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MYTHS AND LITERARY FIGURES IN

THE PROSE FICTION OF RAMON PEREZ DE AYALA

by

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Thesis submitted for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

The thesis describes Pérez de Ayala's use of myths and literary figures, enquires into their effect on the structure of his novels and short stories and traces the development of this transcendental side of Ayala from his early pantheism to his later qualified optimism. Chapter I shows the close connection between myth and literature and outlines the attraction of myth for the creative writer. The second chapter shows how Ayala's view of life and concept of the novel led him to turn to myth to express his ideas. The thesis then examines chronologically all Ayala's fiction. Throughout there is found a single mythical hero whose progress through the three traditional stages of departure, initiation and rebirth is attended by traditional motifs. In Ayala's very early fiction this hero lives in complete harmony with the next world, but after 1905 his quest is a failure because he cannot reconcile his dream of order with his experience of disorder and brutality. In the period after 1915 the heroes become more successful, although few become 'pure' heroes and for most success is partial and pragmatic. These three periods show different uses of the mythical, literary and real levels. In the first, they exist harmoniously, but in the second the juxtaposition is often ironical and grotesque. In the third there is a conscious, although sometimes unsuccessful, attempt to reconcile the levels, often through the inclusion of literary figures which influence the structure of some of his work. The inclusion of these two extra levels gives Ayala's work a 'mythical quality' which challenges traditional ideas of characterisation, authorship, space and time in the novel. The thesis ends by suggesting possible influences on Ayala and reviewing the concept of the mythical novel during the first thirty years of the century.

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The works of Pérez de Ayala are referred to in the following edition:

Ramón Pérez de Ayala: Obras Completas, prólogo de José García Mercadal, 4 vols., Aguilar, Madrid, 1964-9.

There are, however, the following exceptions:

Tinieblas en las cumbres, edición, introducción y notas de Andrés Amorós, Castalia, Madrid, 1971.

A.M.D.G., Obras Completas de Ramón Pérez de Ayala, IV, Pueyo, Madrid, 1931.

La pata de la raposa, edición, prólogo y notas de Andrés Amorós, Labor, Madrid, 1970.

Troteras y danzaderas, edición, introducción y notas de Andrés Amorós, Castalia, Madrid, 1972.

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Amistades y recuerdos, edición recogida y ordenada por J. García Mercadal, Aedos, Barcelona, 1961.

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Fábulas y ciudades, Destino, Barcelona, 1961.

Nuestro Séneca, recopilación de José García Mercadal, E. D. H. A. S. A., Barcelona, 1966.

El país del futuro; mis viajes a los Estados Unidos, 1913-1914, 1919-1920, edición recogida y ordenada por J. García Mercadal, Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid, 1959.

Pequeños ensayos, edición recogida y ordenada por J. García Mercadal, Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid, 1963.

Principios y finales de la novela, Taurus, Madrid, 1958.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Myths and literature

The purpose of this thesis is to describe and account for Ayala's use of myths and literary figures. It enquires into the effect upon the technique and structure of the novel of the incorporation of mythical themes, assuming that both will be radically altered. The thesis is not, however, limited to registering such literary effects, but will examine Ayala's critical theories to establish his reasons for using myths and will try to evaluate the success of this mythical technique in terms of the problems which the novel faced at the beginning of the century. It will suggest that behind the many mythical elements and literary references there lies a constant factor, the myth of the hero, which is a key to the meaning of many of Ayala's fictional works. The first step must be to present those theories on the relationship between myths and literature which are assumed in this thesis and to suggest ways in which myths would alter the form of the novel.

In its narrowest sense, myth means a narrative about superhuman figures, set at an unspecified time in the past and dealing with some hypothetical event of great importance to man.¹ Although there are many

1. J. Ferrater Mora, Diccionario de filosofía, II, Buenos Aires, 1969, p. 210: 'Se llama 'mito' a un relato de algo fabuloso que se supone acontecido en un pasado remoto y casi siempre impreciso. Los mitos pueden referirse a grandes hechos heroicos... que con frecuencia son considerados como el fundamento y el comienzo de la historia de una comunidad o del género humano en general'.

definitions of the term,² it is generally accepted that myths mean more than they seem to and are connected in some way with basic emotions and issues. Traditionally they have been of interest to anthropologists, psychologists and linguists whilst the literary critic, less interested in what they mean than in what they have been made to mean, has looked on them as sources of imagery and structural principles of literary form without regard to origin. One of the aims of this thesis will be to see how far Ayala is prepared to invest myths with his own symbolism and how far he is concerned with returning to their original sense.

As the etymology of the term suggests (Greek $\mu\upsilon\theta\acute{o}\varsigma$ = word), myths, like literature, are verbal creations. Indeed, language has been seen as the first cause of myth: 'Mythe est le nom de tout ce qui n'existe et ne subsiste qu'ayant la parole pour cause'.³ The theories of Max Müller, with which Ayala was familiar, offer an explanation of this. He sees myths as the remains of a primitive, and thus natural, language where each word reflected attributes of the object, 'told its own story' and was a poetic creation.⁴ Language was not, in the mythopoeic stage, a set of conventional signs, but it was ambiguous and unwieldy since words referred to the attributes of objects rather than to the objects themselves. The explanations needed to clarify simple statements which had thus become incomprehensible are the basis of myths as we know

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2. M. C. Peñuelas, Mito, Literatura y Realidad, Gredos, Madrid, 1965, pp. 13-15.
 3. P. Valéry, 'Petite lettre sur les mythes', Variété, II, Gallimard, Paris, 1930, p. 249.
 4. F. Max Müller, 'Comparative Mythology', Selected Essays on Language, Mythology, and Religion, I, London, 1881, pp. 356-7.

them.⁵ Müller concludes that 'the origin of mythological phraseology, whatever outward aspects it may assume, is always the same; it is language forgetting herself'.⁶ Literature is always potentially mythical because it uses language in the same hypothetical way when it creates objects by naming them and organizes reality into meaningful patterns by drawing on a fund of 'significant' objects. In the broadest sense of the term, literature becomes mythical when it departs from the description of observable reality. A writer like Ayala, who consciously stylizes his work by drawing attention to such images of reality rather than reality itself, invites a mythical approach.

The study of myths in literature tends to concentrate on identifying and analyzing certain recurrent themes and motifs. Attempts have been made to explain the eternal appeal of some of these themes by reducing them to an archetypal pattern, which we have in common with all men of past generations. The pattern which Maud Bodkin, for example, proposes as the structural principle behind all tragedy is a kind of initiation rite consisting in self-sacrifice and the merging of the 'ego' with a greater power, or 'Dyonisian union with a larger whole'.⁷ This thesis will try to show that a similar pattern of initiation through suffering runs through most of Ayala's novels. Many of his references to myths are concerned with this process

5. F. Max Müller, 'On the Philosophy of Mythology', Selected Essays..., I, p. 590: 'Mythology is inevitable, it is natural, it is an inherent necessity of language, if we recognise in language the outward form and manifestation of thought: it is, in fact, the dark shadow which language throws on thought, and which can never disappear till language becomes altogether commensurate with thought, which it never will'.

6. F. Max Müller, 'Greek Legends', Selected Essays..., I, pp. 471-2.

7. M. Bodkin, Archetypal Patterns in Poetry, OUP, 1948, p. 22.

of death and rebirth. His heroes are renewed, as he says in his 1942 prologue to Troteras y danzaderas, in a sequence of events which leads from darkness to light and surrender of the self. This thesis will be concerned with showing that Ayala's heroes are versions of the mythical hero by identifying the typical motifs of transformation.

Juan Villegas uses this method when he traces the myth of the hero, as outlined in Joseph Campbell's The Hero with a Thousand Faces, through several modern Spanish novels. The first step in Villegas's structuralist approach is to relate the myth to the novel in which it appears: 'El método mítico... tendría como función... revelar esa estructura mítica y su función en la unidad de la obra literaria'.⁸ The second step is to use the myths as evidence of the writer's world-view: 'Para nosotros la perspectiva adecuada ha de ser indagar en los mitemas como portadores del modo de estar en el mundo del hombre moderno'.⁹ The myth of the hero is basically concerned with initiation, or passage from one state to another and, as it is adapted in Ayala's novels and several of his short stories, will be outlined briefly here. The hero's career traditionally begins with a call to action addressed to a superior personality. In modern situations however the hero is often an ordinary, even mediocre person at a critical period, often a crisis of identity. He may see that his life is unsatisfactory and decide upon a complete break. This initial rejection may imply criticism of the society which has caused the unstable situation. The typical motifs of this stage are connected with change from one state to another : the

8. J. Villegas, La estructura mítica del héroe en la novela del siglo XX, Barcelona, 1973, pp.40-41.

9. J. Villegas, La estructura..., p.75

journey, exile, the crossing of a threshold and contact with a character who awakens in the hero an awareness of the inauthentic situation.

In the next stage the hero undertakes a journey into unknown regions in a search for knowledge or personal transformation, undergoing many trials which test his courage and ability. This stage, known as the descent into the underworld, is peopled by strange beings, both helpful and unhelpful and culminates in atonement with the father-figure and a knowledge of the spiritual world which will make the hero immortal. The image of the sun is frequently used for the immortal hero. The stage is known as the 'jornada del día y de la noche' and ^{is} full of images of descent, often to Hell or a labyrinth, and of darkness. In modern literature this period may appear as a time of soul-searching and introversion. The demons encountered on the way may represent forces in society. It is a time when reality disintegrates.

Traditionally, the hero having achieved atonement with the father and acquired superior knowledge through a vision of the next world, the third stage is concerned with the return to this world. The hero has understood the essential harmony of all things and is in a position to initiate others into such mysteries. In the modern novel this often proves difficult and the return is a failure, sometimes the fault of the hero himself and sometimes the fault of society.

The basic pattern is cyclic and composed of three stages. Campbell points out that the original use of the symbols was 'to conduct people across those difficult thresholds of transformation that demand a change in the

patterns not only of conscious but also of unconscious life'.¹⁰ In the 1942 prologue to Troteras y danzaderas Pérez de Ayala describes the framework for his poetry and the corresponding series of novels as a kind of initiation.¹¹ At the beginning the world appears 'como formas pasivas, tácitas y sedientas de la fecunda caricia, que desde el origen de la creación estaban en espera de nuestro advenimiento individual'. The hero, considering himself indispensable and unique thinks that the world is waiting 'para que... les insuflásemos [a las formas pasivas] nuestra alma y verbo, sin lo cual ellas por sí no dicen nada'. The hero's mission will be to create the world anew and to make it intelligible. In the critical central section, or 'período de las nubes' the hero's view dissolves and 'hallamos que se desmaterializan, que se nos huyen si intentamos asirlas [las formas] y retenerlas, que van cambiando y confundiéndose, sin cesar y evasivamente, de forma, colorido, densidad'. At this time the hero is totally alone, an orphan in the world. It is a nightmare sequence where nothing is real, and corresponds to the mythical descent into Hell. The third period begins with the gradual understanding that behind the 'formas' lie the 'normas eternas' or forces which govern life. The hero will eventually learn that 'el hombre no puede incluir dentro de su norma al universo, sino que debe incluirse y coordinarse, por las normas eternas, dentro del universo, desde el pasado hacia el destino, de lo más próximo hasta lo más remoto, en ámbitos de más universal perímetro cada vez'. The process consists in gaining greater understanding so that he can be integrated, not into society, but into life. In the three stages of this plan there are references to the

10. J. Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces, second edition, New York, 1968, p.10

11. Ayala, prologue to Troteras y danzaderas, Buenos Aires, 1942, pp.16-17.

typical mythical imagery. The process from darkness to light echoes the original myth where the sun is an analogy of the hero's journey. The hero is as usual a solitary figure. Ayala likens the return to the real world to the myth of 'los trabajos y los días'. In theory at least, there is a case for looking in Ayala's novels for the three stages (separation, initiation and incorporation) of these initiation rites.

The thesis will also be concerned with a second source of mythical references in Greek legends, which figure predominantly in some of Ayala's short stories. These myths are more literary than the myth of the hero, having already been adapted countless times, more personal, and concerned with particular figures. Unlike the vast scheme of the transformation of the hero, they are miniatures and all recreations will deal with a strictly limited body of images. They may also imply a specific view of reality. In a study of the literary use of classical myths, Luis Díez del Corral explains this view of reality in which myths blur the distinction between the spiritual and physical worlds by making the divine human and the human divine.¹² This half-way-stage is the realm of art. Myths are aesthetic objects, with statuesque qualities. Ayala compares them to the colourless shapes of paper figures.¹³ They represent a total harmony between this world and the

12. L. Díez del Corral, La función del mito clásico en la literatura contemporánea, Madrid, 1957, p. 36.

13. Ayala, 'Las pajaritas de papel de los dioses', Más Divagaciones Literarias, Obras Completas, IV, p. 1239 : 'El universo de las figuras de papel es incoloro e ingravido, como los arquetipos originales de las cosas antes de la creación, o como las sombras inanimadas del ultramundo'.

next, which is perhaps why they appeal to Ayala.

As Highet says, such stories are often used for their form, which is invariably strong and simple, needing no descriptive detail for support.¹⁴ This strong shape, which can never be altered substantially, is attractive to writers who feel the need for an externally suggested form. It presents a plot-structure at a glance and contributes to a feeling of necessity in the work. The characters who appear in myths are also clear-cut figures whose actions are predictable and related to a model. Such characters can never be lost under the weight of social influences and their identity is never in question. This is a quality which appeals to writers dealing with characters who are not completely formed and or whose identity is in question, hovering between authentic and inauthentic existence. Mythical characters have simple passions and constantly repeat the same actions. In two respects, however, they are ambiguous. A character may only be identified vaguely with a myth and as a result will become mysterious.¹⁵ The vagueness of myths is a feature of the symbolist movement and traces of it are to be found in some of Ayala's early stories. Myths are also ambiguous because they can be treated in two quite different ways. Traditionally they have been used to ennoble and dignify. This is the naive approach which sees in them eternal truths. They exist in the platonic world of ideas. On the other hand they

14. G. Highet, The Classical Tradition, OUP, 1949, p.532: 'First, they are in search of themes which can be treated with strong simplicity - themes which have enough authority to stand up without masses of realistic or 'impressionist' detail to make them convincing'.

15. G. Highet, The Classical..., p.517: 'Their methods (the Symbolists') tend to disguise and transform all the material that passes through their minds, until nothing is left but a hint, a nuance, a grotesque, a parodic reminiscence, a phrase repeated in a dream, a poignant echo'.

can be treated ironically and grotesquely to draw parallels with modern life. This degradation of myth thrives on repeating the physical details of myths in modern situations. Basically, the first view emphasises the continuity of certain themes whilst the second plays upon change and degeneration. This thesis will be concerned with estimating the amount of displacement which takes place and with showing that the degradation of mythical themes decreases in the second half of Ayala's career.

References to literary figures can be seen within the context of displacement and are common in the later novels of Ayala where they fulfil many of the same functions as the earlier evocations of myths. They are larger than life characters, to some extent existing independently of the works in which they first appeared and yet firmly linked to a particular plot-structure and set of ideas. In addition, they invite the reader to consider the work in which they reappear in relation to other works of literature and sometimes send him right back to the origins of the genre. In this way they provide an answer to a problem which is well formulated by Frye: 'If literature is didactic, it tends to injure its own integrity; if it ceases wholly to be didactic it tends to injure its own seriousness'.¹⁶ The problem, to find a way of welding together narrative and theme, may be solved by allegory, by irony or in the following way: 'A third context to which the theme of a literary work may be attached is its context in literature itself, or what we may call its archetypal framework'.¹⁷ Literature seen in this light appears as a

16.H.Northrop Frye, 'Myth and Symbol', Myth and Symbol : Critical Approaches and Applications, edited by Bernice Slote, Midwest Modern Language Association, Lincoln, 1963, p.14.

17.H.Northrop Frye, 'Myth and Symbol', p.14.

coherent whole, a complete vision of the world on which successive writers may draw. To be original means to refer to the origins of a theme. The critic will have to stand back from the individual work and see it as the last in a long tradition. As Frye says: 'Poetry can only be made out of other poems; novels out of other novels'.¹⁸ The result is that recurring images can only be understood by continual reference to origins, which, in Frye's theory, lie in myths. His conclusion is that myths are the purest form of literature, being independent of external reality, the most stylized and that 'in literary criticism myth means ultimately mythos, a structural organizing principle of literary form'.¹⁹ This thesis will examine the inevitable tension which exists between this inherited pattern and the elements which Ayala invents.

Myths then are clearly not just stories about demons and gods. Literature which embodies some of the qualities of myths without making direct reference to stories about demons and gods may also be mythical. Perhaps 'myth' could better be understood as a way of treating a subject than as a subject itself. The idea of the 'mythical quality' of some literature is outlined by C.S. Lewis in An Experiment in Criticism. In the first place myths are extra-literary because they do not depend for their effect on the way the story is told, but on their central idea which can be seen at a glance.²⁰ A myth is not seen as a linear narrative but as a static object: 'The stories I am thinking of always have a very simple narrative shape -

18. H. Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, third printing, Princeton, 1973, p. 97.

19. H. Northrop Frye, Anatomy..., p. 341.

20. C.S. Lewis, An Experiment in Criticism, CUP, 1961, pp. 43-44.

a satisfactory and inevitable shape, like a good vase or a tulip'. The creative writer will be able to consider this shape from different points of view, a useful method especially when the myth represents or is identified with ideas. It will be difficult to identify with the characters because they move in a world which is not ours, being exempt from natural laws, but relevant to it. The reader will identify with mankind in general, an idea which will be seen to be essential in Ayala's own theories. Lewis concludes that mythical literature will be 'fantastic' and 'awe-inspiring'. That it will not be realistic is fairly clear but whether it will be awe-inspiring and devoid of comedy is debatable in the case of Ayala, as the usual contrast between comedy and tragedy hardly applies. Myth is wide enough to include both as it presents a world seen from a great distance and as Northrop Frye would say, precedes the division into comedy and tragedy. Myths are also often treated in a burlesque way, which again reduces their potential awe-inspiring nature which is based on a naive interpretation.

E. M. Forster distinguishes two classes of novels according to these two possible treatments of mythology: 'They are alike in having gods, and unlike in the gods they have. There is in both the sense of mythology which differentiates them from other aspects of our subject'.²² One of the devices to be found in the first type, or fantasy, is parody and adaptation which 'have enormous advantages to certain novelists, particularly to those who may have a great deal to say and abundant literary genius, but who do not see the world in terms of individual men and women'.²³

21. C.S. Lewis, An Experiment..., p.42

22. E.M.Forster, Aspects of the Novel, third impression, Arnold, London, 1927, p.143.

23. E.M.Forster, Aspects..., p.157.

Prophecy also uses mythology, but to offer a comprehensive view of the whole universe where characters, although remaining themselves, reach back to some general concept.²⁴ Here, humour is absent and myths are full of meaning; they recreate an ideal world. This thesis will try to show that Ayala's novels are both 'fantasy' and 'prophecy', that Ayala is continually balancing the two tendencies and playing one off against the other.

The novel has traditionally been the most unmythical of genres, perhaps more often concerned with destroying myths than creating or recreating them. Its very name suggests that it is about some unprecedented event. Harry Levin puts it well: 'The novelist must feel a peculiar tension between the words, conventions, and ideas that the masters of his craft have handed on to him and the facts, impressions, and experiences that life continues to offer'.²⁵ The consciously generic novel is typical of writers like Ayala who believe that there is nothing new in life, and that the novelist's task is to grasp essential truths. In doing so he will alter the nature of the genre.

The relationship of the author and his work will be changed in a number of ways. He will no longer be an observer, but a privileged seer, able to recreate eternal themes. The reader will sometimes be inferior to him and yet sometimes, through prior acquaintance with the myth, become his accomplice. The mythical level of such novels will betray the author's constant presence: he is the creator of a view of the whole world. Yet the author's ability to invent is strictly limited by the myth he uses, which has its own framework. In the case of recreations of previous literary

24. E.M. Forster, Aspects..., p.161.

25. H. Levin, The Gates of Horn, OUP, 1966, p.53.

works by whatever methods, authorship is shared with the original writer.

In any novel which deals with myths the role of the individual will be diminished, and he will only be seen in relation to the myth, which he can represent, fail to represent, think about or dream about. His actions will not always be accounted for by psychological explanations. The reader will be invited to make comparisons between the modern character and the model with the result that the former may often appear inauthentic. The situation becomes more complicated in Ayala's later novels when characters are aware of their own literary precedents.

