ideal."¹ The example he set for them was the personification of political corruption and cynicism, yet he cannot understand how his favorite son can marry an ugly, stupid girl just for her money.

Irrationality is another character fault that can have ironic results. Micaela wants her son to get married in sexual ignorance thinking that the Holy Ghost or Mother Nature will instruct him, but as is indicated by the novel's title, Luna de miel, luna de hiel, no such thing happens. Urbano's friend Paolo is a fifty-five year old bachelor who has been engaged for thirty years because his mother does not approve of the marriage, claiming that they are too young. He carries this absurdity into other phases of his life and irrationally sees all old things as young, including his antiques. "Mas, para Paolo, las antigüedades jamás perdían su virtud juvenil, su frescura y sorpresa de cosas actua-

¹Ibid., p. 235.

les."¹ Adriana, protagonist of "La triste Adriana" from Ombliquo del mundo, and her husband, Federico, are both so caught up in their own individual lives that they are all but unaware of each other. She lives in a dream world pretending to be unfaithful to her husband. When the local Tenorio attempts to make her dreams come true, she refuses.

From Ayala's early fiction to his final novel, Tigre Juan, there are evidences of an improved ability to use substantial irony effectively. The ironic structure of an early short story, "El Anticristo," reveals skill, but also weaknesses that Ayala later overcame.

"El Anticristo," from Ayala's first collection of short stories, Bajo el signo de Artemisa, 1912, relates the account of Sor Resignación, a young nun who flees Spain with the other seven nuns from her very small convent. They escape to avoid persecution from El Anticristo, a revolutionary whose real name is Rosendo Toral. When the revolution fails, Toral is also forced to flee, and he and the nuns take the same ship to America. The ending points to a future in which Sor Resignación and Toral will attempt a new life in a new land together.

The irony begins with the title and names. Though Toral burns cathedrals and fights against the Church, he is actually a kind, generous person. Sor Resignación is not at

¹Los Trabajos de Urbano y Simona, p. 215.

all resigned, but insistent, inquisitive and searching for definite values. Her real name, Tiburcia, is also ironic since Tiburcio was a pagan who was converted to Christianity and died a martyr,¹ while Tiburcia forsakes her vows and presumably the Church, too.

There are many ironies of plot. The nuns do needlework and discover they have been sewing for El Anticristo. When they board the ship, El Anticristo helps them, as the nuns do not recognize him. The man that they think is El Anticristo, the man who looks most like a criminal, is the ship's chaplain, to whom they must confess. When the boat sinks, Toral saves the nuns, and when their lifeboat sinks, he saves Sor Resignación. Only then does she realize who he is; she sees the initials on his shirt that she herself had embroidered. Finally, as the ship sinks, the irony of its name, the Pío IX, is revealed as it "elevaba a la manera de unos brazos ígneos y suplicantes hasta el firmamento."² Its prayer, needless to say, goes unanswered.

The naïveté and ignorance of the nuns lead them to make ironic comments. One nun thinks that the glow in the sky from burning convents is just a summer sunset. The Mother Superior imagines Mexico is still populated with plumed

¹"Tiburcio," Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada Europea-Americana, Vol. LXI.

²Bajo el signo de Artemisa, p. 288.

savages. Another sister states that she cannot imagine anyone getting seasick, though she has only been on board ship one day; she later gets quite sick when the sea becomes rough.

The development of the feelings Sor Resignación has for Rosendo Toral shows irony. She begins by hating him as a religious exercise. "Le odiaba con mayor perseverancia y ahinco, de tal suerte que su forma peculiar de amor a Dios se confundía con el sentimiento de aversión a Satanás, encarnado en el Anticristo."¹ It is just this hate, however, that prepares her to love him. She is more obsessed with him than are the other nuns and imagines him to be small and ugly. He is actually a large, attractive man. She dreams first of killing him, then of converting him. Once on board ship she openly rebels for the first time in her life, desiring a new life, a real existence. While others get physically seasick, she suffers "marea del alma."²

The ironies in this story are essential to the development of the protagonist's character, making more plausible her change from a poor, passive country girl to a rebellious, eager human being. The ironic frame functions as a counterbalance against what could have been merely an anti-clerical, sentimental story with a contrived plot. The irony gives the story a tautness, credibility and satiric sting that make it easily the best story in the collection.

¹Ibid., pp. 251-252.

²Ibid., p. 281.

There are, however, certain weaknesses in the ironic content, which tends to be a little too obvious; some of the incidents are too coincidental, the anti-clerical tone a trifle too haughty. The irony is essential to the story, but is not as integral a part of its form as is the case in Ayala's later novels.

Ayala's last two novels, Tigre Juan, 1926 and El curandero de su honra, 1926, reveal a fully accomplished writer. He is still experimenting with form, but his narrative technique is established. The irony is controlled and permeates characters, plot and form in both novels.

Perhaps the most striking irony lies in Ayala's treatment of the mythic content, involving both Don Juan and a mixture of Othello and the embodiment of Calderonian honor, exemplified by El médico de su honra. Ayala places his story in modern times and creates new myths, contemporary versions of the old ones, reflecting his affinity with the Generation of '98. The plot deals with a forty-year old misogynist, Tigre Juan, who falls in love with a young girl, Herminia. Against her will they marry and eventually find a happy life together.

The Don Juan of this novel is not the Tigre Juan of the title but rather his close friend Vespasiano Cebón. Although Vespasiano is attractive to women and seduces many of them, he is no copy of the traditional Tenorio. He is not bold or virile but rather effeminate. His name is an aid in revealing his character. "Vespasiano, emperador de Roma y

ejemplo de decadencia cesárea; Cebón, relativo a carne bien alimentada, cebada, grasienda."¹ The dashing young nobleman has been replaced by an effeminate traveling salesman. The physical description that Ayala paints of him shows the difference between Vespasiano and the Don Juan of Tirso or Zorrilla.

Sus facciones eran correctas y finas, menos los labios, gruesos, sensuales y majados. . . . Era guapo, con una belleza decadente de emperador romano o de señora madura en libertinajes. Despertaba en muchas mujeres atracción malsana y curiosidad de incertidumbre, no sólo por la ambigüedad de sus rasgos y miembros, algunos de ellos femeniles, como la sobarba, el abultado pecho y el trasero, no menos rotundo, sino también por sus actitudes sugestivas, de corrompida molicie, y su experimentada madurez, a semejanza de la perdiz para el gastrónomo, que la halla más sabrosa en un punto de incipiente descomposición.²

Though this modern Don Juan makes plans to seduce Herminia, and she does run away with him, he is incapable of carrying out his plans and fails. It is ironical, too, that he neither goes to Hell for punishment nor to Heaven for salvation, but is left alive on earth, aware of his failure, frightened of Tigre Juan and finally cognizant of his own petty nature.

Tigre Juan is the embodiment of the Othello-Médico myth. He thinks that his first wife was unfaithful to him and now hates women, except saintly, maternal types such as his mother and his neighbor Doña Iluminada. He admires the

¹Urrutia, p. 89.

²El curandero de su honra, pp. 27-28. Vespasiano is mentioned in Tigre Juan, but appears as a character only in this, the second part of the novel. He is no longer the protagonist, but a secondary figure or perhaps an antagonist.

Don Juan archetype and considers him a fitting scourge of women. When Herminia flees with Vespasiano and Tigre Juan thinks that he has been cuckolded, he does not kill his wife to revenge his honor nor as an act of jealousy; instead, he slashes his own wrist in an attempt at suicide. He is not the médico but the curandero of his honor. Part of Ayala's revision of the myth includes a new concept of honor wherein blood revenge has no part. Tigre recovers from his suicide attempt, and he has a reconciliation with his wife, forgiving her completely. In a final scene with Vespasiano, he also pardons the latter, gives him a crushing embrace and asks to continue being his friend. Thus Tigre Juan becomes Juan Cordero, a resolution already hinted by his paradoxical name, Juan Madrigal Guerrero.

The ironies of plot and character, easily separated in "El Anticristo," are so interwoven in Ayala's last two novels that they are inseparable. The irony is an integral and essential part of the form, linking plot and characterization, giving the novels a finely ironic texture. Most of the irony centers around Tigre Juan and the way the events and other characters relate to him. He conceives of his widowed neighbor lady as "Santa Iluminada, virgen y mártir."¹ He thinks her a virgin, in a figurative sense, because she has remained true to her dead husband, and a martyr in a literal sense because she suffers and mourns his death. She is in

¹Tigre Juan, p. 31.

actuality a virgin, since the man who married her did so only as a business transaction; her martyrdom was the misery she suffered living with a man who did not love her.

Colás, Juan's adopted son, leaves town because Herminia, the girl he loves, spurns him. Juan first wishes that Vespasiano would make the girl love Colás, but she already loves Vespasiano. Then Juan wants to revenge the disdain the girl has shown toward Colás, but instead he falls in love with her. His desire to punish her by his frequent presence is ironic since he begins to fancy that she is actually enjoying it, but it is really torture for her. She dreads the day when Juan will ask her to marry him. This expectation is not realized, however.

Aquel día aciago, presentido por Herminia, no llegó. Y, sin embargo, era como si hubiera pasado, quizás porque pasó en silencio, Y otro día, un día cualquiera, Herminia, atónita, se dió cuenta de que era oficialmente la prometida de Tigre Juan, sin haberla pedido él en matrimonio ni, por tanto, haber tenido ella ocasión de rechazarle.¹

Juan writes to Colás that he is going to marry Herminia, thinking this news will gladden him, having forgotten that Colás is in love with her, too.

Before the wedding, Vespasiano sends a letter to Tigre Juan telling him his travels will soon take him again to Pilares, the scene of the story, and that he has a certain girl ready for conquest. Juan receives vicarious pleasure in Vespasiano's seductions, but he does not know that Vespa-

¹El curandero de su honra, pp. 9-10.

siano's intended victim this time is Herminia. When Vespasiano arrives, Juan asks him to go see the future bride. Tigre is so jealous he wants no man even to look at Herminia, yet he allows the one man who could seduce her to be alone with her. The irony is very strong here for Tigre wants Vespasiano to be a John Alden to his Miles Standish. Herminia, the Priscilla in the triangle, has been waiting for Vespasiano to come take her away. He refuses saying, "Yo no robo la mujer a mi amigo."¹ He is perfectly willing, however, to be her paramour whenever he is in town.

When Juan was much younger, he served as a valet to an army captain. The captain encourages a romance between his maid, Engracia, and Juan, who does fall in love with her and marries her. The captain, whose own wife has been deceiving him with many of the men in his battalion, including Tigre Juan, perceives that Juan is in love with the maid and says : "En cosas de amor soy un lince. Nada hay que se me escape."²

This same ironic pattern is found throughout these two novels; irony is added to irony, surrounding and involving the central figure of Tigre Juan. Though one critic has characterized Tigre Juan as being primarily grotesque,³ it is

¹Ibid., p. 103.

²Tigre Juan, p. 157.

³Mary Ann Beck, "La realidad artística en las tragedias grotescas de Ramón Pérez de Ayala," Hispania, XLVI (1963), 486-87.

his ironic nature and the ironic development of his character that stand out most clearly. The importance and the purpose of the irony of Tigre Juan are perceived in the final pages of the story when Tigre Juan and Vespasiano meet. They seemed to have symbolized opposing principles, Tigre Juan a virile, honest, sensitive misogynist, and Vespasiano an effeminate, sensual, amoral lover. Ayala brings about a harmonizing of the two opposites, showing they are compatible.¹ Tigre Juan recognizes that he was not a whole man and in his parting words to Vespasiano says,

Eres una parte de mí mismo, que me falta; como yo debiera ser una parte de ti. Te echo de menos; te echo de menos. Quisiera exprimarte como un limón, e inyectar en mis venas porción de tu zumo ácido.²

The resolution of two seemingly discordant elements, one of the modern critical usages of irony, is achieved and is the ultimate irony of the novels. Tigre Juan, the ironic man, the partial man, attains a full, rounded existence, a conclusion that the author has brought about by indicating the opposite.

The same type of irony appears in Belarmino y Apolonio. The two shoemakers of the title represent opposite and seemingly incompatible attitudes and approaches to life, and this incompatibility applies to their personal lives, too. The resolution of the plot brings Belarmino and Apolonio together as friends and symbolizes the resolution of the two ways of

¹Ibid.

²El curandero de su honra, p. 270.

viewing life. In this way Ayala shows the necessity for the union of the philosophic, contemplative, introverted nature of man with his dramatic, communicative, extroverted nature. This union is the final irony of a novel full of ironies, all pointing to the final one. And they point to it, of course, by pointing in the opposite direction.

These ultimate ironies of resolution are ironies of plot and so a part of substantial irony. They function much as the ironies of myth and overall plot do. Substantial irony "defeats expectation or belief by arousing it."¹ Its purpose is to move the novel toward an outcome by constantly pretending to drive toward an opposite one. The plot moves forward, the characters develop and the novel progresses toward its final resolution through an ironic structure of major and minor ironies. The minor ironies form a musical accompaniment against which the larger ironies of plot and myth flow as a melody, integrating the ironical tone into the very form and structure of the novels, rather than imposing it on the novel as is the effect of much of Ayala's verbal irony. As the verbal irony plays an important role in the way Ayala tells a story, so the substantial irony is closely linked and essential to the way that story progresses. In the novels where both types of irony occur, they reinforce each other; in the later novels substantial irony performs alone and suffices for the artistic effects Ayala desired.

¹Hutchens, p. 37.

Besides the specific contributions that verbal and substantial irony make to Ayala's fiction, there are the functions and effects of the overall use of irony, too. These can be appreciated in three main areas: humor, style and Weltanschauung.

First, and most obviously, irony is an excellent vehicle for the humor that is omnipresent in Ayala's fiction. Irony is a constant in all of Ayala's writing, in his fiction, essays and poetry.¹ It is, as with Cervantes, "el recurso estilístico que su humorismo prefiere."² It is also the form of humor he uses most. Irony accompanies his satire; his use of language is often ironic. Romeu, in his article on Ayala's humor, mentions Ayala's irony but fails to stress its importance and preponderance. He does assert that Ayala's humor is essentially intellectual,³ but does not see the great role irony has in making his humor intellectual. Irony is quintessentially intellectual, "probably the most philosophical species of expression of the comic spirit."⁴ Yet his humor has not the cold, sheerly intellectual tone of wit. The irony lends a warmer, more human tone to Ayala's humor

¹Angel del Río, Historia de la literatura española, Vol. II (Rev. ed.; New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), pp. 315-16.

²Teresa Avelleyra Arroyo de Anda, El humorismo de Cervantes en sus obras menores (Mexico: Imprenta Aldina, 1962), p. 22.

³Romeu, p. 80.

⁴Swabey, p. 45.

that brings him much closer to Cervantes than to Quevedo and gives him more affinity with Shakspeare than with Oscar Wilde. Ayala's irony affords the "tolerance and larger comprehension"¹ that characterize the Quixote.

Since tragic irony is an important part of irony and is found in Ayala, it may seem paradoxical to stress the comic function of irony. It is just this dual potential of irony, the "trembling equipoise between jest and earnest,"² that makes it such a successful comic device. In all really good comedy there is a serious tone or background. Ayala is a comic novelist and a serious writer with a serious purpose. His novels are tragicomic³ as is his basic artistic viewpoint. Irony is the logical and natural mode of expressing humor in a tragicomedy since irony partakes of both the tragic and the comic.

The form of Ayala's novels reflects, of course, his tragicomic outlook. In the early novels and the novelas poemáticas, the tragic is dominant and the denouements are tragic, i.e., Prometeo dies, Alberto loses Josefina, the main characters in Luz de domingo and La caída de los Limones die. In Ayala's later novels, from Belarmino y Apolonio on, the novels deal with serious or tragic themes, i.e., the Othello-Médico myth, but are resolved in traditional comic fashion with a happy ending and something closely allied to

¹Ibid., p. 67.

²Thomson, p. 166.

³Mariano Baquero Goyanes, "La novela como Tragicomedia," Insula, X (15 Feb. 1955), 1, 4.

the marriage that has been a constant in comedy since its very origins.¹ Whether the tragic or the comic dominates, irony always helps to maintain an equilibrium and harmony between them, recalling once more Thomson's definition of irony as the "trembling equipoise between jest and earnest."

Also related to style is the function irony serves in providing, or helping provide, aesthetic distance for the reader. Aesthetic distance "is the implicit set of directions concerning the distance from the object at which the reader must stand if he is to see it for what it is."² The writer's problem is to direct the reader so that he neither becomes too personally involved in the work of art and thus fails to see it as art nor becomes so detached that he is not moved at all. A good example of this is Tinieblas en las cumbres. The problem is to present Alberto in such a way that the reader will neither become too emotionally and personally involved in Alberto's inner struggles nor so objective that he fails to grasp and feel the extent of the struggle. Ayala's solution is first to portray his protagonist as more of a spectator than participant in the orgiastic trip to the mountains, for his real trip is spiritual, and

¹Wayne Schumaker, Literature and the Irrational--A Study in Anthropological Backgrounds (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960). On page 190 he states that mating is basic to typical comic plots, and on page 144 he shows how the origin of the marriage is the union of Mother-Earth and Heaven-Father to promote fertility.

²David Daiches, A Study of Literature for Readers and Critics (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1948), p. 63.

secondly to indicate the proper distance through the use of irony. The constant irony used when discussing the men and prostitutes prevents the reader from becoming too involved and allows him to enjoy those scenes. In order that this detachment not extend too far, the author advises the reader to skip a chapter in which Alberto and an intellectual friend discuss Alberto's problems. The reader adjusts his aesthetic distance as he shifts from the fun and revelry to the passages that help illuminate Alberto's inner being and the reasons for his anguish. It is significant that in A. M. D. G. there is little irony and a resultant lack of aesthetic distance built into the novel. Both the author and the reader lose their serenity and needed detachment, and the result is that this is his least successful novel. It may be an interesting anti-Jesuit tract, but it fails to arouse interest as a work of art.

Closely akin to the function of irony in aesthetic distance is the role it plays in establishing a balance between the comic and moral-didactic content of Ayala's fiction.¹ This moral-didactic content is present in varying degrees in all of Ayala's novels.² In Luna de miel, luna de hiel and

¹Hutchens, p. 31. "If anything is clear about Fielding's purpose in Tom Jones, it is that he wished to keep his material simultaneously under the eye of comedy and the eye of moral judgment, and only irony can achieve this goal without sacrificing either to the other."

²Donald L. Fabian, "Bases de la novelística de Ramón Pérez de Ayala," Hispania, XLVI (1963), pp. 58-9.

Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona, Ayala's satirico-moral-didactic material centers around sex education. Balanced on irony's fine edge, the novels avoid being merely a humorous, titillating recasting of the Daphnis and Chloe tale or degenerating into socio-moral treatises. Instead, the humor and moral content complement each other, and the novels maintain their artistic integrity.

The last of the three main areas in which irony is of paramount importance in Ayala's work is his Weltanschauung. His view of life is tragicomic and ironic, and perfectly compatible with that view is his humanity, his basic concern for the human.¹ Irony is a form of the comic that is consistent with a humanitarian outlook, for "the ironist seems usually concerned with the fate of the human race and to take the point of view of humanity."² Though Ayala wrote at a time of widespread dehumanization of art and though there are undoubtedly evidences of this dehumanization in his writing, he remains a humanitarian, and his concern is for this world, this life.

Northrop Frye states that "during the last hundred years, most serious fiction has tended increasingly to be ironic in mode."³ Thus the ironical nature of Ayala's novels

¹Guillermo de Torre, "El universo novelesco de Pérez de Ayala," Asomante, XX (1964), pp. 16-17.

²Swabey, p. 56.

³Frye, pp. 34-35. It is perhaps no coincidence that Madame Bovary precedes Frye's book by exactly one hundred years.

is compatible with the era in which he wrote; it is also in keeping with his Spanish fictional heritage. This literary tradition is one that includes a good deal of irony and many ironists, from the bitter irony of Quevedo's satire to the gentle irony of Juan Valera,¹ who is just a generation before Ayala; from the Cervantine irony of the Quixote to that of Alarcón in El Sombrero de tres picos.

In conclusion, irony is a factor present in Ayala's fictional works from the first to the last novel. There is a trend from verbal to substantial irony and a definite progress in his ability to employ irony artistically and integrally from the period of his first four novels to that of his more mature ones. Throughout his whole body of fiction, though, irony plays an important and indispensable part; it is the principal vehicle for the expression of his comic spirit and contributes vitally to the form and content of his novels.

¹Ayala recognizes Valera's irony and comments on it in his Divagaciones literarias (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1956), p. 73.

CHAPTER III

CONCERN FOR LANGUAGE

Language is the author's basic tool, and he obviously cannot express comic effects without it. He uses words to create comic situations, develop humorous characters, dash off witty sayings and tell jokes. But there is another aspect of the comic in words; it is that which Bergson calls the comic created by words as opposed to the comic expressed by words. The comic created by words, he tells us,

doit ce qu'il est à la structure de la phrase ou au choix des mots. Il ne constate pas, à l'aide du langage, certaines distractions particulières des hommes ou des événements. Il souligne les distractions du langage lui-même. C'est le langage lui-même, ici, qui devient comique.¹

Molière provides an excellent example; he created humorous character types, very funny situations and witty repartee. But he also derived much of his comedy from the language itself in the form of puns, invented words, dialects and foreign languages. This is true of Ayala, too. His concern for language, his use of words and syntax and his awareness of the vagaries of human expression are significant as sources for the humor in his fiction.

¹Henri Bergson, "Le rire" in Oeuvres (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), p. 436.

One need not read far into any one of Ayala's novels to sense that he is an author with an extreme interest in and concern for language. It is seen in his fine style and his extensive vocabulary but particularly in his use of words to create comic effects. Ayala plays with words in the form of puns, spoonerisms, comic names, ludicrous similes and other figures of speech. He also exploits dialects, colloquial speech and foreign languages for the comicality they may add to his fiction.

The ultimate expression of Ayala's concern for language is to be found in the many characters he has created who display varying aspects of his own awareness of and concern for language.¹ The attitudes these characters have toward words vary from ignorance and awe to mastery and disrespect, but in each case they reveal further insight into Ayala's own attitude toward language and into the extent to which that concern is related to his humor.

Ayala also utilizes his vast command of his own language plus several others, both classical and modern, to achieve extensive comic effects.

Ayala is not a real devotee of the pun. Puns do not appear with great frequency in his fiction, but they are there: bad puns, old puns, some rather obvious and certainly not original puns and some that confirm Monroe's dictum that

¹Carlos Clavería, "Apostillas al lenguaje de Belarmino," in Cinco estudios de literatura española moderna (Salamanca: Colegio Trilingüe de la Universidad, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1945), pp. 69-91.