Space, the objects which fill it, and time will also be changed. Down-to-earth reality is used as a contrast, and has little importance by itself. Some objects, those traditionally connected with the myth, will assume far greater importance than they otherwise would. Often a myth will be used for its images which provide a grotesque contrast with reality. The traditional linear time-sequence of the novel will be altered because, once the myth has been seen, the end is implied in the beginning. As a result, there is little room for chance or even development for myth is based on endless repetition. Change can only occur abruptly, through a character deviating from the myth. Indeed, there is little room for cause and effect because all actions occur in relation to the myth. Generally the flow of time will be dictated by some external rhythm such as the passing of the seasons or days of the week, which of their nature are continually repeated. In the most mythical novels this repetition is ritualistic.

1.2 The critics and Ayala's use of myth

Most of the critics have mentioned that Ayala uses myths and literary figures. Although there has been little disagreement or controversy among them, each one emphasises a different aspect, probably because each has only touched on the theme incidentally whilst pursuing his own line of enquiry. It is understandable that although some have pointed out the need to see why and how Ayala uses myths, none has offered a comprehensive survey and one has even regarded the attempt as futile.²⁶ The findings of those who have studied the theme fall into three broad categories : myths as a way of perceiving the world, the adaptation or displacement of myths, and the literary effects of the mythical level.

Francisco Agustín is the first to show the importance of myths in Ayala: 'Las literaturas inglesa, francesa e italiana le han dado sus más delicadas, envidiables cualidades. La mitología y los clásicos griegos y latinos, la emoción directa de la naturaleza'.²⁷ Certainly nature plays an important role in the early novels and short stories where the hero, by identifying with nature, becomes aware of a sense of harmony in the universe. Only through nature can he overcome the restrictions of the present and appreciate the underlying rhythm of the world around him. Agustín may, however, mean a wider definition where nature amounts to common sense in the way in which Ayala understands it in one of his essays : 'El sentido común, en última instancia, es la oculta, permanente e inviolable voluntad de

26. G. G. Brown, A literary History of Spain: The Twentieth Century, London, 1972, p. 43: 'but comparing the works does nothing to illuminate any obscure meaning in Ayala's version'.

27. F. Agustín, Ramón Pérez de Ayala (su vida y obras), Madrid, 1927, p. 24.

la naturaleza, a la cual hemos de obedecer, so pena de caer rídiculamente o de perecer miserablemente'.²⁸ Amorós's comments on the connection between mythology and nature are very helpful: 'De esta idea (naturaleza sintética, ideal y representativa) y no de eruditos neoclasicismos surge la pasión de Pérez de Ayala por la mitología'.²⁹ In this way, mythology is seen as more real than observable reality and more in tune with a universal harmony.

Many critics, more interested in the ideas behind the myths than in the way Ayala used them, have suggested that they represent Ayala's view of the world. For María Salgués de Cargill, the study of myths is a way of discovering what Ayala thought about a variety of topics. As a result, she concentrates on the relationship between myths and the 'problem of Spain': 'Pérez de Ayala hace uso del mito para expresar su ideología y así tratar de resolver el enigma de España'.³⁰ This approach is limited to registering a few instances of degradations of myths, and does not explain how they alter the whole structure of Ayala's novels. It also fails to account for all the other myths which Ayala uses and for the fact that the Spanish myths invariably come from the distant past. Only in the case of the isolated and sensitive hero does he approach a '98' theme. Cargill tries to explain the distance between the myths and Spanish problems by saying that Ayala 'disfraza un tanto su españolismo y hace uso del mito clásico y moderno que

28. Ayala, 'Lo olvidado: El 'arte poética' de Horacio', Obras Completas II, p. 465.

29. A. Amorós, La novela intelectual de Ramón Pérez de Ayala, Madrid, 1972, p. 44

30. M. Salgués de Cargill, Los mitos clásicos y modernos en la novela de Pérez de Ayala, Jaén, 1971, p. 7.

siempre gira en torno a España, eje de la obra de Ayala, pulpo gigante que tiene todos sus tentáculos aferrados a las páginas de sus libros'.³¹ But the problem still remains unresolved: do the myths point directly to social problems or do they soften all social criticism? Other critics are divided on this point. Some of Ayala's novels, notably Prometeo, do relate the myths to modern questions and Esperanza Rodríguez Monescillo is therefore partly justified in saying that in it Ayala uses the myth 'para representar el problema de España'.³² In contrast, K. E. Shaw, regards myths as a counterweight to balance Ayala's preoccupation with the Spanish problem and achieve some kind of universal application. Myths will contrast with modern reality and neither illustrate nor explain it. He interprets Ayala's interest in the classics as escapism and nostalgia for a more harmonious world-view.³³ If this is the case, myths are not of central importance. Their importance is also diminished by one of Cargill's own conclusions on myths as one way of acquiring knowledge of the universe: 'Una de las perspectivas, a través de la que podemos interpretar su mundo, nos la brinda por medio de la recreación de mitos'.³⁴ Myths are, in her view, only one of many mutually conflicting views rather than a harmonious resolution of conflicts.

Set against this there is the more harmonious view of myths as a

31. M. Salgués de Cargill, Los mitos..., p.104.
32. E. Rodríguez Monescillo, 'El mundo helénico de Ramón Pérez de Ayala', Actas del II congreso español de estudios clásicos, Madrid, 1964, p.512.
33. K. E. Shaw, A Critical Study of the Novels of Ramón Pérez de Ayala in relation to Twentieth Century Trends in Fiction, M. A. thesis, University of Manchester, 1954, p.157.
34. M. Salgués de Cargill, Los mitos..., p.110.

means of grasping the true nature of reality. Myths point in two directions at once: 'Lo mítico nos reenvía a lo actual, pero también al símbolo general de la humanidad'.³⁵ Myths are full of physical details which can be adapted to the present. They also demonstrate, as Amorós suggests, the unchangeability of the world, that nature repeats itself endlessly and that everything is always the same. This approach, often used by Amorós,³⁶ shows the present as an accumulation of past experiences. As a result, Ayala's novels are seen as hovering between two levels: 'Es un recurso frecuente en Pérez de Ayala lo que podríamos llamar 'paso de lo particular a lo general'. Responde... a una convicción bien establecida: todo se repite; el acontecimiento es una manifestación de un principio general que, a lo largo de la historia, ha tenido otras muchas'.³⁷ The past is the key to the present. Unfortunately the only explanation that Amorós offers is that Ayala 'se complace en la repetición',³⁸ and that 'todo esto responde al esencial clasicismo de Pérez de Ayala'.³⁹

As many myths are related to classicism, often only existing in classical versions, Ayala's use of myths has often been taken as evidence of a classical world-view. He is seen as regarding the world as a harmonious and complete whole where all phenomena are justified and reflect eternal principles. M. B. McCall suggests that Ayala's classicism is a desire to reflect this completeness in the novel.⁴⁰ Yet the inclusion

35. A. Amorós, La novela..., p. 260.

36. A. Amorós, La novela..., p. 66.

37. A. Amorós, La novela..., p. 91

38. A. Amorós, La novela..., p. 240.

39. A. Amorós, La novela..., p. 338

40. M. B. McCall, An Analysis of Ramón Pérez de Ayala's Novels as a Plea for Freedom, Ph. D. thesis, Bryn Mawr, 1959, p. 28.

of references to myths in a novel, although perhaps evoking an antique atmosphere on occasions, does not necessarily lead to a sense of unity and may often create a sense of disunity. The modern version, by its emphasis on physical detail, may appear incongruous, degraded and totally divorced from universal harmony, especially if the myths come from a number of different sources. The many levels may be antagonistic and the writer may use them ironically. Amorós, for example, finds three levels at work in Prometeo: 'el mítico, el realista degradante, y el generalizador simbólico'.⁴¹ The mythical level is not, here, an ideal, but an intermediary between the other two. As will be shown, the myths tend to accumulate round chaotic and unstable situations, often in opposing pairs. It is therefore easy but dangerous to regard myths as an ideal to which characters should aspire. E.R. Johnson, for example, misinterprets Prometeo by assuming that the distance between Marco and the real Odysseus automatically condemns the former.⁴² In fact, the myth is used in several contrasting ways in Prometeo.

Julio Matas is right to point out that literary roles are often abandoned at the end of Ayala's novels 'tal como sucede con los temas y asuntos, el original se altera en la medida en que su conducta se aparta del plan normativo de estas novelas'. Tigre Juan is modelled on don Gutierre, Othello and don Víctor de Quintana 'pero sólo en la medida en que supera la crueldad vengativa del primero, la condición celosa del segundo y la cobardía social del tercero'.⁴³ But even Matas refers to mythical characters

41. A. Amorós, La novela..., p.241.

42. E.R. Johnson, 'The Humanities and the Prometeo of Ramón Pérez de Ayala', Hispania, XXXVIII, 1955, pp. 276-81.

43. J. Matas, Contra el honor (Las novelas normativas de Ramón Pérez de Ayala), Madrid, 1974, p.179.

as if they were an ideal, stating that their 'dimensión arquetípica' illustrates the 'comportamiento normativo' which Ayala announces as the aim of his later novels.⁴⁴ This over-simplification, in which the mythical world is considered good and the physical world bad, does not account for Ayala's practice. The models often come in contrasting pairs of opposites representing extremes of behaviour and whose final reconciliation is pragmatic. The world of myths is not necessarily a better world nor do the literary figures always serve to point 'claramente a la armonía, a la restauración de lo vital positivo'.⁴⁵ On the contrary, the vital aspect of many of the novels consists in the characters' rejection of the myths so as to develop as people. This last stage of the development of character in Ayala is, as Matas says, harmony. Yet harmony is a concession;

¿Totalidad? Sueño imposible. Harmonía. Apuntad a ese hito.⁴⁶

The reason why the question of harmony has caused misunderstanding is that none of the critics has tried to account for all the myths in Ayala. Classicism may imply harmony between this world and the next; references to classical myths do not necessarily establish it.

Critics have noted that Ayala's method of creating characters pointing to universal themes is analogous to the creation of myths. Both Bancroft⁴⁷

44. J. Matas, Contra..., p.178.

45. J. Matas, Contra..., p. 181.

46. Ayala, 'Filosofía', El sendero andante, Obras Completas, II, p. 208.

47. R. L. Bancroft, Ramón Pérez de Ayala : A Critical Study of his Works, Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1957, p.128 : 'In him (Belarmino) Ayala creates a virtually mythological figure'.

and Cargill⁴⁸ have suggested that Ayala tries to create new myths with similar qualities to the old. The process is thus a double one: individuals are raised in stature and myths are simultaneously debased, the rise of the lower ones being balanced by the fall of the higher ones. For Matas this corresponds to the rise of fortunes in comedy and to their fall in tragedy.⁴⁹ The two simultaneous movements will be the more dramatic the greater the original distance between the two levels. Generally speaking the distance decreases over the period 1915-1925. The movement downwards, or displacement, has been noted by most of the critics, especially in the case of Prometeo, which is the most obvious example. Displacement tends to show the glaring differences between the original and the modern version. R. L. Bancroft, for example, shows how Ayala uses the different levels for irony.⁵⁰ Many of the best examples of myths used solely for this purpose will be seen in the early novels. As Amorós says of Prometeo, characters will appear as 'malos actores de teatro que aprovechan la ocasión para repetir una escena que - en otra obra - les proporcionó un gran éxito'.⁵¹ As a result, they will be held in incongruous attitudes, and the action will be delayed momentarily, achieving some of the effects of the esperpento. But this is only one literary device, and not a common one; displacement may be tragic. Ayala's use of myths is essential to the

48. M. Salgués de Cargill, Los mitos..., p.27.

49. J. Matas, Contra..., p.50: 'A una curva trágica (o descendente) sucede, en sus novelas, una curva cómica (o ascendente), en el sentido de restauración del orden normal o natural cuya culminación es la armonía 'universal' reflejada por la individual de los personajes principales'.

50. R.L.Bancroft, A Critical Study..., p.228: 'What is most individual in Ayala's work is the ironical humour... The play between fantasy and reality, in which the adaptation of myths has so large a role, is the highest form of this humour'.

51. A. Amorós, La novela..., p.240.

delicate balance between tragedy and comedy.

J. L. Hartsook, in an article on Luz de domingo, says that the myth gives form and artistic distance when both are needed to 'allay the unconscious guilts and anxieties that may be stirred in the reader and detract from his aesthetic enjoyment'.⁵² It could be argued that the real aim is to make any moral judgements inappropriate so that the reader will not be forced to sympathize with the two victims of the attack. Although Hartsook's explanation cannot hold good for all the myths in Ayala, it is useful for showing that myths make a narrative sound invented rather than observed. The distance created between the reader and the events will tend to reduce the distance between the reader and the author. They will share a superior knowledge about the characters and the work as only they can grasp the system of parallels set up by the author. This becomes much more complicated when, as in the later novels, the characters themselves are aware of their literary precedents.

For Baquero Goyanes, too, myths create an ironical distance, with the author more concerned with general meaning: he argues that the device of presenting novelistic facts as such shows that the author is unconcerned with social or ideological purposes. The mythical technique is used, he suggests, to present a dual perspective on the characters which in turn will give form and meaning to the work.⁵³ When the characters are aware of the myth they too will see reality from different points of view. This idea is examined by Amorós, who regards it as a structural element

52. J.H.Hartsook, 'Literary Tradition as Form in Pérez de Ayala', Romance Notes, vi, 1964, p. 22.

53. M. Baquero Goyanes, Perspectivismo y contraste, Madrid, 1963. pp. 204-205.

reminiscent of the theatre scene in La regenta.⁵⁴ The idea is that when reading characters lose themselves, live different lives and become more tolerant. This clearly has nothing to do with irony.

Not all the critics have approved of Ayala's use of myths: Mangold, Dobrian and Fabian, in unpublished theses, have each accused him of pedantry: 'Ayala's culture, as it appears in his books, is only an ornament, an attitude, a manner; it is nothing of transcendence in itself'.⁵⁵ Dobrian makes similar remarks about Tinieblas en las cumbres:

One often notices etymological, literary, historical and philosophical allusions and references which, though in most cases are generally attuned to the character or situation presented, reflect more than anything else the desire of a self-conscious author to impress his reader with his erudition and, perhaps, to offset the bawdy nature of his novel. Yiddy's rambling and prolix speech, six full pages...., runs over with trite pedantry and insignificant detail of this sort. 56

These two statements are an instinctive and understandable reaction but fail to examine Ayala's motives. Two of the important features of Tinieblas en las cumbres are that its language is intentionally inappropriate to the subject and that myths are not used in the same way in other novels. One might also wonder whether trite pedantry can impress.

Dobrian's criticism highlights a problem: Yiddy's speech is essential to the novel; if that goes then the whole novel falls apart. If Ayala is to be treated seriously then he must be accepted as he is, myths included.

Mangold criticizes Ayala for dealing in symbols which have no basis in reality, claiming that 'he can not convert the expanded symbol back into reality'.⁵⁷ He supports this argument by saying that in the Tigre Juan

54. A. Amorós, La novela..., p.338.

55. F.R. Mangold, Ramón Pérez de Ayala : A Critical Study through his Prose Works, Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1934, p.26.

56. W.A. Dobrian, The Novelistic Art of Ramón Pérez de Ayala, Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1960, pp.48-49.

57. F.R. Mangold, A Critical Study..., p.12.

novels there is no don Juan, failing to realize that don Juan only exists in the imagination of the characters as an idea for them to talk about. Finally, D. L. Fabian makes a criticism of the Urbano novels which is applicable to much of Ayala's work: that he mixes myths from many sources, overpowering the original Daphnis and Chloe theme.⁵⁸ The bewildering cross-currents which this causes are perhaps one reason why the novel has not been as well-received as the others. If one of the qualities of myths is to clarify any use of them which does not must be suspect.

58. D.L. Fabian, A Critical Analysis of the Novels of Ramón Pérez de Ayala, Ph.D. thesis, University of Chicago, 1960, p. 154 : 'As has been noted, Ayala has made a contemporary adaptation of the simple pagan myth of Daphnis and Chloe, adding to it elements of the modern mythology of Freud and a large dose of sociology to produce a ragout which contains little of the charm of the old story and fails to achieve the quality of a novel about real people in a real world'.

1.3 Conclusions

In this chapter the connection between myths, defined in the broadest way possible, and literature was first discussed and leads to the following conclusions:

1. that myths, like literature, are generated by language;
2. that myth criticism involves identifying certain recurrent themes, such as the initiation of the mythical hero and its attendant motifs, and relating them to the work in which they occur;
3. that mythical figures are both universal and particular and belong both to the physical and spiritual worlds;
4. that pre-existent literary figures have qualities which are analogous to those of the original myths and may project a 'mythical' or 'fantastic' quality onto a work;
5. that myth ultimately means a structural principle of literary form and that the most mythical works will return to such forms.

As a result, the presence of myths and literary figures will transform the novel in which they appear and can be used in many ways:

1. they may be used to draw unflattering parallels with modern life or, paradoxically, to ennoble it;
2. they may clarify characters whose true personality is ill-defined, in the process of formation, or who represent ideas;
3. they are a way of welding together narrative and meaning;
4. they may represent the imagination of a character without using his own language;

5. although they may represent intrusions by the narrator, they may sometimes reduce the role of the creative imagination;
6. they affect all aspects of the structure and technique of the novel.

The state of criticism on the mythical tendency in Ayala is confused because most critics have made only incidental comments on the subject. Although there is no clear pattern, the following issues have emerged :

What connection do myths have with the description of nature? Are the myths used for social criticism or to balance it? Are myths merely one point of view in a diverse world, a half-way-stage between this world and the next or a state of ideal harmony to which man must aspire? Do they ennoble or degrade, and what connection do they have with tragedy and comedy in Ayala? Does the distance between the real and the mythical levels lead to irony or a serene and detached tolerance? Or are the mythical and literary references mere pedantry? To these questions may be added the following: Can Ayala's mythical technique be described in such a way as to account for all his writing, or must each reference be treated separately? What myths does he use, and do they have any common factor? Is there any development in his use of myths and literary figures, and if there is, does it have any connection with Ayala's ideas? Are myths referred to in Ayala's ideas about the novel? Do Ayala's statements in 1942 refer to all the novels or only to the Alberto series? Do the theoretical effects of myth on the novel as outlined in I.1 apply to Ayala? Finally, does Ayala's mythical technique owe anything to other writers, and was there a concept of the mythical novel at the time Ayala was writing?

In order to answer these questions a chronological method must be

used. After a chapter outlining the importance of myth in Ayala's theory of the novel each novel will be taken separately. The thesis ends with an appendix which relates Ayala to other writers of his time.

CHAPTER II

MYTHS IN PEREZ DE AYALA'S THEORY
OF THE NOVEL

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2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to show the central importance of myths in Ayala's theory of the novel. The difficulties are considerable because he never gathered his ideas together in an explicit theory and thought it a waste of time to define the novel:

¿Quién hay que no sepa lo que debe ser la novela, según la experiencia de sus lecturas y predilecciones? A cada paso me entero de nuevas definiciones de la novela, que cuando menos acreditan un beato convencimiento de estar en posesión de la verdad. ¹

The implication is that there is no ideal form for the novel. This attitude is seen in Ayala's comments on the 'novela-nivola' question: 'Novela o nivola, ¿qué importa? Lo que importa es si se es o no se es, porque todo lo que es, es como es'. ² Yet it must not be supposed that Ayala was not concerned with the formal problems of the novel or that he did not write about the importance of myths. His work, both critical and creative, is littered with observations on the form of the novel although they are never elaborated in a coherent theory.

A second apparent difficulty is the fact that he said very little about his own novels. This chapter will therefore try to deduce Ayala's theories from what he said about other novelists and from his theories on art in general. His criticism implies that literature aspires to myth and that literary figures offer partial solutions to some of the formal problems of the novel. Ayala tends to admire those novels which exhibit archetypal and mythical features,

1. Ayala, prologue to Troteras y danzaderas, Buenos Aires, 1942, p. 6.
2. Ayala, Divagaciones literarias, Obras Completas, IV, p. 914.

which do not copy external reality very closely, which are self-contained, and in which form is subordinate to content. The three sections of this chapter deal in turn with Ayala's views on the novel as he found it, with his idea of what the novel should do and finally with the way in which myths are an integral part of his concept of the novel.