"most puns turn out to be either veiled insults or veiled allusions to sex."¹ It should be recognized, too, that an author may put a pun into the mouth of one of his characters and thus release the author from the burden of the pun, disclaiming any originality or freshness and letting the character assume the blame. Such is probably the case when an elderly lady puns on cardenales,² which can mean both church officials and bruises. Puns have long been made on the sign of the cuckold, so it is not surprising to see one in Ayala. To a peasant's statement of lack of concern, "A mí no me importa un cuerno," Tigre Juan replies, in chastising him for allowing his wife to be unfaithful, "Al parecer, a usted no le importa un cuerno ni dos cientos mil pares de cuernos."³ These are elemental puns, and better ones can be found in Ayala. A woman who has already borrowed 1,000 pesetas from a baker plans to "sangrar nuevamente al sanguíneo y rubicundo confitero."⁴ But perhaps the best of Ayala's puns is one which shows very clearly how negligent language can be.⁵ Referring to the maternal relationship between the woman in charge of a brothel and her prostitutes, the author calls

¹D. H. Monro, Argument of Laughter (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1951), p. 48.

²Luna de miel, luna de hiel, p. 235.

³El curandero de su honra, p. 109.

⁴Belarmino y Apolonio, p. 69.

⁵Bergson, pp. 444-45. What Bergson calls "un laisser-aller du langage" describes the linguistic equivalent of absent-mindedness in man.

them her "hijas putativas."¹

Ayala's sense of humor can be shocking, and he also plays with words by omitting them, especially profane ones. This is not to imply that Ayala does not use profanity; certainly the dialogue in the scenes in Tinieblas en las cumbres between the prostitutes and their swains is realistic and full of strong language. But Ayala realizes that by merely alluding to a vulgar word he can produce a much greater comic effect than by actually using it. At times the missing word is alluded to in terms that allow no equivocation: "Gardena no cesaba de insultar a Jiménez en una especie de panegírico exaltado. En que hacía ritornello cierta denominación vulgar del macho cabrío."² At other times the reference is less clear: "Al llegar aquí empleó el subjuntivo de un verbo que no debía cogerla muy de sorpresa."³ But often he is content to allow the reader full freedom in supplying the omitted word, as when a character steps on some sharp stones and "saltó un ajo de extraordinarias dimensiones por los prefijos, subfijos y afijos de que iba encostrado."⁴

A different approach is taken in a scene from Luna de miel, luna de hiel. Urbano and Simona, the wholly innocent newlyweds, are traveling in a stagecoach. The other passengers are two nuns, not as innocent, it would seem. Urbano

¹Tinieblas en las cumbres, p. 146.

²Ibid., p. 35.

³Ibid., p. 154.

⁴Ibid., p. 171.

hears the stagecoach driver using words unknown to him but that have a singular effect on the nuns, who give a start and cross themselves with each utterance of the coachman. At first Urbano thinks that the nuns have hiccoughs, but he eliminates this likelihood "siendo imposible que dos personas hipasen tan acordes, ni aun sometidas a la misma regla monástica."¹ His naive reasoning certainly adds to the humorous situation. Next he thinks the nuns are nervous and frightened by the driver's loud shouts. But soon he realizes it is the words themselves that produce the effect, so he decides to use the words himself. The nuns are, of course, shocked. But it is only when the driver adds blasphemy to his swearing that Urbano finally realizes the nature of the words. "¡Oh, Dios! ¡Oh, Dios! Esto sí lo entiendo. Y lo de antes sería lo mismo, un juramiento indecente, sólo que yo no lo entendía."²

Given the many examples in Ayala of concern for words and their power, it seems obvious that here he is not only interested in the ludicrous situation. It is a further revelation of the author's interest in words. Why should a word that means nothing to one person be so shocking to another? Can words be bad in and of themselves? Is one better off not knowing such words? Ayala does not answer these questions, but he does pose them indirectly and leave the reader to ponder along with Urbano the idea that "hay palabras que tienen

¹Luna de miel, luna de hiel, p. 82.

²Ibid., p. 84.

virtud de producir grandes efectos."¹ Certainly Ayala's prose is evidence of the truth of this statement, and the comic in words forms only a part of the grandes efectos in Ayala's writing.

The grandes efectos that words can produce are not limited to their meanings; the sounds of words can also be a source of amusement. Thus Ayala plays with sounds: rhyme, alliteration, repetition and the relation between sound and meaning;² all can have a felicitous effect.

Ayala uses rhyme in one passage in which he is satirizing the shallowness of contemporary drama. Thus one comic device is used to reinforce a broader comic frame. This is true in the case of most of these instances of humor; they are not just isolated witticisms, but integral parts of an artistic whole, single comic devices within a larger comic whole. In this passage Ayala comments on three ballads in a play, all of which appeal greatly to the Madrid audience but which Ayala lets the reader know are lacking in any real poetry:

La primera estrofa de la balada tenía el consonante en ía:
 Tras tu airón yo me iría
 Tras tu canto-hechecería,
 . . .
 y nunca se concluía. . . . La segunda estrofa aconsonataba

¹Ibid., p. 83.

²K. W. Reinink, Algunos aspectos literarios y lingüísticos de la obra de don Ramón Pérez de Ayala (The Hague: Publicaciones del Instituto de Estudios Hispánicos, Portugueses e Iberoamericanos, 1959). In Chapter III he discusses at some length Ayala's use of onomatopoeia.

en ón, y era la misma canción. ... La tercera estrofa tenía el consonante en aba, y nunca se acababa.¹

If the repetition of sounds (rhyme) can provoke laughter, then surely repetition of whole words can do so, too. Ayala describes a local cacique as "aquel célebre y ridículo político de la barba enmarañada y esponjosa, de la elecuencia enmarañada y esponjosa, del intelecto enmarañado y esponjoso."² Besides the amusement of the repetition of the same adjectives, this repetition serves to accentuate how ridiculous the man is. There is also a dynamic effect as the adjectives modify first a physical characteristic, then an action and finally a mental quality, producing an effect not unlike a poetic device.

Ayala also plays with the sounds of words in relation to their meaning. A slight shift in sound can give a word an entirely different meaning. It can be as slight as the shift between estío and hastío: "Fué a una hermosa casa de campo así que comenzó el estío, y, por desgracia, con el estío el hastío de Marco."³ A change of prefix can give a word an opposite meaning, though retaining the rhyme and root: "Ingurgito hasta que regurgito."⁴ Such play with prefixes leads naturally to the Spanish system of ascending augment-

¹Troteras y danzaderas, pp. 279-80.

²A. M. D. G., p. 11.

³Prometeo. Luz de domingo. La caída de los Limones. p. 43.

⁴Ramón Pérez de Ayala, "Pilares" in Obras Completas (Madrid: Aguilar, 1964), I, 911.

ative prefixes, also exploited by Ayala: "¡Puerco! ¡Repuerco! ¡Requetepuerco! ¡Ultrapuerco! ¡Archipuerco!"¹ Presumably one cannot augment the force of this noun further. The sound changes here do not change the meaning of the root word, but they do increase it dynamically, making it stronger at each step.

Words that end with identical syllables may or may not be related etymologically and so point out further idiosyncrasies in language. In the following conversation, the ending ismo is manipulated, showing how little rhyme can have to do with a word's meaning:

No habla usted de ese coco de romanticismo, que maldito si se lo que es, que no ponga usted el infierno a contribución. A mí, todo lo que termina en ismo me hace temblar; como cataclismo, guarismo, gargarismo, reumatismo, exorcismo, anarquismo.
 --También a mí, pero me atrae como el abismo.
 --Otro ismo que mete miedo.
 --Pues todos son uno y lo mismo.
 Y se echaron a reír por lo cómico que las había salido el diálogo.²

The words appear to bear some common meaning, but actually there is no connection between most of them--guarismo is from Arabic, abismo from Greek, mismo from Latin, and reumatismo certainly is not an ismo of the same category as romanticismo. So sound and meaning clash, and the reader finds this dialogue as comic as those who spoke it.

Names of people also seem to fascinate Ayala, and he uses them with special purpose throughout his fiction. The

¹A. M. D. G., p. 120.

²Luna de miel, luna de hiel, p. 154.

cautious reader learns he must investigate the name or names of each of Ayala's characters for a possible symbolic meaning, comic purpose or classical reference, or all three. The spectrum is broad, ranging from names with a humorous sound to nicknames of rather complex derivation: A priest has a name with a funny sound, Cleto Cueto;¹ the name may be ironic as in the case of the man with an enormous stomach called Panzina (little stomach);² other names are symbolic: Telesforo Hurtado,³ who turns out to be a thief, or Deogracias Alpaca,⁴ who expectorates a lot. There are also names with a sexual or scatological reference: Falo, which Ayala hastens to assure the reader is only a nickname for Rafael in certain parts of Spain;⁵ a nun named Sor Circuncisión;⁶ and even the heroine with the absurd name Perpetua Meana. Ayala, who usually makes no comments on names except to explain a nickname, calls our attention to the absurdity of this name: "Cuando Marco supo su nombre y apellido celebró el primero, reputándolo muy bello y significativo, y le hizo ascos al segundo por carecer de eufonía y por otros motivos."⁷

The animals, too, may have comic names. Thus a mule

¹A. M. D. G., p. 64.

²Tinieblas en las cumbres, p. 281.

³La pata de la raposa, p. 21.

⁴Luz de domingo, p. 92.

⁵Bajo el signo de Artemisa, p. 203.

⁶El ombligo del mundo, p. 247. ⁷Prometeo, p. 47.

is called Carlos V because "a causa de la mandíbula prognata y floja, le hallaba gran parecido con el emperador y toda su real descendencia."¹ Many animals' names indicate nothing about the animal, but they do reveal Ayala's knowledge of the classics: a rooster named Alectryon;² a donkey named Agamenón;³ a goldfish named Platón.⁴

The most humorous names are undoubtedly the nicknames. They show a real facility for comic names. An extreme case is that of Don Rosendo and his sixteen children. Each day, when he returns home, he goes through a little ritual:

--¿Reina la paz y la felicidad en el empíreo? ¿Eh? Vamos a ver. La, Le, Li, Lo, Lu; Na, Ne, Ni, No, Nu-- y concluyó, como si se riese teatralmente--: ¡Ja, Je, Gi, Jo!⁵

These nicknames are actually the initial two letters of the children's names. The first three were accidental, but the father purposely named the others to fit the above pattern. The humor is due to the absurdity of the names and the effect of the repetition and rhyme.

Many of Ayala's characters with nicknames are to be found in El ombligo del mundo, which takes place in the village of Reicastro, whose inhabitants compulsively give everybody and everything a nickname, all based on a superficial

¹Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona, p. 76.

²La pata de la raposa, p. 43.

³Prometeo, p. 19.

⁴Troteras y danzaderas, p. 48.

⁵"Pilares," p. 888

resemblance to something else or to some chance happening.¹ So a chapel is called La Madre Eterna "a causa de la hinchada cúpula, como vientre encinta, que destaca rotunda sobre el perfil del pueblo."² One of the local priests bears the sobriquet El Padre Eterno "por su aspecto craso y tonitronante y porque los maldicientes le adscriben innumerable prole de tapadillo."³ Another priest is known as Cuatro quintos de la verdad; he signs his proclamations with his initials B. U. R. R., to which a wag once added, "Cuatro quintos de la verdad. Falta la O final."⁴ The nicknames play an important role in this novel, as they tend to determine the attitudes of people in respect to others. They also emphasize the failure of the people of Reicastro to examine things closely before judging them. And, of course, they often serve to add humor to the stories.

However, the most complicated, if not most humorous, nickname is found in another novel, Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona. A man is called El Pentámetro due to an analogy based on Greek verse. El Pentámetro always follows his master Paolo around, both of them mounted on horseback. "Nada hay tan hermoso como un hexámetro escoltado por un pentámetro, al modo de un caballero con su espolique en pos: ni nada más noble que un hidalgo seguido de su espolique, a la manera de un

¹El ombligo del mundo, pp. 12-13.

²Ibid., p. 19.

³Ibid., p. 25.

⁴Ibid., p. 27.

hexámetro con la guardia del pentámetro."¹

Ayala can be quite witty in his word play, too. He has a happy facility for joining one word to another with which it is not normally associated, giving a figurative meaning to a word usually taken literally, or for using a word in an unexpected place. This combination of words produces its comic effect by the surprise or shock element in the unusual use of a word.

Bergson divides such word play into two categories. The first is the insertion of "une idée absurde dans un moule de phrase consacré."² A man explains his relation to another man: "Nos profesábamos una amical y fiel indiferencia."³ We are used to a pinch or jab of the elbow as a signal that a joke is being played, but Ayala, going one better, calls it a "pedagógico pellizco."⁴

The second of Bergson's categories is stated in this way:

"On obtient un effet comique quand on affecte d'entendre une expression au propre, alors qu'elle était employée au figuré. Ou encore: Dès que notre attention se concentre sur la matérialité d'une métaphore, l'idée s'exprime devient comique."⁵

So a large woman in a quite advanced state of pregnancy is

¹Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona, p. 204.

²Bergson, p. 440.

³Ramón Pérez de Ayala, "Sonreía" in Obras Completas, I, 820.

⁴Tinieblas en las cumbres, p. 220.

⁵Bergson, pp. 441-42. Italics Bergson's.

described as "Conchona, en los epílogos de la gestación, ostentaba una preñez ciclópica."¹ Here attention is focused on epílogos and ciclópica, and their literal meaning comes to the fore. Another example also concerns a pregnant woman: "Al mes de estar en la finca, su barriga, muy encrespada y testaruda (de alguna manera se ha de decir), daba a entender que no quería tapujos ni apreturas."² This time Ayala's parenthetical expression serves to call attention to the literal meaning of the words, while in the first case there is no comment made by Ayala. It should be repeated that it is not Ayala's usual custom to comment on or draw attention to his comical devices, but occasionally he does.

A step up from this type of witty word play is the transposition of an idea from its natural expression to a contrasting key or tone.³ In Ayala's case this usually takes the form of the expression of some bodily part or function in sesquipedalian phrases. When describing the clothing of a poor poet, Ayala uses lofty language; he depicts a hat with

¹Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona, p. 248.

²Tinieblas en las cumbres, p. 130.

³Bergson, p. 445. Bergson further elaborates on this idea, and his words are applicable to the above examples:

"Plus artificielle, mais plus raffinée aussi, est la transposition de bas en haut qui s'applique à la valeur des choses, et non plus à leur grandeur. Exprimer honnêtement une idée malhonnête, prendre une situation scabreuse, ou un métier bas, ou une conduite vile, et les décrire en termes de stricte responsabilité, cela est généralement comique." p. 446.

an oily hatband as having an "abusiva exuberencia de superfluidades adiposas."¹ The rest of his attire receives the same kind of description. A woman whose nickname is Barbona is not called that because she has a beard, but "a causa de cierta intemperancia capilar en la quijada."² An elderly man who is sick in bed removes not his wig and dentures but his "apócrifas excrecencias capilares y óseas."³ This is not pedantry but a purposeful playing with words intended to add comic overtones to the descriptions.

There is one higher type of word play where the humorous and the poetic meet. Such a combination of rhetorical devices and humor appears throughout Ayala's writings, illustrating two aspects of him as an author: poet and humorist. These comic similes or metaphors are vivid and unique and stand out on the page. Employing the best of poetry and humor, they form a concise, happy union of words. They can be classified in three categories.

First, he personifies inanimate objects. When Ayala calls the boundary between "las mansiones honestas" and the town's red-light district "el Rubicón moral,"⁴ he gives a moral quality to the boundary. Ayala describes an old, run-down plaza by comparing it to a group of old women: "La

¹Troteras y danzaderas, p. 155.

²El ombligo del mundo, p. 47.

³Belarmino y Apolonio, p. 208.

⁴Tinieblas en las cumbres, p. 31.

plaza es como una tertulia de viejas tullidas que se apuntalan en sus muletas y muletillas."¹ The humor inherent in these images certainly adds to their force.

He also depersonifies humans. The examples here are similar. Both refer to the collapse of a container and both combine visual and aural images. A group of people have been engaged in lively conversation, but now, "La animada discusión de antes había languidecido, como un globo que pierde el gas."² The other image is more cruel and more elaborate in describing a woman who has been hit in the stomach: "Como si el vientre fuese el fuelle de una gaita gigantesca y por la colisión del puño se hubiera vaciado de pronto, los ámbitos de la caja de la escalera retemblaron: tal fué el alarido de la portera."³

Third, he gives animal qualities to humans. Don Cástulo explains to an elderly noblewoman the differences between beso and ósculo:

Ósculo, osculum, etimológicamente quiere decir boquita pequeña. Habrá usted observado que los niños, para besar, recogen y proyectan la boquita, en forma de culo de pollo. Eso es un ósculo.⁴

A much better example is a simile comparing a man's beard to a goat's udder: "Barba ubérrima y bipartita en forma de teta de cabra."⁵ Ayala liked this one so well that he returns to

¹Tigre Juan, p. 9. ²"Pilares," p. 906.

³Troteras y danzaderas, p. 8.

⁴Luna de miel, luna de hiel, pp. 208-209.

⁵La caída de los Limones, p. 169

it almost a hundred pages later and elaborates further on it: "El jefe del partido republicano de Tarazona, de barba ubérrima y bipartita, como teta de cabra, manifestaba aquel día la susodicha barba particularmente tupida y voluminosa, algo así como una buena ubre momentos antes de la ordeña."¹

Just as Ayala plays with words to create humor, so he plays with languages: foreign languages, dialects, highly colloquial speech and even invented languages. Ayala's use of such languages does not always serve a comic purpose, for the purpose may be to obtain a realistic effect or to relate his fiction with other literatures and literary tradition. Nevertheless, frequently Ayala does employ languages for the comic potential they have.

Ayala had received a good education in classical literature and read and enjoyed it all his life; he also read widely in several European literatures, lived in England and traveled through Europe.² In his essays he writes about many English, Italian and German authors, and his fiction also reflects his knowledge of other languages besides his native Spanish. Among his characters are Englishmen, Italians, a professor of Greek and many peasants, mostly from Asturias; his novels take place chiefly in Asturias but also in England, Italy and Madrid. This provides an opportunity to employ languages, dialects and colloquial speech.

¹Ibid., p. 261.

²Francisco Agustín, Ramón Pérez de Ayala, su vida y obras (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1927), pp. 21-24.

Foreign languages, to the uninitiate, may be things of mystery, overawing any who are familiar only with their own tongue. The situation of a foreigner trying to communicate in a language he does not understand to a person who does not understand the foreigner's tongue can be humorous. A bilingual observer of such a situation may find humor in the words used. In fiction, too, the use of foreign languages can produce comic situations and comical word play that can be very effective elements in an author's humorous repertoire.

If modern foreign languages can seem mysterious, how much more so the remote, ancient languages of the past. In a story about Rabelais, Rabelais' fellow monks think his mastery of language, including Greek and Latin, to be a demonic power: "'Hombre que habla nueve hablas, y algunas tan torcidas y revesadas, que del infierno han de provenir, que ningún fiel de cristianidad acierta a entenderlas,' dicen los demás hermanos; róbanle taimadamente preciosos manuscritos helénicos y latinos, los cuales raspan y lavotean."¹ This is set in the sixteenth century, but Ayala indicates that much of the same sense of mystery stemming from linguistic ignorance and superstition, if no longer a sense of the demonic, still surrounds these ancient languages in this conversation between a professor of Greek and his wealthy hostess:

--Griego. ¿Pero el griego existe?

--Existe y no existe--respondió Setiñano--. El griego

¹Bajo el signo de Artemisa, p. 14.

clásico es una lengua muerta.

--¡Una lengua muerta! --repitió la marquesa. --Pues a mí se me figuraba que no existía. Como se dice, cuando una cosa no se entiende, que está en griego. ... ¡Verdad que qué más no existir que estar muerta! Y, ¿cómo se puede estudiar o conocer una lengua muerta? No se me alcanza.¹

A person who knows nothing of the classical languages may, then, seem ludicrous, and so may one whose knowledge is incomplete. So a woman who uses an occasional Latin phrase to show off the little Latin she knows may be trapped or misled:

--Sin querer -- habló, compungido, don Cástulo -- acordéme de Dafnis y Cloe.

--Da finis sicloen? -- inquirió, sonriendo, la señora. Mira, Cástulo, déjanos ahora de latinajos.

--No es latinajo. Es el nombre de dos amantes helénicos.

--A todo lo que no me suena lo llamo latinajo.²

The remoteness of these ancient languages is fraught with good comic possibilities.

Ayala also finds comic possibilities in contemporary tongues. An Italian singer speaks a mixture of Italian and Spanish. The mixture is realistic and comic, but no small part of the risibility of her mixed idiom is in her tendency to use more Italian and less Spanish when she is angry. When happy she speaks Spanish with occasional lapses into Italian words and syntax: "Hugolino, mío tesoro, besa a don Eduardo,

¹Prometeo, pp. 62-63. The mysterious and demonic power of language is suggested in the name the people give a priest who knows twenty languages: "la torre de Babel." Belarmino y Apolonio, p. 89.

²Luna de miel, luna de hiel, p. 12.

que está tan bello; dale un bravo baciozzo."¹ But when she is really irate, her speech is mostly Italian:

Son fiori de chimiterro. ¡Ma Che! Yo no tiro tale fiori al público. Yo no mi sporco con aquestas fiori, e con aquestos sporacacioni que sois vosotros.²

Since Ayala was ambassador to England and knew English well, he uses English words and quotes from English authors from time to time.³ One of his characters is a circus owner who feigns an English accent in his Spanish. He really knows no English, and his sham is revealed when the protagonist speaks to him in "el idioma del dulce cisne del Avón."⁴

In Belarmino y Apolonio there is a Frenchman who lives in Spain. His Spanish is much better than the Italian singer's. He uses very few French words in his speech, but he reveals his Gallic origin in his syntax by overuse of the subject pronouns and demonstratives and misusing ser and estar. The result is a realistic and comic version of Spanish with French syntax: "Esto que yo he deseado decir"⁵ (Ce que j'ai voulu dire), and "¿Que es lo que es aquello?"⁶ (Qu'est-ce que c'est que cela?). This would sound strange to the Spanish ear and would give away the man's French origin to one versed in French. In either case it would provoke at least a modicum

¹Troteras y danzaderas, p. 152.

²Ibid., p. 166.

³"The more I see of people, the better I like dogs."
La pata de la raposa, p. 41.

⁴Ibid., pp. 135-136. ⁵Belarmino y Apolonio, p. 71.

⁶Ibid., p. 307.

of amusement.

One of Ayala's characters invents a language. The invented language resembles the pig Latin or double Dutch of school children. The inventor of this language, Grano de Pimienta, places either of the syllables ti or pi before the syllables of the Spanish word, so that "Eres un zoquete" becomes "Tietirestiuntizotiquetit ," and "Me r o de Emp docles" results in "Pimepirripi  pidepiempipepidopicl s."¹ By means of this esoteric language Grano de Pimienta manages to insult his rival with impunity. Additional comedy stems from the fact that he invents this language to counteract his rival's quotations from classical writers, of whom Grano de Pimienta is ignorant. He thus confounds his opponent much as older boys might confound a younger child by employing pig Latin or some other secret language they may have.

Dialects are a special form of a language and have been used by great comedians like Aristophanes and Moli re as comic sources. There seems to be something inherently funny in a character who comes on stage and speaks in a dialect, some dialects being more amusing than others. Since most of Ayala's fiction takes place in Asturias, it is not surprising that he uses the local speech quite frequently.

¹El ombligo del mundo, p. 42.

²Reinink studies the Asturian dialect in Ayala and includes a vocabulary of Asturianisms in Chapter V. He concludes that Ayala uses the dialect inconsistently, mixing it with Castilian, and that he is not trying to reproduce the Asturian dialect exactly. Algunos aspectos literarios y ling  sticos de la obra de don Ram n P rez de Ayala, p. 143.

This use of dialect adds local color, a realistic effect, and provides a contrast between the peasant's speech and the purer Castilian of the wealthier people. All this is done in a usually comic way, and the peasants' mispronunciation ("Mingalaterra"¹), proverbs ("Mujer moza, marido vieyo, al diablo se alegra el güeyo."²), ignorance, superstition and the oddities peculiar to the particular dialect contribute to the generally comic portrait of the peasants.

Another variant of language, though closer to the conventional forms of language than dialect, is colloquial speech. The settings of some of Ayala's fiction allow him to introduce a broad spectrum of social classes, to capture their particular way of speaking and to attempt to imitate through the written word the varied sounds of spoken Spanish. The result varies from university students' jargon to the conversation of prostitutes, from the cosmopolitan speech of city dwellers to the utterances of the poor, working class. At its best it creates very picturesque speech, full of colorful phrases, pronunciations, and folk idioms, adding to the conviction that Ayala is a man concerned with language, well aware of the comic possibilities of deformities of the spoken and written word.

Ayala's concern for language, his awareness of the comic potential in a variety of linguistic idiosyncrasies,

¹La pata de la raposa, p. 250.

²El curandero de su honra, p. 122.

and his fine sense of humor combine as he plays with words and languages. The most profound expression of his concern for language results when "les particularités de langage ne font que traduire les particularités de caractère,"¹ when his concern is reflected in the attitudes of his characters toward language. Many authors play with words and languages;² what distinguishes Ayala from them are the numerous examples of his fictional creatures who disclose as a character fault some peculiarity regarding language, some evidence that at least part of their speech is a personal creation, some proof of the complexity of man's means of verbal expression and the impossibility of complete communication. Carlos Clavería cites many examples of such an attitude on the part of Ayala's people and calls them instances of a "lenguaje individual y cabalístico." This general category needs further breakdown based on the character's knowledge of language. Thus there are characters whose lenguaje individual is based on ignorance, others on semi-ignorance, and yet others on a mastery over the language. A feeling of awe toward language usually accompanies the ignorance and semi-ignorance.

Ignorance characterizes the individual language of Alberto's servant Manolo of La pata de la raposa. He stands

¹Bergson, p. 448.

²James Joyce's Finnegan's Wake is, perhaps, the ultimate example of such play; Ayala stops far short of such extreme word play.

³Clavería, p. 71.

in awe of language and realizes it has certain powers. His interest in words leads him to read his master's books, especially those about philosophy and sociology "porque los entendía menos."¹ He does not understand what he reads but memorizes passages from them, acquiring some radical ideas and managing to "adquirir un vocabulario de palabras sesquipedales, como archisupercrematísticamente, asombrar a sus relaciones con el fárrago de su sabiduría, y enviar, bajo pseudónimo, a un periódicucho semanal de Pilares, artículos tremebundos, que comenzaban así, por ejemplo: 'La contumelia de las circunstancias es la base más firme de la metempsicosis.'"² So while Manolo does not understand all the big words he reads, he recognizes the possible tyranny that words have, their power to influence others, and he succeeds in impressing and intimidating others even more ignorant than he. Further proof of the power of words is the fact that through his eventual mastery of language (plus some unscrupulous financial dealings) he climbs to a higher social level, to the point of being able to mingle with the local nobility.³

Unlike Manolo, most of the characters ignorant of language remain that way. Consider Sor Clavo, a humble nun.

¹La pata de la raposa, p. 10.

²Ibid., p. 11. In the 1964 Obras Completas, there is a parenthetical statement immediately following this quotation: ("esta frase se la había plagiado a un tal Belarmino, zapatero y filósofo de la localidad.") p. 242. Belarmino's vocabulary is wholly comprehensible only to himself, so one can be sure that Manolo does not understand it.

³La pata de la raposa, p. 247.

She hears her superior use the word barraganía and inquires as to its meaning. It just happens that the other nun has no idea what the word means; she used it because she likes its sound, hoping no one would ask about its meaning. Obviously this is a case of double ignorance. In answer to Sor Clavo's question, the other nun replies: "Barranganía, la misma palabra lo da a entender, se dice de aquellos que no creen en la transubstanciación."¹ This is no help to Sor Clavo since she does not know what transubstanciación means either, and even if she did, it would give her no insight into the meaning of barraganía. Though still curious, she dares not ask any more questions. How typical of Ayala this scene with one nun using a word whose meaning she does not know, another who is completely ignorant, two words with such disparate meanings as barraganía and transubstanciación, and, as a final bit of humor, the nun's statement to hide her ignorance that "la misma palabra lo da a entender," which it would only to someone who knew that barraganas are. This scene combines word play and language concern as a peculiarity of character and is further evidence of the many facets of Ayala's humor.

Other characters use words, not just for their sounds, but for some imagined, occult power they attach to them. Their ignorance of the words may not be complete, but they use the words repeatedly and generally incorrectly, trusting in their force and special meaning. Cerdá, in Tinieblas en

¹Bajo el signo de Artemisa, p. 273.

las cumbres, has his favorite expression, aun inclusive.

The author explains: "Para el señor Cerdá estos dos adverbios eran materiales necesarios en toda construcción gramatical, vinieran o no a cuento."¹ He may know, or have known what these words denote, but they seem to have lost their actual meaning, and, in becoming necessary parts of his speech, they apparently impart some hidden value to his words. A more explicit example is that of Don Leoncio, Urbano's father. His favorite word is premature, and Ayala gives more information as to what it signifies to Leoncio: "Don Leoncio se había encariñado con la palabra 'premature,' bien que no alcanzase del todo su valor exacto; pero se le antojaba que contenía poder suasorio incontrovertible y vaga amenaza catastrófica."² He does use the word correctly once, calling the projected wedding of his son premature, but he seems to hope for some magical or mystical result to help his argument. Its only effect is to draw the rejoinder from his wife: "Tu eterna obstinación de asno."³ This does not, presumably, shake his faith in the persuasive power of the word nor dim the awe it produces in him.

There is another case of misuse of words that Ayala has more fully detailed, giving a complete case history of the word and its relationship to its user, Don Medardo, Josefina's father. The latter first uses it to describe his

¹Tinieblas en las cumbres, p. 16.

²Luna de miel, luna de hiel, p. 16. ³Ibid.

daughter's suitor: "Era un señorito con educación e higiénico; y sépase que para don Medardo estas palabras tenían valor de términos cabalísticos."¹ Note that Ayala uses the word cabalísticos, indicating the occult power of the word for Don Medardo. Ayala forgets Medardo's interest in educación without revealing its cabalistic significance and concentrates on higiénico. Don Medardo then uses higiénico again and the author adds, "¿Qué misterioso sentido tenía en labios de don Medardo la palabra higiénico?"² Ayala calls the reader's attention specifically to Don Medardo's use of this word and its mysterious nature. It is only some two hundred pages later that Ayala explains how Don Medardo first heard it and what meaning he attributes to it. Medardo hears higiénico used to describe a marquis, and he wonders what it means:

Don Medardo hubiera deseado preguntar a algún docto el valor exacto de la voz higiénico, pero temía que se burlasen de él. Durante unos cuantos meses anduvo con el oído alerta, estudiando en qué sentido empleaban la palabra, cuantas veces aparecía en la conversación. Se decía que era higiénico del montar a caballo, comer ciertos alimentos caros, pensar poco, vestir ropa de hilo, pasear a las horas de sol, que son las horas de oficina, y holgar constantemente, todas ellas particularidades que convienen con la aristocracia. Y así don Medardo llegó a la convicción de que tanto montaba decir aristócrata como higiénico, si bien la segunda palabra le parecía más elegante y elevada.³

There is quite a bit of realism in Medardo's actions and reactions, which are very human and natural, and they are also quite comical. Medardo's good bourgeois mind is seen at

¹La pata de la raposa, p. 67. ²Ibid.

³Ibid., pp. 270-271.

work in the process of discovering the word's definition, and the fact that he equates it with aristócrata is, no doubt, partially responsible for the cabalistic value he gives it. The sound of the word is also important, and it is ironic that he finds higiénico to be more elegant and elevated than aristócrata.

Don Medardo's concern for this one word is only part of a greater concern for language; at spoonerisms he is the unchallenged champion among all Ayala's characters, though only a few use them. As word play, the spoonerism must rate even below the pun, but as a character fault it is much more interesting, revealing insight into a person's thinking, intelligence and awareness of words. So a prostitute confuses clister with eclipse,¹ and a lowly process server Monicaco with Mónaco.² Don Medardo commits as many as four to a page³ and several times that number during the course of the novel. His individual language is composed of misused words and spoonerisms. He is a more humorous character because he is afraid he uses words that others will not understand, these words being, of course, the ones that he spoonerizes. To his daughter he says, "Hablas en pótesis. ¿Entiendes la palabra?" To this she mercifully replies, "Sí, papa,"⁴ not wanting to

¹Tinieblas en las cumbres, p. 167.

²Luna de miel, luna de hiel, p. 254.

³La pata de la raposa, p. 74.

⁴Ibid., p. 271.

embarrass her father by correcting him. It is by such subtle examples that Ayala demonstrates that though human language is imperfect, man still manages to communicate with his fellow beings.

If ignorance of language generally leads to awe on the part of the ignorant ones, those who master language often display a disdainful or disrespectful attitude toward words, or an absent-mindedness so that they use the wrong words with the wrong people. The result is a form of pedantry. Thus while they have dominion over language, language in a sense exercises control over them, too, and their pedantry is also a character fault. Ayala's humor is a two-edged sword, cutting the pedantic and awed alike.

As those in awe of language create a personal language in ignorance, so those having a mastery over language create from that mastery a lenguaje individual y cabalístico. Both are accessible to a limited audience. So if a classics professor absent-mindedly speaks too eruditely to a servant, there may be no communication:

--Dígale usted a la señorita que hay imposibilidad física y metafísica, de que yo pueda incluirme en estas mezquinas prendas, so pena de estallarlas y continuar tan edénico como antes. ¿Qué hay, amigo? Por lo estulto de la faz con que me miras, y lo boquiabierto que estás, colijo que no comprendes el habla culta.¹

This habla culta, a mixture of learned words and figurative speech, is amusing in and of itself; the servant's dumbfound-
edness and the professor's pedantry also are comical.

¹Prometeo, pp. 56-57.

It is not, however, always a case of an inferior not understanding his superior. In La pata de la raposa, Alberto, talking to his friend and peer Telesforo, employs language incomprehensible to the latter:

--Supongo que me hará usted la merced de creer que la cunia del indiano no es señuelo que me haga incurrir en connubio. ...

--Usted perdone; no entiendo bien.

--Que no me caso por dinero, hombre.¹

Telesforo, though Alberto's friend, is less intellectual than Alberto and is more accustomed to the vocabulary of the business world. Alberto forgets this and so his pedantic phrase slips out.

There are several elements that tend to mitigate the pedantry of Ayala's characters. Alberto, for instance, is usually very much aware of the level of language he employs and adjusts his vocabulary to fit the occasion and his audience. He hates "la palabrería y retórica ajenas," yet

cuando hablaba con amigos sobre tópicos livianos, construía adrede laboriosos párrafos de grandilocuencia irónica. Pero cuando el sentimentalismo hacía presa de su espíritu, procuraba hablar con la simplicidad de un labriego.²

That Alberto's grandilocuencia is intentional and is ironical in tone serves to soften the pedantic aspect of his nature.

Besides self-awareness and irony there is a vein of humor in Ayala's pedantic characters that tends to dissolve their bombast and lofty speech in laughter. The reader real-

¹La pata de la raposa, p. 23.

²Ibid., p. 91. Italics mine.

izes that Ayala is sympathetic to these characters and is playing with words here as in many other instances. In fact, Ayala's own speech seems to have been a mixture of this same humor and grandilocuencia irónica.¹ If a person's pedantic speech is ironic and humorous, and the speaker is not being supercilious, one can laugh with him at least as much as at him.

The most sustained example of a likeable pedant is don Cástulo, who appears as one of the main figures in both Luna de miel, luna de hiel and Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona. He is the tutor to the hero of the story and has been well educated, especially in the classics. His speech is full of allusions to mythology and classical writers, and he employs big words, elevated phrases and much rhetoric. He avoids complete pedantry by virtue of his unfailing good humor, his inferiority complex and resulting timidity, and his self-awareness. Part of the humor in his character stems from the fact that whenever he has contested a university chair (Professorial positions are granted in Spain on the basis of oral examinations.), his lenguaje individual has failed him; his timidity is greater than his learning. When around friends and those with less education than he has, his speech blossoms forth in full flower. He is at his pedantic best when he asks the simple peasant couple for their daughter's hand in marriage; the language he would like to be able to utilize

¹Obras completas, p. lxviii. "Oírle hablar es como si se le leyera."

in public literally gushes forth:

Laborioso padre y madre virtuosa, ... ¿Qué hombre hay digno de apropiarse este tesoro, abrazándose con él en los suaves delirios del sacrosanto Himeneo? Ninguno. Sin embargo, su misericordia y generosidad, que no mis méritos, me han diputado a mí, el más cuitado, para que la conduzca al ara de las nupcias como legítimo esposo y señor, lo cual no haré si antes no me otorgáis el beneplácito indispensable, como procreantes que sois.¹

To his peasant audience, this speech is completely unfathomable; it is a truly cabalistic language.

Not all those who master language are pedantic, however. In some it takes the form of irreverence toward language itself; their speech is a conglomeration of slang expressions, profanity, word play, impertinences reflecting an impertinent personality. They create a highly spiced, personal idiom. One of them is Padre Atienza, a Jesuit scholar who mocks the other priests and eventually leaves the order,² who converses in phrases such as the following: "Ya veo a ese mariquita insuflándole chismes al superior. ... Vamos a ver que tripa se le ha roto."³ and "el pobre Padre Numarte, ese paquidermo filosófico."⁴ and "--Se creían que yo soy un sandio y mal hostelero, un bandulaque de tres al

¹Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona, pp. 94-95. Ayala then adds, on page 95, with fine satire that if Cástulo could talk like this in public, "sería ya catedrático, rector de universidad, ministro, archipámpano." Oratory suffices in Spain to assure success.

²This character is based on Cejador y Frauca, a good friend of Ayala's. Carlos Clavería, "Apostillas adicionales a Belarmino y Apolonio de Pérez de Ayala," Hispanic Review, XVI (1948), 343.

³A. M. D. G., p. 59.

⁴Ibid., p. 62.

cuatro. ... Ya sabía yo que les iba a salir la burra mal capada. ..."¹

Another, and very different aspect of irreverence toward language is seen in another priest, Padre Gamborena. He is an old priest who runs a school for deaf and dumb children. His talk is endless word play; he plays with names, languages, rhymes, sounds, and all this he mixes with the constant clearing of his throat. He utters the following during a card game:

--¡Cuajo, guanajo, cáscaras de ajo! -- chilló el clérigo, que manejaba surtido repertorio de exclamaciones por aliteración y consonancia--. Coria, Babia, Batuecas; allí se está Tigre Juan. Con as en mano no arrastra. Los cuarenta doña Marica. Dos perronas perdidas en tonto. ¡Ejem! ¡Ejem! ¡Ejem! Tigre Juan, mientes ausentes. ¡Ja! ¡Ja! ¡Ja! ¡Alerta, tuerta, detrás de la puerta! Gamborena. Sursum corda. ¡Ejem! ¡Ejem! ¡Ejem! ¡Ja! ¡Ja! ...²

It is amazing that even with such deformities his speech can still convey meaning. But it is an extreme example of a personally created language, one that seems to mock normal speech.

Any study of attitudes toward language on the part of the characters in Ayala's fictional world must arrive at Belarmino y Apolonio, for its two main characters are the supreme embodiments of Ayala's own concern for language. It is the novel that has drawn the most critical attention, a great comic novel with several layers of meaning. On one

¹Ibid., p. 73.

²Tigre Juan, p. 176.

level it is, as Levy was first to point out,¹ a satire of the Spanish disciples of Mallarmé, seen in Belarmino's efforts to so widen the meaning of words as to be able eventually to say everything with one word: "La cuestión de la filosofía está en buscar una palabra que lo diga todo cuando nos dé la gana."² On another level it is a novel further propounding Ayala's concept of relativity and perspectivism.³ It also illustrates Ayala's belief in the need for classical harmony,⁴ for Belarmino and Apolonio represent different aspects of and attitudes toward life that the author manages to reconcile in an ironic harmony. They also represent differing approaches to language, opposing concepts of life and thought that Ayala brings into harmony at the novel's end.

Apolonio, a cobbler by trade but a playwright by avocation, presents a mixed attitude toward language. He acquired his education from his association with students who made good-natured sport of him and filled his head with "noticias y noticiones históricos y literarios, unos ciertos, otros inventados."⁵ So his speech is at times a mixture of ignorance and learning with quotations thrown in whether

¹Bernard Levy, "Pérez de Ayala and Belarmino y Apolonio," The Spanish Review, III (1936), 74-80.

²Belarmino y Apolonio, p. 112.

³Weber, pp. 253-71.

⁴Nora Lamb, "The Art of Belarmino y Apolonio," Bulletin of Hispanic Studies, XVII (1940), 129.

⁵Belarmino y Apolonio, p. 112.

applicable or not, a pastiche that even Apolonio himself could not completely decipher. This passage has more non-sense than sense:

"Tiene razón mi señora la duquesa. Quienes amontonan el oro son hombres viles. ¿Qué aconsejó Yago? Llena tu bolsa. Quienes lo conquistan y lo reparten son hombres nobles. ¿Qué hizo Hernán Cortés? Quemar sus naves. Quienes carecen de oro son hombres indiferentes." La alusión a las naves de Hernán Cortés, ni la entiendo, ni creo que mi padre la entendiese.¹

The allusion to Cortés is as absurd as it is unintelligible, both to audience and speaker, but there is also a pedantic, aphoristic tone to the paragraph. This combination of ignorance and learning is typical of Apolonio.

His mastery of language is on a subconscious level. He is a poet, and even his regular conversation comes out in meter and rhyme. Apolonio and his son see a man with a lantern, and as the son relates:

'Diga, señor lampistero; no habiendo aviso, supongo que hay vía libre, y espero que el tren pase de Busdongo.' Y volviéndose hacia mí: 'Dime, Pedriño, no es esto señal de ser poeta? Sin intención he compuesto una sonora cuarteta. Siempre expreso en poesía el contento o el fastidio. Valeiro bien me decía que soy el moderno Ovidio.'²

Not only does he compose a cuarteta, but even his comment on it is in poetic form. When his protectress, the duchess, forbids him to speak in verse without her permission, it is almost more than this talkative man can bear, for not to talk in verse is tantamount to not talking at all. He exists to

¹Ibid., pp. 122-23.

²Ibid., p. 108. Italics mine.

talk, to communicate via speech and his dramas.

It is in Belarmino that Ayala reaches his zenith in portraying interest in words in a character; Belarmino is the most extreme and thorough example, for his concern for language is a large part of his character. His is the most individual and cabalistic language to be found among Ayala's characters. He is the most dedicated to language, the ultimate humorous expression of such an attitude. For Belarmino only two things are of real importance: his adopted daughter and his philosophy, and his philosophy is really a search for a way of making one word express all concepts.

Belarmino's language is the only one the reader cannot at least partially comprehend, or could not comprehend, for Ayala has placed a partial vocabulary of Belarmino's lexicon at the end of the book and gives translations of his speech from time to time throughout the book.

Belarmino forms his personal idiom by taking existing words and giving them new meaning. So he listens for words in others' speech that he will adopt into his lexicon, as when he hears the word expeditivo: "A Belarmino le gustó la voz expeditivo, y la almacenó en la memoria, a fin de meterla en la horma, ensancharla y darle un significado espacioso, nuevo y conveniente."¹ Thus, though others cannot understand him, he does understand his own language.

Part of the humor in this novel is in the reaction

¹Ibid., p. 93.

of others to Belarmino's language. He calls a priest a dromedary and then has to explain that he is not insulting him, but that dromedary for him means priest.¹ A student who is interested in Belarmino's vocabulary asks permission to come to converse with him. Belarmino's affirmative answer, "Tendré un gran espasmódico,"² leaves the student dumbfounded, but how could he know that espasmódico means pleasure? A longer passage can better illustrate his language, its complexity and how disarming it can be to the uninitiate:

--Fuera de la zapatería, y suscrito en al círculo, de la paradoja, que es un cuadrado, porque es el ecuménico, soy fanático y hasta teísta macilento; pero dentro de la zapatería, y en ridículo, soy analfabético.³ Este es el maremagnum de la clase y del bien eliminar.³

All of the underlined words above have a personal meaning to Belarmino. This speech is given to a priest, a man of considerable intelligence and linguistic training; in fact, he is called la torre de Babel "por la estatura y porque sabía veinte idiomas: unos vivos, otros muertos y otros putrefactos."⁴ Yet he is left speechless, not knowing whether he is being mocked, toyed with, or whether he faces a fool or a genius. Such scenes are full of rich humor, and the novel is full of such scenes.

In Apolonio and Belarmino the humor derived from word play merges with the humor of characters, and the two cannot be separated; at this point the peculiarities of lan-

¹Ibid., p. 155.

²Ibid., p. 156.

³Ibid., p. 91. Italics mine.

⁴Ibid., p. 89.

guage and character unite. Belarmino and Apolonio cannot be understood if separated from their attitudes toward language, nor can the full humor of the novel be appreciated if such a separation takes place.

As Belarmino and Apolonio represent the acme of Ayala's concern for language manifested as a character trait, so is Belarmino y Apolonio the novel in which Ayala's general concern for language coalesces into a comic, integrated whole, since such concern is close to the novel's central purpose. But it is very difficult to trace any pattern of growth and development in the way Ayala plays with words. Such play with words and languages is, like irony, a fundamental component of his humor present in his first novel in a mature form and continuing through to his last novel in approximately the same proportions and forms. Likewise, if one compares the attitudes toward language as revealed in the cases of Medardo, of La pata de la raposa, and Leoncio, from Luna de miel, luna de hiel, the first dating from 1912 and the second from 1922, little difference can be discerned. Belarmino, however, does seem to be a culmination of Ayala's interest in the development of a closed, hermetic language, especially as this reflects a comical character trait. Indeed, indications exist that Ayala contemplated Belarmino as a character long before he actually created him,¹ and certainly all his

¹In La pata de la raposa, 1912, there is mention made of Belarmino: "Esta frase se lo había plagiado a un tal Belarmino, zapatero y filósofo de la localidad." Obras completas, p. 242.

fictional personages who have a partial language peculiar to them helped prepare the way for Belarmino, from Cerdá and his aun inclusive to the cultured, figurative hyperbole of Marco. After Belarmino y Apolonio there is a continuation of characters like the latter: Gamborena, Cástulo and others. The comedy derived from language, whether as word play or character trait, is thus a consistent ingredient in all of Ayala's major fiction.