2.2. Ayala on other novelists

It is clear that Ayala rejects, with some reservations, two of the most important traditional forms of the novel : the psychological novel and naturalism. Yet the novel is still, for Ayala, one of the two art forms capable of conducting a psychological analysis : 'El psicologismo es materia estética a propósito para la novela y el cinematógrafo'.³ But Ayala does not consider that literary characters can ever be unique, unrepeatable individuals and so refuses to present them as if they had been taken directly from observed reality or pretend that they actually existed. The task of the novel is not to imitate life but to try to understand it:

Para alcanzar este conocimiento tendríamos siempre que recurrir a los ejemplares extremos de potencialidad de una raza, un pueblo, un carácter, una psicología; a las normas; así como el conocimiento de la belleza plástica helénica lo percibimos en los cánones de la estatuaria.⁴

It is clear from this that for Ayala 'norma' does not mean an ideal to be achieved, but a basic underlying principle of human activity. Psychological analysis, for Ayala, will entail the dramatization of these principles and not a delving into a character's subconscious. This conception of the psychological

3. Ayala, Las máscaras, Obras Completas, III, p. 432.

4. Ayala, Más divagaciones literarias, Obras Completas, IV, pp. 1178-9 (La Prensa, 19/12/1922).

novel is unusual as the novel has traditionally been concerned with creating new characters in new situations.

Ayala's criticism of the traditional psychological novel is also concerned with technique:

En efecto, en las novelas que recaen demasadamente hacia la tendencia psicológica, los análisis de motivaciones y las distilaciones quintaesenciales de sensaciones y sentimientos, por parte del novelista, tienen siempre algo de imposibilidad e inversimilitud, de la parte del lector, y muy rara vez consiguen fundirse y consubstanciarse en auténtico flujo vital, con la descripción del ambiente, la narración de los hechos y el choque externo, realista, del diálogo, pues en toda novela el diálogo debe ajustarse con el momento en que coloca la acción el novelista, y es lo que ata, como con una ancla, la superactualidad de una obra literaria a la actualidad huidiza de la vida; y esta impresión de artificio e inversimilitud entre el ver las almas en su diafanidad interior, al tiempo que se contemplan los cuerpos en sus acciones externas, la recibe no sólo el lector bisoño, sino también el lector ducho y experimentado. 5

The fault with such novels is that they are written from two incompatible points of view. Characters will not be allowed to reveal themselves, but will be constantly explained by comments from an implied author who, logically, can know little about them. His 'voice' will sound like that of an academic psychologist and conceal the 'auténtico flujo vital' of the characters. The problem seems to be to present characters directly, without undue interference, and yet at the same time invest the novel with meaning, which implies the presence, in some form, of a narrator.

If characters are to reveal themselves, they must presumably do so by talking or writing. Ayala favours neither method. Although not artificial, the epistolary novel, according to Ayala, 'podrá ser tal vez aburrido y agobiador para el que lee'.⁶ The interior monologue is also

5. Ayala, Principios y finales de la novela, p. 23.

6. Ayala, Principios..., p. 25.

condemned by Ayala for its chaos. Writing in 1904, he sees the future of the novel as a development towards the chaos of subjectivism: 'Evolucionar, del objetivismo impersonal de los naturalistas al egoísmo psicológico e incoherente de la vida, ampliamente y humanamente considerados'.⁷

But to be completely convincing there must be complete identity between the author, or implied author, and the character doing the talking because 'ese análisis no es verosímil, ni siquiera posible, sino en un único caso (y ello suponiendo que sea hacedero siquiera en tal caso único); y este caso es el análisis psicológico sobre el propio yo del novelista mismo'.⁸

The only character that a novelist can write a psychological novel about is himself.

Ayala's principal objection to the psychological novel is that it gives too much importance to the identity of the individual. His position is that the 'yo' and the outside world should be balanced classically:

Los clásicos no son exclusivamente objetivos, ni la subjetividad está mutilada, sofocada o anulada en ellos; nada de eso. Antes bien, lo que determina ese raro complejo e integridad máxima de un autor o una obra clásicos no es la total supresión del yo, sino la clara conciencia de la limitación insuperable del yo, y un exquisito equilibrio entre los datos de la realidad externa y las imágenes con que el espíritu individual creador la va interpretando, a la par que se manifiesta él mismo.⁹

The psychological novel is a 'callejon sin salida' because it has no way of balancing subjective states, which are not in themselves important, with some external and impersonal perspective.

Ayala considers that the psychological novel and naturalism, probably

7. Ayala, La caverna de Platón, Obras Completas, I, p.1203.

8. Ayala, Principios..., pp. 33 - 4.

9. Ayala, Principios..., p.29.

because of the different interest in the individual, are opposites. He accepts that the balance between internal and external reality had to be redressed after the Romantics' preoccupation with the self but feels that the realists are superficial and fail to 'adivinar el ritmo interno ni oprimir la carne del mundo. Son objetivos en demasía'.¹⁰ One of the problems in Ayala's novel-writing is how to present this internal rhythm. Naturalism reduces the role of the author to that of a passive observer. For Ayala, the obligation for the novelist to prove that the reality described in the novel is scientifically true is inartistic and a misconception of the nature of reality. For Ayala, reality in the novel is invented and must be presented as such:

Nunca se entendió por realidad artística la realidad observable por todos, común a todos e impersonal, sino todo lo contrario, la realidad refractada en la persona de un artista. La realidad artística es inseparable de la persona del artista. Sin un artista no es posible que exista realidad artística. En cambio, el naturalismo quiso trocar la 'personalidad' artística por el 'temperamento', que es un concepto fisiológico, material, nada incorpóreo'.¹¹

The role of the writer, for Ayala, is not to observe life, but to live it fully and transmit its essential features. Ayala would also consider that the creative writer is more than a temperament, a uniquely privileged being.

A further criticism of the naturalists concerns the difficulty of description in language, which is a linear form, of physical reality which exists in space. He considers that description distorts the language:

La sintaxis francesa moderna, debido a la preocupación dominante, desde los románticos, de infundir en el idioma valores pictóricos y sensuales - lo cual exige una atomización y disolución del lenguaje, puesto que las sensaciones pictóricas son en el espacio

10. Ayala, Las máscaras, p. 28 (Europa 6/3/1910).

11. Ayala, Las máscaras, p. 611.

simultáneas y las sensaciones literarias son en el tiempo sucesivas, incoativas; por lo tanto, para convertir las sensaciones de tiempo en sensaciones de espacio es fuerza suprimir el período, la sucesión, la sintaxis, y dar a cada vocablo valor autónomo, independiente, como de presencia colateral al modo de las pinceladas de un lienzo, y no en la relación de antes y después, que es la relación intelectual y lógica -, digo que la sintaxis moderna ha caído en un extremo de raquitismo y anquilosamiento sin igual en ningún otro idioma. 12

One of the claims of this thesis is that Ayala tries to elaborate a language suitable for description by using myths, which, while containing plastic qualities, exist outside space and time. We may say that Ayala rejects realism for its misconceptions about the nature of reality and for its incompatibility with the task of novel-writing.

The thesis novel is also rejected because it presents an inaccurate picture of reality by looking at it from a single point of view and presenting some characters more favourably than others.¹³ Once the didactic purpose of thesis novels is accomplished, they fall automatically into obsolescence.¹⁴ Morality is to be taught differently, through the reader's identification with each of the characters in turn, a task which the thesis novel is unable to fulfil.

Ayala's rejection of the thesis novel is important for the light it sheds on his view of the creation of individual characters in the novel. Any literary form which presents individuals will have difficulty in treating universal themes:

La tesis de una obra dramática no coincide nunca con una regla universal. Si el caso concreto que estudia el dramaturgo cae dentro de una regla universal, claro es que ya no hay tesis. La

12. Ayala, Más divagaciones..., p.1176 (La Prensa 19/12/1922).

13. Ayala, Las máscaras, p.28 (Europa 6/3/1910).

14. Ayala, Más divagaciones..., p.1124 (La Pluma Feb. 1922).

tesis dramática jamás podía consistir en el caso general, sino en la excepción. 15

Yet it is clear from his prologue to Troteras y danzaderas that he is concerned with presenting the normal, not the abnormal. This concern with normality seems to be contrary to the nature of the novel, and demands a special technique. Although he acknowledges that his later novels are, in a sense, thesis novels, they are not the traditional form of the thesis novel because they do not rely on documented and recognizable reality to make their points, and are unconcerned with 'exceptions'. The difficulty which Ayala faced was how to present 'norms' without relying on ideas or recognizable individual characters. This thesis will try to show that Ayala uses mythical and literary figures for this purpose.

Ayala's comments on three novelists, Valera, Galdós and Valle-Inclán are all concerned with the use and abuse of such archetypes. His strong criticism of Valera is due to the fact that generic characters can make normal ones look ridiculously small. Valera is the humanist who 'no quiere ver en cada hombre sino la razón genérica y, por consiguiente, nos instruye de cómo el santo, el sabio, el artista y el héroe son hombres de carne y hueso, con el propio mecanismo interior de un hombre común y corriente'.¹⁶ Although many critics would argue that Ayala tends to do the same, this criticism indicates that whereas Valera would reduce types to ordinary status, Ayala would in theory try to see the archetype in each character and thus raise his status. Indeed, this is one of the qualities which he admires in Galdós, whom he describes as 'el humano' :

15. Ayala, Las máscaras, p.141.

16. Ayala, Divagaciones..., p. 868 (Europa 1925).

En cambio, don Benito Pérez Galdós, el humano, se pone en contacto cordial con la razón individual, o sea la razón de la sinrazón en cada hombre íntimo . . . y a este fin excava en la aridez del hombre común y corriente hasta sacar a luz un granito o simiente de santidad en el más pecador, de sapiencia en el más necio. 17

Later on in the same passage, which was written in 1925, Ayala admits that he has not yet chosen between the two methods, which would again suggest that in the later novels there is a perpetual tension between generic characters represented by myths and literary figures, and individuals. Ayala admires Galdós because he is able to understand the personal motives of characters and at the same time set them in a universal context. As Galdós can present sympathetically the interests of the individual and the more general interest of humanity, his work is 'fundamentalmente humano' and therefore 'fundamentalmente serio'.¹⁸ Ayala sees Valle-Inclán as a writer who also presents reality in such a way that it reflects universal forces :

Veo, en la entraña de toda la obra de Valle-Inclán, un dramatismo remoto y sagrado, una sensación titánica y fiera de la lucha inacabable entre el Bien y el Mal absolutos; pero no entendidos en cuanto conceptos metafísicos, sino (al modo de la humanidad mítica e infantil, de espíritu original y sentidos cándidos) en cuanto entidades vivas, omnipresentes, trágicas, que así se manifiestan en una intuición de los sentidos, en un color, una línea, un olor, una imitación de la epidermis, como en una intuición del alma, que, aunque instantánea, se dilata en un ámbito desmesurada, semejante a la emoción de lo infinito, lo absoluto y de lo eterno. 19

This thesis will show that Ayala's early writing shows some of these characteristics and will discuss the difficulties of the presentation of such timeless reality in the novel, which is basically linear. Ayala admires Valle-Inclán for his ability to evoke past ages, and considers this a sign of his originality :

El autor es tanto más original - y no hay paradoja - cuanto más remota son las resonancias que en él se concentran; como si

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17. Ayala, Divagaciones . . . , p. 868.
18. Ayala, Las máscaras . . . , p. 40 (España 9/12/1915).
19. Ayala, Divagaciones . . . , p. 982.

dijéramos que sus raíces beben la sustancia de las tradiciones literarias primordiales. 20

Originality, in the sense in which Ayala uses the word, means returning to origins. In Ayala's attempt to balance the two aspects of reality he tends to concentrate the resonances upon a few mythical figures and his early short stories often present nature ⁱⁿ (this mythical way. Ayala admires Valle-Inclán for these timeless plastic details, ²¹ and concludes that by rejecting psychological investigation he has refused to write modern novels. ²² The same is true of Ayala.

It is interesting that Ayala most admires those writers whose work includes mythical features or themes which lend themselves to mythical treatment. He is not interested by the development of the psychological novel and accords little importance to the individual character. He is more interested in those writers who present a coherent view of the whole world and in the novel as an instrument to that end. In order to appreciate the vital role which myths play in his novels it is necessary to give a short account of his general ideas about the novel.

2.3. The nature of the novel

For Ayala, the creation of a novel is analogous to the creation of the world. Many of his novels deal with the genesis of aspects of human conduct

20. Ayala, Las máscaras, p.161 (La Pluma, 32, Jan 1923) .

21. Ayala, Divagaciones..., pp. 982-3: 'Tanto da percibir los siglos en la sensación de un instante como percibir en un instante la presencia dilatada de los siglos, la inimitabilidad imaginativa de la sensación presente; es de ambas maneras un paladeo de eternidad. La segunda manera es la propia del goce estético' .

22. Ayala, Las máscaras, p.163 (La Pluma, 32, Jan 1923) .

and tend to return to the origins of these aspects by evoking the myths connected with them. Through their ability to repeat the original act of creation, the novel (and the drama) will correspond to the whole of life:

'Novela y drama son las dos únicas formas de arte que se corresponden con la vida, tomada esta en toda su integridad'.²³ Ayala's novels will not be limited to any single aspect of life but will be integral novels in which the whole of experience can be epitomized.

If this is to be achieved, the novelist must look upon his creation in much the same way as God looks upon his, justifying everything and fitting it into a universal harmony : 'Si la novela y el drama son las artes que más tienen de creación, el novelista y dramaturgo serán los que más se asemejen al Creador'.²⁴ The novelist must therefore be imbued with the 'liberal spirit', the corner-stone of much of Ayala's thought and, according to him, the way in which God looks on his creatures. Ayala explains the implications for art:

Es decir, que toda obra de arte nos inculca, de un lado, un sentimiento general e indefinido de liberalidad, de aptitud para la comprensión amplia de todas las cosas en conjunto; y de otro lado, nos concentra la atención sobre el problema determinado de como cierta fatalidad, hostil a las demás criaturas en torno de ella, últimamente desemboca en el curso caudaloso y ecuánime de la armonía universal. 25

The novel will show that discord is an illusion. In order to do this the novelist must be able to show reality from two apparently incompatible points of view.

The first involves the 'dramatic spirit', where the conflict will be felt 'de una manera genéricamente humana, en cuya expresión vayan implícitas

23. Ayala, Las máscaras, p. 51.

24. Ayala, Las máscaras, p. 54.

25. Ayala, Las máscaras, p. 59.

todas las maneras individuales de sentir la misma pasión'.²⁶ Indeed, one of his conditions for taking characters seriously is to be able to see behind them the archetypes which govern their lives and establish their identity. As he says in the Libro de Ruth, 'en la novela el personaje más individualizado se halla necesariamente incluido en un módulo genérico y universal'.²⁷ The second perspective, or 'lyrical spirit' will present the individual with sympathy and understanding, eschewing all moral judgements and allowing the reader to identify with a character. The aim of the novel will be to reconcile the two points of view, showing that they are not really opposites. Clearly there are great problems in trying to present an individual's view of the world and show it to be in harmony with some more objective scheme. There must be some element in the novel which is common to the individual and to the 'sub specie aeterni' perspective. Myths, and especially the myth of the hero, by symbolizing eternal conflicts without ceasing to be products of the individual imagination, provide some kind of bridge. As a result the work of art will be able to clarify the reader's view of the world:

El mérito de la obra de arte estriba en su capacidad de recibir con antelación al devolver. La turbiedad de nuestros sentimientos se filtra en su recinto, y cuando vuelve a nosotros lo hace trocado en una lluvia bien repartida y fecunda. Le damos lo vago y amorfo, por ser lo más íntimo, y nos devuelve lo rítmico y neto.²⁸

The purpose of art will be to bring order to the universe. The implications of this must now be considered.

The individual character who is a 'prisionero de sí propio; un pequeño cosmos sellado, inaccesible para los demás',²⁹ and cannot therefore be

26. Ayala, Las máscaras, p. 37 (España 9/12/1915).

27. Ayala, El libro de Ruth, p. 9.

28. Ayala, Las máscaras, p. 397 (Europa 27/3/1910).

29. Ayala, Más divagaciones..., p. 1189 (La Prensa 4/3/1923).

revealed entirely, is important only insofar as he exhibits the life that is common to all mankind. As Ayala says : 'El hombre solo puede ser tomado en serio en aquella zona de ^Isuper que se relaciona con los demás hombres, o en donde se engendran normas aplicables a los demás hombres'.³⁰ The difficulty here is that if this approach were followed in the novel there would be no possibility of distinguishing one character from another. Indeed, it seems that Ayala was going against the very nature of the novel with his concept of the individual. At this deeper level where, as Ayala says, 'no hay caracteres, sino que el alma humana es el mismo tipo reproducido en serie innumerable',³¹ personal attributes and characteristics are irrelevant. It will be seen that in many cases Ayala's characters are only distinguished by superficial details. Indeed, in the mythical hero Ayala finds a character who has no personal characteristics: the hero is life. The aim of much of Ayala's mythical imagery is to emphasize those qualities of his characters which bring them nearer to the source of life in God:

Observamos que, en la creación, cada ser y cada cosa, tomados individualmente, obedece a una fatalidad que le ha sido impuesta; cada ser y cada cosa no es sino la manera aparente de obrar de un principio elemental, cuya última raíz se alimenta de la sustancia misteriosa del Creador. 32

Characters will become more individual the further they move from the source of life.

Yet the novel is a genre which is usually associated with such particular characters, events and objects, and with their description. For Ayala description is superficial. Literature is expected to present life, but cannot describe it. He looks back to the Iliad where the beauty of Helen of Troy is

30. Ayala, Las máscaras, p.35 (España 9/12/1915).

31. Ayala, Las máscaras, p.641 (España 20/4/1916).

32. Ayala, Las máscaras, pp.52-3.

never described, but only seen through its effect on others, through action.³³

The problem is that the novel, as a time-medium, cannot convey any idea of presence. Any description will necessarily be an enumeration; objects which exist simultaneously will therefore be presented over a period of time. Yet Ayala's vision of a harmonious universe is essentially a timeless and static one. One of the qualities of myths is to hold back the passage of time: actions are repeated as if they were happening for the first time and the reader is concerned less with what will happen than with what always happens. Each action by a mythical character looks like a ritual formula epitomizing all similar actions, and re-enacting the original, or mythical event. Reality, for Ayala, is not in the observable present:

La realidad no es lo que pasa y cómo pasa, sino la génesis presente de lo que pasa, la suma de factores individuales de cómo pasa, y de los cuales el cómo pasa es el pretexto para que ellos se muestren, para que tengamos una vislumbre del misterio de las conciencia (sic). 34

If art is a 'trozo de realidad verdadera'³⁵ then it will be a 'génesis' - return to the mythical origin of an action - and a 'suma' - a compendium of all possible actions. These two ideas, 'génesis' and 'suma' are the key to Ayala's understanding of the novel.

The novel will not so much investigate or explain reality as reduce it to its essence. It will condense all experience within a single tightly-knit framework: 'En varios de mis libros, consta mi parecer de que una novela-tipo... es como un pequeño orbe cerrado y esfera completa, que repiten como en epítome el acto y el sentido de la creación primordial'.³⁶

34. Ayala, Las máscaras, pp. 407-408.

35. Ayala, Las máscaras, p. 42 (España 16/12/1915).

36. Ayala, Las máscaras, p. 564.

Clearly Ayala does not consider the novel a linear account of events, following each other logically. Although it is difficult to imagine a 'circular novel', Ayala has in mind some kind of structure in which the end of the novel is implied in the beginning, and where the whole can be seen at a glance. Each action will be related not to its immediate cause but to its mythical beginnings, and will thus be shown to be inevitable. There must be a sense of necessity in the novel:

Creo que una de las pruebas para averiguar la calidad auténtica de una novela consiste en descubrir si los personajes episódicos, y también los episodios, se presentan con carácter de necesidad vital, como seres y acontecimientos, respectivamente, que no pueden por menos de ser como son y de acontecer cuándo y cómo acontecen. 37

Perhaps for this reason Ayala tends to use characters for whom he is only partially responsible: many of them are either mythical or literary figures whose identity is already established. The completeness of the novel also involves its independence from the rest of reality. Ayala would argue that the only real thing about a novel is the fact that it is a novel: he is always anxious to point out its fictitiousness and underline the literary devices which he uses. His habit, for example, of including chapters which the reader may omit may be partly due to his supercilious wit, but its effect is to remind the reader that he is reading. Ayala's novels are in the paradoxical position of being meant to epitomize what is most real in life and yet to be apart from it:

La realidad artística es una realidad sui generis. Las obras de arte son reales o no lo son, viven o no viven, en virtud de un don peregrino de que está dotado el verdadero artista, el don de crear, que no porque se ajusten o aparten del modelo imitado. 38

37. Ayala, prologue to Tiroleras y danzaderas, 1942, p. 6.

38. Ayala, Las máscaras, p. 188.

Artistic reality is given by the personality of the artist, and it is to this aspect that we now turn.