What is one to make of such a pronounced interest on Ayala's part in the various manifestations and implications of language, the comic aspects of which are only part of a whole? Concomitant with his early efforts at word play is a "gran interés en el misterio de la palabra."¹ Part of the mystery, and part of Ayala's interest, lies in the ambivalence of language; men do communicate with it and exchange ideas, but language is not a perfect means of communication. El Estudiantón, who seems to be a portavoz for the author, explains how each man's language is a thing unique to him and cannot be wholly understood by others.

Cada hombre que es una cosa de veras, habla un idioma distinto, que no entiende el que no es esa cosa, porque tienen alma distinta. El chalán habla su idioma, el contrabandista el suyo, el suyo también el político, y el artista, y el ferretero, y el soldado y el dentista. El mundo es como una gran lonja, llena de sordos que aspiran a verificar sus transacciones; todos gritan; hay un horrendo rebullicio, pero no se oyen los unos a los otros. No se concluye ningún trato.²

¹Clavería, Cinco estudios de literatura española moderna, p. 71.

²Belarmino y Apolonio, p. 187.

Ayala explores the ambivalence of language for the tragicomic potential inherent in it. In Alberto's case, the problem of communication, or the lack of it, has tragic results. He has difficulty transmitting his thoughts and feelings to those around him, partly because of the imperfection of language and partly because those around him, with a few exceptions, are either crude, obtuse, insensitive or lack the intellectual and educational background that Alberto has. An apparently deep empathy between him and Josefina is belied when he abandons her, unable to verbalize the motives behind his act. Alberto is a sort of prototype of the modern existential hero who feels an extreme solitude, an alienation from his society, an inability to communicate with his fellow human beings. Ayala does not concentrate on this phase of Alberto's existential anguish, and he does not return to this theme in his later fiction. He was, however, very well acquainted with the leading writers and thinkers of his day and was exceptionally well read in general European fiction and thought. It is inconceivable that he was unaware of Unamuno and others who wrote about existentialism around the turn of the century. But Alberto is not completely isolated; he communicates rather well when involved in discussions with other sensitive intellectuals, like Yiddy in Tinieblas en las cumbres. It is with Yiddy that he discourses on the imperfections of language, showing his awareness of the problem.

El lenguaje humano es aún imperfecto, o más bien rudimentario y bárbaro; ni se ha inspirado en la naturaleza ni

ha rebuscado los innúmeros sonidos que la laringe puede emitir, ... Si el lenguaje humano fuera perfecto e inspirado en la naturaleza, como lo es el arte de la pintura y de la escultura, podríamos realizar maravillosos poemas. En esta hipótesis todos los pueblos hablarían el mismo idioma.¹

In this passage Alberto is talking specifically about a poetic language, but he evidently sees the problem in its larger scope, too. His own solution, though only a partial one, is to adopt an ironic way of speaking, a humorously pedantic tone that he uses with his fellow intellectuals, as if to mock the whole serious question of speech and communication.

In Alberto the equivocal nature of language has tragic consequences, while in such later creations as Cástulo, Gamborena and Belarmino, the outcome is essentially comic, in keeping with Ayala's trend toward the comic in his more recent fiction. Though communication is still not perfect, these characters do manage to communicate sufficiently well to avoid utter chaos and confusion. Language is still an imperfect thing, "une oeuvre humaine, modelée aussi exactement que possible sur les formes de l'esprit humain,"² but now the results of its use are mainly comical.

The ambivalence of language is only a part of Ayala's larger concern for language. All the parts have significant ramifications in his way of writing, in his style. It appears as part of the delineation of many of his characters who display peculiar attitudes toward words. Ayala's ironic use of

¹Tinieblas en las cumbres, pp. 275-76.

²Bergson, p. 449.

words and the vast vocabulary he employs are further hallmarks of his style. Word play is of consequence in his fictional creation; he has told how he feels it is a legitimate form of artistic expression.

Jugar al vocablo, hacer juegos de palabras, no es actividad despreciable ni signo de bajeza intelectual, antes al contrario. En este juego, como en todos los juegos y deportes, para obtener ventajosa excelencia se exigen, de una parte, gran aptitud nativa, que si Natura no la ha ortogado graciosamente es seguro que Salamanca, no ha de prestarla, y, por otro parte, larga asiduidad.¹

And Ayala, like many of his characters, has a personal language, his literary creation. His personal language is characterized by his rich vocabulary, the use of foreign languages, personal stylistic mannerisms and a constant awareness of the comic possibilities of words. Though these possibilities are realized frequently in Ayala's novels, it would be wrong to focus solely on the comic, as one critic does. "To this reviewer, Ayala's linguistic explorations seem less designed to probe the mysteries of language than to create amusing speech uttered by droll characters usually in comic situations."² It is just as wrong to concentrate on Ayala's interest in the mysterious quality of language, as Clavería does.

Parece como si el autor hubiera sentido siempre desde temprana fecha, un gran interés por el misterio de la palabra, por el convencionalismo de su significado, y por las posibilidades de creación de un lenguaje indivi-

¹Ramón Pérez de Ayala, Pequeños ensayos (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1963), p. 202.

²Edith F. Helman, Review of Cinco estudios de literatura española moderna, by Carlos Clavería, Hispanic Review, XVI (1948), p. 75.

dual, hermético e incomprensible, última consecuencia de los repetidos ensayos de Ayala de presentarnos sus criaturas de ficción caracterizadas por una especialísima manera de hablar y de expresar su pensamiento.¹

The proper perspective is a view between these two, and Ayala's personal language, his literary tool, is the artistic embodiment of both his interest in the mystery of the word and his desire to create a fine comic method of expression.

¹Clavería, Cinco estudios de literatura española moderna, p. 71.

CHAPTER IV

SATIRE

When Ayala refers to satire as "ese látigo simbólico, ... falaz instrumento que suena a beso y levanta ronchas,"¹ he not only gives an apt description of the term, but he also indicates its dualism. On the one hand, satire attacks and criticizes; on the other, it provokes humor. It is a joke about serious things² within a moral framework.³ If the humor vanishes, it cannot be satire, only invective, denouncement, criticism or reprimand. The whip must "suen a beso" or it is only a whip. As the satirist laughs while censuring the vices, stupidities, injustices and follies of mankind,⁴ he hopes to amuse his reader and, simultaneously, to elicit

¹Troteras y danzaderas, p. 230.

²Gilbert Highet, The Anatomy of Satire (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 233.

³"For effective attack we must reach some kind of impersonal level, and that commits the attacker, if only by implication, to a moral standard." Frye, p. 225. Dryden recognized morality and wit as the two poles of satire, too. Kernan, p. 8.

⁴Satire, of necessity, can only ridicule that which is human: men or things manmade. It would be pointless to satirize animals or nature unless the satire were directed at some sort of deity.

scorn and contempt for the object of the satire.

The methods, or weapons, of satire are diverse: "irony, paradox, antithesis, parody, colloquialism, anticlimax, topicality, obscenity, violence, vividness, exaggeration."¹ These weapons are powerful, and the satirist's assault is direct. He seeks to shock, to jar his readers from their ignorance and/or complacency. He spares no rhetoric to influence, convert and stimulate his audience. Violence, disgust, distortion, grotesqueness and absurdity are all possible constituents of satire.

In a passage from one of his novels, Ayala demonstrates his awareness of the traditions of satire and gives his general views of it. The spokesman is Alberto, who, having joined a circus in which he satirizes local priests and politicians, describes his efforts in a letter to a friend.

Querido Juan: He probado a representar algunas pantomimas, satirizando conceptos e ideas comunmente recibidos como verdades inconcusas. Mi sistema de demostración es ad absurdum; esto es, desarrollar uno de aquellos nocivos conceptos hasta sus últimas y más bufas consecuencias. La gente se ríe que se desternilla. ... La sátira, noblemente ejercida, me parece participar de la dignidad de un sacramento, y desde luego concuerda con el de la penitencia en el sigilo personal: se dice el pecado, pero no el pecador. La sátira fustiga genéricamente vicios y necesidades, pero no al vicioso López o al necio Rodríguez. ... Entonces me sentí un poco triste y me acordé de las palabras de Swift: "La sátira es a la manera de un espejo, en donde cada cual cree generalmente descubrir el rostro de todo el mundo, menos el suyo propio. Pgr esta razón la sátira siempre es acogida alegremente."²

¹Highet, p. 18.

²La pata de la raposa, pp. 159-61.

From this the following points can be extrapolated as basic elements in Ayalian satire: it attacks entrenched, harmful ideas and institutions; reductio ad absurdum is an essential method; laughter is provoked; satire is a valid artistic medium; vices and follies, not individual people, are the proper objects of satire; and finally, those to whom the satire applies do not recognize it nor move to effect a change. These ideas are common to most satirists and locate Ayala within the broad confines of European satire.

Ayala's satire aims at equally traditional targets which can be grouped into four main areas: religion, society, politics and literature. The scene of most of his novels is in and around the provincial capital Pílares, a re-creation of the author's own hometown of Oviedo; Troteras y danzaderas takes place wholly in Madrid. The time of all his novels is roughly the turn of the century, 1880 to 1920. Ayala, therefore, writes about and satirizes the national and provincial scene of the Spain of his own era. This implies a high degree of topicality in his satire, and the reader needs a good knowledge of Spanish civilization to follow the humor and distinguish the objects of the attacks. On the other hand, there is a certain universal quality to vice and folly that makes much of Ayala's satire accessible to a wider audience.

Quantitatively, the various aspects of the Church receive the brunt of Ayala's ridicule, especially the clergy. It is the hypocrisy of the priests that Ayala sees as their chief vice. This hypocrisy manifests itself in the deviations

the clergy make from their vows of chastity, poverty and otherworldliness.

Very strongly satirized are the clergymen who are hypocritical about sex. In the first story that Ayala wrote, "El otro Padre Francisco," he displays his anti-clerical bent and draws a harsh portrait of a prior. The prior berates Rabelais for his open moral laxity, but the prior is immoral, too, and much more hypocritical since he disguises his mistress as a monk. In another short story, "Grano de Pimienta y Mil Perdones," two priests seem to vie with each other to see who can father more children. There is a libidinous priest in Tinieblas en las cumbres who kisses a girl in a chapel just after he has prayed with her. The oxymoron used to describe how he kisses her, "con discreto frenesí,"¹ emphasizes his lustful nature. Notwithstanding the lasciviousness of the clergy, Ayala calls them "sombras negras" and "un tercer sexo," referring to their dress and celibacy.

Ayala also portrays the clergy as guilty of avarice and greed. In sermons the monks tell their parishioners to give more offerings, threatening them with the wrath of God. Victoria Cea, Simona's mother, has a chaplain who accompanies her everywhere. In Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona it is learned that he has acquired or spent the Cea fortune, saving much of it for himself and giving a considerable amount

¹Tinieblas en las cumbres, p. 241.

²El ombligo del mundo, p. 53.

to his seven sisters. Ayala points out that the clergyman eats well, though often the layman does not: "Acompañábale otro Padre innominado, de volumen normal entre religiosos, aunque excesivo para laicos."¹ Abbotts in particular are accused of eating to excess: "La piel, que en otro tiempo ciertamente hubo de ser túrgida y tensa como la del vientre de un abad."²

The satire is gentler for the priests who are merely wordly, but worldliness is a form of hypocrisy, too. Don Robustiano epitomizes the epicurean clergyman. He is very friendly, especially to the wealthy at whose houses he is a frequent visitor; he enjoys good wine and food and smokes his host's finest cigars. His literary tastes run to the classics with a preference for amatory writings rather than religious ones. The pedantic quality of his speech rounds out his portrait. Perhaps the fact that Ayala's own tastes were quite similarly inclined may account for the softer satire he directed against such priests.

In addition to this general anti-clerical satire, there is concentrated in A. M. D. G. a very specific attack on the Jesuits. In venting his ire against them, he gathers in one school a group of priests who are cynical, jealous of each other, addicted to gossip, and unconcerned for the welfare of the boys they teach; they spy on each other, too.

¹Belarmino y Apolonio, p. 89.

²La pata de la raposa, p. 152.

One of them is a pervert, another a sadist who inflicts severe physical punishment on the students. Ayala ridicules the way Jesuits obtain money from rich widows, he derides their concern with certain images and drawings such as the Bleeding Heart, and he disparages their feeling of superiority over other religious orders. The satire is harsh and bitter, more so than in any other of Ayala's novels. At times, in fact, the humor tends to disappear and there is more invective than satire. It is a reminder that Ayala had not forgiven the Jesuits for the treatment he received at a school of the Society; like Alberto in the novel, he lost his faith because of Jesuit teachings and example. What this invective gains in interest¹ it loses in artistic integrity, for the author fails to maintain detachment, which is essential in even the most militant, vitriolic satire. As Bullit says of satire, "as much as and perhaps more than in any other literary genre, an apparent detachment from too intense a personal involvement is the necessary precondition to greatness."² This lack of detachment weakens the novel and is responsible for the poor criti-

¹"Attack without humor, or pure denunciation, forms one of the boundaries of satire. It is a very hazy boundary, because invective is one of the most readable forms of literary art, just as panegyric is one of the dullest. It is an established dictum of literature that we like hearing people cursed and are bored with hearing them praised," Frye, p. 224.

²John M. Bullit, Jonathan Swift and the Anatomy of Satire (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 39. He also warns the satirist against relaxing "into an uncritical and laughing amusement." p. 38.

cal reception A. M. D. G. has received.¹

Dogmas, religious or otherwise, are natural, inviting targets for the satirist's pen. They are rigid, seemingly arbitrary, sacrosanct. In a country of relative religious ignorance and blind adherence to canonical tenets such as Spain, dogmas can easily become a vice, a folly that attracts the satirist's attention. Those dogmas that Ayala sees as most harmful are confession and the concept of heaven and hell in relation to this life. He denigrates the confessional as a place of tyranny, pernicious to both confessor and confessee. Sexual innuendo, prevarications, invented sins and fear abound. Ayala also attacks the absolution given in the confessional booth.² The fact that most of those who confess are women leads Ayala to call this relationship "cornudismo místico." Young Alberto chooses an old priest as confessor, hoping for leniency, but the priest horrifies the lad by threatening to withhold absolution.

Ayala sees the traditional notion of heaven and hell as manmade:

¿No se le ha ocurrido a usted pensar alguna vez que los teólogos que inventaron el cielo y el infierno eran hombres de escasísima chapeta? Mire usted que al mismo demonio no se le hubiera ocurrido imaginar como asilo de la eterna bienaventuranza un lugar en donde toda tediosidad y hastío tiene su asiento. Es un empíreo para los papanatas. Y en cuanto al infierno ... los fieles cris-

¹See Nora, pp. 476-79.

²Romeu, p. 68.

³Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona, p. 86.

tianos se han parado poco a considerar si es temible o en puridad más amable que el cielo.¹

This quotation is from a letter by Alberto; the question of whether there is an afterlife or not and what it will be like if there is poses a real problem to him. He feels the Jesuits tried to frighten him into heaven, but he remains confused and perplexed, afraid to abandon hope for a continued existence after death and unable to accept what the Church teaches.

Ultimately, however, it is not the specific dogmas but the concept of dogma, the idea of an elaborate theology, that Ayala assails. Whether it concern an inconsequential point--"Se llamaba Sor Clavo, peregrino nombre que aludía, evidentemente, a uno de los tres (o cuatro; grave problema teológico) con que los sayones suspendieron a nuestro Salvador en la cruz."²--or whether it lead to the point of having a ruling for every issue and for all sides of that issue--"Sí, señora; la Iglesia lo tiene todo previsto. Para todas las opiniones, aun las más opuestas, hallará usted autoridades corroborativas en el riquísimo repertorio doctrinal de la Iglesia."³--Ayala deplores the imposed theological structure of the Church in favor of a greater degree of individual choice and initiative.

The preponderance of religion as an object for Ayala's

¹La pata de la raposa, p. 161.

²Bajo el signo de Artemisa, p. 237.

³Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona, p. 36.

satire needs to be seen in proper perspective. Highet says: "But there is always one person, or one type, or one group, or one social class, or one national structure, on which the satirist focuses most of his amusement and his loathing, and from whom he derives the strength to generalize and vivify his work."¹ Ayala chose the clergy and dogma as his focus; from this center radiate his satirical attacks on other phases of Spanish life, for the Church's influence is all-pervasive. Frye compares this type of satirical attack to the theme of giant-killing in romance. His comments afford insight into the relation of the satirist and his targets.

For society to exist at all there must be a delegation of prestige and influence to organized groups such as the church, the army, the professions and the government, all of which consist of individuals given more than individual power by the institutions to which they belong. If a satirist presents, say, a clergyman as a fool or a hypocrite, he is, qua satirist, attacking neither a man nor a church. The former has no literary or hypothetical point, and the latter carries him outside the range of satire. He is attacking an evil man protected by his church, and such a man is a gigantic monster: monstrous because not what he should be, gigantic because protected by his position and by the prestige of good clergymen. The cowl might make the monk if it were not for satire.²

Ayala's religious satire is not directed at individual, real people, nor does he seek to destroy. He is not a Voltaire shouting, "Ecrasez l'infâme," but rather a Galdós seeking reform and honesty within the clergy. And like Galdós Ayala is not against religion nor irreligious,³ though he does not

¹Highet, p. 241.

²Frye, p. 228.

³"Perdida la fe religiosa, decimos, que no el sentimiento religioso, pues este es una realidad viva, hasta tocar en la emoción mística. Sentimiento religioso que

agree with the dogmas and beliefs of established churches. Not all the priests he depicts are bad,¹ nor all aspects of religion satirized. Even the acerbic denunciation of the Jesuits in A. M. D. G. is not an attack on individuals, but rather on an institution affording protection to evil men who use that protection for personal gain.

Spanish society and its structure, mores, educational system and economic status were at a low ebb by the end of the nineteenth century; the Spanish-American war only emphasized the facts. The writers of the Generation of '98 and their immediate successors sought to reveal this decadence in an endeavor to lift Spain from her nadir. Frequently, they used satire as one of their literary means. Ayala, too, lays bare the social evils by means of satire, recognizing it as "the most socially effective form of the comic, with the greatest utility as a practical instrument for the destruction of evils."² He attacks a wide variety of social ills, deriding the superstition and ignorance of the lowest classes, mocking the smug complacency of the bourgeois and assaulting the privileged position of the wealthy noble class, already in a state of decay. One of the principal manifestations of

al fin halla su realización, no en dogma religioso, pero sí en un sentido, frente al hombre, de confraternidad humana." Cesar Barja, Libros y autores contemporáneos (New York: Las Americas Publishing Company, 1964), p. 454.

¹Though Reinink is most certainly wrong in claiming there are more good priests than bad in Ayala's novels. p. 30.

²Swabey, p. 62.

the sick condition of society and the State is the Spanish educational milieu, characterized by Ayala as completely inadequate for the prejudiced, chauvinistic, ignorant Spanish mind.

In Ayala's view of society wealthy women divide their time between Church and charity, trying to buy their way into heaven. Men, not much interested in the Church, worship their own trinity: "toros, política y mujeres."¹ Commerce is a dishonest affair: "Pues para la prosperidad de todo negocio es postulado indispensable conceder participación en los consejos y en los manejos a un pillete certificado."² Prostitution is a raw sore on Spanish society, but "qué culpa tiene la úlcera por pertenecer a un cuerpo corrompido, cuyo es manifestación franca y fatal resultado?"³ The typical Spaniard is xenophobic, so someone who does not speak Spanish is either Jewish, Protestant or a Mason, names applied indiscriminately to foreigners. Certain practices combine to produce social monsters: "reunidos celibato y beaterio, esos dos agentes de deformación corporal y psicológica, el resultado es un tipo de monstruosidad mucho más monstruoso que cuanto ha concebido la pusilánime imaginación de los hombres sencillos."⁴

¹Tróteras y danzaderas, p. 230.

²Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona, p. 221.

³Belarmino y Apolonio, pp. 30-31.

⁴Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona, p. 186.

As A. M. D. G. warns against Jesuit education, so Luna de miel, luna de hiel and Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona show the evils of a Spanish lay education. By means of a reconstruction of the Daphnis and Chloe legend Ayala satirizes contemporary attitudes and practices of education in general, sex education and sex attitudes in particular and their results.

Urbano, the hero of the novels, is twenty years old, has just received a law degree, and is totally ignorant of sex.¹ Though his mother has carefully censored his reading, and though a tutor, Cástulo, guided his education, Ayala intends Urbano as a typical product of the Spanish educational system. Simona, the girl his mother selects as his mate, is as innocent as he, though how she was educated is not clearly revealed. Their honeymoon, as the title to the first novel foreshadows, turns into a bitter moon and, potentially, a tragic moon. Ayala shows that inadequate sexual instruction can be disastrous.

Foremost among the guilty parties in this case are the parents, who have failed to teach their children. "Soy de opinión que esas cosas los hombres deben aprenderlas de boca de su padre, y las mujeres de su madre."² The Church

¹Such complete sexual innocence is an absurdity in the twentieth century, but the exaggeration is a satirical norm. The reader should accept it as a novelistic convention that perhaps cautions against a possible trend rather than an actuality.

²Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona, p. 122.

shares in this guilt along with society for insisting on equating love and sin: "La Iglesia y la Sociedad entienden por matrimonio ese mismo acto de amor que sin matrimonio califican de los más vil y nauseabundo."¹ The Church is also proscribed because those who give advice for the Church, as priests, are celibates with only theoretical knowledge. Ayala satirizes a priest, Padre Palomar, who finally informs Urbano of the true facts about sex; Palomar is pedantic, slovenly, equivocal, and his main interest in Urbano's case is prurient.

It can be said of Urbano that his education has left him ignorant of the facts of life, for he is completely unprepared to face life. He had no physical education, his learning was by rote memory, he does not understand enough law to practice, and he has no training in the humanities. The trabajos in the title of the second novel refer chiefly to the efforts of Urbano to re-educate himself. He becomes adept at sports, learns a profession, reconciles the spiritual and physical sides of love and becomes fit and prepared for life, but none of it is due to the instructional processes of his formal education.

Cástulo, too, is a product of Spanish schools. He is intelligent, has a good knowledge of classical languages and literature, but is little better suited for life than his pupil. He has no practical training, no way of applying

¹Ibid., p. 125.

what he knows. He has tried to win a university chair, but is a victim of the outlandish system of bestowing such positions.

Existe en España una rara profesión: la de opositor a cátedras. ... Esto se explica porque en España se conceden las cátedras por amistad, parentesco o bandería, antes que por mérito; de donde se aprende más y mejor de los opositores que de los mismos catedráticos.¹

He has read a good deal, but because he brings no experience to his reading, books become a source of dreams for him. As he gains experience, he comes to appreciate Rousseau's philosophy of education as expressed in Emile. In fact, Ayala appeals for something akin to Rousseau's system: train both body and mind, teach naturally, learn by experience and then turn to reading.