There is one sense in which the author must be discreet and impersonal: he must create individual characters which are not extensions of his own personality.³⁹ The novel should in no sense be a personal testimony. Yet the presence of the author is very strongly felt in all Ayala's novels. Indeed, at the end of Belarmino y Apolonio he says that if the protagonists did not exist in real life they at least existed for him. The novelist can invent but he cannot play upon his own personality. Ayala would argue that the novelist is a privileged personality: 'El buen novelista se caracteriza por la posesión de una simpatía universal; de suerte que en su propia individualidad hay algo ~~de~~ todo el mundo'.⁴⁰ This apparent conflict between Ayala's theory and practice is explained by his concept of the novelist:

¿Qué otra cosa son los grandes novelistas y dramaturgos sino abogados de la irresponsabilidad humana, o lo que tanto monta, intérpretes, aunque falibles, de un presunto plan providente que rige los destinos mortales: vates o zahoríes de la armonía universal y, por ende, de la universal tolerancia? 41

As a seer the novelist will be able to return to the mythical origins of all mankind. His job will be to re-create what is already there and as a seer he will remind mankind of what it already knows. The novelist has the religious function of looking after men's souls ('la vocación para la cura de almas').⁴² It can be seen that Ayala's view of the aims of the novel are almost mystical, and it could be argued that they are not even suitable for the novel form.

39. Ayala, Divagaciones..., p. 995 (La Prensa 10/2/1924).

40. Ayala, Pequeños ensayos, p. 31

41. Ayala, Divagaciones..., p. 946.

42. Ayala, Amistades y recuerdos, p. 47.

Nevertheless, they explain why he should be concerned in all his novels with the mythical and archetypal aspects of character and plot.

2.4. The importance of myths

If the novel is to be a 'suma', a 'génesis' and justify all actions by revealing the archetypal functions of all characters it will inevitably be mythical because this is precisely what myths do. Ayala makes the point clearly that the aim of art is the mystical one of leading to a state of clarity and understanding through aesthetic emotion: 'Todas las cosas, sin dejar de ser como son, se nos parecerán en su representación sustancial y virginidad originaria. Reviviremos los génesis, viviremos las mitologías y asistiremos a la metamorfosis'.⁴³ For Ayala, literature aspires to myth, which could be considered its origin, and has the aim of returning to original events in order to see everything as if for the first time. There is, according to Ayala, a 'fatalidad intrínseca de toda obra literaria hacia el clasicismo y lo arquetípico':⁴⁴ all art will be reminiscent of the common origins of art and life in myth. It follows that 'los grandes creadores abastecen su edificación de dos canteras inexhaustibles: la vida y los libros'.⁴⁵ These are not, in Ayala's thought, opposites but are analogous, each being a creation. Literature, as we have seen, will therefore be full of references to original acts, and therefore to other literature. As Monte-Valdés says in his decadent way:

Las buenas obras de arte se nos infunden de tal suerte en el

43. Ayala, Nuestro Séneca, p. 236.

44. Ayala, Nuestro Séneca, p. 201.

45. Ayala, Divagaciones..., p. 948.

espíritu, que al punto las asimilamos y las sentimos como un recuerdo que no logramos emplazar en el tiempo, algo así como las historias y palabras que hemos oído durante una convalecencia. 46

It is basically an attempt to see the universe as if for the first time. This critical precept, which Ayala admires most of all in 'Clarín',⁴⁷ determines the kind of material which Ayala resurrects for his novels. In the first place, man will be regarded almost biologically as he begins life in the world, and in the second, there will be some account of the connection between this world and its maker. These two ideas have their corollary in fables and myths.

Fables contain a primordial view of the universe as it is. It is for Ayala a deterministic world where good and evil have little meaning: there are simply two moral standards, the 'moral de los fuertes' and the 'moral de los débiles'. The first looks to the general good and the conservation of the species, and the second to the good of the individual. Both are totally justified, and man is only to be judged on whether he fulfils his role or not, his only choice being whether to try. Man is therefore forced into action by certain forces 'lindando con lo puramente biológico, que no "razones de orden superior y desinteresado"'.⁴⁸ The fact that fables portray these two morals in conflict makes them truly realistic:

Las fábulas, como la naturaleza misma, no son morales ni inmorales, ni siquiera amorales. Son inframorales o premorales. Contienen

46. Ayala, Troteras y danzaderas, p. 241.

47. Ayala, Las máscaras, p. 171: 'Clarín, que si fue un gran crítico fue precisamente porque sabía ver las cosas por primera vez con perfecta ingenuidad y, por decirlo así, barbarie de espíritu'.

48. Ayala, Fábulas y ciudades, p. 34.

así la moral de los débiles y mansuetos como la moral de los dominadores y adquisitivos. Por tanto, las fábulas, como la naturaleza, no enseñan nada 'a priori', pero confirman 'a posteriori' sinnúmero de hechos perdurables desde que el mundo es mundo. 49

At the origin of all literature there is a genre which presents a state of nature with the serene indifference which Ayala seeks to achieve in his novels. It follows that there is likely to be some 'fabulous' element, not as a plot-structure, but as part of the relationship between the narrator and his work.

This 'fabulous' viewpoint is the origin, according to Ayala, of tragedy, which is necessary to render a work 'serious':

La fábula esópica es un género literario elemental y su materia consiste en el libre juego de los instintos primarios, comunes a hombres y bestias. De manera que, en cierto modo, la fábula es la simiente rudimentaria de la tragedia. Otorgad las máximas dimensiones a varios instintos primarios, legítimos cada cual por sí, pero incompatibles entre sí; dejadles libre juego y he allí la tragedia. 50

In presenting this view of the world, Ayala can be expected to return to the literary forms which originally embodied it. If the fable is a rudimentary literary form, Ayala's novels can be said to be mythical not just because they contain mythical figures, but because they return to the origins of literature. Indeed, Ayala is not one of those writers who draw on the whole body of literature for references: his are almost exclusively to original structural principles. There is therefore a conscious archaism about his novels which can often be attributed to this 'fabulous' quality.

If fables are a form which has already been displaced slightly towards humanity and earthly reality, behind and above them stand myths, to which

49. Ayala, Fábulas..., pp. 19-20.

50. Ayala, Fábulas..., p.108.

he must return in order to show the contact between this world and the next, or world of essences. Myths, for Ayala, are very real, symbols of the next world, and produced by fantasy or the lyrical spirit:

La fantasía, cuando no es delirio enfermizo o locura desatada, es la madre de los mitos y de los símbolos, los cuales, una vez nacidos, el arte puede manejarlos, conforme a la lógica del mundo real, como verdaderas realidades, puesto que para la imaginación las realidades del mundo interior son realidades verdaderas, como lo son las posibilidades del mundo físico. 51

Myths are unique in objectifying the human imagination. Although they are in a sense subjective creations, they are neither personal nor tied to the subconscious. They lie beneath apparent reality, yet not so deep as to become incoherent. It could be said that they belong to that level of consciousness at which all men are the same, the level in which Ayala is most interested. They are also attractive to Ayala because they can be used 'conforme a la lógica del mundo real', because they exist in this world as much as in the next. If they are symbols, it is only because, in Ayala's thought, the whole of physical reality is one vast symbol:

Los griegos tomaban estas mitologías de manera más seria; como símbolos. ¡ Ay de los hombres que juzgan del vasto, insondable y misterioso mundo, como realidad palpable y próxima, cuando no es sino velo y símbolo que se interpone entre nuestra imaginación, nuestra conciencia y la realidad última ! 52

In a world where everything is only a representative of something else beyond, which is to be seen through the imagination, myths stand half-way ('Mito vale tanto como declaración y aclaración de un enigma'). 53 Their purpose is very close to Ayala's conception of the novel which will create order out of chaos. The order which he will try to create is the platonic

51. Ayala, Más divagaciones..., p. 1175 (La Prensa 17/12/1922).

52. Ayala, Fábulas..., p.190.

53. Ayala, Crítica de libros, Obras Completas, II, p.551.

one of the universe as a scale leading upwards to heaven:

En mi dictamen, el punto más certero y altanero de intuición artística lo alcanza Platón en el Filebo, diálogo en el cual considera lo bello como una evolución o desarrollo desde lo feo, mediante la armonía y conciliación de los contrarios. Antes de conocer esta idea de Platón, yo había concebido la obra de arte literario (poesía, novela, drama) precisamente conforme a este canon... Y al mismo propósito están ajustados mis poemas y novelas...⁵⁴

One way in which this is done in Ayala's novels is by following the hero on his quest for this harmonious world, and a second is Ayala's own presentation of reality. As we have seen, Ayala opposes description of objects, and it is easy to see why. If they are described in everyday language they cannot be shown to have any relation to the next world. Here again, Ayala turns to myths:

Este concepto clásico de la poesía produjo una figuración representativa de la Naturaleza: la mitología. La mitología fue parto laborioso y patético del numen lírico. La mitología, vestidura externa del clasicismo poético, es imitación y emoción directas de la Naturaleza.⁵⁵

A mythical point of view will not attempt to describe objects according to their superficial attributes or appearances, but will place them on the platonic scale. Objects will have their origins, and therefore their identify, disclosed by certain stories in mythology. All objects of the same type are identified: behind every laurel tree there is the laurel tree, as Ayala says in Belarmino y Apolonio.⁵⁶ Instead of being concerned with the diversity of the universe, Ayala will be concerned with its unity: behind every man there is the hero. Literature devoted to recreating a platonic universe will consist of recreating a certain limited number of privileged objects, and is not open to the whole world, although certain mundane objects (Apolonio's Vichy water for example) can become privileged. Myths are also very plastic figures,

54. Ayala, Más divagaciones..., p. 1058.

55. Ayala, prologue to Cancionero castellano, Obras Completas, II, p.511.

56. Ayala, Belarmino y Apolonio, Obras Completas, IV, p.17

being known through sculpture, and represent common humanity, stripped of all circumstantial attributes, yet not dehumanised or considered abstractly. This is what Ayala most admired in the sculpture of Julio Antonio,⁵⁷ and may explain why Ayala is fond of freezing characters in statuesque poses.

We have seen that, in theory, the mythical view presents an 'emoción directa de la naturaleza', by which Ayala means that object and symbol are one, the object representing an ideal version of itself. Yet man has already begun to divide reality and symbol. This is the tendency towards displacement which starts as soon as myths are organised:

Ya hemos hecho bígamo al símbolo; y es que lo mismo en el Olimpo de los dioses helénicos que en el Helicón de las normas ideales - y no otra cosa eran los dioses sino incorporación plástica de estas normas - no rigen los dictados éticos y jurídicos de nuestras sociedades rudimentarias. 58

The particular mythical figures and stories which the modern artist has at his disposal are now divorced from reality and exist separately as cultural objects. They may be used decoratively, but they are no longer ideals in the platonic sense. Accordingly, Ayala used this process of displacement to present the world as a meaningless and degraded place. Nevertheless, there is the aspiration, seen now only in the quest of the hero, towards a world in which symbol and reality are one. If there is any plan behind Ayala's use of myths, it is towards their reconciliation with reality. His later heroes will therefore be more and more closely identified with the archetypal one. Yet there can never be complete reconciliation, but only the balance which Ayala sees in the first post-mythical age, or classicism:

57. Ayala, Amistades..., p.72.

58. Ayala, Más divagaciones..., p.lIII.

[classicism] no es la total supresión del yo sino la clara conciencia de la limitación insuperable del yo, y un exquisito equilibrio entre los datos de la realidad externa y las imágenes con que el espíritu individual creador la va interpretando, a la par que se manifiesta él mismo. 59

If the idea of the mythical hero exalts the yo, and leads to its becoming god, the displaced reality will provide a classical balance, by bringing him down to earth, often grotesquely.

The 'directness' of the mythical view of reality has one further consequence: it is almost totally impersonal. A laurel tree is the laurel tree and has certain fixed and universal emotions attached to it. Ideally they are the primordial emotions which gave rise to the myth, but in the mind of the modern reader the myth is a cultural object. As Ayala says, 'hemos hecho bigamo al simbolo'. Paradoxically, then, a host of well-worn literary references are intended to produce an untutored and innocent response to the world. Yet, if the artist must look at everything as if for the first time he must necessarily refer back to these original myths. Again, if Ayala wants to produce an epitome of the world he must use archetypes. Yet the range of objects with mythical or archetypal significance is so small, and so culturally conditioned^{that} the author will be unreasonably constricted in his choice of subject-matter. Accordingly, the true myth in Ayala is not his series of references to concrete mythical figures, which have their uses in other ways, but to the mythical quest which lies behind them, which is not irrevocably linked to a certain limited number of objects or particular plot-structure. It is all very well remembering 'primordial events', but they can be remembered once too often.

CHAPTER III

MYTHS AND LITERARY FIGURES

IN THE EARLY NOVELS

MYTHS AND LITERARY FIGURES IN THE EARLY NOVELS

3.1 Description of nature

In the course of conversations just before the crisis in Tinieblas en las cumbres, Alberto explains the twofold problem of the representation of reality in literature. In the first place, there are elements of reality which do not affect particular senses, but are experienced subjectively in the form of vague general impressions and associations which can not easily be expressed in words:

¿y este no sé qué difundido en la mañana, este espíritu de leyenda, de antigüedad remota, de melancolía y de ensueño que todo lo empapa, y vibra por dondequiera como música que viene de muy lejos? 1.

The 'no sé qué' is a subjective impression which is no less real for being so, and would have to be included in any description of the scene, in which Alberto sees vague echoes of the past and legendary qualities which present difficulties for him as a painter, and greater difficulties for a writer. The importance of this passage is that Ayala is evidently interested in more than direct descriptions of physical reality and will be concerned to show it in a timeless and mythical way. In a later passage, Alberto compares the ease of reproducing the colours of nature in painting with the difficulty of reproducing the sounds of nature in writing. The sounds of language are artificial and so direct description is difficult:

¿podré, por ventura, trasladar el susurro del bosque con el gorjeo de los pájaros y los mil ruidos que lo componen, sin hacer una referencia intelectual, esto es, una descripción, ayudándome de elementos ópticos y de referencias lejanas? 2

Literary descriptions will tend to be over-intellectual and instead of presenting the object directly, will have to deck it out in adjectives and external references. For these reasons Alberto decides to become a painter because painting, unlike

1. Ayala, Tinieblas en las cumbres, Madrid, 1971, p.228.

2. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p.260.

literature is, 'perfecto e inspirado en la naturaleza'.³ Now, Ayala considered that mythology is one literary form which is a direct representation of nature.

The problem for the novelist can be briefly stated. Reality can be perceived in terms of the associations which it evokes. But when this is done in a work of literature, the result is a certain wordiness, over-intellectualism, and a lack of direct views of the objects described. References to myths turn the reader's attention away from reality and focus it on his past reading and make an appeal to his imagination, which is already aware of the images which are used. As a result, Ayala will not describe nature in terms of sense-impressions, but in terms of the ideas and resonances which it sets up in the mind.

It is typical of Ayala that he should include in a novel a discussion of some of the problems involved in writing. The problems which Alberto outlines are not, however, to be seen in Tinieblas en las cumbres, but in three short stories which precede it, Cruzada de amor, Quería morir, and La última aventura de 'Raposín'. In these early short stories, nature is presented as a kind of revelation of the divine and a refuge from the material world. Its importance here rests on the fact that it is described mythically.

Nature in Cruzada de amor is of a literary kind which could only exist on paper. The sun is a mythical object: 'el sol, con su carro de fuego'.⁵ The dawn too, is a conventional, universal type:

La aurora extendía por el cielo sus pálidas rosas, y asomaban por el Oriente los rubíes engarzados en oro de la corona de Apolo.⁶

3. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p. 260.

4. Cruzada de amor was first published in 1902; Quería morir in Los Lunes de El Imparcial, 1/2/1904; La última aventura de 'Raposín' in 1904.

5. Ayala Cruzada de amor, Obras Completas, II, p. 880.

6. Ayala Cruzada..., pp. 888-9

This is nature not as seen by an individual in terms of sensations, but as a permanent, unchanging phenomenon outside place and time: every dawn is basically the same. The forces which govern nature are personified, so establishing a sympathy between man and nature. Natural events may be directed by the gods, but they are gods made in the image of man. Nature is seen as a work of art, only existing in words. Cruzada de amor is however a pastiche, whose chief importance is that it shows that Ayala was interested from the very beginning of his career in the conventional imagery of the myths and their original significance. That is, he is trying to present nature as if seen for the first time.

As most of the poems of La paz del sendero are concerned with the transcendence of nature, it is worthwhile looking at the sort of language which he was trying to create in his poetry in the years preceding 1905. In 'Coloquios' he says:

yo intento
amalgamar aquellas palabras misteriosas
que evoquen, inefable, la esencia de las cosas, 7

He describes nature in mysterious and often magical terms which explode the objects before his eyes; epithets like 'divino' and 'celestial' are common. The intention is to produce the vaguest of descriptions in which nature seems hardly of this world, and converted not just by the poet's imagination, but also of its own nature, into a spiritual and mythical being, into an idea.⁸ This is

7. Ayala, 'Coloquios', La paz del sendero, Obras Completas, II, p.118.

8. V. García de la Concha, Los senderos poéticos de Ramón Pérez de Ayala, Oviedo, 1970, p.137: 'Al final, todo se transfigura: no sólo el propio poeta, sino los campos mismos, las montañas. Tierra y cielo, como ocurre en 'Nuestra Señora de los Poetas', se confunden, y las vacas se convierten en divinidades brahmánicas en medio de un doloroso destierro'.

Ayala's view of poetry at the time:

A la antigua concreción, machacona y vulgar en la métrica, de un pensamiento prosaico, ha sustituido el poema simbólico que tiene iniciaciones de sentimientos inefables, nebulosidad evocadora de música, y entraña bajo las gráciles ondulaciones rítmicas conceptos universales, no por abstractor menos poéticos. 9

By 'musical' Ayala probably does not mean lyric, but the music of nature, or heavenly music of the stars as in Luis de León's Oda a Salinas. It is nature as part of a great and harmonious idea, not as a collection of sensations which are pleasing to man: nature is the first step to Heaven. It is the idea of nature, or nature as a thinking being, which he will try to convey. Amorós connects this appreciation of nature with Ayala's use of mythology: 'De esta idea (naturaleza sintética, ideal y representativa) yo no de eruditos neoclasicismos surge la pasión de Pérez de Ayala por la mitología'.¹⁰

Mythical imagery is evident from the very beginning of Quería morir, where man is shown living in harmony with the whole universe because he is submerged in nature: 'también el sol en el cielo parecía rezagarse, ni más ni menos que si yo, Josué redivivo, detuviese su curso para visitar a mi amada con el día'.¹¹ Nature corresponds to his wishes because he is, through living in harmony with it, virtually a god. The mystical state into which the protagonist falls recalls the myth of the 'world navel': he is in a magic place where knowledge of the divine is possible. This religious conception of nature is emphasised by the imagery: 'Era una tarde apacible como un culto'.¹²

9. Ayala, Poesía, Helios, I, 1903, 126 et sig..

10. A. Amorós, La novela intelectual de Ramón Pérez de Ayala, Madrid, 1972, p.44.

11. Ayala, Quería morir, Obras Completas, I, p.1072.

12. Ayala, Quería morir, p.1073.

It is a magical afternoon where time is suspended, where natural laws no longer apply: only essences can be seen. The cows are timeless : 'Dos vacas viejas, rojas, tristes y de rizado testuz, rumiaban tendidas sobre la jugosa hierba en paz horaciana'.¹³ They are not so much symbols of a resigned philosophy of life as an incarnation of it: they are one of nature's thoughts. This capacity to think, which leads to the harmony of all living beings, is repeated at the end of the story, when the privileged protagonist finally understands what nature is thinking:

Y es que la idea de la muerte noble, santa, con grandeza, envolvía el campo como un pensamiento infinito; era la voz de la tierra que yo no acertaba a descifrar; era la letra de la música que me cosquilleaba en las últimas profundidades del pozo de mi espíritu.¹⁴

This is one of the privileged moments, connected with the mythical theme of the 'world navel' when, through contemplation of one place in nature, something of the sense of the universe is made known to man, who thus attains divine status.¹⁵ The hero may want to die, but death is for him entry into the next world : there is nothing pessimistic about it. The opening image of the story was, in conclusion, neither arbitrary nor pedantic.

Similar descriptions of nature appear in La última aventura de Raposín where the graveyard trees are presented not as they appear to the human eye, but in terms of their mythical and religious function:

Llegó hasta el bosque de castaños que cerca a la iglesia del pueblo,

13. Ayala, Quería morir, p.1073.

14. Ayala, Quería morir, p.1075.

15. J. Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces, second edition, New York, 1968, p.41: 'the hero as the incarnation of God is himself the navel of the world, the umbilical point through which the energies of eternity break into time. Thus the World Navel is the symbol of the continuous creation: the mystery of the maintenance of the world through that continuous miracle of vivification which wells within all things'.

como en otro tiempo hayas corpulentas y simbólicos laureles, en torno al templo de Afrodita, formaban augusto recinto...¹⁶

They are not just symbolic in literature, but also in nature which is thus seen as a great collection of signs pointing to divine purposes, a work of art in itself and often described by Ayala by reference to paintings. Nature also seems to have a memory, so that the past is eternally present:

Al pie de los troncos centenarios, gruesas serpientes de raíces dormían guardadas en cercos de bancos graníticos, que en tal sazón parecían dólmenes o aras de sacrificio, e impregnada en ocre rojo de la tierra, el agua de los arroyos era sangre de víctimas. ¹⁷

Nature is a witness of the past and of the origin of things.

Perhaps the imagery here is not as important as the mythical situation of the protagonists when they enter into contact with nature. The mythical images are appropriate, but will inevitably appear pedantic abstractions. The reason for the discontinuation of this type of writing is explained by the hopelessness of Alberto's desire to render in art the 'no sé qué difundido en la mañana, este espíritu de leyenda, de antigüedad remota, de melancolía', and in the crumbling of the world-view on which it is based. Man and nature cannot live together in harmony because nature is totally indifferent to man. The sense of Alberto's despair at the end of Tinieblas en las cumbres is that nature will not lead to the divine, that the two worlds are forever separated. Yet the desire for harmony, the mythical union of the two worlds,¹⁸ continues to form the subject of Ayala's novels and will be a goal which the hero will have to win. References to myths and legends are not, therefore, a stylistic device. The perfect world of these early short stories will haunt the rest of Ayala's work.

16. Ayala, La última aventura de 'Raposín', Obras Completas, I, p. 929.

17. Ayala, La última aventura..., p. 929.

18. J. Campbell, The Hero..., p. 228: 'This is the sign of the hero's requirement, now, to knit together his two worlds'.

3.2 Description in Tinieblas en las cumbres

In Tinieblas en las cumbres the mythical motifs which before were meaningful are systematically debased: the two worlds are irrevocably divorced and no harmony is possible. As a result, mythical themes and images are inappropriate and grotesque and anything which refers to a higher world, either in art or religion, is automatically degraded. The myths can no longer be used as symbols, but as metaphors establishing some superficial likeness between essentially dissimilar objects. Myths also provide a framework for the whole novel which, as will be seen, is an image of the world after the fall. The references to myths and literary figures are more frequent in passages of exposition and less frequent in narrative. There are far more in Part I and the early sections of Part III where the mythical framework for the whole novel can be seen through some of Alberto's ideas. By following their use throughout the novel conclusions may be drawn about the position of the narrator and his attitude to the characters and the reader.

Literary and mythical references are used as metaphors in order to describe simultaneously the physical and moral attributes of the characters. A good example of this technique is the introductory description of Cerdá, who is exaggerated to greater than human proportions: 'Este señor Cerdá era una especie de sátiro, producido en las boscosidades de la provincia de Lérida'.¹⁹ This sentence is typical of the presentation, beginning with down-to-earth reality which is then exaggerated and deformed. The high-flown language is continued with the ~~invented~~ word 'boscosidades', which shows that the description has completely abandoned reality. Cerdá is then deflated with the words 'provincia de Lérida'. At the end of the paragraph

19. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p. 45.

he is brought down to earth with the fact that he learned about sex in a book he picked up in the market. He is continually raised to a mythical plane only to be brought down again: 'el Sultán de Lérida... Y esto, sólo por la virtud creadora de la imaginación de Cerdá'. 20 All these references to sultans, satyrs and lesser mythical beings are the fruit of Cerdá's imagination and are a means of projecting his subjective view onto objective reality. The imagery is not just comic exaggeration but presents his view of himself, and in terms which are totally unreal because Cerdá is less than real.

A similar technique of describing a character is used with Jiménez, whose eyes are 'dos faunos' and whose eyebrows are a 'laurel sombrero':

la expresión, en conjunto, mefistofélica, tal cual suelen adoptarla los Mefistófeles de ópera; las orejas, muy despegados del cráneo por arriba, apuntaban como cuernecillos diabólicos. Si a esto se añade la tenue inclinación del torso, se tendrá un demonio en acecho, un demonio bienhumorado. 21

Jiménez may be a 'devil' but he is only a literary devil, the archetype being left far behind. This technique anticipates a similar one in Tigre Juan, where the protagonist is related to a literary myth not, in the first place, by imitating his actions but by playing the part on the stage. Jiménez is seen to be no more than a literary figure, demonstrating the real world's lack of importance. A further effect of this type of description is that the figure of Jiménez is fixed forever. He is not presented as he appears at one particular moment in time, but as he always appears to a narrator who can see him at all times. The description of Jiménez is then quite static and timeless, an effect heightened by the comparison with Mefistofeles, a figure which exists outside

20. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p.53.

21. Ayala, Tinieblas..., pp.47-48.

time in the mind of the reader.

The first continuous series of imagery concerns the brothel, which is pedantically described as a 'templo de Afrodita', and its inhabitants, who are 'vestales'. There are a number of parallels with antiquity:

Así como en la antigüedad clásica el falo de bronce sobre el dintel era de equívoca elocuencia, en esta edad prosaica las verdes persianas corridas hacen el oficio de signos rituales. 22

The brothel district is a 'Rubicón moral que corre misteriosamente, vedando lenocinicos arrabales'.²³ The aim of such language is to avoid presenting reality directly by using imagery which is known through reading rather than experience. The obscene drawing in the brothel itself is the work of 'algún pequeño Apeles';²⁴ gestures are described as an 'estatvaria actitud'²⁵ or 'no de otra suerte que las imágenes de Colón, señalando con el índice las Indias occidentales';²⁶ an expression is described as 'grotesca gravedad de fetiche';²⁷ Jiménez is 'el coco de las pupilas'.²⁸ This grotesque imagery is generally literary and bookish, giving the reader a limited view of the reality of the scene. The narrator stands far enough back to make comparisons with 'doradas edades helénicas', referring to the prostitutes as 'del siglo de Péricles' and 'prostitutas arcaicas',²⁹ and as a result appearing uninterested in the events and intent upon giving reality an air of unreality.

Generally, the distance between reality and the metaphors used to qualify it is as great as possible. The 'juerguistas' are converted into a

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22. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p.57.
 23. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p.62.
 24. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p.63.
 25. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p.64.
 26. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p.64.
 27. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p.65.
 28. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p.65.
 29. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p.164.

band of satyrs, sylphids and nymphs because that is precisely what they are not. In a truly degraded world, such as that presented in Tinieblas en las cumbres, all mythical imagery will automatically seem inappropriate. The same kind of imagery reappears in all the scenes dealing with the 'juerguistas':

no se dijera otra cosa sino que el canino caballero pretendía resucitar aquellos remotos y bárbaros tiempos en que el sátiro, entre los troncos de una selva, palpitaba en acecho de la ninfa, y así que la veía, recia y maravillosa en su desnudez indefensa, lanzábase sobre ella. Pues bien; saltando por encima de algunos siglos, desde Pan hasta San Martín, diremos que... 30

When Jiménez kicks "La Luqui", he adopts 'una postura de sílfide',³¹ and the prostitutes turn away from the road 'de manera que se las hubiera tomado por dríadas de los bosques u otras criaturas líricas y virginales'.³²

The occupants of Yiddy's cart are 'los genios que lo habitaban',³³ when the 'juerguistas' sing, it is a 'coro destemplado y satiresco'.³⁴ Although these references give a certain unity of tone to the novel, they are not particularly effective. They are pedantic and do not serve to clarify the work.

There are, however, two good reasons why mythological references should be used in the central section about Arenales: Ayala is able to set up an ideal situation which can from time to time be brought down to earth, and there is a framework of ideas which is more important than the events themselves. The way of life in Arenales is clearly meant to represent the earthly paradise: 'Era la existencia de las edades arcádicas'.³⁵

30. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p. 222.

31. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p. 226.

32. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p. 240.

33. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p. 242.

34. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p. 287-8.

35. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p. 71.

When Rosina's father strikes her following her rejection of a suitor, 'la madre y la abuela intervinieron implorantes; lanzaban en la noche alaridos lamentables e invocaciones arcaicas'.³⁶ The reason that they are archaic is that the narrator, not looking at the particular events, but rather at his own subjective impressions and his memory, sees in them associations with the past. The interest in relating the event consists in showing that certain basic urges continue and that no aspect of reality can ever be seen in isolation. It is as if the narrator can only register sensations which have been anticipated in his reading. Rosina, for example, is purely literary: 'la criatura sencilla, un poco de égloga a fuerza de timidez'.³⁷ She embodies many of the qualities of the lover in Italianate love-poetry: 'tenía la dulcedumbre de las palomas duendas y la pompa humilde de los rosales silvestres'. Her hair is 'oro de miel', her cheeks 'de fuego' and 'ámbar', her teeth 'blanquísimos'.³⁸ She is, like traditional heroines, exceptional, and the sailors have made a myth of her; 'acaso cohibidos por la nobleza física de la muchacha y una vaga aprensión de su destino'.³⁹ In fact the description tells the reader less about Rosina than about the narrator, whose function is clearly to destroy the myths which others create. The reader already knows that Rosina's 'destiny' is to be a prostitute; the narrator now lets him know that Rosina the Renaissance ideal works in the local pickling factory.

Literature figures in an ironical way in Emeterio's attempts to seduce Rosina. Like many of Ayala's characters, he imitates literary models; 'echó mano de un sentimentalismo fiambre, en conserva, que había sedimentado

36. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p. 78.

37. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p. 71.

38. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p. 72.

39. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p. 72.

en su memoria con pretéritas lecturas folletinescas'.⁴⁰ On the first night he is a 'trovador exaltado de caudalosa vena poética', on the second, 'mancebo entristecido, lacio, inapetente, para quien los desdenes de su amada son otras tantas heridas en el corazón', and on the third, 'el amante terrible y dominador'.⁴¹ Not one of these poses is genuine, and it is interesting to see that Ayala chooses to illustrate this falseness by making Emeterio copy attitudes about which he has read. As a result of this imagery, reality is seen as a shabby copy of literary models. The comparisons between the two levels inevitably show the world as a grotesque and unreal place.

Mythical allusions are used quite differently in order to establish a sentimental point of view in the account of the night which Rosina and Fernando spend together. Ayala is interested mainly in the way the story can illustrate the mythical meaning behind it. The mythical references turn the story into a fairy-tale, the aim being to contrast its purity with the fact that as a result Rosina will become a prostitute. It is seen as a repetition: 'E idéntico misterio que maceró en sus aromas, allá en las bíblicas edades, al rey Hermoso y a la Sulamita, los envolvió en ígnea lengua de oro'.⁴² Through^{out} the account of Rosina's life in Arenales a mythical, unreal atmosphere veils her every action, even the way she sings: 'De esta suerte que aquel murmullo acompasado tenía un encanto musical de leyenda'.⁴³ Here the mythical imagery is intended to convey a vague, general impression which would be difficult to describe directly because it is not strictly speaking a sense-impression but an intellectual association. The same technique is used in the scene where Rosina looks out upon the countryside after the departure of Fernando following their night of love:

40. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p.79.

41. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p.79.

42. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p.120.

43. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p.124.

Una cumbre de la izquierda, rotunda, frondosa y verde como la cabeza de un Baco con guirnalda de pámpanos, erguñase aureolada de ora fluido. Por todas partes las hojas húmedas emitían notas doradas, como si hubiera caído sobre el campo la fecunda lluvia de oro que un tiempo recibió Danae, estremecida. 44

The first reference, to Bacchus, is purely descriptive but when Ayala mentions Danae he evokes a series of mythical events. The effect is to freeze the action momentarily and fix it in the mind of the reader, although Ayala makes no attempt to use the story of Proetus and Danae as a framework for his narrative. The dream-like situation is established so that the contrast with the events of the following day is even greater; when Rosina feels that she is 'cayendo desde las azulinas alturas de sus ensueños a la realidad corriente y moliente de fábricas, Emeterios y sardinas en vinagre'. 45 It could be concluded that myths are used here for their unreality.

The mythical situation also provides a general framework which reveals the structure and hence the meaning of events: Rosina is set in an earthly paradise so that she can be kicked out of it into the real world, having lost her innocence. She is closely associated with Eve and the fall from grace because 'no tuvieron vergüenza, como Adán y Eva al advertir su desnudez, porque se sentían inocentes'. 46 The fall from grace is not seen as an event set in the past, but as a continually repeated process. The novel begins, then, with the heroine falling into a world of sin and vice. The sections dealing with the juerguistas, apparently only unified by the journey theme, are an image of the fallen world. After the eclipse and the spiritual crisis, Albert exclaims: '¿ Qué haré yo sin esperanza?'. 47 The only thing of value which he possessed in the degraded world was hope. Now hope, in

44. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p.129.

45. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p.129.

46. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p.121.

47. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p.285.

the myth of Pandora's Box, is the one good element which escapes into the world with all the vices. The final sections on the mountain pass are accompanied by imagery connected with the end of this fallen world: 'Y la vida de la tierra ha de concluir de un modo semejante, por propio enfriamiento, a causa de la extinción de esa gran lumbre solar'.⁴⁸ Tinieblas en las cumbres, which at first sight is only loosely structured, is in fact held together by three myths. It begins, chronologically, with the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, continues with a Pandora's boxful of vices and ends with an Apocalypse. It is interesting to see that Ayala arranges these three sections in the manner of the epic. He begins 'in media res' and breaks off the narrative to explain the origins of the situation in the section on Arenales, after which he resumes the narrative, bringing it to a crisis in which the whole is made coherent and intelligible, through a few mythical references.

The mythical themes which are significant are, however, almost lost in a wealth of references which are not. They are not used economically, and the tone is inevitably pedantic. Only later will Ayala reduce the mythical references to a few key ones which really serve a purpose. The technique as used in Tinieblas en las cumbres establishes a relationship between the reader and the narrator in which the latter dominates the work and displays his superior knowledge. This is quite clear from the Epilogue, which must be the last word on the subject:

Entienda, asimismo, que si he puesto en ocasiones sobrado caudal de citas inglesas, latinas y hasta griegas, no es porque yo haya sido pedante, sino por cierto inmoderado afán, que siempre sentí, de mofarme un tanto de mis presuntos lectores. 49

48. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p. 280.

49. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p. 307.

3.3 Literature in A.M.D.G.

As A.M.D.G. is a novel of harsh criticism of a certain section of society, it is not in the author's interest to degrade reality but rather to shock the reader with the force of hard evidence. The attack will depend on the apparent truthfulness of the account because the problems are too serious for the detached mockery of Tinieblas en las cumbres. Nevertheless, as many of the abuses in the book are common to other forms of education, Ayala links them with the Jesuits by making frequent references to their attitudes to literature, and as a result A.M.D.G. is the first novel in which the relationship of the characters with literature plays an important part. More significantly, it is also the first time that Ayala bases characters entirely on pre-existent literary and mythical figures.

Although myths are rarely used for grotesque imagery, there are a few isolated cases whose very isolation shows that they are not intended to form a framework of imagery. The inflated imagery is sometimes used to make objects and people look ridiculously small or grotesque. The children who take art lessons are 'aspirantes al laurel de Apeles'[?] 50 and the park outside the college is called the 'Campos Elíseos'. 51 When Conejo sets off fireworks in the classroom to test the boys' concentration, one of them turns round, 'creyendo sin duda que se trataba del fuego de Sodoma y Gomora'. 52

The technique of exaggeration by reference to myths is used to describe the methods of two of the Jesuits. Of Conejo, he says:

Envidiaba a Argos, a causa de su centenar de ojos, y aun a la espléndida cola del pavón, adonde, luego de haber sido asesinado por Mercurio, Juno trasladó las cien pupilas metálicas del hijo de Arestor,

50. Ayala, A.M.D.G., Madrid, 1931, p. 44.

51. Ayala, A.M.D.G., p. 51.

52. Ayala, A.M.D.G., p. 117.

porque Conejo era también muy fanfarrón. 53

Here the Jesuit's fantasies are translated onto a mythical plane so that they can be seen more objectively, in the language of the narrator rather than his own. The Principal is compared to Caligula for his indifference to his own unpopularity : 'Como Calígula, él también lo reputaba por señal cierta de su soberanía'. 54 By comparing his cruelty with that of Caligula, Ayala makes him too bad to be true. The real extent of his cruelty is thus not shown, and this type of imagery is not used to any great extent. The image does, however, link the Jesuits with Rome as a military rather than a spiritual power.

A trait which becomes important in Troteras y danzaderas is to be found in embryo here. Characters are shown to be authentic or otherwise according to their sensitivity to literature. The Jesuits are seen as lacking all sensitivity and excessively materialistic. They disregard the classics, praise their own disastrous poet and persecute the only man of real learning, the 'sumo helenista' Padre Atienza, for whom literature is a vital force through which real liberty can be achieved. His response to the world is spontaneous and he never becomes pedantic. He is linked by the plot with Bertuco, who writes poetry to express personal feelings.

The real interest of A.M.D.G., as far as Ayala's use of myths and literary figures is concerned, lies in the invention of two characters, Gonzalfáñez and Ruth Flowers, who are modelled on literary themes and represent certain ideas. The mysterious figure of Gonzalfáñez hovers on the edge of the plot. Instead of being observed directly, he first appears in the

53. Ayala, A.M.D.G., p. 45.

54. Ayala, A.M.D.G., p. 64.

novel as he exists in the imagination of the neighbours:

En Regium se sustentaban diferentes hipótesis acerca de Gonzalfáñez. Quienes aseguraban que era demente, habiendo sido su padre alcohólico. Cuáles que sufría de infortunios amorosos, habiéndose casado en Circasia con una princesa de extraordinario ardor e insaciable venusismo. 55

Ayala uses the same kind of introduction for Tigre Juan, a character who is in many ways similar to Gonzalfáñez and perhaps a later version of him.

Gonzalfáñez is also presented through the memory of the elusive narrator, and is thus set apart from the other characters.⁵⁶ In order to divorce him even more from everyday reality he is associated with a ballad: 'Gonzalfáñez... hombre extraño y nombre de romance antiguo'.⁵⁷ No ballad may have been written about him, but he would be a suitable subject for one: the name is clearly meant as a reminiscence of Fernán González or Alvarfáñez although there are no detailed parallels. He is a figure who represents the spirit of a past age. He is also associated with the gods of nature:

¿Qué habrá sido de ti, Gonzalfáñez, nombre alto y sonoro, deidad esquivada de las encrucijadas rústicas?'. 58

He represents a total communion with nature, talking to the grass and oblivious of human beings.⁵⁹ This sensitivity is intended as a contrast with the Jesuits, who care little for anything natural. In addition, by virtue of his murder of Aurrecoechea he represents a kind of rough natural justice, which is not inconsistent with his association with a ballad. He is presented on the same purely literary plane as Ruth, with whom he eventually lives.

55. Ayala, A.M.D.G., p.7.

56. Ayala, A.M.D.G., p.10: '¡Nunca te olvidaré, Gonzalfáñez...! '.

57. Ayala, A.M.D.G., p.10.

58. Ayala, A.M.D.G., p.10.

59. Ayala, A.M.D.G., p.7: 'todas las cosas y seres de la Naturaleza ejercían tanto imperio sobre Gonzalfáñez que, reclamándole hacia sí, le hacían permanecer largo rato suspenso y como enajenado'.