Ayala maintains a fine control over his material in these two novels, sustaining the humor inherent in the situation without allowing the honeymoon scenes to become titillating or in bad taste. The attempts of the newlyweds to realize something they sense but cannot articulate, to move from innocence to knowledge are balanced between a rich humor and a potentially tragic outcome.

The weaknesses of Spanish society diminish Spain's contributions to the world. When one character accuses Spain of not having invented anything, another replies that she has contributed several types of food, the Jesuits, mentioned ironically, and the alpargata or fiber sandal.² At the end of

¹Belarmino y Apolonio, p. 16.

²Ibid., p. 168.

Troteras y danzaderas, a friend asks Alberto what Spain has produced, and he answers, "Troteras y Danzaderas,"¹ a sarcastic denunciation of the whole of Spanish society.

Graft, nepotism, instability, reaction and incompetence ravaged the political structure in Spain, which was as debased and debilitated as the social one. Caciques who represented higher officials ensconced in Madrid still controlled the hinterlands. Ayala presents the caciques as "tahures, borrachones y querellosos"² who rape, steal, murder and rig elections. The provincial governors hide their dishonesty behind facades of decency, but they cannot conceal that they are inept, unimaginative and unproductive. In Madrid, the politicians on the national level are no better. For them, politics is a game: "Les gusta más hacer el payaso y abrir la boca que abrir una carretera."³ The majority of politicians are neither liberals nor conservatives but opportunists: "Claro que en España la grey política se compone casi exclusivamente de arribistas, o sea hombres que juzgan tontos a los demás y no piensan sino en medrar, como quiera que sea."⁴

¹Troteras y danzaderas, p. 350. Since these words have definite reference to Juan Ruiz, as evidenced by the novel's epigraph from El libro de buen amor, "Después fise muchas cantigas de dança e troteras," they may be ironic. In this interpretation, Alberto would mean that a country that has produced such a masterpiece as that of Juan Ruiz has made a great contribution. See Donald L. Fabian, "Pérez de Ayala and the Generation of '98," Hispania, XLI (1958), 157.

²Luz de domingo, p. 111.

³Troteras y danzaderas, p. 48.

⁴Ibid., pp. 142-43.

The author satirizes some actual political leaders and uses their real names. He criticizes Castelar for his oratory and gives a donkey his name. He shows Sagasta inventing a province in order to provide rewards for his cohorts.

Guadalfranco no existe. Es una provincia que inventó Sagasta. Es una provincia que tiene existencia en el presupuesto del Estado, una existencia imaginaria, pero carece de existencia real. ... Volviendo una de las veces a gobernar, aplicóse, como es de rigor, a repartir profusamente entre secuaces, amigos, paniaguados y familiares, cuantas prebendas y bicocas le brindaba el presupuesto; pero halló que no tenía bastante que dar a los muchos que le mendigaban y eran innumerables las quejas y aun amenazas que recibía. Pero aquél era un gobernante de inagotable industria y contundente inventiva... ocurriósele hacer una nueva clasificación territorial de España, añadiéndole una provincia más que sacó de su cacumen: la provincia de Guadalfranco, ... conque dejó satisfechos a los amigos que antes se habían quejado de vacío.¹

This whimsical exaggeration of the spoils system is also sharp satire, and Ayala uses the mythological province as setting for the story of the downfall of the Limones, a cacique family.

In Troteras y danzaderas, Ayala gives an extended portrait of a Spanish politician. Sabas Sicilia is a professional politician holding the office of a cabinet member. His face is a mask, a politician's false front. "Echábase de ver al punto que era hombre público por la carátula que llevaba puesta, ocultándole la verdadera y móvil expresión del rostro; esa carátula social de las personas que han vivido muchos años ante los ojos de la muchedumbre, carátula que tiene vida propia, pero vida escénica, y tiende a tipificar

¹La caída de los Limones, pp. 183-84.

con visibles rasgos fisonómicos el ideal y singulares aspiraciones del individuo, de manera que facilita la labor del caricaturista, porque la carátula tiene ya bastante de caricatura."¹ Don Sabas is, then, a caricature of a typical Spanish politician: calloused, cynical, pedantic, egotistical and ineffectual. Through him Ayala satirizes not only all similar politicians, but also the conditions, apathy, traditions and political structures that allow such men to hold office and power.

In his multiple role of novelist, poet, essayist and critic, Ayala was in close contact with the Spanish literary milieu. He knew that with the exception of a few men like Galdós Spanish literature had definitely declined by the end of the nineteenth century, especially poetry and drama. It is mainly against these two genres and their practitioners that his satirical jabs are launched.²

The romanticism still prevalent in Spain at this time produced no real poetry or other literature until it was modified by the Modernists and '98 authors. Ayala seems to have gone through a romantic period as does Alberto; the author is, then, mocking himself, too, when he satirizes this "Santo

¹Troteras y danzaderas, p. 53.

²Curiously, Ayala rarely writes about members of the Generation of '98, except Benavente, whom he harshly criticizes in Las máscaras. Valle-Inclán appears in Troteras y danzaderas as Alberto del Monte-Valdés, but his writing is barely mentioned. The other members, Unamuno, Machado, Azorín and Baroja are not even mentioned. Ayala concentrates on those who continue nineteenth-century movements.

Sacramento de mí mismo,"¹ his "indecente vicio de metafisiquear y neoplatonizar a solas con la naturaleza."² Romanticism was still strong in the theater dominated by Echegaray, and some of the modernists stressed the romantic elements of that movement; Ayala's attacks on this affectation are summed up in this parodic poem that could have been written by any one of a dozen poets, according to the author.

Soy poeta embrujado por rosas lujuriosas
y por el maleficio de la luna espectral.
Mi carne ha macerado con manos fabulosas
uno por uno cada pecado capital.

En el burgués estulto, mis guedajas undosas
de bohémio suscitan una risa banal;
mas él no advierte, bajo mi mugre, las gloriosas
armas del caballero ungido de ideal.

Son mi magnificencia y fasto principescos;
adoro las manolas y los sueños goyescos;
toda la España añeja triunfa a través de mí.

Con ajénjo de luna mi corazón se embriaga,
y en mi yacija, por que la carne satisfaga,
sus magnolias me ofrenda la princesa Mimi.³

The fin de siècle tone, the decadence, the juvenile note of self-pity and escapism, the desire to épater le bourgeois represent the worst of what Spanish poetry had received from Darío and the late nineteenth century French poets.

The provincial literary scene is even more dismal than that of the metropolis. In the short story "Adriana" Federico is a poet in a group of writers who form a tertulia

¹Luna de miel, luna de hiel, p. 173.

²Tinieblas en las cumbres, p. 264.

³Troteras y danzaderas, p. 93.

and publish a review. He is described sarcastically as

un poeta típico, con todas las circunstancias que suelen acompañar la mera profesión lírica. A saber. Vivía parásito de los demás, ... Su carácter no se había desarrollado virilmente, sino que permanecía en el estadio de perfecto y delicioso infantilismo ... le era menester el halago caricioso, ... Era asimismo vanidoso. ... Finalmente, Federico, como mero poeta, era muy ignorante.¹

This literary circle accomplishes nothing, spends all day in a cafe and all night in a bar; they have big dreams and consider themselves revolutionaries. All their hopes and petty activities are demolished in one sentence: "Pero sus actividades subversivas no iban más allá de la publicación quincenal del periodiquito de combate, que nadie leía."² And Federico's lack of talent is emphasized by his constant concern, imagined, that a rival poet has stolen his rhymes. The total picture is a devastating portrait of every mediocre poet, tertulia and little magazine in Spain.

If Spanish literature was in a state of decay, the blame was not all with the artists. The Madrid theater audience, for example, could not recognize a good play and applauded a poor one. Ayala has a play performed in Troteras y danzaderas that is a thinly disguised version of Galdós' Electra. The audience is expecting a call to arms, a revolutionary message that will be a victory for liberalism. All are disappointed, for the drama is merely a "verdadera tragedia de gran austeridad de forma, y el fondo saturado de

¹El ombligo del mundo, pp. 89-91.

²Ibid., p. 93.

una pesadumbre a modo de gravitación de lo eternamente humano y doloroso."¹ So used to mediocre propaganda are the theatergoers of Madrid that they fail to appreciate a really good play, though they pretend to enjoy and understand it since the author is famous and prestigious.

One of the central figures of Troteras y danzaderas is Teófilo Pajares, a fictional counterpart of the Spanish modernist poet Francisco Villaespesa. In satirizing through Teófilo the extremes of Modernist poetry and drama, Ayala utilizes his perspectivist techniques to give a broad picture of his target. Through Teófilo's own words and actions, his poems and play, the author's comments and those of Alberto and other characters, the reader receives a full satirical view of a poet, a poetic movement and the artistic environment of Madrid.

From Teófilo himself, one perceives a confused and frustrated being, overcompensating for an inferiority complex. He has lofty ambitions and high artistic hopes, but he lacks a true poetic gift. He prides himself on writing "con cínica deleitación y nauseabundos detalles la orgía que con su carne pútrida habían de celebrar los gusanos,"² as he longs for death, yet he nearly faints at the thought of having tuberculosis. He jealously derides all other authors, especially on hearing them praised.

¹Troteras y danzaderas, p. 266.

²Ibid., p. 7.

His own poems and his drama reveal a good deal of bombast, pretense, imitation, little depth and no originality. They are obvious manifestations of his personal emotions and difficulties written in romantic outpourings of inspiration. In his poetry he appears as a lonely outcast, a pariah of society like those Espronceda wrote about. Actually, he desires a more comfortable existence than his Bohemian life affords.

The author's direct comments on Teófilo are unsparing, pointing out his ignorance of music, painting and mythology, though he "había decorado siempre sus versos con innúmeras alusiones al arte y a la mitología."¹ When the narrator describes Teófilo's play, it is only to mock it in the most derisive terms, ironically praising it and presenting its inartistic traits with broad humor. The audience shows its poor taste and want of discernment by wildly applauding the drama, especially the most banal and contrived parts.

Alberto, although he is Teófilo's friend, recognizes that the latter is more poetaster than poet. He claims Teófilo's poetry is indistinguishable from that of a dozen other poets and deplores the excess of "tropos y símiles, que tan a tontas y locas despilfarran."² Montes-Valdés and Alberto both criticize Teófilo's play for its lack of historical authenticity, its absurd plot and bombast.

In addition to this relativistic technique, Ayala

¹Ibid., p. 61.

²Ibid., p. 93.

uses many of the traditional weapons of satire, principal among which is irony. The two are not equivalent; almost all satire includes some irony, but not all irony is satirical. Frye calls satire "militant irony."¹ Irony is such a basic and oft-used component of satire because it "is the perfect rhetorical device for catching the pretense which reveals itself as sham, since its two terms permit the poet to create both the pretense and the truth at once."² By means of irony the writer dramatizes the difference between what men are and what they pretend to be. Thus when Ayala remarks that a group of girls mock a number of priests "sin reparar que eran ministros del Altísimo,"³ the statement is both ironical and satirical.

Exaggeration is another satirical weapon Ayala uses. He exposes vices by expanding them, and this distortion causes the reader to focus his attention on the vice and recall it vividly. The Jesuits in A. M. D. G. are excellent examples of exaggeration. With the exception of two sympathetically drawn priests, one nearly insane and the other a pedant, the Jesuits are all either lewd, cruel, vacuous, selfish or a combination of these traits. He seems to have thrown all the rotten eggs he could find into one basket, and the technique is very effective. He also exaggerates by making the sexual benightedness of Urbano and Simona total, the better to point

¹Frye, p. 223.

²Kernan, p. 84.

³Tinieblas en las cumbres, p. 149.

out the dangers and foolishness of inadequate sex education.

The opposite of exaggeration is diminution, "any kind of speech which tends, either by the force of low or vulgar. imagery, or by other suggestion, to depress an object below its usually accepted status."¹ Ayala employs this device in numerous little witty thrusts aimed at the clergy. "Lujurioso como un fraile;"² "Adulador ... ¡Clérigo en fin!;"³ and "El cura, ... se resfregó la barriga, por encima de la sotana, como si su inteligencia radicase en aquellas vísceras y con el frote se activasen los operaciones discursivas."⁴

Ayala is no exception to the observation that "genius seems to have led practically every great satirist to become what the world calls obscene."⁵ The shock value of sexual and scatological material, whether in crude statement or mirthful jest, is of inestimable worth in helping the satirist make his point and create loathing. When Ayala gives a nun the name Sor Circuncisión, he knows he may injure some religious sensitivities, but he also knows the name will grate and jar and help to ridicule the plethora of convents that plagued Spain. Hightet suggests that the satirist uses a very extensive vocabulary full of "cruel and dirty words; . . .

¹Bullit, p. 45.

²Tinieblas en las cumbres, p. 46.

³Bajo el signo de Artemisa, p. 204.

⁴La pata de la raposa, p. 165.

⁵Frye, p. 235.

trivial and comic words; . . . colloquial and anti-literary words,"¹ and these go hand in hand with obscenity to upset the reader and produce the unexpected.

There is a limited amount of parody in Ayala's fiction. The opening passages to Prometeo that burlesque the Homeric epic are perhaps the finest example of it. The poetry and play of Teófilo are parodic, and there is a very gentle parody of Berceo's poetry in a letter written by Alberto:

Querido Juan: Sobre un prado verde y cencido,
de un olmedo a la vera, muy sombroso y tupido,
do las aves organan con un manso ruido,
esta epítola quiero hilvanar de corrido.²

Satirists range from those who like man and write to cure his vices and ills to those who despise him and seek to destroy.³ Ayala belongs exclusively to neither of these camps, but, in general, he is much closer to the former, more like Cervantes than Quevedo, closer to Horace than to Swift. Though somewhat skeptical about the efficacy of satire, he nonetheless continues to try to reason with men to bring about an improvement. Romeu claims Ayala's satire is bitter and malicious,⁴ but this is true only on occasion and chiefly when the butt of the satire is the clergy. It is true that the satirical world Ayala creates in A. M. D. G. is black and harsh, one in which "man is at war with mankind, where the gods or natural powers are brutal and distant; a world

¹Highet, p. 18.

²La pata de la raposa, p. 141.

³Highet, p. 235.

⁴Romeu, p. 68.

of cannibalism, torture, mutilation; a world where love corrupts to lust and sexual deviation."¹ And there is no equivocation in the novel's final words: "¿Cree usted que se debería suprimir la compañía de Jesús? --¡De raíz!"² But in the majority of his satirical portraits there is a good deal of compassion and human warmth. Sabas Sicilia arouses pity at his failure and losses and ultimate smallness; Teófilo dies a heroic, if not tragic, death; and the duchess in Belarmino y Apolonio, symbol of a dying, decadent noble class, draws a charitable smile in her deathbed scene, her hair in curlers, "con la cabeza cubierta de mariposas de papel,"³ loudly denouncing the clergy and the confessional, but forgiving everybody. Indeed, this portrait of the duchess is a good depiction of Ayala's view on satire; he pardons people but attacks folly, evil institutions and absurd practices.

Regarding Ayala's satirical assaults on Spain and things Spanish, the basis for his attacks is the amor amargo he shared for Spain with the members of the Generation of '98. The roots of amor amargo are deep in Spain; Gracián, Feijoo, Larra, and Galdós are just a few of the many Spanish authors who have felt a need to criticize the country they love. It is a tradition for Spaniards to censure the shortcomings of their fatherland while yet remaining loyal Spaniards. Ayala,

¹Kernan, p. 22.

²A. M. D. G., p. 255.

³Belarmino y Apolonio, p. 277.

nevertheless, felt the need to defend that tradition.

Supongamos que un español profiere palabras de velado y aun de paladino menosprecio para España. En nada afecta esto a su calidad de buen español ni a su cantidad de españolismo.¹

He also states specifically that Alberto's search for a personal identity and a sense of direction are intimately linked to Spain and her need to find a national conscience; Alberto is looking for his "razón de ser en la razón de ser de su nación."²

It is not surprising that amor amargo, a love/hate paradox, finds frequent expression in satire, for satire is itself paradoxical in its design to destroy through laughter, to cure through attack. It is an ideal medium for expressing the ambivalent feelings so many Spaniards have toward their country. Satire is an intellectual sport with an emotional impact, one that allows little or no sentimentality. The satirist can express his amor amargo with no fear of being maudlin in his patriotism or a traitor in his attack, for satire indicates an interest and concern in the object being satirized. If he attacks an infirm member, it is only to heal the whole body.

Satire makes certain demands on an author, determining to some extent the form and content of his work. The vices, follies and dullness of men are many and varied, but satire

¹Ramón Pérez de Ayala, Política y toros (Madrid: Renacimiento, 1924), p. 47.

²Urrutia, pp. 21-22, citing the prologue to the 1942 edition of Troteras y danzaderas (Buenos Aires: Losada), p. 8.

has its limits. Virtues, unless carried to an extreme, do not lend themselves to satire, nor do truly horrible atrocities, such as Hitler's killing of six million Jews.¹ If a person is to be satirized, his fictional delineation is not usually realistic or convincing. Rather he is distorted, magnified, or diminished to ridiculous or grotesque proportions. He is, in short, more of a caricature than a character, as is true of many of Ayala's fictional figures. Satire is seldom a subtle art, or at least, its brush strokes are usually definite and visible, since the satirist does not trust his audience to clearly see his purposes. Much as a caricaturist concentrates on a few outstanding features and exaggerates them, so does the satirist draw his personages.

Satire operates within a wide generic range, "extending from where it blends with comedy to where it merges into tragedy."² Ayala's satire covers this range within the tragicomic frame of his fiction. The vitriolic anti-Jesuit denunciation, the bitter tone of Prometeo, the devastating portrayal of an androgynous female in the person of Micaela are on the tragic end of the spectrum. Much more frequent in Ayala is a gayer, lighter satire that partakes of the tolerance and larger comprehension of the Quijote.³

¹"But some villainies are too awful for us to despise. We can only shudder at them, . . . Against such crimes, satire is almost impotent." Highet, p. 23.

²Kernan, p. 22, note 2.

³Swabey, p. 66.

The relationship of satire to Ayala's fiction is best understood if he is seen as a novelist who uses a good deal of satire rather than a satirist who writes novels. Satire is not the dominant note in his novels, and only a few of them are principally satirical, though all contain satirical material to a greater or lesser extent. A. M. D. G. is definitely a satire against the Jesuits, and Proteras y danzaderas a satire of the socio-politico-artistic atmosphere of Madrid, but to call any of the other novels primarily a satire would be erroneous. Thus, Belarmino y Apolonio includes a satire on Mallarmé's disciples in Spain, but it is much more than just a satire; satire forms a part of the total work.

Rather than a satirist, Ayala is an ironist, and his satire is governed by his ironical outlook. Swabey differentiates between irony and satire in this way:

Whereas satire censures culpable wrongs and injustices, irony more often uncovers ignorance and stupidity, being less interested in social reform than in the love of truth. By contrast, irony stands smiling with its fingers on its lips letting reason into dark corners, whereas satire by its imaginative eloquence excites anger at human misdeeds and cruelties. . . . Indeed, the laughter of satire appears more spiteful, contemptuous, scoring the badness of actuality, as against that of irony, which appears more concerned with what ought to be, deploring the defects of what is in comparison with ideality.¹

Ayala's irony suffuses his satire, lending it a forgiving spirit, a tolerant depth and a serenity typical of the author himself.

¹Ibid., pp. 59-60.

CHAPTER V

CHARACTERS

One of the hallmarks of the world's great comic literature is the presence of outstanding humorous characters. They may be universal and original archetypical creations such as Falstaff or Quijote, complex, fully-drawn figures that exist in a class by themselves, or they may be the most memorable of certain types, like Molière's Miser or Alarcón's Liar, marvelous creations, but not rounded characters, lacking the depth and substance needed to raise them from the category of types.¹ In addition, comic fiction teems with many excellent and signal minor characters, numerous stock types that have long appeared in comedy, and the stylized or flat characters, often memorable and effective, that Forster describes.² All these kinds of characters appear in Ayala's fiction.

As varied as the different species of characters is the way in which Ayala presents and develops them. The phys-

¹Falstaff is undoubtedly in the tradition of the miles glorioso, but he is much more, too. So full of life is he that he rises above the bragging soldier type and becomes a unique character, a Falstaff.

²E. M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927), pp. 103-104.

ical descriptions vary from brief, witty or caricatural phrases to detailed and lengthy portraits. Knowledge of the character's moral and intellectual qualities may come from his word and actions or directly from the narrator, or from other characters. Ayala often goes to great extents to illuminate and complete the comic nature of the personages he creates. When he succeeds, the result can be a truly imaginative, uniquely comic character.

In introducing his fictional people, Ayala utilizes his descriptive power to good comic advantage. His purpose is not always to develop a character, but merely to characterize it by some outstanding physical peculiarity. The person then becomes that peculiarity. These witty sketches are a sort of verbal legerdemain, converting parts into wholes. Thus a man who likes to watch people's faces to see how they react to bad news is summed up in his look, which is "tan fría, que cuando miraba a una persona le convertía la sangre en un sorbete de fresa."¹ A vacuous circus performer is remarkable for her complexion: "Su piel es albariza, exangüe, como la panza de la rana."² A country girl's ruddy color and dark hair become her whole self: "Sus mejillas de una rubicundez impropia de la epidermis humana, y el pelo negro rezumante, como la hulla, de manera que el rostro parecía un fragmento de cabello, en ignición."³ Though the reader learns

¹La pata de la raposa, p. 237.

²Ibid., p. 153.

³Ibid., p. 249.

very little, if anything, more about these figures, the humorous description lingers in his mind, identifying that character each time he appears.

The technique of concentrating on one obvious part of a person's appearance is verbal caricature. Ayala also uses caricature as part of a more detailed description of a person's physical and psychic constitution. When Cerdá is depicted as having "la nariz en trofeo,"¹ it is only part of a complete caricature of him, in which his head is compared to an obelisk and his eyebrows to cockroaches. Although the author likens Novillo's white teeth and hirsute face to "una estría de carne de coco asomándose entre la cáscara pardusca y crinada,"² this is not the outstanding aspect of his appearance. The caricature here is but a part of a complete description and delineation of the man. It adds to his portraiture without dominating it, and the reader remembers other physical features, as well as personality traits.

These short humorous descriptions occasionally tend toward absurdity, especially when drawn in inanimate terms. The purely geometrical terminology employed in portraying a maid reveals her character symbolically: "De rostro esférico, cogote cubito, torso cilíndrico y faldamento cónico."³ Thus dehumanized, she becomes what the geometric shapes suggest to

¹Tinieblas en las cumbres, p. 10.

²Belarmino y Apolonio, p. 161.

³La caída de los Limones, p. 257.

the author: "la solidez, la exactitud, la fortaleza, la regularidad."¹ After such a description, the narrator's comments that she does not resemble a rational being nor even an irrational one but is "más bien una cosa"² are superfluous, as she is beyond the limits of humanity.

Ayala rarely goes to such an extreme since his usual purpose is not to completely dehumanize his characters, but to show an absurdity in their appearance that prepares the reader for an absurdity in their personality. Doña Marica, Herminia's grandmother, has a ludicrous, far-fetched hairdo:

Esta señora tenía mundo, sin una sola hebra, el cuero cabelludo. Pintábase todas las mañanas el cráneo con un corcho quemado, de suerte que fingiese una cabellera partida en dos bandas; la raya central la sacaba raspando con una aguja de hacer calceta.³

At seventy, she still is coquettish, steals from Tigre Juan while playing cards, and is a gossip. Gamborena, the third hand in the card game, also is caricatured and dehumanized. With his black clothes and brown, bald head, he looks like "un frasquito de tinta con corcho de botella de litro,"⁴ and his face resembles the masks of tragedy and comedy. He has many eccentricities of speech, manner and thought. Doña Marica and Gamborena are both old, even senile. By depicting them as caricatures Ayala captures their ludicrous aspects. Then he faces the difficult task of trying to develop them into rounded characters. In this case he is not quite successful,

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Tigre Juan, p. 174.

⁴Ibid., p. 173.

though they both approach credibility and do assume greater depth and life than their dehumanized presentation would indicate.

A fine sense of humor and an evident sympathy accompany most of the passages that describe Ayala's novelesque people. However, there are exceptions. The Jesuits in A. M. D. G. are portrayed in a very mocking, cutting way, and the novelist's goal seems to be to devastate more than to caricature. One priest is notable for his "accesos de asma y aquello de babear en el plato."¹ A colleague has a ludicrous nose: "También al disforme apéndice nasal de Mur veíasele vibrar entre el vaho y el husmillo de los manjares."² There is no mitigating note, nothing to soften the negative tone of these portraits. The reader must exercise caution, however, for when Ayala pictures Alberto as "un joven insignificante" whose head is full of "cosquilleos transcendentales" and "otras zarandajas,"³ the effect is quite different. These statements are very ironical and serve to set Alberto apart from his cruder and more sensual companions. These comments are the first introduction to the protagonist; later his true position and nature become evident. In contrast to the good-natured mocking of Alberto stands the completely unsympathetic portrait of the son in "Padre e hijo."

Era, el hijo, más bien bajo que alto, de fofa gordura,

¹A. M. D. G., p. 52. ²Ibid.

³Tinieblas en las cumbres, p. 168.

semejante al eunuco; los ojos, ridículamente insolentes, como los de las gallináceas; la piel de las mejillas, de un rojo subido, casi azulenco, indicio patológico. Usaba bigotejo y una mosca irrisoria debajo del labio inferior. Pretendía producirse con altivez, a pesar de serle refractaria la menguada estatura y obesa estructura; el hablar, afectado y redicho, hasta un extremo cómico. Las cualidades dominantes de su carácter eran la avaricia y la vanidad. Además, alardeaba de muy religioso, mogigato ya.¹

The humor is all but obliterated by the harshness of the description, and the evident contempt with which Ayala depicts the son makes it impossible for the reader to formulate his own opinion of the boy. As in other instances in Ayala's fiction, too much of the character's "inner make-up comes from the author himself, in the form of gratuitous commentaries which leave little that is implicit or that may serve as food for the reader's imagination."² That this is a flaw in Ayala's writing must be acknowledged.

Ayala's concern with types and archetypes is very evident in his characters. He introduces some readily recognizable types, such as pedants, foolish fathers and the conventional hero and heroine. He also returns to some peculiar types that had especial attraction for him: middle-aged lovers, deviates, obese types and others. As these types recur, he changes them, altering them significantly at times, expanding and varying them so that some are endowed with a

¹Bajo el signo de Artemisa, pp. 228-29.

²Walter A. Dobrian, "Development and Evolution in Pérez de Ayala's Ligre Juan," in Literature and Society, ed. Bernice Slote (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), p. 198.

life of their own and are not mere types, though they still share much in common with others in that category.

The pedant is a well-established comic type, dating back at least to Greek and Latin comedy. In Ayala's novels they appear often, usually as priests. Don Robustiano stands out for his constant allusions to mythology, interjections of English phrases into his conversation and his patent enjoyment in manipulating language. Palomar is a better delineated pedant. He smokes his bishop's leftover tobacco and cigar stubs, reveals his lascivity while serving as a spiritual advisor, and speaks frankly and to the point. He parades his erudition in an ostentatious manner with frequent Latin quotations from ecclesiastical authorities. He occasionally spices his speech with colloquialisms: "Recoime con el niño bitongo."¹ Padre Atienza is another pedant who combines linguistic extremes ranging from a lofty tone with frequent classical allusions to a racy, colorful jargon. The pedant par excellence is Cástulo. He is one of Ayala's choicest creations and the only one of this category to be fully developed.²

The many obese types that Ayala portrays bear witness to a predilection on his part for describing overweight people. A casual encounter with a circus master leads to an interesting simile. "Vestía de frac, cuyos faldones, a causa

¹Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona, p. 43.

²Cástulo will be discussed in detail later.

de las grandes asentaderas del individuo, se entreabrían y levantaban como las alas del grillo puesto a estridular."¹ Ayala depicts an extremely corpulent man in a way to suggest that there is a correlation between body shape and personality.

La primera cosa de don Jovino que acaparaba la atención, y lo que después continuaba acaparándola, era el vientre, como acontece con algunos ídolos búdicos, y también, como con tal ídolos acontece, cráneo, brazos y piernas parecían desarticulados del corpachón, o estaban articulados malamente y en sitios inadecuados o absurdos. Aun viéndole en pie se creía verle en cuclillas: tal era la exiguidad de sus extremidades abdominales, plegados, por otra parte, en actitud fetal. Y no sólo su facha, sino además su conducta, tenía la serenidad idiótica de los ídolos.²

It is as if Ayala conceived of obesity as an absurdity, distorting the body, giving it a less human shape and also warping the inner structure. This becomes more explicit when a maternal, sedentary woman is shown as an "alegoría flagrante, en sendas correspondencias orgánicas; desaforado busto y asentaderas desaforadas."³ A circus fat lady even changes her behavior and attitude after shedding most of her excess weight. When describing her in her portly state, Ayala combines a lyrical note with the inevitable humor. Corpulence, in her case, seems to have afforded her positive personal characteristics, tenderness, grace and good humor, that she lost with her fat. Her number, balancing on the back of a

¹La pata de la raposa, p. 131.

²Troteras y danzaderas, p. 156.

³La caída de los Limones, p. 175.

tiny donkey, had been the crowd's favorite, but once she reduced, she no longer performed. Ayala laughs at her, but it is a compassionate laugh.

The concept of machismo is an integral part of Spanish, and Spanish-American, life, and the macho a very typical Hispanic personage. In Ayala the type ranges from the permissive sexual promiscuity allowed and expected of the male to donjuanismo to the extreme sado-sexual individual who must show his manhood not only in his sexual prowess, but also in his physical superiority, cruelty and lack of concern for others. Most predominant, though, is the sexually prodigious variety.

The type is represented in Ayala's first story by Rabelais, whom he calls a satyr and whom he has pay homage to the macho cabrío. Ayala's first novel also presents a satyr, Cerdá, who epitomizes lechery. His fame is legendary in the red-light district of Pilares. His appearance reflects his inner nature, and the narrator uses words that clearly indicate this: "sátiro," "sed concupiscente," "voluptuosa," "lujuriosos."¹ He is also vulgar, crude, boisterous and cowardly. Quite different from Cerdá are three men who live in the same province. "En toda la provincia eran renombrados y envidiados, por lo multitudinoso y clandestino de la prole, junto con don Cristóbal, otro hidalgo, de gótica oriundez: don Rodrigo Castañeda, del valle de Congosto, y don Olegario

¹Tinieblas en las cumbres, pp. 9-10.

Pandoro, alias el Padre Eterno, cura párroco en la villa de Reicastro."¹ Rodrigo and Cristóbal are both enormous men and strong, both come from noble families, both are widowers. Cristóbal is a spendthrift who devotes himself to hunting and squandering his fortune. Ironically, his wife was not faithful to him, and the child she had belonged to another man. A self-centered hedonist, he can be quite ruthless. Rodrigo is also a physical, rather than a spiritual or intellectual, individual. He rules his estate tyrannically, dispensing feudal justice. If a mule kicks him, he kicks it back; if it is difficult to tame and throws him, he shoots it. He treats people in a similar fashion. In "Justicia"² he disperses a mob single-handedly, because all fear him. Rodrigo and Cristóbal are semi-legendary figures; pagan,³ gigantic in stature, laws unto themselves, they are feared and envied by all the men and admired by all the women. The men even feel proud for their wives to bear children by

¹Bajo el signo de Artemisa, pp. 226-27. Each of these three actually appears in different stories, but they are mentioned here in comparison with Cristóbal who outdistances them in "ímpetu y eficacia genesíacos." p. 227.

²Rodrigo first appears in a short, short story, "El patriarca," that Ayala wrote in 1906; it is included in the collection entitled El raposín (Madrid: Ediciones Taurus, 1962). This short story is an embryonic version of "Don Rodrigo y don Recaredo." In the original story the two men are uncle and nephew, and the priest does not accompany the girl back to Pilares. "Justicia," written in 1928, continues part of the action of "Don Rodrigo and don Recaredo," and Rodrigo enters as a secondary character.

³The Castañeda family is "casta de bárbaros, de paganos." El ombligo del mundo, p. 152.

these two prodigies. Olegario, the priest, is less imposing in size and deed. He is a rather ridiculous personage; he competes with the other priest in the town for prominence, feeds his pigs through a special chute that leads from his dining table, and works in his garden, which is watered by three streams he calls "Fe, Esperanza y Caridad."¹ When the new railroad bisects his garden, Olegario, a symbol of fertility, withers away and dies.

The cruel type macho is represented by the males of the Becerriles family. They terrorize the town and violate the heroine. They are "hidalgotes y cacicotes" who will do "cualquiera barbaridad que se les meta entre ceja y ceja."² They are the decadent and vestigial remains of an old family of caciques. At the opposite extreme is Angel Ríos, of Iroteras y danzaderas. Though middle-aged, he is still very virile. When he has money, he is very generous and is always kind and good-humored. Angel is not a deceiver of women and thus no Don Juan. Because he cannot control his sexual urge nor handle money wisely, he is forced to live apart from his wife and children, whom he loves. Closer to the true Don Juan type are Vespasiano, the friend of Tigre Juan, and Pachín Cueto, the alcalde of Reicastro, appearing in several of the short stories in El ombligo del mundo.

Ayala's attitude toward the macho type is difficult

¹Ibid., p. 25.

²Luz de domingo, p. 104.

to determine. He satirizes the Don Juans and caciques, mocks the hypocritical priests, but seems to be sympathetic to the Rodrigo or Cristóbal types. A Rabelaisian vein runs through his humor, and he admires prodigious deeds of both body and mind. A stronger vein is also found, however; it is his view of true virility and strength, the real man as loving father and faithful husband.

The usual romantic interests in comic fiction are the young hero and heroine, or the old husband and young wife. Ayala adds another: the middle-aged lovers. Felicita and Anselmo of Belarmino y Apolonio are the supreme examples. Their very appearance is ludicrous; she is thin and masculine, and he is fat and effeminate. Their courtship began when both were already middle-aged and ten years later has still not progressed beyond the state of "el más puro romanticismo, platonismo e inefabilidad."¹ Fate seems to be against their union; he loses his poise and affability when in her presence, and such is his timidity that he cannot speak, especially of love. Throughout their floundering courtship, Felicita grows thinner and Novillo becomes fatter, true to their nicknames, La Consumida and El Buey. Their relationship has become a wordless ritual; he strolls beneath her window at night and follows her at a distance during the day. The only communication between them is the love poems he sends her, poems actually written by Apolonio.

¹Belarmino y Apolonio, p. 78.

When he lies dying from pneumonia, she rushes to be by his side, but he does not want her to see him without his hair and teeth, wanting her to remember him as being younger. She does see him after his death and attributes his hairless, toothless condition to his illness. The deathbed scene is a little masterpiece of balance. The inherent emotionalism is counterpoised by the humorous way Ayala depicts the scene, making it tender but not cloying.¹ Her decision to retire to a convent adds a final touch that is also at once poignant and comic, for it is traditionally the young heroine who forsakes the world when her hero has died or abandoned her.

The ridiculous and sublime characterize Felicita and Anselmo. She still considers herself a young girl and hopes to bear children; he has a phobia that his false teeth will attack and bite him at night. There is also a great deal of warmth and human interest in them. The two come alive on life's stage and convincingly act out their tragicomedy; though defeated by fate, their hopes frustrated, they assume a dignity that belies their absurdities. Ayala recognizes the pathetic aspect of their lives.

Pero el amor mudo y constante de Anselmo y Felicita encerraba, bajo el aspecto ridículo, emoción patética. Aquella timidez invencible de Anselmo, ... ¿A que podía atribuirse sino al sañudo antojo de la Némesis adversa? Buscábanse sin cesar Anselmo y Felicita, vivían el uno para el otro; pero la Némesis antojadiza había herido de

¹Leon Livingstone, in "The Theme of the Paradoxe sur le comédien in the Novels of Perez de Ayala," Hispanic Review, XXII (1954), 213, calls this scene a "combination of compassionate humanity and practised sensibility."

mudez a Anselmo y colocado entre los dos, además de esta barrera de silencio, un ancho valladar infranqueable, aunque de aire delgado y transparente.¹

Urbano's friend Paolo is cast from the same mold. At fifty-five, he has been engaged to the same girl for thirty years. His mother controls the family fortune and thus controls her son. The fiancée is from a lower-class family, and Paolo's mother is opposed to their marrying. He is a romantic aristocrat who enjoys the privileges of his caste; he cherishes his ancient steed, a modern Rocinante, as a symbol of his caballerosidad. He persists in courting his fiancée just as if both were young and were looking forward to a time when they would be old enough to marry. A combination of the heroic and the absurd, the pathetic and the ridiculous, he epitomizes the middle-aged still pretending to be young.

Micaela is a variation on the theme. After more than twenty years of repressing her femininity, she decides she loves her husband and attempts to win back his affections. Micaela desires to be seductive and appealing to Leoncio, but her efforts are grotesque, and he is physically repulsed. She ages rapidly in body and regresses in mind until her behavior becomes childlike. Her husband really loves her, but is not attracted to her physically. Meanwhile he is behaving with his mistress as if he were a young man. Caught between his wife and mistress, he takes a job as a traveling salesman to escape.

¹Belarmino y Apolonio, pp. 78-79.

In all these cases Ayala exploits the humor of middle-aged lovers without failing to show sympathy, too. Rather than treat them in a purely comic fashion, his approach is tragicomic and human.

A frequent Ayalian type is the middle-aged maternal woman, a childless Virgin Mary. She is warmhearted and, frustrated in her own attempt to find love, dedicates herself to helping young couples overcome the blocking characters and progress toward marriage. She is a Celestina transformed by Ayala's alchemy into an innocent, pure, self-sacrificing go-between, realizing personal happiness through that of others. Felicita goes to considerable lengths to help Pedro and Angustias, first by bringing them together, then arranging all the details of their elopement.¹ She is not quite successful, despite her honest intentions and careful plans; Pedro goes back to the seminary, and Angustias, dishonored, drifts into prostitution. Felicita's own thwarted romance gives her the motivation to attempt such a scheme and to relive her own youth. Ironically, she is responsible for Anselmo's death since he catches pneumonia en route to intercept the elopers.

¹When Apolonio learns of the elopement, he calls Felicita, "¡Infame alcahueta!" The duchess of Samovia corrects him, though, and gives insight into Felicita and others like her:

"--No digas palabras mal sonantes. Eso de la alcahuetería es cosa muy relativa. Todas las mujeres, en llegando a cierta edad, si son amorosas todavía, como no están en sazón de que las amen y ellas no aciertan a vivir sino en la atmósfera del amor, se perecen por proteger y concertar amores ajenos." Ibid., p. 201.

Anastasia, Josefina's maiden aunt in La pata de la raposa, desires only that her niece be happy. The aunt was brought up so strictly that she thought kissing was evil. It is only while serving as chaperon to Josefina and Alberto that she realizes, too late, that she has erred in never having loved. She has her comic side, best seen in the pater noster she says each night to ward off the fleas, but is essentially a pathetic woman who can now but dream of the normal life she missed. Predestinación is just the opposite; she affords the comic relief in Luz de domingo and does not brood over her fate. She is a mother figure to Castor and watches over him and his fiancée. Only after Castor is gone does she succumb to the proposals of one of her boarders; she will marry but not before reforming the man. Predestinación is the only one of this type to find love for herself.

Iluminada is the most completely developed maternal-cupid type. She renounces her love for Tigre Juan as hopeless and resolves to help him and Herminia be happy, though at forty, she still looks young and attractive. Iluminada is a complex person; she was forced to marry a man she did not love, and as a neighbor to Juan has long admired him, understanding him in ways even he does not. She accepts the orphaned Carmina as a ward and makes of her a surrogate to experience the love she has sacrificed.

Toda yo, dechado de obligada esterilidad, simiente apta que jamás podría por sí dar fruto, he tenido que descuartizar las infecundas entrañas en mil pedacitos, que he ido aventando a voleo en el alma de Carmina, para en ella

fecundarme. ¡Qué ella ame, como yo sé amar, y qué sea amada como a mí nadie me ha amado!¹

Here she resembles Celestina, fulfilling both her maternal instincts and wishes and satisfying her amorous longings vicariously.

Diametrically opposed to the above type is the proud father,² presented through widely varying representations. Rosendo, the father of sixteen children in Pilares, is a study in contrasts. To his children he is patience and paternal love personified; he feeds each infant in its turn and insists that he be the only one to do so. To his wife he is kind, tender and considerate. He goes to mass regularly and plays the organ in church. There is, however, another side to his life; his occupation is "el de guapo, al servicio de sucios negocios en alta escala."³ He has been involved in some very mysterious crimes, and rumor has it that he has killed someone. The family disregards the rumors and cannot believe that he is cruel and capable of crimes. Ayala presents all the information about Rosendo's work as heresay, but it is apparently true, though his image as a father remains more vivid than the idea of his being a bully and a

¹Curandero de su honra, p. 58.

²Ayala himself was apparently a kind, proud father. When his oldest son was stricken by a fatal disease, it so affected Ayala that he never finished the collection of poems he was working on nor wrote anything other than articles for newspapers. Note by editor in Obras completas, vol. II, p. 70.

³Pilares in Obras completas, I, 880.

hypocrite.

The other proud fathers live more conventional lives. Medardo is fond of his two daughters, though he shows favoritism toward the older one. He desires happiness for his offspring, but his judgment is poor; the men he thinks will make good husbands both abandon the daughters. Leoncio, like all the proud fathers, has his ridiculous aspect. In his case it is that he is dominated by his wife to the point that their son, Urbano, is raised by the mother. Only after Urbano is married and Micaela becomes less dominating does Leoncio establish an open relationship with his son and become an advisor, confidant and teacher to him, as he has longed, but not dared, to be. Don Clemente, "El profesor auxiliar,"¹ is a widower with six daughters. Like Rosendo, he lives a double life, though not to such an extreme. As a father he is a success, adored by his daughters; as a substitute teacher he fails completely, and his students mock him and play practical jokes on him. He does not want the students to know how poor he is nor his daughters to discover how inept a teacher he is. Tigre Juan's pride as a father also leads him to ridiculous actions. He makes a great show out of giving the bottle to his son and changing his diapers in public. Though the people watching make fun of him, he feels secure enough to ignore them.

In spite of the great differences among the proud

¹Ombliqo del mundo, pp. 255-79.

fathers, they share certain qualities: they are foolish and loving, and their family life is kept separate from their activities outside the home. They are also all sympathetic characters, despite their irregularities.

The psychologically abnormal characters that appear so often in the novels of the post-civil war Spanish authors¹ are not innovations; Galdós was very much interested in abnormal personalities, and Ayala portrays many in his novels, too. Generally their deviation tends to be sexual, and Ayala presents them in a humorous light. For instance, a man in Pilares has a compulsion to approach women and embrace and kiss them, although he is harmless; "Nunca se tuvo noticia de que se hubiera propasado a mayores desafueros, sino que, después de satisfacer este platonismo osculatorio, dejaba en libertad a sus víctimas."² Despite his innocence, his appearance is so horrible that he frightens all the women.

Pequeñuelo, casi enano, la cabeza enorme, casi monstruosa. Tenía el pelo sumamente blanco, las cejas sumamente negras y la boca babosa.³

Another deranged figure in this same unfinished novel⁴ is a doctor who has a mania for ciagars.

El mejor obsequio que se le podía brindar era una caja

¹Dobrian, p. 200, "the depraved or demented figures of many of the new generation of novelists."

²Obras completas, I, 879. ³Ibid.

⁴In the recent Obras completas it is presented as a "novela corta," but since it was never completed, it is difficult to say whether it was intended as a short novel or a regular novel. It runs sixty pages in the 1964 Aguilar edition.

de cigarros puros de Cuba, lo cual no significaba que le gustase fumar de lo bueno, antes al contrario, fumaba de lo infimo, y los cigarros de regalo los iba coleccionando. En su casa tenia varias habitaciones cubiertas con anaquelerías y éstas llenas de cajas de cigarros.¹

Ayala gives a fine study of a voyeur in the short story "Clib." The man inhabits an upper room in the casino from which he scans the city with his telescope. Nicknamed El Fresón "a causa de su cabeza minúscula, bermeja y granujienta, cubierta de inflamadas herpes o sarpullidos,"² he is a sick, perverted person. Ayala ridicules and belittles him, but also creates a good deal of compassion for the poor wretch.

Those whose perversion is greater are less compassionately depicted. Iluminada's impotent husband chooses to ignore sex completely; the doctor-priest in A. M. D. G. is a pederast who takes advantage of his position to molest the schoolboys; Vespasiano is a cowardly, effeminate Don Juan; Padre Olano, a viejo verde, fancies himself attractive, but is actually dirty and repugnant. All of these figures are strongly mocked and satirized. Not all of the viejos verdes are harshly drawn; Marco de Setiñano's father-in-law is a comical version, who devotes himself to chasing the local servant girls. The viejo verde, or lecherous old man, is a typical Spanish character, known in literature and reality, too.

The inclusion of so many men with sexual aberrations

¹Obras completas, I, 907.

²El ombligo del mundo, p. 211.

is a sign of Ayala's realistic, faithful reproduction of contemporary types. The strong position of the Church, the large number of priests, the traditional devotion of wives to their children and religious duties rather than to their husbands, the Spanish concept of honor, the long tradition of Don Juan for men to emulate, the acceptance of *machismo*--these are all factors that contribute to the formation of such deviates as Ayala describes. He sees humor in these figures and mixes understanding with derision. In the case of a truly pathologically infirm person like Prometeo, there is no humor, no ridicule. When he attacks a milkmaid and then hangs himself, it is tragic and somber.