The story of Ruth Flowers is based on the Book of Ruth, and there are continual parallels with both the structure and meaning of the biblical source, in which Ruth is a Gentile from a foreign country who accompanies her widowed mother-in-law on her return to Judah following the death of her own husband, with the intention of turning to Judaism. The theme of the foreigner, and the search for the true religion are repeated when Ruth follows her husband to Spain, and, after meeting her mother-in-law, turns to Roman Catholicism. The theme of widowhood is repeated when Villamor commits suicide. Finally, in both versions there is the theme of the widow rushing into the arms of another man who offers salvation, the Boaz-Gonzalfáñez figure.

Three details are subtly altered by Ayala. In the first place, Judah is portrayed as a land of peace and piety, but Spain is idealised only in the imagination of Ruth: 'Ruth pensaba en España como en una tierra encendida de rosas y poblado de aventuras, el país de la novela cotidiana'.⁶⁰ Here Spain is degraded, the promised land has become 'el país de la novela cotidiana'. Religion in Spain is very different from the example of Judah which was intended to show that the religious spirit may be carried into everyday existence and applied to the needs of everyday life. In the Jesuits' manipulation of Ruth for either propaganda or as a sexual object we see the antithesis of the integration of converts into religious life which was the message of the original. The Jesuits are portrayed as elitists who can admit no outsiders: none can even speak to her and Padre Olano tries to rape her. All this contrasts with the kindly protection offered by Boaz, who must be seen as a model for Gonzalfáñez. Both are connected with moral rectitude

60. Ayala, A.M.D.G., p.172.

and strict justice, especially in sexual questions. They have a similar preoccupation with justice: in the case of Boaz it is punctilious and legalistic, and in Gonzalfáñez it is rough, natural justice. In both cases, a simple pastoral life is seen as an ideal.

In conclusion, it must be said that the structure of the Ruth episode points to certain superficial parallels and that the meaning of the original betrays the degradation of a certain section of Spanish life. Ruth and Gonzalfáñez are the first purely literary characters to be introduced into a novel by Ayala with the obvious intention of outlining the meaning. Although the technique is used in an uncomplicated fashion here, and is merely presented by the narrator, it anticipates a technique which Ayala will use more and more frequently and with greater complexity in subsequent novels.

3.4 La pata de la raposa

As La pata de la raposa is concerned with Alberto's decision to take up writing as a career and with the immediate results of his doing so, literary figures become part of the protagonist's imagination. This makes the structure of La pata de la raposa unique among Ayala's novels because Alberto can be seen elaborating the literary theories which the narrator himself follows in presenting him. But first it would be appropriate to consider two aspects of the use of myths and literary figures which La pata de la raposa has in common with the novels which immediately precede it : myths in description and the inauthentic response to literature.

Although it is usually people who are described mythically, there are a number of objects which are treated in this way. The brush which Teresuca

bangs on the window 'manifestó virtudes de varita maravillosa en manos de un hada'.⁶¹ The point of view necessary to express reality in this way is a very distant and whimsical one : there is nothing in the novel to suggest that Teresuca fulfils the role of a fairy-godmother. Rather, the reader is given a momentary glimpse of an action which is then magnified beyond recognition. In the same way the expedition to the mountain pass is described as a 'bacanal más frenética, digna de los tiempos paganos',⁶² which again creates a distance between expression and reality. This sort of language turns reality, momentarily, into a fantasy and establishes a certain pedantic and detached tone.

Most of the secondary characters are translated onto a mythical plane, a technique which when it is not accompanied by any meaning or general framework leaves the character in a state of suspension. This happens when the myth is used as a metaphor, associating two superficially similar attributes of essentially dissimilar objects with the aim of making their appearance more striking. This is the case with don Medardo when he reads about Alberto's presumed murder of Rosina: 'Parecía un profeta demente, consumido por los ayunos y las maceraciones'.⁶³ The image may give a visual impression of a scene which if described would dissolve into countless details, but it diverts attention away from don Medardo, who is in no sense a prophet, onto the narrator's faculty for inflating the characters.

This tendency to derive imagery from literary works has the effect of circumscribing the area with which the novel can deal, as when Ayala presents a prisoner who keeps a caged bird in a way which echoes the ballad

61. Ayala, La pata de la raposa, Madrid, 1970, p. 41.

62. Ayala, La pata..., p. 58.

63. Ayala, La pata..., p. 100.

'Que por mayo era por mayo'.⁶⁴ The reader is made to feel that reality is an endless succession of literary themes.

Although in some cases the effect is pompous, as for example when the news of her husband's desertion is brought to Leonor by a hairdresser who is elevated to the status of 'el Mercurio portador de las infaustas nuevas',⁶⁵ it can sometimes underline effectively the function of a character in the plot. Mármol is a good example:

Tenía en aquel momento algo de sacerdote antiguo, con la túnica de seda amarilla y talar amplitud, que no era sino un guardapolvo y la tiara, o dígase rotunda gorra inglesa, sobre la cual las gafas del automovilista destacaban como las masas oculares en la frente de un bactracio.⁶⁶

At the end of the chapter, the same imagery is repeated: 'Y se perdió en la espesura del bosque, con la túnica talar flotando a su espalda, como un druida'.⁶⁷ In the first place this has a visual impact, and in the second, Mármol is fulfilling a magical role in reuniting Alberto and Fina.

Characters who are less important are often summarized both physically and mentally by the use of some literary parallel. When Sr. Ramón is referred to as 'aquel Sócrates loco',⁶⁸ little more need be said about this strange figure. Again, Meg's ineffectual admirer, Ettore, has a 'perfil apolíneo', which makes him a stereotype. Don Celso Robles, the misogynist, is more exaggerated, partly by the use of architectural images and partly by his cult of a mythical stomach which is 'habitado por una divinidad cruel y turbulenta en cuyo propiciamiento se inmolaban a diario innumerables víctimas'.⁷⁰ This has the effect of exaggerating one feature to such an extent

64. Ayala, La pata, . . . , p.194, note 542.

65. Ayala, La pata. . . , p. 234.

66. Ayala, La pata. . . , p. 255.

67. Ayala, La pata. . . , p. 258.

68. Ayala, La pata. . . , p. 140.

69. Ayala, La pata. . . , p. 293.

70. Ayala, La pata. . . , p. 228.

that it becomes greater than the whole of which it is a part, and to some extent independent of it. The important point is that to do this Ayala always has recourse to mythical imagery. The mythical explanation is followed by a medical one: 'Patológicamente, el señor Robles era un temperamento apoplético y congestativo'.⁷¹ He is thus seen from two contrasting points of view, which are made to contrast because they come from quite different worlds. It can be seen that the value of myths is at this stage in Ayala's career to describe characters in the most incongruous and often most inappropriate way possible. Ayala looks at his characters from the greatest distance.

A further effect, already used in A.M.D.G. and increasingly employed in subsequent novels, is the portrayal of characters who are aware of literary models and concerned to imitate them, thus betraying their insensitivity towards literature. Teresuca, for example, is aware of the superiority of life in novels over her own when she says to Manolo: 'Pero a mí me gusta que me cuenten cosas, como en las novelas'.⁷² Apart from the irony that Teresuca is herself a character in a novel which is not concerned with romantic adventures, this is one of Ayala's ways of showing a character to be anti-vital. Manolo himself has a curious view of literature: 'Le atraían, de preferencia, los volúmenes doctrinales de filosofía, moral y sociología, porque los entendía menos'.⁷³ He is attracted by the seductive power of words and is not concerned with their meaning. In this sense he is a forerunner of Apolonio. Hurtado shows a slightly different aspect of these inauthentic attitudes in his simulated idealization of Leonor :

71. Ayala, La pata..., p. 229 .

72. Ayala, La pata..., p. 42 .

73. Ayala, La pata..., p. 43 .

me moriría de desconsuelo si no tuviera por sostén ciertas facultades poéticas... Pero quien dice amor, dice poesía. *Leonor* es mi musa. Yo soy un sentimental; créamelo usted. 74

Ayala makes this more ironic as it is an imitation of Bécquer's 'poesía eres tú'.

Those who imitate literature in Ayala's early novels tend, like Emeterio Barros, Manolo and Hurtado, to be actors who feel nothing and are coldly calculating, and use words to disguise their real selves. The rehabilitation of the actor figure will only be seen in the later novels.

The mythical and literary references which have so far been considered are all presented from the narrator's point of view and are incidental to the structure and meaning of the novel, at the centre of which stands Alberto. All the characters are grouped round him and there is not a single one who does not meet and influence him in some way: the secondary characters only exist so that Alberto can see them. As most of them are seen through a veil of mythical references, and as Alberto is never described from outside, it is reasonable to suggest that the viewpoints of Alberto and the implied narrator are very close.⁷⁵ The literary references are the shadow which Alberto casts over the novel, which is narrated as he would like it to be, in terms of myths.

When on his way to Cenciella, he stops at a roadside inn where he experiences all the sensations in terms of art. In each case the narrator announces an object and then shows how Alberto transforms it. The innkeeper's daughter, for example, is first presented conventionally: 'Era carillena, lechosa de color, pelo de caoba, muy encendida de labios, ojos negros y rubias

74. Ayala, *La pata...*, p. 53.

75. c.f. a letter to Ayala from Valle-Inclán after reading *La pata de la rapsoda*: 'a mí como lector me comunica la impresión de que él mismo (Alberto) es quien escribe la novela' in Ayala, *Ante Azorín*, Madrid, 1964, p. 35.

las pestañas'.⁷⁶ Then she is presented as she appears to Alberto:

Sugería el recuerdo de esas hembras pingües y fáciles que en las kermeses de Rubens dejan sin asombro sus senos ser estrujados bajo la mano venosa y cetrina de un flamenco beodo.⁷⁷

Her skirt is 'semejante a los añiles de Fra Angélico'.⁷⁸ Later on in the same scene, the miner, considered 'con curiosidad desinteresada, artística',⁷⁹ becomes a Meunier statue. In similar fashion, there are associations with Jordaens, Teniers, Patinir, Rimsky-Korsakoff, Rubens and Verocchio. Such images do not affect his senses so much as his memory, and cause him to look at the world as a spectacle⁸⁰ in which he is in no way involved. Although the transformation of life into art is a constant theme in Ayala, it is here undeveloped: the two levels are simply juxtaposed. Indeed, this is the only occasion on which Ayala uses images from painting, probably because comparisons with other literary works can be more detailed.

Most of the literary and artistic figures which have so far been considered do not unify the novel or crystallize its structure. Indeed, La pata de la raposa has the freest structure of all Ayala's novels. Nevertheless, there is an attempt to unify the objective perspective of the narrator and the subjective attitudes of Alberto in the four philosophical poems in Chapter VI.⁸¹ The four moral patterns summarize four stages in Alberto's development. The 'moral canina' can be associated with the spiritual communion with nature seen in Tinieblas en las cumbres:

Ahora creo, sí, y firmemente, en la vida eterna; creo en algo misterioso, de sutilísima esencia que, infundido en nuestro

76. Ayala, La pata..., p. 66.

77. Ayala, La pata..., pp. 66-7.

78. Ayala, La pata..., p. 67.

79. Ayala, La pata..., p. 65.

80. Ayala, La pata..., p. 64.

81. The same technique will be used to greater effect in the Novelas poemáticas.

cuerpo, lo anima y le ha de sobrevivir. ⁸²

This is essentially the blind faith exemplified by Sultán the dog. The second morality, represented by Alectryon, is that of boundless energy. Alberto takes this path when, having done nothing for a long time, he decides that 'hay que hacer, hay que apresurarse'. ⁸³ The third stage is reached when Alberto, reconciled with Fina, decides upon a comfortable pastoral existence. This is the morality of Calígula the cat, which involves the idea that the good of the individual is paramount. The final stage is the morality of Madama Comino, 'the moral del olvido' which is reached when Alberto looks upon the world with total indifference during his stay in Lugano. Although this is clearly not the archetypal framework which Ayala uses in later novels, it is a foreshadowing of the method. The use of separate poems containing mythical and literary references shows the difficulty which Ayala has in unifying the text and the meaning which it is supposed to convey. Its importance is that it reduces a whole novel to a miniature structure based on poems and mythological figures that is evoked by one of the characters.

Whereas in the philosophical poems there is thematic unity between the literal and mythical levels, Alberto's poems about the prostitute, ⁸⁴ whom he elevates sentimentally to being Helen of Troy, illustrates well the tension which Ayala generates between the two levels. Yet whereas he often simply juxtaposes them, here he shows them moving together. In the first poem the 'poeta sentimental' creates the mythical level on which the experience becomes part of a universal process, but the myth is shown to be dissolving:

82. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p. 262.

83. Ayala, La pata..., p. 251.

84. Ayala, La pata..., pp. 142-5.

Helen will no longer inspire 'venusto furor' and the poet can no longer see 'una Aganipe en cada fuente/y un Pegaso en cada corcel'.⁸⁵ Although the ironic poet in the second poem sees her as a 'daifa de estipendio/muy módico'⁸⁶ he is still 'anegado de ternura'.⁸⁷ The mythical and literal level are not incompatible, as is shown by the ironic poet's final 'Sr', but this reconciliation depends on them first being shown to be far apart. Amorós comments: 'Este instalarse en el mito y luego bajar desde él a la realidad histórica será constante en Prometeo'.⁸⁸ Yet here it is not so much a single movement downwards, but a coming together of the lyrical view which elevates objects and the ironical view which belittles them.

This ambivalence of myths is seen in Alberto's two attitudes towards them. He decorates the circus with a curtain which 'simula un átrio de columnas dóricas, en mármol; en los intercolumnios, destaca sobre paños de púrpura mitológicas divinidades en guisas y posturas fantásticas'.⁸⁹ It is strange that when Alberto tries to create a comic art form he immediately turns to myths, which he would use to erect a temple to human stupidity.⁹⁰ His system is 'de demostración... ad absurdam; esto es, desarrollar uno de aquellos nocivos conceptos hasta sus últimas y más bufas consecuencias'.⁹¹ Here we see in theory what is sometimes Ayala's practice. The idea is that if reality is to be exaggerated there must be some scale by which deformation can be measured. It is interesting that Alberto has in mind a pantomime, in

85. Ayala, La pata..., p.142.

86. Ayala, La pata..., p.144.

87. Ayala, La pata..., p.145.

88. Ayala, La pata..., p. 145 note 410.

89. Ayala, La pata..., p.172.

90. Ayala, La pata..., p.172.

91. Ayala, La pata..., p.175.

which characters would be stylized, each with his own mask. The effect of some of Ayala's mythical techniques is to give characters masks.

Yet there is also the serious view of myths. Alberto feels that as a writer he will have a 'vocación de linaje religioso':⁹² that is, he will be able to interpret the next world for the inhabitants of this. He looks forward to a time when 'todos los hombres tuvieran aquella facultad de destilar el mundo en conceptos e imágenes, y aquella aguda y bien templada sensibilidad que hacía eco a la más leve palpitación del Universo'.⁹³ Such 'conceptos e imágenes' are the myths to which the writer will return. Indeed there is the sense that literature will be a return to the origins of mankind, a modern mythology:

es necesario haberse encontrado en trances vividos, muchas veces insignificantes en apariencia, de los cuales se ha podido extraer, como si se creasen por vez primera en la historia, los valores y conceptos fundamentales de la conducta y del universo. 94

La pata de la raposa develops the use of myth to establish one character's view of the world: Alberto will always look upon his surroundings in a fashion so detached that he sees everything in terms of archetypes and myths. Yet if La pata de la raposa really depends on the character of Alberto his weaknesses will tend to mar the whole novel: almost everything must be seen through his eyes. He is a weak central character who is only constant in changing. His importance is continually undermined by the greater importance of the ideas which cluster around him and which sometimes force him into action. A single character could not be expected to adopt so many contrasting philosophies or have so many

92. Ayala, La pata..., p. 277.

93. Ayala, La pata..., p. 252.

94. Ayala, La pata..., p. 277.

ideas. If La pata de la raposa is just about Alberto then it is a weak novel, tied to presenting the world-view of a weak character. Amorós suggests that Ayala stops writing novels with a single main character because of the failure of Alberto.⁹⁵ Yet there is evidence to suggest that already in La pata de la raposa Ayala was developing a technique of presenting characters which would enable him to use them as vehicles for ideas and for a general conception of the world without depending upon their personality, thoughts or subjective attitudes (see 3.6).

3.5 Authentic and inauthentic responses to literature : Troteras y danzaderas

A consistent use of myths and literary figures can be seen in exaggerated descriptions which momentarily take the reader's attention away from reality. As in Tinieblas en las cumbres, myths provide a fund of incongruous metaphors. For example, the stove in the music-hall gives off a 'calor plutónico',⁹⁶ and the table-cloth in the pensión has its own 'historia geológica' with a 'período diluviano' when most wine was spilled on it.⁹⁷ The hat-boxes on the floor in Lolita's room are 'como cestos de Pomona o cornucopias de la abundancia, a juzgar por la profusión eruptiva de flores y frutos artificiales... que rebasaba de los bordes'.⁹⁸ This is a stylistic trait of an author who will not leave reality alone, and who will pounce on the most unassuming objects to magnify them almost beyond recognition. This exaggeration is almost always achieved by reference to some myth and is metaphorical rather than symbolic.

95. A. Amorós, La novela intelectual..., p. 202.

96. Ayala, Troteras y danzaderas, Madrid, 1972, p. 213.

97. Ayala, Troteras..., p. 271.

98. Ayala, Troteras..., p. 313.

It is in the description of people that the allusions really come into play, as Amorós says of the treatment of characters in the novel :

'Algunos han hablado, incluso, de la crueldad con que se complace en rebajar a los muñecos que él mismo ha creado'.⁹⁹ Mythical references do make the characters look like puppets, but the author does not create them: he re-creates them from past models. In this way he is not entirely responsible for them and dissociates himself from them. The treatment is not always cruel: in the case of Teófilo Pajares, the ageing youth, the degradation is balanced by the insight which is eventually gained into his unstable character.

Yet it is true that in Troteras y danzaderas there is a greater tendency to use the mythical level to degrade rather than merely to exaggerate. There is more irony because the real characters are often demeaned by the mythical comparison. Grajal and Artaza, for example, are modern heroes:

Constituyan dos tipos, o mejor, arquetipos del héroe moderno, a quien el prosaísmo de la vida contemporánea fuerza y constriñe a emplear el esforzado ánimo en empresas poco lucidas y muy inferiores a su ímpetu y arrestos. 100

Their heroism involves defenestrating prostitutes and driving cars through shop windows and depends entirely on their ability to pay for the damage. The modern hero is a wealthy playboy.

Generally, mythical references in Troteras y danzaderas do not serve to illuminate reality but to confuse it. When Tejero's money is stolen and he feels a sensation of lightness, he remembers St. Ignatius on the distinction between God's thoughts and the Devil's and the Epicurean doctrine of natural and unnatural desires. The tiny incident is blown up beyond all proportion

99. Amorós, prologue to Troteras..., 1972, p. 9

100. Ayala, Troteras..., p. 374.

and then gently deflated.¹⁰¹ The same concern with images and appearances is evident in the introduction to *Halconete*: 'Recordaba a aquellos pulidos abades de otro tiempo, doctos en Humanidades y meticulosos catadores de la vida y sus más recónditos placeres.'¹⁰² *Halconete* is presented through the memory of the elusive narrator, who bathes the character in an archaic and unreal light. In this way *Halconete* is nothing more than a fixed and unchanging mask. Yet there is no sense of degradation : the two levels are simply juxtaposed. In these early novels there is always the same tendency to treat the smallest details mythically, often from the point of view of the narrator. Another example of this comes from the music-hall scene when the narrator describes the noise which the performers make back-stage as:

como si la caterva de castas humanas, escindida por maledición divina en la torre de Babel, retornase a la amiganza y unidad primeras por medio del culto a la vida en su forma más rudimentaria y placentera, como es la exaltación de la energía física y amor del juego y de la danza. ¹⁰³

Such an elaboration is not a simple sense impression, although it is concerned with the senses. Ayala, it is clear, will never try to recreate a scene by evoking its physical reality. Instead he describes intellectually: there is not a single noun or adjective in the above passage, which is a description of noise, which actually refers to noise. Ayala seems to delight in his own wordiness: myths do not always limit. The music-hall scenes are full of mythical allusions. Don Jovino, the 'ídolo búdico'¹⁰⁴ is described in the following way:

las pupilas proyectadas sobre el cielo raso y en impasible quietud

101. Ayala, *Troteras...*, p.189-90.

102. Ayala, *Troteras...*, p.200.

103. Ayala, *Troteras...*, p.224.

104. Ayala, *Troteras...*, p.214.

de fetiche, parecía no oírlos, porque los dioses, falsos o verdaderos, rara vez prestan oídos a los clamores de los mortales. 105

Again there are no words denoting physical qualities: the reader is expected to recreate the image himself. The importance of this technique is that it never dissolves the object described into its constituent parts: a general atmosphere is built up. The narrator's task is to suggest and on occasions, to deflate. The music-hall sequence is a collection of strange pseudo-mythical beings: Benjamina wears a 'traje casi edénico',¹⁰⁶ and Bobadilla's head is 'un trasunto, acaso afectado, del de Mefistófeles, injerto en el de Shakespeare'.¹⁰⁷ Another head, belonging to the leading actor in Teófilo's play, is described as a 'sarcástica cabeza de Diógenes'.¹⁰⁸ Clearly myths are used for description much more extensively than in La pata de la raposa, and more effectively because they consistently convert the whole of literary Madrid into a pantomime. The device seems to be more effective when there is some central theme to give it unity: here the use of very diverse myths in the description of the smallest and often most insignificant details is consistent with the theme of the novel.

Some characters, however, often presented in contrasting pairs, are treated as literary figures because they symbolize something greater than themselves. Even in an early novel like Troteras y danzaderas they are a key to the meaning of the whole. The figure of Don Quixote underlines aspects of Monte-Valdés's character, although it is first presented as a visual image:

A la primera ojeada este hombre ofrecíase como el más cabal trasunto corpóreo de Don Quijote de la Mancha. Luego se echaba de ver que era, con mucho, más barbudo que el antiguo caballero, porque las del actual eran barbas de capuchino.,¹⁰⁹

105. Ayala, Troteras..., p. 224.

106. Ayala, Troteras..., p. 225.

107. Ayala, Troteras..., p. 231.

108. Ayala, Troteras..., p. 353.

109. Ayala, Troteras..., pp. 54-5.

This is more complicated than earlier uses because Monte-Valdés corresponds to don Quixote on many levels. The reader is taken through two stages: a first impression on which more details are then added. Don Quixote is a skeleton on which to hang them, and the theme lies behind all aspects of Monte-Valdés. Some of his actions are quixotic: 'Monte-Valdés, como Don Quijote, suspendía a quien por primera vez hablaba, con una emoción entre imponente e hilarante'.¹¹⁰ This is a habitual action, and is followed closely by a particular event. He gives what little money he has to an injured workman, for which he is greeted with:

'¡Viva Don Quijote!'.¹¹¹ Quixotism lies behind the popular view of him.

The reaction of the witnesses to the incident is meant as an echo of Unamuno's article: '¡Muera Don Quijote!', which sought to point out that quixotic gestures were not necessary or desirable in the Spain of the time.

Monte-Valdés is thus set in a contemporary situation rather than as an echo of the distant past. He also sees himself as a don Quixote figure:

'Pero debo advertirles que yo soy un hidalgo pobre'.¹¹² He shares with the narrator a certain view of himself, and it could be said that Monte-

Valdés is presented in the way he would like. His view of art too has traces of quixotism:

Quijote, no sólo en la traza corporal, sino también en el espíritu de su arte, manipulaba el lenguaje descubriendo haces de palabras como ejércitos de señores magníficamente arreados, allí donde los demás no veían otra cosa que rebaños de borregos iguales. ¹¹³

The use of language for its associations is part of Monte-Valdés' literary theory:

110. Ayala, Troteras..., p. 56.

111. Ayala, Troteras..., p. 57.

112. Ayala, Troteras..., p. 59.

113. Ayala, Troteras..., p. 239-40.

me parece que no hay belleza sino en el recuerdo, y aquilatamos si una obra de arte es buena o no lo es según se nos presenta inmediatamente como un vago recuerdo personal... 114

And he is himself a 'vago recuerdo' of don Quixote. In this way Ayala shows that Monte-Valdés makes of his own life a work of art. Yet there are also references to the Golden Age in general:

Don Alberto del Monte-Valdés, como los españoles de antaño, había dado los nerviosos años de la juventud a las aventuras por tierras de Nueva España. 115

He represents, in a modern setting, the Spain of the past, providing a comparison with the everyday reality of the novel. He preserves many of the traditional values which are associated with the conquistador mentality: 'A partir de este punto comenzó la época misteriosamente heroica de la vida de Monte-Valdés, la época de la conquista'. 116

He is like the 'enjuta Castilla de los tiempos del Emperador', hungry, but fighting for the faith, 'y tanto como se le apretaban las tripas se le erguía la cabeza ante ojos ajenos'. 117 Here he is a vague echo of the bachiller of Lazarillo de Tormes. Alberto Monte-Valdés represents the essence of Golden Age history. In this he conforms to many of the characteristics of the 'mythical quality' outlined by C.S. Lewis. Yet he is not a generic character because he is well aware of the comparison, a technique which grows in the later novels.

Ayala presents the literary side of characters in different ways, not always relying on references to the past. Teófilo Pajares, whose inauthentic attitudes to literature are meant to contrast with Monte-

114. Ayala, Troteras..., p. 241.

115. Ayala, Troteras..., p. 55.

116. Ayala, Troteras..., p. 59.

117. Ayala, Troteras..., p. 59.

Valdés's sensitive ones, is presented as he appears in the press:

Teófilo Pajares, 'El Príncipe de los poetas españoles,
a cuyo paso debía tenderse por tierra un tapiz de rosas'
al decir de algunos diarios de escasa circulación. 118

He is introduced as he exists on paper. Words make him seem larger than life, and the introductory section about him consists in ridiculing this myth. He is also a myth in the eyes of Verónica, who sees him as a 'gran tipo',¹¹⁹ and his bohemian life as a fantasy: 'Como esos [bohemos] de los libros y de las novelas y de las óperas. ¡ Viva la vida bohemia ! Y yo que creí que eran inventos de los papeles y de los escritores...'¹²⁰

The Teófilo whom she admires is an 'invento de los papeles', and when she finally meets him, she scarcely knows what to say. Clearly there circulates in the Madrid of the novel an idea of Teófilo which is raised to mythical proportions. Verónica's attitude is well expressed in the lines:

no se resolvía a decidir que fuese una persona tejida con la misma estofa burda del resto de los hombres. Hasta la absoluta ausencia de ella en que Teófilo se mantenía, como si realmente la muchacha no existiese, era para Verónica muestra inequívoca de grandeza, digna de veneración. 121

This hero-worship must dissolve before she can see him as he really is. In the portrait of Teófilo, Ayala is always intent on contrasting fact and fiction. Teófilo himself tries to project an image of the sensitive but misunderstood genius. His facial expression 'languidecía con mueca de consternación, - una mueca espectral hubiera dicho él'.¹²² His poetry frequently uses the image of the grimace (mueca) with its connotations of masks placed over reality. The first line of one of his poems shows his

118. Ayala, Troteras..., p.48.

119. Ayala, Troteras..., p.145.

120. Ayala, Troteras..., p.143.

121. Ayala, Troteras..., pp.178-9.

122. Ayala, Troteras..., p.48.

use of poetry to present himself in a different light: 'Soy poeta embrujado por rosas lujuriosas'.¹²³ Teófilo's real existence bears no relation to his image in poetry, which is no more than a pose copied from Baudelaire. He takes up the role of the 'poète maudit', ridiculed by the insensitive bourgeois, yet at heart one of nature's aristocrats in love with an exotic princess. But there is no 'princesa Mimí', no 'magnificencia y fastos principescos', no rebellion against the bourgeois, and no unbridled licence because he never gets the chance. His rare encounters with prostitutes are transformed: 'por la virtud lustral y metamorfoseante de la poesía, se habían purificado y convertido en intrigas cuya heroína era una princesa de manos abaciales'.¹²⁴ Teófilo is also described by the narrator in mythical terms which are intended to make him appear ridiculous. When he recovers his shoe after the fight with the portera the narrator describes the action in the following way: 'y como si se hubiera ajustado al tobillo no una bota, sino las alas de Mercurio, voló, más que subió, al piso primero'.¹²⁵ This comparison is grotesque, as are many of the others. When he steps out of the room at Rosina's, conscious of his ragged appearance, he adopts a pose:

Salió del gabinete cesáreo como un César de verdad.
Rosina y Conchita, que estaban en la antesala, viéronle
venir con aquel aire de realeza, ya la primera le
admiraba, mientras la otra luchaba por contener
la risa. 126

This well illustrates the dual attitude to the myths. They can be used seriously, creating the admiration which Rosina, who is emotionally

123. Ayala, Troteras..., p.144.

124. Ayala, Troteras..., p.215.

125. Ayala, Troteras..., p.53.

126. Ayala, Troteras..., pp.75-6.

involved, obviously feels, and is one of the characteristics of the 'mythical quality'. On the other hand, myth is also a cause of hilarity, because any comparison of Teófilo with Caesar is grotesque for anyone not emotionally involved with him. Teófilo is seen here from two points of view: the tragic and the farcical, which in Ayala's theories are very close. Unity between them is achieved by the mythical image which works on the two levels. Teófilo is of course conscious of all these poses even though he is never sure of their effect. He continually tries to disguise himself, and as a result looks like a bad actor: 'Pajares asumió un continente sacerdotal, porque la sentencia adquiriese cierto valor religioso'.¹²⁷ He attempts to dignify his position in ^asociety which he finds shameful by the illusiory expedient of turning his life into a literary work. His attempts to cover reality with literary references spill over into his relationship with Rosina, to whom he adds tritely, 'Poesía eres tú',¹²⁸ to which the narrator adds:

Esta satisfacción inocente de complicar el propio instinto con la vida del Universo y encubrir la veneridad con las ropas hechas del bazar del Arte,...¹²⁹

This objective explanation shows that Teófilo never looks at particular aspects of reality and always sees himself in terms of universal issues (i. e. mythical ones) which he expresses in clichés ('las ropas hechas del bazar del Arte'). He is not even very good at making such references: 'él, Pajares el poeta, que había decorado siempre sus versos con innúmeras alusiones al arte y a la mitología helénicos'.¹³⁰

For he is not quite sure who Antigone was. Using them to decorate

127. Ayala, Troteras..., p. 77.

128. Ayala, Troteras..., p. 77.

129. Ayala, Troteras..., p. 77.

130. Ayala, Troteras..., p. 110.

literature can be a problem and even a disadvantage. The fact that Ayala includes this comment is evidence of the fact that he was well aware of the dangers of a method which he himself practised.

The question of myths is problematic in another sense. Their real importance is that they represent a crisis of identity. Teófilo is never sure of what he is like for other people or of the very nature of reality. The myth-making has been an attempt to bolster up his failing confidence. The crisis, concerned with the nature of reality, comes when his greatest allusion, sleeping with Rosina, looks like coming to nothing:

Amenazábanle las silenciosas moles de la ciudad durmiente,
como si fueranaa derrumbarse sobre él de un momento a otro,
disgregadas por un agente de diabólica actividad corrosiva. 131

His myth-making has led to a situation where reality seems unreal. It is the sort of crisis which Ayala will use in the later novels. The mythical and literary world is a problem for Teófilo. In it he lives an imaginary existence punctuated by grotesque falls and self-doubt. He only becomes an authentic character when he discards literary roles, although as a result he comes to see his commercially successful play as an artistic failure.

Most of Ayala's characters are presented in contrasting pairs. The spontaneous attitudes of Verónica are set up as an example of how literature can also clarify a view of life. Having identified with each of the protagonists of Othello in turn, she can stand back, and from a distance understand the sense of inevitable conflict which is for Ayala the true tragic emotion:

131. Ayala, Troteras..., p.265.

en lugar de ir viviendo una tras otra las diferentes pasiones individuales, vivía ahora en su propio corazón la emoción expectante del conflicto y choque de las pasiones ajenas, las cuales le eran bien conocidas y sabía que habían de obrar fatalmente por haberlas en sí misma experimentado en los actos precedentes. 132

Her identification with literary figures is strictly controlled. It only lasts until another character dominates the scene, and all identification ends when she realises the inevitability of the conflict. In this way she can never identify with one particular character:

Verónica presentía que los sucesos que entretejen la historia y de la cual los hombres reciben placer dolor, exaltación, gloria, ruina, son como tienen que ser, producto de elementos fatales en proporciones fatales. 133

Literary figures are very appropriate to illustrate this sense of fatality because their lives are predetermined and will be repeated each time the work in which they appear is read. Unlike Teófilo's, Verónica's relationship with a small number of literary figures teaches her the 'liberal' attitude to life which Ayala propounds in essays of the same time. Having seen the characters in conflict she learns to justify the workings of the universe. In accordance with these discoveries, Ayala's use of literary figures begins to change after Troteras y danzaderas. Instead of presenting a series of isolated literary figures in descriptions, he begins to use them in contrasting pairs. They will represent justifiable and inevitable views of life by continually repeating traditional actions. In addition there will be more emphasis on the problems created by the characters' awareness of the existence of literary archetypes.

132. Ayala, Troteras..., p.161 .

133. Ayala, Troteras..., pp.161-2.

3.6 Alberto Díaz de Guzmán as a mythical hero

A mythical interpretation of Alberto's adventures lays the emphasis of the early novels on both social comment and the idea of initiation into life. It will tend to justify some of Ayala's statements in the prologue to the 1942 edition of Troteras y danzaderas and reveal the unity and ritualistic structure of the early novels. Alberto belongs to a class of modern heroes whose adventures are psychological, whose home is a degraded and prosaic modern Spain and whose only achievement personal failure. The objectivity of the myth enables the narrator to present Alberto from outside with the result that his subjective vision is not allowed to dominate totally the novels in which he appears. The adaptation of the myth of the hero is therefore both a technical device and a key to meaning in the Alberto novels.

The progress of the hero begins with the 'call' or spiritual crisis which makes him question his previous existence: 'El personaje, al captar o al hacérsele patente la proximidad de las situaciones límites, comienza por cuestionar su existencia y la autenticidad de la misma'.¹³⁴

This is the case in Tinieblas en las cumbres, where the magical motifs of the hero's development are subordinated to psychological motivation. Only in the last of his novels will Ayala allow the magical to take precedence. The form which the call takes will correspond to the protagonist's previous attitude towards reality. The eclipse in Tinieblas en las cumbres is therefore appropriate because it attacks Alberto's whole conception of a universe made for man, his idea of the value of beauty, and destroys

134. J. Villegas, La estructura mítica del héroe en la novela del siglo XX, Barcelona, 1973, pp. 96-97.

all his illusions about the value of art and life. Yiddy plays the role of the 'personaje despertador' by warning Alberto of the dangers of his pantheistic view of the universe.¹³⁵ It is only through their conversation that the reader can appreciate that for Alberto the eclipse means that there is a basic incompatibility between this world and the next. A typical motif of this stage is the journey, which, when it appears so early, is seen as provoking the crisis.¹³⁶ The 'juerguistas' trip to the mountain pass provides all the conditions necessary for the crisis, and shows Alberto's isolation in a world which is not to be taken seriously. This is the motif of rootlessness often found in these early stages.¹³⁷ For example, Alberto is indifferent to all the other characters, and when one of them takes Rosina away he hardly reacts. His isolation is greater because he never knew his father, the motif of the orphan being a common one in the background of the mythical hero.

When the crisis comes it is often expressed in terms of crossing a threshold, and is accompanied by a change in life-style. The mountain-pass is itself a kind of threshold, both between one province and the next and between this world and the next. When, shortly afterwards, Alberto hesitantly enters a church, 'no sabía si retroceder o seguir adelante'.¹³⁸ The scene at the church provokes a break with all his previous beliefs when he sees 'uno de esos cromos jesuíticos en que la divina humanidad

135.J. Villegas, La estructura..., p.101: 'El maestro o personaje despertador... tiene como misión llevar a cabo el llamado, provocar en el iniciante o futuro iniciante la conciencia de que deberá abandonar la forma de vida que ha llevado, o hacer evidente lo insatisfactorio de la misma'.

136.J. Villegas, La estructura..., pp.101-102.

137.J. Villegas, La estructura..., p.105.

138. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p.294.

del Nazareno parece despojada de toda hombría y majestad'.¹³⁹ Man's only contact with the next world is portrayed by a tasteless picture.

The church represents an aesthetic failure, spiritual darkness, and the impossibility of any help.

The importance of the threshold motif is again seen, this time from Rosina's point of view, when they arrive at Alberto's house: 'En el portal, Rosina sintió ciertos escrúpulos, como si temiera profanar la mansión'.¹⁴⁰ The 'mansión' is a place apart from the rest of the world, where Alberto will sink into a deep and symbolic sleep, crossing into a different existence. He describes the house as 'esta tumba de un muerto vivo',¹⁴¹ and when he looks at himself in a mirror 'pensó contemplar una calavera descarnada'.¹⁴² The last lines of the book are a clear indication that he has died: 'Tomó las manos de Alberto. Estaban frías'.¹⁴³ Although this could be taken as evidence that Ayala did not intend to write a sequel, it has the value of a symbolic death:¹⁴⁴ Alberto will never be the same again, and will descend into Hell where he will face a time of trials. In Alberto's case he is forced to abandon all previous beliefs: the next morning he believes in nothing:

Lo mismo que en la eternidad del firmamento van apagándose las estrellas, dentro de su alma habían ido muriendo todos los luminares de la infancia. ¹⁴⁵

Ayala clearly adapts the mythical motifs and applies them to Alberto's intellectual life: it is a crisis of ideas. Yet, as in the mythical

139. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p. 296.

140. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p. 297.

141. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p. 297.

142. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p. 298.

143. Ayala, Tinieblas..., p. 299.

144. J. Campbell, The Hero..., p. 91: 'the passage of the threshold is a form of self-annihilation'.

145. Ayala, La pata..., p. 49.

situation, there are the familiar motifs of light and darkness, and the hero's adventures are identified with the entire cosmos.

Villegas describes the situation of the hero at the beginning of the second stage (initiation and acquisition of experience) in the following way:

se encuentra con todo un camino - interior o exterior - por recorrer, en el cual se ha de encontrar con obstáculos, dificultades, situaciones favorables que le irán descubriendo progresivamente un nuevo sentido para su existencia o un sistema de valores diferente en el cual sustentar sus convicciones. 146

The motif of the journey appears in his departure for Cenciella, which involves a complete break with the past: he destroys all the statues and paintings and throws them, with all his books, out of the window. He feels a new sense of purpose and energy: 'Sentía ahora el corazón ligero, nutrido de ímpetu e impaciencia; quizás alegre'.¹⁴⁷ This energy recalls the positive purpose of the initiation rites: they help the hero to undergo certain necessary changes. The narrator points out that Alberto's aim of forgetting himself is like the withdrawal of the priest into the wilderness, and the sense of purpose of the missionary on a journey.¹⁴⁸ The motif of the abandonment of the self is seen when, instead of basing his life on perishable things, he decides to search for meaning in nature itself. This is in marked contrast to the idea of nature of the early short stories, where nature was open to man: the protagonist of Quería morir only had to be in the country to see the

146. J. Villegas, La estructura..., p. 105.

147. Ayala, La pata..., p. 52.

148. Ayala, La pata..., p. 52: 'Era que había venido a posarse en él, con aleteo silencioso, como ellas suelen, una nueva ilusión; aquella ilusión cristiana y antigua que arrastró a los padres al yermo, a los misioneros camino adelante, y a las ardientes vírgenes al silencio aquietante del claustro'.

next world whereas Alberto has to search. Alberto chooses as his teacher his dog, Sultán, who becomes the protector figure who will serve as a guide.¹⁴⁹ This same idea is continued in the use which Alberto makes of all the animals.

The protector figures are usually accompanied by menacing and destructive ones. Hurtado and Jiménez, who was described in Tinieblas en las cumbres as a 'Mefistófeles', represent the inauthentic life of the 'señoritos' of Pílares. Hurtado in particular shows great insensitivity towards art, which is one of the evils which Alberto is trying to combat. The miner at the roadside inn is also shown in a menacing light, illustrating the social conflicts in the novel. Even the dog, Sultán, attacks him, having failed to recognize him. Alberto's world is full of such characters which have a mythical function behind their literal presentation.

In the series of trials which the mythical hero undergoes the end point, according to Campbell,¹⁵⁰ is the mystical marriage with the queen goddess of the world who is perfection of every sort: a mixture of mother, sister, mistress, wife and of all evil. In the presentation of the women Ayala comes nearer to the mythical model and there is less attempt to make them convincing as individuals. The first of the women is the goddess of the flesh, or queen of sin, sent to tempt Alberto in the form of the 'viuda de Ciorretti'. She is associated, both in the title which Ayala gave to Chapter VIII in manuscript and later crossed out, and in a specific

149. J. Campbell, The Hero..., p. 69: 'For those who have not refused the call, the first encounter of the hero-journey is with a protective figure... who provides amulets against the dragon forces he is about to pass'.