The stock hero and heroine as romantic leads in comedy are seldom the focus of interest, nor are they the source of much humor. The ingenue is pretty, innocent, not too intelligent, and rather passive; her male counterpart is noble and handsome but must rely on clever servants or other adroit accomplices to overcome the blocking characters and bring about the happy ending. These same types often appear in novels;¹ Ayala follows the tradition with some interesting alterations and transformations.

Josefina, Angustias and Simona qualify as fairly conventional heroines; they are too saccharine and pure to be believable, sketchily developed and only passively involved

¹Frye, p. 167. "Fictional comedy, especially Dickens, often follows the same practice of grouping its interesting characters around a somewhat dullish pair of technical leads."

in the action of the plot. The males opposite them, however, are only partially within the traditional type. Alberto is the unquestioned protagonist as well as the hero and is very well delineated.¹ His relations with Josefina form only a part of his quest to find himself and give a meaning to existence. He himself is the only real blocking character preventing him from a happy ending. Pedro is not the protagonist of Belarmino y Apolonio, but he does have a greater role than Angustias; he is well developed, narrates part of the story and interprets the two main characters. Urbano is both hero and protagonist and a moving force in the novels. It is mainly due to his growth, actions, efforts and intelligence that he and Simona are reunited. He has the help of clever servants and at first is too ignorant and naive to help himself, but he learns rapidly and matures from a boy to a man in the year covered by the two novels.

Some of the heroines are rounded, forceful personalities, too. Perpetua is clever, active and Marco's equal. Herminia plays an important part in Tigre Juan's character development. The pages of double columns giving a simultaneous account of their activities show how interwoven and interdependent their lives are. In time, "Herminia comes to represent to Juan a constant reminder of man's role as the protector of women and the propagator, through her, of the

¹Nora refers to La pata de la raposa as "más que pintura, pues, análisis de un personaje. Análisis brillantemente ilustrado ... pero llevado en definitiva con tal rigor y encarnizamiento." p. 481.

human race."¹ Sor Resignación is at once heroine and protagonist. It is because she moves from resignation to determination, from spectator to participant that she discovers a more satisfying life.

A common technique with Ayala is to embody opposite traits of human nature in two characters, much like the ideal-real dualism of Quijote and Sancho. Belarmino and Apolonio are the most artistically achieved opposites, and it is their presence that has led critics to call this novel the Quijote of the twentieth century.² In "La araña,"³ a short story published separately in 1913, Pablo and Agustín are members of a tertulia who always have opposite opinions on any subject. Pablo is a mystical idealist and Agustín an atheistic materialist. They tell long involved fables in which they indirectly attack the other's point of view without openly acknowledging the other's existence. A third member, Pedro, is the mediating force, and he establishes a harmonic middle position, reconciling their ideas. Cástulo and Concha have apparently little in common; she is an unschooled, practical country girl, while he is erudite, theoretical, more cosmopolitan. They complement each other and manage a good balance and a blending by helping and teaching each other. Tigre

¹Dobrian, p. 194.

²Barja, p. 465. "Es el Don Quijote de este escritor, acaso de la novela española contemporánea."

³Obras completas, II.

Juan and Vespasiano represent contrasting attitudes toward love and sex. In Las máscaras,¹ Ayala discusses a Greco-Christian concept of love, based on Plato, in which the woman is idealized and idolized. Opposed to this he posits a Judeo-Islamic approach to male-female relations; woman, an inferior being, exists to be used by man. Tigre Juan places his mother, Iluminada, the Virgin and his wife on a Platonic pedestal, but regards the majority of women as deserving of the vengeance of Don Juans and Othellos. An equilibrium is achieved when Juan emerges as a virile, yet gentle, husband, and an equality between the sexes and a single moral standard are established. Harmony and order are essential to Ayala's thought. These dualisms exist together in man, and according to Ayala's relativistic philosophy, man must reconcile them within himself.

In true comic tradition, Ayala uses many stock types; he also presents types, or partial types of his own invention. Although many of these characters can be categorized due to a certain phase of their personalities, they are not all flat figures or merely stock types. Tigre Juan is a proud father, but he is also much more, and the fact that Felicita fits into two categories is evidence that she is not merely a simple, flat character. There are flat, uninteresting figures in Ayala's novels, but they are outnumbered by the ones that are well drawn and possessed of life, those who are carica-

¹Pérez de Ayala, Las máscaras, 4th ed. (Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpa, S. A., 1940), pp. 300-05.

tured in a very humorous fashion, or those who represent their type with fascinating variety.

Ayala's best creations fall into no easy classification. They are not humorous and vividly alive just because of the way they are described nor because of their ludicrous situation, but are inherently comic in thought and deed. The outstanding ones combine a touch of pathos, or a sense of the tragic, with their comicality.

The critics are in general agreement that Tigre Juan is Ayala's most excellent character. Dobrian calls him "one of the most, if not the most, significant and fully developed figures in twentieth-century Spanish fiction."¹ Ayala delineates him in many steps and in many ways. He is first described in a humorous, dehumanized manner:²

En el pescuezo flaco, rugoso, curtido, avellanado y retractil, tan pronto largo de un palmo como enchufado entre las clavículas (al encogerse de hombros suprimía el cuello), estaba espetada, afirmada, la testa con rara energía, mostrando, en una manera de altivez, el rostro cuadrado, obtuso, mongólico, con mejillas de juanete, ojos de gato montés y un mostacho, lustroso y compacto, como de ébano, que pendía buen trecho por entrambas extremidades. Su piel, así por la entonación como por la turgencia (piel jalde, tirante, bruñida), parecía de cobre pulimentado. ... La faz, bárbara e ingenua, de Tigre Juan, guardaba cierta semejanza con la de Atila.³

The style of this description, with its long, complex sen-

¹Dobrian, p. 201.

²Dobrian thinks this dehumanization makes Tigre Juan "stand out more vividly, . . . insisting on his resemblance, in appearance and mannerisms, to a fierce mountain tiger." Ibid., p. 190.

³Tigre Juan, p. 15.

tences and parentheses, its series of adjectives, dependant and independent clauses and many commas, all of which chop the passage up into many short units, gives an effect similar to the vibrancy and luminous quality of pointillism. It is only the surface that reflects light, however, and thus this description is only an exterior one. The dehumanizing terms that depict him as having a tanned leather neck which skewers his head, mountain lion's eyes, ebony moustache and copper skin increase the vividness of the portrait but shed no real light on Juan's interior. The crowning touch is the comparison to the cruel, barbaric warrior Attila, which again stresses Tigre Juan's appearance, not his character, which is quite the opposite. Ayala purposefully introduces his protagonist in his intensely superficial, indelibly graphic style. It is a painting of a bizarre, grotesque, unreal figure. Then, having shaped the exterior surface of the man, Ayala goes successively deeper, illuminating layer by layer more and more of Juan's interior make-up until at last the delineation is as complete and striking as the description, reversing the dehumanization and creating a rounded, complex human personality.

The methods employed to achieve Juan's full development are many and varied. In typical Ayalian fashion the general approach is relativistic, that is, it presents the hero from many points of view. To the children of the neighborhood he is an irresistible ogre, alternately frightening

and rewarding them, revealing not a tiger, but a man "aquejado de ciega nostalgia de paternidad."¹ The town gossips consider him a hermetic individual with a mysterious past; according to rumors he killed his first wife for compromising his honor. In a flash-back the rumor is confirmed, though the wife was innocent and was actually protecting another woman. Since that time Tigre Juan has been obsessed with an exaggerated sense of honor, fully convinced that women, with few exceptions, live to deceive their husbands, who are then justified in killing their wives. Tigre Juan admires Don Juan as a burlador de mujeres, the avenger of wronged husbands, though he fails to see the irony in such admiration.

While Juan is becoming enamored of Herminia, his letters to Colás and his inner monologues reveal the change that love is bringing about in him without his suspecting it. In addition, the author's comments afford considerable knowledge about Tigre Juan's mode of thought and feeling. As shy as a young boy experiencing love for the first time, he is unable to express himself to Herminia, and he is too blind, too naive to realize that she is afraid of him and torn between loving and hating him.

In Tigre Juan's relationships with other characters his evolution and development are vividly revealed. Iluminada knows and understands him and affords him a better comprehen-

¹Ibid., p. 23.

sion of women. Colás, generously adopted and reared by Juan, has several long and revealing discussions with his stepfather that disclose their views on love, honor, Don Juan and morality. Nachín de Nacha, an old friend of Juan's who lives in the country, serves to show his superstition and earthiness. They are together on Saint John's eve, watching the traditional revelry and rituals. He is a foil to Juan, a reminder of the latter's rustic origin, a folk wiseman and a counselor. Vespasiano's role is to reveal to Juan that the truly virile man is Juan, not Don Juan. When Tigre Juan pardons Vespasiano, he has finally arrived at self-mastery.

The personage who emerges finally is a totality; absurd, inconsistent, and stubborn though he has been, he is also warm, honest, and very human. Juan Madrigal Guerrero is a complete man. He is secure in his role as husband and father and able to ignore and pardon the taunts and jests about his wife's indiscretion. This brilliant comic creation provokes laughter and tears in the reader, often simultaneously. Unlike Othello, whom he resembles, he is not tragic, but profoundly tragicomic,¹ though the comic dominates. At the novel's conclusion Juan is at peace with the world:

¡Padre nuestro, que estás en los cielos!
 Hijo mío, que estás en mis brazos!
 Mujer mía, que estás a mi vera,
 y en mi tuétano estás impregnada, y estamos,
 alma y cuerpo, tú y yo, en este hijo de entrambos!

¹Ayala specifically calls the novel a "tragicomedia," Curandero de su honra, p. 220.

¡Don divino de la vida!
 Vivir. Vivir. Arrobo supremo.
 ¡Qué placer el de la vida!
 La vida, ¡qué sufrimiento!
 Gozar... . Penar... . Vivir.¹

Marco de Setiñano of Prometeo is another of Ayala's memorable figures. Like many of the author's characters he is conceived on three levels: mythical, symbolical and human.² It is on the level of myth that he looms largest. Clever, resourceful, large of stature, he is a modern Odysseus. Everything about him is of epic proportions, including his appetite for eating, drinking, knowledge and love. Also on the mythical level, he is a frustrated Prometheus who realizes that his only hope is to engender a son who may be the fire-bringer. Significantly, Marco is thirty-three when the main action commences.

Symbolically he represents the questing spirit. His search is for immortality and for fulfillment in this life. He prepares for his task by study and exercise. His approach to learning is a quest in itself. After preparing himself, Marco undertakes a voyage from Italy, where he was born and has lived, to Spain, his father's country. He is seeking a land where he can find roots, meaning and opportunity.

The human side of this Odysseus is less developed, but it is clearly seen in three instances. When he is washed up naked onto the beach and some girls at play spot him, his

¹Ibid., pp. 213, 215.

²Livingstone, Hispanic Review, pp. 213-14.

behavior and embarrassment are very human. While waiting for his child to be born, he is eager, nervous, concerned for his wife's welfare and fretful about the possibility of the child's being born with deformities. Again, after the son comes, crippled and twisted inside and out, Marco suffers as a normal father would.

He is bigger than life, of heroic and tragic dimensions. The joy and humor that once characterized him leave his life when his ambitions are thwarted. Ayala makes it clear that the large philosophical questions admit of no simple solutions; paternity is no guarantee of immortality, and ambitions do not always bring about fulfillment, especially grandiose ambitions.

The most humorous of Ayala's characters is Cástulo Colera, who combines contrasting traits: timidity and loquacity, naïveté and erudition, modesty and eroticism. At forty-five, his life has been priest-like, celibate and poor. Micaela dominates him as completely as she does her son and husband, and Cástulo is the perfect, pliant tutor she wants for Urbano. A radical, though logical and believable, change is seen in Cástulo when he meets Conchona and experiences his first sensations of love.

That which differentiates him most is his speech, his highly recondite and bombastic language that displays his education. He likes to shock his audience with brazen or advanced ideas or by his frank expression. "Don Cástulo se

sentía terrible, diciendo estas cosas, y consideraba que a su novia le producirían la admiración que el más ambicionaba: la admiración escandalosa."¹ The scandal is for humor and display only. "Urbano y Paolo se reían, oyendo aquellas atrevidas proposiciones, tan incompatibles con la figura, carácter, ideas, y costumbres de don Cástulo."²

This thoroughly likeable pedant is the real comic touchstone of the two novels. As the humorous situation of the first novel, the innocents on a honeymoon, gives way to the trabajos of the second, more and more of the humor is supplied by Cástulo, particularly in his new roles as husband and father. Once married, he expounds on sex as if an expert; when his son is born, he pontificates on paternity. He becomes bold where once bashful, confident where once wavering, but always retains his innate good humor, personal warmth and comic credibility.

No listing of Ayala's best characters would be complete without Belarmino and Apolonio. Of the two Belarmino is the more important and better developed, the obvious sentimental favorite of the author.³ Notwithstanding this preference, the two belong together, like Don Quijote and Sancho

¹Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona, p. 86.

²Ibid., p. 250.

³"No creo sea aventurado decir que en Ayala ha existido más Belarmino que Apolonio. Cuando en nuestras conversaciones se ha pronunciado el nombre del zapatero filósofo, la afectuosa sonrisa de Ayala se ha tornado acariciadora e inefable." Agustín, p. 190.

Panza. They have much in common: they are both cobblers; both lose a prosperous business and have to go to a poorhouse; each relates his cobbler's profession to his avocation; and each is more interested in his avocation than in his work. They undergo similar experiences with divergent results. Each has a moment in which his endeavors are justified. A group of Belarmino's followers and detractors arrange a plan to see if the cobbler's language has meaning to him. They record his voice surreptitiously and play it back as a speech by an imagined philosopher from Koenigsberg.¹ Belarmino understands perfectly and is further convinced that all philosophers speak a common language. The corresponding event for Apolonio is the performance of his play. He wrote it as high tragedy, but it is done as low farce. Apolonio watches unaware of the travesty being made of his play, thinking only that it is a triumph for him, a victory over Belarmino.

The two men have contact with students. Much of Apolonio's jealousy stems from the fact that before he came to Pilares, the students congregated around him, while in Pilares Belarmino is the cynosure, though the students both mock and admire these men. Apolonio is a mild Don Juan, constantly flirting, falling in love and writing love poetry. Belarmino is of a more aescetic nature, almost monk-like in his habits. He is married to a shrew whom he ignores as much

¹It is doubtful that Belarmino knows of Kant, but to have the false philosopher come from Kant's city is a fine ironic touch.

as possible. He is devoted only to his philology-philosophy and his niece, whom he has adopted. If Belarmino is "identified with Socrates (even to the naming of his wife Xuantipa),"¹ then Apolonio must be identified with Lope de Vega. As Belarmino represents a subjective approach to reality, so Apolonio symbolizes an objective approach. The final reconciliation of the two is movingly portrayed, balancing sentiment with humor, symbolic of Ayala's belief in classical harmony. "Es la primera vez que se hablan, y se tratan de tú con espontaneidad, porque en el misterio del pecho eran íntimos el uno del otro, desde hace muchos años."²

Besides these outstanding characters, all main figures, there are myriad minor characters that are marvelously portrayed. The greatest concentration of such characters is in Belarmino y Apolonio, and this abundance constitutes one of the novel's finest attractions. Several of them have already been discussed: Felicita, Novillo, Pedro, Angustias, the duchess of Samovia and Padre Alesán. In addition, there is Collignon, a portly French baker, Belarmino's patron and friend. So frugal is his wife that he must smuggle from his house the food he takes to Belarmino and Apolonio in the poorhouse. His epicurean taste leads him to a strange system of values: "No se debe golpear a las mujeres, ni aun a

¹Livingstone, Hispanic Review, pp. 213-14.

²Belarmino y Apolonio, p. 311.

causa de la comida; mucho menos a causa de otras razones sin importancia; la infidelidad, por ejemplo."¹ Through him Ayala makes gentle sport of the French. El Estudiantón is a poor and perpetual student, having spent twenty years at the university. He becomes interested in Belarmino's language and devotes himself to studying and learning it before dying of hunger. A newly rich couple, Restituto and Basilisa de Neira, seek to improve their social positions by buying titles and trying to associate with the duchess. As Ayala describes them, they would neither hurt nor harm anyone knowingly. Their only concern, besides the social one, is to save their souls. To do this they give to charity, though with great condescension, assured that if the poor see God, "lo verán desde la cazuela, y sin sacarle punta a la función."² And lastly, Belarmino's wife, Xuantipa, should be mentioned. She is shrewish and harsh with Belarmino and unloving to his adopted daughter. Though she has few, if any, redeeming qualities, there are at least circumstances that somewhat justify her wrath. Belarmino is a poor business man, and they are in constant debt. He pays more attention to Angustias than to his wife, in spite of Xuantipa's youth and attractive appearance. She is very formidable when angry: "como una Euménide, penetraba, vestida de huracán y desolación."³

¹Ibid., p. 291.

²Ibid., p. 136.

³Ibid., p. 61.

The central role of characterization in Ayala's fiction is an essential fact.¹ His comic propensities are important in the ways he develops characters and are revealed time after time in the multitudinous comical characters that people his novels. Not all these figures are rounded, many being mere caricatures or rapid sketches, but some of his flat characters are remarkable. Urrutia argues that all of Ayala's characters are puppets: "Sus criaturas de ficción están obligadas a acomodarse a las situaciones y desarrollar su vida novelesca conforme a las exigencias del tema central."² There is some truth in this statement, yet she ignores the logical and consistent development of many of the characters, quite apart from the central theme. The author gives analyses of his people until they become familiar to the reader. Ortega y Gasset understood the importance of such familiarity.

Una narración somera no nos sabe: necesitamos que el autor se detenga y nos haga dar vueltas en torno a los personajes. Entonces nos complacemos al sentirnos impregnados y como saturados de ellos y de su ambiente, al percibirlos como viejos amigos habituales, de quienes sabemos todo, y al presentarse nos revelan toda la riqueza de sus vidas.³

Ayala's best creations are not puppets; endowed with a portion of the author's humanity, touched by his good humor and

¹Donald L. Fabian, "Bases de la novelística de Ramón Pérez de Ayala," Hispania, IVL, 57.

²Urrutia, p. 69.

³José Ortega y Gasset, "Ideas sobre la novela," in Obras completas de José Ortega y Gasset, III (Madrid: 1946), 400, as quoted by Charles Leighton, "The Structure of Belarmino y Apolonio," Bulletin of Hispanic Studies, XXXVII, 243.

engendered lovingly, they assume an existence of their own. Although he chides them, derides some, and attacks a few, making them detestable monsters, his sympathy toward the great majority of his characters is not to be denied. They all have some ridiculous aspect that he exploits for his humorous purposes, but it is not done with contempt or derision. And, ultimately, it is the author's sympathy, not his contempt or derision, that makes his comic characters live.¹

¹White, p. 180.

CHAPTER VI

DARK HUMOR

Freud's theory of the comic, which conceives of humor as a release from restraint,¹ is most appropriate when applied to the dark side of humor. When laughter offers a release from inhibitions, the impulses that men normally repress are freely discharged. This rebellion can be justified easily if the repressions are irksome.² Thus, obscene, cruel and bizarre jokes give both amusement and release to the teller and his audience. The effectiveness of low comedy was known to the world's greatest comic authors; in Aristophanes, Shakespeare, Rabelais, Molière and Cervantes ribaldry and mockery appear with lighter, more innocent humor.

Obscenity and cruelty exist on the low end of both the comic and the moral scale near the line which separates man from animal. One of the things that definitely lifts man above animals is his awareness of his lusts, his body and his physical acts and the shame they cause him.

One of the deepest paradoxes in comedy thus reveals itself in obscenity, which is a threshold over which man enters into the human condition; it is a comic equivalent to the

¹Monro, p. 182.

²Ibid., p. 54.

religious state of original sin or of tragic 'error,' and man may be justly thought human because of his sense of what is 'evil,' 'sinful,' or fearful.¹

If, then, dark humor is shocking, it is also universal; if it offends, it also attracts. Dark humor has come to be a standard part of comic writing, revealing fundamental human attitudes and drives and bringing to the surface much that man normally conceals.

Ayala's humor, in its broad scope, includes a considerable proportion of low comedy. Quantitatively, sexual humor is preéminent, but there is also the comic of scatology and the grotesque as well as humor stemming from the distorted and the bizarre.

Few critics have concerned themselves with the prominence of sex in Ayala's novels and none with its relation to humor. Urrutia considers love to be one of the two most important of Ayala's themes, second only to "el problema de Espana."² She makes it clear that Ayala regards sex as the prime factor in his concept of love. "A Ayala le interesa en sus novelas el amor como fenómeno universal de atracción humana cuya característica principal es la relación erótica entre ambos sexos."³ Agustín also recognizes Ayala as an "autor siempre sensual"⁴ and thinks that in Belarmino y Apolonio the author "eleva el elemento sensual a móvil primero

¹Wylie Sypher, "The Meanings of Comedy," Comedy (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1956), p. 208.

²Urrutia, p. 61.

³Ibid., p. 62.

⁴Agustín, p. 187.

y constante de las vidas individuales."¹ Aside from these two critics, however, Ayalian criticism has largely ignored the sexual content of his novels. Two things stand out: the large quantity of sensual material and the fact that Ayala usually treats this material comically. Ayala gives information about the sexual beliefs, practices or tendencies of practically all his major characters and many of the minor ones. The reader learns that the characters are promiscuous or celibate, informed or ignorant, normal or obsessed, faithful or unfaithful. These sexual traits form an important part of the character's make-up and give insight and understanding concerning his motives and behavior. It is, for example, impossible to fully understand Iluminada's relationship to Carmina without knowing that Iluminada is sexually frustrated; she was forced to marry a man whom she did not love and who was sexually impotent. She wants Carmina to experience what she was denied and can now know only vicariously.

A definite interest in or preoccupation with prostitution is evident in these novels, too. In all of Ayala's novels there is either a prostitute or a scene in a house of prostitution or both. In footnotes and direct comment and through his characters, the author comprehensively presents his viewpoint toward the carnal profession. In addition, obscene jokes and sexually abnormal types occur frequently. Don Juan is of vital interest to Ayala in both his fiction

¹Ibid.

and essays. He even contributed an essay to Gregorio Marañón's study, Ensayos sobre la vida sexual.¹ From his first novel, a sustained orgy, to his last one, a treatment of love and honor, Ayala exploits the humorous potential of sex, fully aware that "sex is a sphere peculiarly rich in comic possibilities precisely because of its sacred nature, its size as a social fact, and the intense personal relationship it involves."²

The primary use Ayala makes of sex is humorous, but sex also has other applications. His essay in Marañón's scientific study evidences a clinical interest in sex, an interest he also pursues in his fiction beneath the surface of the humor. Ayala saw that the Spanish attitude toward sex was anachronistic, part of the general sickness afflicting Spain. Thus he satirizes sex education, the Church's teachings on sex, the priests' role in disseminating those teachings and the effects of enforced celibacy on the clergy. Ayala brings sex, the great unmentionable, to the foreground, examines it, jests about it and makes suggestions for healthier attitudes and practices concerning it. He attacks the Church and its position but also shows that religion and sex are not incompatible. His humor leads him to joke about religion and

¹Urrutia, p. 118.

²W. H. Auden, "Notes on the Comic" in The Comic in Theory and Practice, eds. John J. Enck, Elizabeth T. Porter and Alvin Whitley. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1960), p. 111.

sex together, a doubly taboo and titillating combination. The result at times proves blasphemous¹ or otherwise religiously offensive, but it is strong satire accurately directed against those at fault. The shock value is important to the satirist.

In addition to this social function, sex serves Ayala's realistic techniques. Sex is a fact of life and therefore must be reported. Ayala sees and describes it as a basic and essential aspect of human existence capable of the sublime or the ridiculous, depending on man's views and wishes. Even at his most sublime, sensual man is somewhat humorous; when he is most ridiculous, the humor becomes more risqué, the laughter more raucous and Ayala more mocking.

In spite of the stress on the carnal side of man, Ayala is rarely pornographic. There may be sex for laughter's sake, sex for satire's sake, but not sex for its own sake. There are elements accompanying the sensual passages that prevent the outcome from being pornography. The social significance is one such element; some of the remarks about prostitution are an indictment of the society responsible for it.

A lyrical tone can also soften the eroticism. When Fernando, the circus strongman, seduces Rosina, the whole scene unfolds with a light, humorous touch and with a tender lyricism that leaves an impression not of sensuality, but of

¹Troteras y danzaderas, p. 161.

love blooming, of innocence lost. Ayala provides many details, and the scene could have been presented in a very erotic fashion, but instead it is touching and nostalgic. The wedding night of the circus owner and the fat lady is also described in this same simple, straightforward, lyrical style.

Humor is the key element that combats any trend toward prurience. The irony with which Ayala relates the actions of the prostitutes in Tinieblas en las cumbres gives the author and reader an objective point from which to view the scenes. The lewd behavior of the men and women is comical and is depicted quite realistically, but the irony assures the reader that this action is really the background of the novel, not its main concern. In fact, a constant irony accompanies all the sensual passages in Ayala's fiction; it is as if Ayala were saying that though sex may seem funny or absurd, sublime or tragic, it is really all those things and more.

Because Ayala realizes that pedantry and sensuality are incompatibles, he adopts a pedantic tone in presenting many of the most salacious pages, heightening the humor and lessening the sexuality. It is much funnier than if he used vulgar words.

Este señor Cerdá era una especie de sátiro, producido en las boscosidades de la provincia de Lérida. De terrible ímpetus viriles y nunca saciada sed concupiscente, horrorizaba a las mercenarias mujerzuelas, reclusas en los prostíbulos, con el denonado brío de su formidable masculinidad, y su resistencia casi legendaria, en el

lúbrico ejercicio.¹

Likewise incompatible are the erotic and the ridiculous. At times Ayala stresses the ludicrous side of sex as when he describes the act of love as "los fugitivos instantes de epilepsia que acompañan a la cópula, al acto de engendrar."² Such ridicule would not be found in pornography because it does not tend to arouse sexual desire; instead, the author treats sex with scorn and wit. At times Ayala goes beyond the ridiculous and uses stronger terms that provoke disgust, loathing and pity.

During the years in which Ayala wrote novels, other writers in Spain were writing "novelas eróticas,"³ but in spite of the strong sensual tone in his writing, his novels are not novelas eróticas. While sex is consequential in his novels, it is not their raison d'être. Ayala recognized the popular appeal that the sexual content would have, but he did not pander to the public; rather, he mocks any reader who sees only the erotic side of his fiction.

One detects a definite change in the way Ayala deals with sex from his first novel to the last ones. In Tinieblas en las cumbres sex is a joke, a Rabelaisian game. It is the most sensual and erotic of all Ayala's novels. Sex forms a setting against which the central theme unfolds. In his last

¹Tinieblas en las cumbres, p. 91

²Belarmino y Apolonio, p. 15.

³Nora, pp. 383-86.

four novels Ayala makes sex, in its different forms, the central theme. Love, honor, conjugal happiness, sexual maturity and parenthood are the themes. Sex appears on a deeper level in the characters and in their motives. Cerdá, for example, exists only in relation to sex; he is a sensual man with no spiritual or intellectual development. Tigre Juan is a complete man, and his changing and maturing attitude toward sex is of greater interest and import. Love, a carnal game to Cerdá, is a meaningful, human experience to Tigre Juan.

Perhaps the basest form of humor is scatological. As with sex, excrement and bodily functions are forbidden topics and cause man shame. To joke about them gives a release from the inhibitions this shame causes. Freud believed that pleasure in excrement was infant sexuality.¹ The child's first smutty jokes are scatological and not sexual. Man's attitude toward his bodily waste products is complex, involving modesty, shame, disgust and pleasure.

Scatological humor is a normal constituent of Spanish picaresque novels, entering even into the Quijote. In fiction dealing with schoolboys there is likewise a tradition of this type of humor, thus tending to confirm Freud's theory. So it is not astonishing that almost all the scatological humor in Ayala emerges in Tinieblas en las cumbres, the most picaresque of Ayala's novels, and A. M. D. G., the novel most concerned with schoolboys. In Tinieblas en las cumbres

¹Monro, p. 216.

scatology is treated as sex is, in a playful ironic mood, and generally with an elevated vocabulary.

El perro seter andaba muy atareado en el porche de la iglesuca, examinando muy cerca y con gran interés arqueológico la base de las columnas de gránito y el maltratado zócalo de los muros. Cuando halló lo que buscaba, levantando una pata con gran gentileza hizo sus menesteres y entróse iglesia adentro con retozón desenfado, impropio de un ser amante de la arqueología.¹

Ayala maintains the same mood when only the boys are concerned in A. M. D. G. When the priests enter, the mood changes rapidly. Then Ayala's satirical intents take the foreground as the priests' sadistic natures appear. Two of the boys, Coste and Pajolero, challenge each other to an eating contest. The narrator hints that the outcome may be unfortunate: "El espectro de la indigestión, denominada familiarmente en el colegio triponcio, se cernía en el refectorio."² Padre Mur, the cruelest of the Jesuits, apprehends the two lads after they have consumed some two dozen chicken croquettes. To punish them he has a third boy read them a nauseous description of the diet and diseases of chickens. Mur's disgusting plan misfires, and the innocent third student regurgitates. The priests' involvement in the scatology not only shows their cruelty but also their infantilism.

In the other novels scatological references occur sporadically as realistic details: a baby with diarrhea, a door spattered with dung by irate neighbors. It is as if

¹Tinieblas en las cumbres, p. 240.

²A. M. D. G., p. 158.

Ayala felt that scatological humor has its place in certain novels only, and he did not use it outside those areas sanctioned by traditional use.

A bit of cruelty creeps into Ayala's humor occasionally, chiefly in his comic descriptions.¹ He derides a man afflicted with a goiter: "y haciendo pendular el bocio, como la ubre de una vaca lechera."² Even more cruel is this portrayal of a crippled man: "Landazabal, el deforme, misionero que fué en tierras de América, desviado de la espina en términos que para andar ha de sujetarse las posaderas con entrambas manos."³ The author's laughter at such subjects is not always kind and sympathetic. This is especially true when Ayala is being satiric and mocking the clergy.

Ayala's sense of the bizarre leads to some of his best comic scenes. His ability to juxtapose opposites, the ridiculous and the sublime, produces some memorable occasions. Tigre Juan's wedding day and night are such a mixture. Juan selects his bride's shoes and insists that she wear them, though they are three sizes too small. The pain is so great that she has to lean on his arm to walk, but his proximity almost makes her faint. By the end of the day Herminia's feet are cut and bleeding. Don Gamborena leads a choir of

¹Lamb, p. 129. "Occasionally, Ayala has overstepped his mark in his search for humorous effect. There is a positive delight in poking fun at the disfigured or weakly."

²Luna de miel, luna de hiel, p. 251.

³A. M. D. G., p. 56.

his deaf and dumb students in a poem he composed for the nuptials. The mutes present the poem in sign language, and then he translates it. A band of revelers passes the bridegroom's house to charivari the newlyweds. Juan attacks the group, believing one of them to be the man who seduced his first wife. After spending the night in jail, the hero returns home at dawn; finding his wife asleep, he kisses her bleeding feet.

Other scenes of bizarre humor abound. Novillo's death-bed scene combines pathos and the ludicrous. The initial passage in Troteras y danzaderas introduces the bedraggled, phthisic, Bohemian poet attempting to visit his love in an expensive apartment. To succeed he has to strike a stout portera in her midsection, lose a boot and thus reveal his holey stockings and have his dignity seriously affronted.

The foregoing examples illustrate the fact that Ayala has a deft eye for seeing the absurdity of a serious occasion, for distorting things and people into humorous shapes. As a tragicomedian he consistently mingles opposing emotions. The resultant bizarre humor is an oft recognized aspect of his comic genius.

The grotesque is a separate division of the comic. Critics, authors and the public have given so many meanings to the term that it has become as meaningless as romanticism or the baroque.¹ The word applies to any mixture of the rid-

¹Before the clarifying efforts of such scholars as Wel-
lek and Hatzfeld, who have made the baroque a useful concept.

iculous and sublime, anything seen as horrible, distorted or weird, often whether any humor is present or not.¹ Such divergence robs the word of any value as a literary term. Several scholars have done pioneering work in the grotesque, attempting to define it precisely, to determine just what it can accurately include. One of these scholars, Jennings, has arrived at a tentative definition that at the very least can serve as a basis for further study.

The grotesque has substance, vigor, and depth; a conglomeration of disparate parts is not grotesque unless the resulting creature takes on a life of its own. . . . We may say that the grotesque object always displays a combination of fearsome and ludicrous qualities--or, to be more precise, it simultaneously arouses reactions of fear and amusement in the observer.²

The simultaneous presence of the demon and the clown is, then, the sign of the grotesque, provided that the clown's laughter exorcises the demon, or that the "humor conquers the anxiety and fear."³ It is this conquest that affords the observer the degree of detachment needed, i. e., aesthetic distance.⁴

¹In her article on Ayala's tragedia grotesca, Beck applies the term variously to "un absurdo delicioso" (p. 488), something "monstruosa y bella a la vez" (p. 482), and persons who are both "ridículas y nobles" (p. 483). I have preferred to call this bizarre humor instead. Professor Beck tends to confuse tragicomedy with the grotesque, hence her term tragedia grotesca.

²Lee Byron Jennings, The Ludicrous Demon: Aspects of the Grotesque in German Post-Romantic Prose ("University of California Publications in Modern Philology," Vol. LXXI; Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), p. 10.

³Ibid., p. 15.

⁴Another pioneer work in grotesque studies is Wolfgang Kayser, Das Groteske: Seine Gestaltung in Malerei und Dichtung (Oldenburg; Gerhard Stalling Verlag, 1957). His work

This definition is sufficient to comprise the grotesque of the paintings of Goya and Bosch, Los sueños of Quevedo and much of the current "black humor," too. It relegates much of what has been called grotesque to the weird, bizarre, or distorted.

Examples of the grotesque exist in Ayala, but not in abundance. There is not a great deal of the demonic in him. In some scenes, however, he does conjure up a picture of fear accompanied by his omnipresent humor. In these instances the grotesque often converges with bizarre, sexual or scatological humor.

The bizarre and grotesque mingle in a scene from Belarmino y Apolonio in the duchess' palace. After dinner the duchess calls for amusement in the form of the "salto de la trucha."

Ante mis ojos estupefactos, don Hermenegildo se puso en cuatro patas. Entonces, Pedro Barquín, colono de la duquesa, hombre tosco y de aspecto soez, se colocó detrás del viejo magistrado, e introduciéndole el pie por la entrepierna, lo levantó en vilo y lo lanzó a regular distancia. La bochornosa operación se repitió varias veces con gran goce y algazara de los presentes, incluso el presbítero Chapaprieta. Mi padre era el único que se mantenía impassible, porque despreciaba lo cómico.¹

The exact reason for this humiliating act is never quite

was done concomitantly with and independently of Jennings', and he has a slightly different and less satisfying approach. First, he agrees with Wieland that the grotesque provokes "Gelächter, Ekel und Erstaunen" (p. 31), then concludes that the grotesque is: "Die entfremdete Welt," "ein Spiel mit dem Absurden," and "der Versuch, das Dämonische in der Welt zu bannen und zu beschwören." pp. 198, 202.

¹Belarmino y Apolonio, pp. 119-20.

explained. The object of derision is an old and faithful employee of the duchess. It is disgusting and degrading, mysterious and fearful. The duchess is the last of her line, the end of a noble family. Her decadence, exemplified in this scene, is indicative of the general deterioration of the Spanish nobility.

In Troteras y danzaderas Alberto and some of his acquaintances decide to discourage a girl from becoming a prostitute by showing her a sampling of the houses of prostitution in Madrid. They begin their descent to Hell at the most expensive houses and work down. At the depths, in the cheapest, tawdriest house, the author reveals a grotesque and sexual tableau of a prostitute with the ironic name Opulencia.

Opulencia saltó por encima del cerco que las ropas ponían a sus pies, y se mostró, con inconsciente impudicia, a la admiración de los circunstantes. Veíasele el esqueleto, malamente tapado por la parda pelleja, pegada al hueso. Sus senos eran flácidos por modo increíble, cónicos y negruzcos, como coladores de café. De la conjuntura de los muslos le brotaba una madeja capilar, abundosa y salediza, como el extremo de un rabo de buey. Parecía la creación macabra de uno de aquellos pintores medievales, atosigado por el terror de la muerte y del diablo. Angelón, Grajal y Artaza le prodigaron requiebros sarcásticos que Opulencia admitía con estulta complacencia, y le indujeron a componer actitudes escultóricas, a lo cual ella se prestó dócilmente.¹

Here the grotesque precludes any pornographic tone the passage could have. The scene is almost too perverse, too horrifying, too revolting; only the humor mitigates the grimness and pierces the demonic gloom; only the comic similes make

¹Troteras y danzaderas, p. 309.

it bearable. Ayala makes this house a metaphor for Madrid¹ and, by extension, all of Spain. He sees the same evil, filth and corruption in his country and that Spain, too, has descended to the depths. The innocent country girl for whose benefit the visit was made is later seduced, cured of her desire to be a prostitute, and sent home, where she enters a convent. Perhaps this is Ayala's way of saying that Spain takes innocence, greatness or ambition and corrupts it, offering only the oblivion of the cloister as the reward.

In other cases the demonic is not so predominant. Don Cristóbal, in "Padre e hijo," prepares a banquet in honor of his wife's relatives, but it is a means of wreaking vengeance on them. The menu includes "un guiso de entrañas de res, y luego una novilla, ... la cual fué asada."² The guiso is really strips of old leather soaked "con sinapismos de la botica, hasta que esponjaron,"³ and the novilla is actually a donkey. Before the banquet was over,

los parientes sospecharon que habían sido víctimas de una burla formidable y despiada, y, a juzgar por la expresión de espanto que les asomó al rostro, en un principio creyéronse envenenados. ... Don Cristóbal, que se arrebuja en haldudo capote de monte, sacó de entre los pliegues de la vestidura, y los arrojó sobre la mesa, los cuatro cascos, el rabo y la melancólica cabeza de un borrico. Bramó, sin dejar de reír a carcajadas:

--He ahí las extremidades de la ternera que habéis devorado tal golosamente, antropófagos. Habéis engullido

¹Ibid., p. 307. "A medida que se internaban por aquellos sombríos y fétidos senos de Madrid, menudeaban los grupos de ramerías de ínfima condición, apostadas de trecho en trecho, por socaliñar viandantes."

²Bajo el signo de Artemisa, p. 225. ³Ibid.

a un semejante.¹

Then his servants release a large pack of dogs that run among and over the guests, barking loudly. The scene is full of fright, loud noises, panic, violence, regurgitating sick people and the demonic laughter of the host.

These examples of the grotesque reveal decadence and cruelty within the noble class, a frequent object of Ayala's satire. The dark side of his satire coincides with the grotesque, and the clown laughs directly at the demon. The grotesque heightens the satire, which is strong and black, but the humor again performs its disarming function, rendering the terrible ludicrous.

In summary, whenever Ayala deals with sex, scatology or human abnormalities, he almost always does so with humor rather than with prurience or morbidity. He recognizes the social value of comedy as a means of laughing at and correcting man's vices and of revealing to man the animal in him when it threatens to conquer the human in him.

Dark humor, although an important facet of Ayala's comic muse, is only one of its many facets. Certainly his humorous scope is too broad to characterize as only dark or light, low or high. He was well acquainted with comic traditions and the comic masters and employed a wide variety of kinds of humor.

Comic tradition has included a vein of dark humor

¹Ibid., pp. 225-26.

right from the beginning. The ritualistic and religious origins of comedy centered around the ancient fertility rites, which were Dionysiac or phallic in nature.¹ The carnal side of man ruled his rational side.

Thus it happens that from the earliest time the comic ritual has been presided over by a Lord of Misrule, and the improvisations of comedy have the aspect of a Feast of Unreason, a Revel of Fools--a Sottie. Comedy is a release, a taking off of the masks we have put on to deal with others who have put on decent masks to deal with us.²

Dark humor has continued up to the present time as a basic component of the archetypal pattern of comedy in varying degrees. In Ayala, it is a rich and frequent source of humor.

¹Sypher, pp. 214-20.

²Ibid., p. 221.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The main aspects of Ayala's humor in his fictional prose manifest themselves in the five areas covered by the preceding chapters. The first chapter deals with irony because of its overall importance in Ayala's writing and its preëminence as the chief form of the comic that Ayala employs. His ironic approach to life and art impregnates each of his novels and short stories, affecting their form and content through the ironies of plot and character and the ironic tone of the narrators. Irony allows Ayala a detached involvement in his tale and in his characters and is an integral part of his tragicomic concept of life as well as his intellectual approach to literature. There are changes and development in the ways in which he utilizes irony during the twenty-five years of his novelistic career, but it is present in all his novels, lending a depth achieved through the ambiguity and dissimulation that are inherent constituents of irony.

As irony is the main form of the comic in Ayala, so his use of and concern for language constitute the chief way in which he expresses his humor. That which stands out here is the humor created by the words rather than the humor they

express. Being a poet as well as a novelist, Ayala was a master in the use of language and had a profound awareness of the word as comic potential. He also saw language in its vast scope as a highly developed though imperfect means of communication, as an outlet for artistic expression and as a mystifying part of man's existence. This poet-novelist availed himself of the richness of words and languages to enhance his fiction and give it a comic core in the personal idiom he created. This idiom is marked by a mixture of elegance and humor, a large vocabulary, irony, play on words and languages, and mock pedantry. As Ayala translates his own concern for language into that of his characters, he achieves a great deal of originality and much of his best humor. This finds its highest expression in Belarmino y Apolonio and especially in the character Belarmino. The cobbler-philosopher searches for a perfect union of word and idea, molding the form to coincide succinctly and perfectly with the content so that thought and expression are one. It is typical of Ayala that he treats this serious idea with all his best humor, enriching the theme with warmth, understanding and mirth and revealing himself as admirer, mocker, experimenter and master of language.

Ayala is not primarily a satirist, but satire leaves its imprint on almost all his fiction. With occasional exception, his is not a trenchant, devastating satire, for he is too much the humanitarian, too forgiving not to mitigate the cut of the satirical whip with compassion and forgiveness.

His satirical vision reveals the author's amor amargo for Spain, a Spain he hopes to improve. If satire sometimes leads him from character to caricature, such distortion and exaggeration serve an artistic function, too, as perennial and essential phases of the satiric art.

The blend of tradition and originality in Ayala appears most clearly in his characters. He utilized many comic types, some borrowed from stage comedy,¹ whose long tradition he knew. In addition to these traditional types, he created original and distinctive characters. Of these, Tigre Juan is the best developed, a credible, major comic creation. The humor surrounding Ayala's characters is essential to their delineation. Although he may mock a trait of theirs, it is a sympathetic mockery and only occasionally harsh. Ayala is fully aware of the comic side of man's nature, but he also sees the tragedy inherent in man. Thus most of his characters are conceived in tragicomic terms, albeit the comic usually prevails. Comic characters can more easily be symbolic, fantastic or metaphoric than their realistic or naturalistic counterparts and in so being may fail to achieve full delineation. This is true of many of Ayala's people who do not

¹"Dramatic comedy, from which fictional comedy is mainly descended. . . ." Frye, p. 163. Dickens borrowed heavily from dramatic comedy, and Ayala knew the English author's novels well and admired them, as evidenced in Principios y finales de la novela. Beck points out several of the features of drama that are found in Ayala's novels. Perhaps future study, even a dissertation, might be based on the dramatic elements in Ayala and his great concern for drama, expressed in such books as Las máscaras and various essays.

quite come to life but who, nevertheless, are unfailingly humorous and share Ayala's own humanity and vitality.

Ayala also treats humorously topics that dwell in a dark zone, either forbidden or not quite reputable. A considerable body of sexual humor exists in his novels, but it is not pornographic. It is tinged with a certain Rabelaisian gusto, but handled with restraint and good taste. Scatological humor receives briefer treatment and again is not offensive, but rather serves to shock or awaken. More characteristic elements of Ayala's dark humor are the bizarre, weird, absurd and distorted areas of life that he views comically and that offer excellent contrast to the lighter and warmer side of his humor. The grotesque is present, too, on a limited scale, catching the demon and buffoon poised against each other. This dark humor is a subvein in Ayala--a prominent subvein that surfaces and submerges throughout.

Up to this point the words humor and comic have been used interchangeably signifying that which is ludicrous and mirth-provoking, comedy in the broadest sense. They also have divergent meanings which are now relevant. As a subdivision of comedy, the comic is on the low end of the scale. For example, a man slipping on a banana peel is comic; it arouses laughter, but only in the mind, and is entirely unemotional. Humor, however, is the ultimate form of comedy, appealing to the whole man, heart and mind, and can be both grave and gay. Humor restores to man that dignity of which the merely comic deprives him. In this sense, the comic

exists to a small extent in Ayala, but it is humor that prevails. Ayala himself recognized a difference between the two: "Lo cómico es siempre chabacano y despreciable. Lo humorístico es un modo poético."¹ It is as a humorist, more than as a novelist, that Ayala succeeds. Like all true humor, his "seems to point to a consonance of the comic and tragic, by which the great and small incongruities of life are somehow reconciled in a cosmic unity."² The universal tolerance of his humor and its tenderness that is tempered by his constant and profound reflexion join with his unique style and storytelling gift to make him one of the two or three best Spanish humorous novelists of the past two centuries.

The exact relationship between humor and spiritual disorientation in Pérez de Ayala's novels provides material for further investigation, with special emphasis on the development of the spiritual disorientation theme. From his first novels to his later ones there is a movement from the anguish of spiritual disorientation to a serenity that owes much to his humorous view of life. Having found a harmony and security and a wider human understanding, he has no further need of the self-mocking tone of the first four novels, but humor remains as a vibrant, important factor in all his works.

¹Belarmino y Apolonio, p. 163.

²Swabey, p. 102.

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