150. J. Campbell, The Hero..., p. 120: 'The mystical marriage with the queen goddess of the world represents the hero's total mastery of life; for the woman is life, the hero its knower and master'.

reference, to the 'matrona de Efeso' or Artemis.¹⁵¹ Robert Graves has this to say about the figure: 'Elsewhere, at Ephesus, for instance, she was worshipped in her second person, as Nymph, an orgiastic Aphrodite with a male consort'.¹⁵² Sra. de Ciorretti and her husband fulfil this role for the inhabitants of Pilares, who consider them 'el arquetipo de la dicha epicúrea'.¹⁵³ She exists more in the mind than in physical reality, a quality which is reflected in Ayala's description: 'gustaba de vestir dentro de sus dominios unas batas o peplos livianos, ondulantes y de célticas entonaciones'.¹⁵⁴ Unlike many of the mythical descriptions, this one is not meant to ridicule, but to underline the symbolism.

Similarly, Fina's only role in the novel is to act as an archetype. On hearing the news of Albert's presumed murder of Rosina she waits patiently, 'con su divino aplomo de estatua',¹⁵⁵ and will remain symbolized by the sexless harmony of Greek statues. Like the 'viuda de Ciorretti', she is an archetype: 'el arquetipo de la mujer cristiana es la virgen madre; sublime paradoja. Y tal es el linaje de belleza de Fina'.¹⁵⁶ She is firmly placed in the next world, which as we shall see, is forever inaccessible to the hero. Meg is a symbol of loco amor, and her appearance is treated in the same mythical way: 'Vestía un mandilón azul, cuyo corte era una reminiscencia de las dalmáticas bizantinas'.¹⁵⁷ Each of the women is given a sacred appearance because each is a kind of high-priestess in one or another temple of love. Ayala makes

151. Ayala, La pata..., p. 83 note 186.

152. R. Graves, The Greek Myths, I, London, 1971, p. 85.

153. Ayala, La pata..., p. 85.

154. Ayala, La pata..., p. 87.

155. Ayala, La pata..., p. 103.

156. Ayala, La pata..., p. 164.

157. Ayala, La pata..., p. 213.

continual attempts to divorce Meg from everyday reality: 'En aquel ambiente de cauta luz el color de Meg, no era humano, sino sustancia diáfana, amasada de resplendores nacientes, con oriente, como las perlas'. 158

Alberto's impressions are all in the same vein: her voice is 'divina' 159 and her expression 'angélica'. The three women are all given divine status because they are all aspects of the mythical queen goddess of the world. The failure of Alberto's quest is seen by the fact that in the real world they are three separate and irreconcilable characters.

In the modern novel the time of trials is often realized in terms of the 'recorrido nocturno por la ciudad', which is a nightmare sequence in which reality dissolves. Its place in the structure of the mythical hero's progress is as a prelude to his eventual return to the world. The theme is sometimes seen as a period of introspection as the hero tries to find out more about himself. Alberto, for example, is often unaware of the surroundings:

Su pensamiento llegaba a tan profundos y misteriosos limbos que, saliendo a la superficie, el mundo, de primera intención, se le aparecía a modo de espectáculo. 160

This is another example of Ayala's concern for presenting the mythical stages as psychological states. He is also concerned to present the motifs of the hero's descent into Hell in recognizably real settings. Alberto's descent is portrayed during his visits to a music-hall, a brothel and a walk round the town of Pilares at night. At this point Alberto is isolated:

158. Ayala, La pata..., p.295.

159. Ayala, La pata..., p.306.

160. Ayala, La pata..., p.64, c.f.J.Campbell, The Hero..., p.97: 'Once having traversed the threshold, the hero moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials!'

society considers him a murderer and he barely talks to anyone except the malevolent Hurtado who is after his money. The whole episode takes place at night and is preceded by imagery connected with the town band of Pílares which plays 'apocalyptic' music.¹⁶¹ Although this image is an incidental detail, it fits into the mythical pattern. In the cinema everything is dark and the film makes Alberto feel sick. When a girl comes on stage to dance another motif becomes apparent. As Villegas says: 'todo baile de máscaras implica confusión, distorsión y sentirse perdido en medio de un conglomerado irreconocible'.¹⁶² All these elements are present in Toñita's dance. The confusion is caused by the jeering from the audience, the distortion by her unrhythmic and frantic contorsions. Reality is unclear because of the darkness, and the fact that Toñita is not really a dancer at all, but is being launched as a prostitute by her mother.

The themes of descent and persecution are repeated when Alberto leaves the hall: 'En la oscuridad del atrio las pisadas repercutían con fúnebre sonoridad'.¹⁶³ The world is a dark mysterious place which needs illumination. Symbolically there appear two stars - the light at the end of the tunnel - which Alberto imagines to be two children. There will always be, even at the darkest moments, some glimpse of light. The entrance to the brothel reechoes the idea of light following darkness: 'Estaban junto a un portal abierto. En lo más profundo de él se recortaba un ventano iluminado'.¹⁶⁴ Yet despite the momentary vision, he is still in the degraded nightmare world, represented by the brothel to which he

161. Ayala, La pata..., p.122.

162. J. Villegas, La estructura..., p.121.

163. Ayala, La pata..., p.132.

164. Ayala, La pata..., p.133.

is dragged by Hurtado the tempter figure. In this underworld it is usual for some of the motifs to be introduced in a grotesque way. The figure of the teacher, hitherto represented by the animals at Cenciella, is portrayed by the prostitute, who was literally a teacher before. When he emerges from the brothel he is lost as if in a labyrinth: 'Se encontró en la calle, sin saber qué camino tomar'.¹⁶⁵ His only response is to run away, pursued by the moonlight, which for Alberto is a symbol of insensitivity and uselessness.¹⁶⁶ This is of course the motif of persecution: there are certain forces which will try to destroy the hero. The measure of the intellectualization of La pata de la raposa is that here Alberto is pursued by an idea.

When he takes refuge in a tavern he falls in with another grotesque teacher figure.¹⁶⁷ The philosopher Ramón de la Pradiña puts forward two contradictory ideas: humanism and misogyny. This absurd contradiction has its effect on Alberto: 'Su mente se había posado, y las ideas, de un nuevo linaje, se articulaban en un tierno organismo naciente'.¹⁶⁸ He is now acutely conscious that the world is an absurd place: there is a total divorce between this world and some higher world which might give it meaning. It is up to man to give it whatever meaning he thinks fit:

Le acometían deseos de reírse a borbotones de la absurdidad de todo lo creado, y en cierto modo, se consideraba creador, porque las cosas no tenían otro sentido o trascendencia que los que él, humorísticamente, quisiera otorgarles. ¹⁶⁹

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165. Ayala, La pata..., p.137.
166. Ayala, La pata..., p.138.
167. Ayala, La pata..., p.138.
168. Ayala, La pata..., p.140.
169. Ayala, La pata..., pp.140-1.

Alberto is as far away from the goal of the hero as possible. Whereas the mythical hero will die, and having gained an insight into the next world, return with it, Alberto makes the mistake of placing himself at the centre of the universe as the sole repository of its ultimate sense.

The decision to join the circus is a logical extension of this. He will use his circus act to preach ideas of his own invention, in an environment which is devoid of all transcendence. The circus period is important because in it Alberto experiences many things as if for the first time: everything he sees is new and unexpected, a typical feature of the training of the hero.¹⁷⁰ The time in the circus also gives Alberto a new identity because he is unrecognizable in his circus clothes, and ends appropriately with a recognition: 'Si me llaman a declarar me parten, porque habré de dar mi nombre y, en publicándose, mi aventura carece de iniciativa'.¹⁷¹ Alberto's social position will always drag him back to the life he led before. After Alberto's arrest the judge turns out to be a schoolfriend, and when Alberto is taken to prison the governor knows that, through his connections, he will soon be released. Villegas underlines the importance of the prison theme; and sees that it is often repeated in the modern novel.¹⁷² Here the prison is a symbol of the past, which will always catch up with Alberto: he will always be a señorito, and will never be able to create his own world.

The weather is also used extensively to symbolize this period of

170. J. Villegas, La estructura..., p. 125: 'El protagonista que sale a buscar o descubrir mundo se encuentra con una multitud de experiencias que nunca ha tenido...'

171. Ayala, La pata..., p. 178.

172. J. Villegas, La estructura..., p. 118.

crisis. He arrives at the prison on a 'noche lluviosa de invierno'¹⁷³ and when soon afterwards he goes to London on another apparently purposeless journey, he finds fog, a common image in Ayala:

Del lado de fuera de los ventanales , de emplomados vidrios, resbalaban vedijas de niebla parda y amarilla, a modo de vellones de despeinada estopa. ¹⁷⁴

This is a typical image of the 'período de las nubes' when the hero is unable to see reality clearly, and recalls the mythical motif of the labyrinth because it impedes all progress: 'En Picadilly Circus, la niebla se hizo tan compacta que el coche hubo de detenerse'.¹⁷⁵ Whereas in Tigre Juan Ayala is prepared to present directly the sometimes magical motifs of the nightmare period, here he is concerned that all the events be realistic. There is therefore the need to translate many of the motifs into literal terms which, as in this case, sometimes renders them obscure.

The labyrinth motif usually precedes the death of the hero. The old Alberto does die in that he loses all his money through the flight of Hurtado, and is therefore deprived of the social position which characterized his old self. Tita Anastasia evokes this in mythical terms at this point with her reference to the myth of the trabajos y los días : 'Si en este mes se oyen los primeros truenos, señala muertes de hombres ricos y poderosos'.¹⁷⁶ The structure of the plot at this point would seem highly arbitrary were it not for this inner necessity for Alberto the señorito to die. Alberto himself certainly feels that his life has been transformed. He says to Fina:

Escucha una página de la leyenda dorada de mi alma Fina, y reerénciame como a una de aquellos santos juveniles,

173. Ayala, La pata..., p.182.

174. Ayala, La pata..., p.199.

175. Ayala, La pata..., p.210.

176. Ayala, La pata..., p.267.

gloriosos y esforzados que mataban dragones y vestigios. ¹⁷⁷

He feels that his adventures have given him a victory over one particular dragon: 'el Ridículo'. ¹⁷⁸ He has been afraid of the opinion which others might have of him and therefore of existence itself. This existential interpretation of the myth of the hero is modern, and makes the journey to a great extent an inner one. Modern man must be a hero to exist.

He is determined to construct his own life, another modern interpretation of the myth, ¹⁷⁹ and will follow certain principles: 'trabajar sin dinero, siendo pobre; trabajar sin sensualidad, siendo casto; trabajar con humildad, siendo obediente'. ¹⁸⁰ These precepts sum up the lessons which he has learned intellectually from his many adventures and trials. His emphasis on work betrays a concern for his return to society which will be the subject of Troteras y danzaderas, and which is one of the ways in which modern writers transform the structure of the myth of the hero. Yet, although Alberto has many admirable aims, there is some doubt about whether his transformation is complete. He says: 'puede decirse que he creado un mundo de la nada'. ¹⁸¹ Now the true hero does not create the world afresh by himself: he receives it as a gift from God, and is transformed by abandoning his own personality. There is in La pata de la raposa an element of ultimate faith in the energy and power of the individual which will later be crushed in Prometeo.

At the end of the second part of La pata de la raposa Alberto is at

177. Ayala, La pata..., p. 273.

178. Ayala, La pata..., pp. 273-4.

179. Ayala, La pata..., p. 276 : 'estoy determinado en construir mi vida'.

180. Ayala, La pata..., p. 276.

181. Ayala, La pata..., p. 278.

what Villegas calls 'el momento en que debe asentarse en una forma de vida relativamente definitiva'.¹⁸² This return to the world can take one of two forms: there is the personal transformation of the hero, which is the traditional and universal myth, and the modern approach which is interested in how the hero returns to society. Ayala seems to follow both: in Troteras y danzaderas Alberto is a teacher who comments on society, and in the final part of La pata de la raposa he is considered traditionally.

Alberto's move to Madrid is to be considered as a return to real life and to literary activity. In Tinieblas en las cumbres he had literary aspirations because of his fear of death and desire for immortality: now he returns to literature with modified ideals. Villegas puts it in the following way: 'el protagonista siente la necesidad de volver a su antigua forma de vida, con nuevos conocimientos o un mensaje que transmitirá a sus congéneres'.¹⁸³ The meaning of the return will depend upon the context. It is presumed that the hero has something to offer and that if he fails it will be society's fault. After his return he will still be subject to trials and persecution: in the original myth this would be the spiteful vengeance of the Gods (c.f. the myth of Prometheus), which is perpetuated in the theme of punishment. In modern situations the return is especially difficult because of the hostile attitudes of society, which is the case in Troteras y danzaderas.

The return is marked once more by the theme of crossing a threshold, which often takes the form of the hero waking up. Every time

182. J. Villegas, La estructura..., p. 126.

183. J. Villegas, La estructura..., p. 130.

we meet Alberto in a new situation he is returning from a dream-world, and coming into contact with harsh reality. This level of reality is continued in the theme of financial persecution : unlike previously, Alberto is unable to pay, having become a 'have-not', and on the fringe of bourgeois society. Another difference is that now he is a more stable character and in Troteras y danzaderas he will not change. Figures are introduced around him, whom he will judge according to his own understanding of life. Whereas in La pata de la raposa he was continually looking for new experiences, he now wishes to retire into mediocrity :

Aspiraba a la mediocridad, en el sentido clásico de moderación y medida. El mucho amor y dolor de su juventud le habían gastado el yo. 184

The archetypal mythical hero traditionally renounces his self, and does not merely have it wasted away. A second irony is that Alberto's return is a remarkably discreet one.

The famous Verónica scene in which he reads Othello is not meant to reveal the truth to him, but to confirm and illustrate theories which he feels but has not yet managed to express. It is a further repetition of the motif of the 'iniciación en un gran secreto': 'Antiguas meditaciones acerca del arte y conclusiones provisionales desarticuladas entre sí, se aclaraban y soldaban en un fresco y sensible tejido orgánico'.¹⁸⁵ With the help of Verónica he forms the theory of authentic art based on the tragic emotion. The reading of Othello can be taken as a further adventure into the ideal world, which will give people a

184. Ayala, Troteras....., p.128 .

185. Ayala, Troteras....., p.149 .

clearer idea of reality in this one. The reading is a version of the mythical theme of the 'two worlds' which Villegas describes in the following way:

La novela moderna presenta con frecuencia personajes que poseen los dos mundos, no en el plano real, sino psicológico. Es decir, la experiencia de la aventura les ha dado un conocimiento del mundo que les permite, precisamente, una comprensión del mundo 'real' por el conocimiento que una vez tuvieron del otro mundo. 186

In this way, literature takes on the significance of the 'other world'.

Such a theory explains well Ayala's view that the writer will be a sage or seer. Yet to appreciate this other world the reader must, for his part, approach literature in total innocence. This spontaneity is once more the motif of seeing things as if for the first time, and involves a voluntary renunciation of the self: the one test which, as has been shown, Alberto did not pass. Verónica's untutored response to the reading of Othello, in which she allows each character to take her over in turn, is an image of the hero's renunciation of the self in order that he may acquire knowledge of the next world. Verónica allows the world to be recreated in her: 'El alma de Verónica le parecía a Alberto tan plástica y tierna como la arcilla paradisíaca entre los dedos de Jehová'. 187 One of the keys to Alberto's failure is that he can only experience this understanding vicariously, through Verónica.

The reading of Othello, in accordance with the dominant theme of portraying the artist's life in society, turns Alberto's attention to the 'problem of Spain':

El espíritu de la raza a que pertenezco y la vida histórica de esta nación en cuyas entrañas fui engendrado, ¿son trágicos o melodramáticos? ¿ Soy actor de coturno y persona,

186. J. Villegas, La estructura..., p. 135.

187. Ayala, Troteras..., p. 157.

dignidad y decoro incorporado a la caudal tragedia humana, o soy fantoche de una farsa lacrimosa y grotesca? 188

In the light of the mythical importance of the reading of Othello, this passage can be seen in a new way: if Spain is farcical, then it is divorced from the essential forces which govern the universe, and cannot be taken seriously. Yet the condemnation is ambiguous. Alberto can give sound advice to Teófilo about his disastrous play, agree to attend Tejero's political meeting and even redeem a young girl from prostitution, but his aloof aesthetic distance does not allow him to take any part in the society which he despises. Indeed, the failure of his life in Madrid may simply be a personal one because he is a failure in the mythical quest. The importance of myth in Troteras y danzaderas is evident from the title of the last section, 'Ormuzd y Ahriman', which refers to the Iranian myth of the eternal conflict between the forces of good and those of evil. The traditional role of the hero is to fight for the good against evil, yet Alberto is unable to treat the problem seriously, for him Spain has simply produced 'Troteras y danzaderas'.¹⁸⁹ The hero cannot return to society, and the tragedy is that it is partly his fault.

The third part of La pata de la raposa deals with the hero's return in a different sense. Here he is concerned with personal salvation. The weather provides its customary indication of the hero's state of mind: it is sunny and the time is eleven o'clock. Significantly the sun, a traditional symbol of the hero, has not quite reached its zenith, and in the mythical time which Ayala uses it never will. Alberto has perfected a certain view of life:

188. Ayala, Troteras..., p.163 .

189. Ayala, Troteras..., p.423 .

A través de laborioso proceso sentimental, Alberto había llegado a lo que él juzgaba como última y acendrada concentración del egoísmo, al desasimiento de las pasiones y mutilación de todo deseo desordenado; al soberano bien, al equilibrio, al imperio de sí propio, a la unidad. 190

Light pervades the whole atmosphere and reality is 'templada, traslúcida y expresiva',¹⁹¹ because Alberto can make sense of his surroundings.

Yet this stability is deceptive, and the final section of La pata de la raposa is intended to show that Alberto has not changed. Villegas expresses this possibility well in a passage about La chute:

La ironía está en que al parecer el protagonista no ha cambiado realmente: es sólo una apariencia de cambio, ya que sigue pensándose a sí mismo de manera semejante. 192

A sure sign that all is really the same is that Alberto has recovered all his money, which serves as a symbol of his previous existence. There is also imagery of darkness:

así como su existencia era una llama entre dos sombras, su sistema lindaba de una parte con la escéptica oquedad inicial de donde había surgido, y de la otra con una oquedad en donde su voz percedera advertía lejanos ecos místicos. 193

He has not emerged into the harmonious and lucid world which is the reward of the hero because the two extremes have not been reconciled. His scepticism will continue to undermine his mysticism. The fact that he has not been transformed is translated into literal terms by the repetition of incidents and motifs from his earlier life. He still fears death and ridicule, and his prized self-control is quickly lost in his flirtation with Meg. As we have seen, Meg is a mythical figure, often

190. Ayala, La pata..., p. 291.

191. Ayala, La pata..., p. 290.

192. J. Villegas, La estructura..., pp. 127-8.

193. Ayala, La pata..., p. 291.

compared to a serpent, who is sent to punish him in an appropriate way. She brings out all the failures which he has tried heroically to suppress. She represents passion for a man who has carefully eliminated all feeling. To return to serenity he must reject her: 'Sus ideas y sentimientos adoptaron de nuevo la impasible serenidad estética'.¹⁹⁴ Yet in doing this he rejects the life which Meg represents: he can only experience life from a safe distance.

His punishment is imposed by tita Anastasia, the 'sibila decrepita'¹⁹⁵ who is the mythical old crone representing the vengeance of the gods. Whereas the mythical hero transforms the old crone into a beautiful princess,¹⁹⁶ Alberto returns to the country house to find, instead of Fina, the curses of tita Anastasia. The title of the final section, 'La tarde', preserves the mythical time-sequence : the evening will soon turn to night. Alberto is a hero who refuses to go all the way along the path prescribed for the hero's transformation. Instead of renouncing the self, he carefully preserves it and constructs his own system of beliefs based on the maintenance of aesthetic distance and tranquility which effectively prevent the integration into the world.

Regarded in this mythical light, Alberto becomes a much more unified character and the novels are seen to have a much stronger framework than might at first appear. Nevertheless, the use of myths is very often incidental and confined to the grotesque description of minutiae. Clearly there is a conflict between the ennobling and

194. Ayala, La pata..., p. 310

195. Ayala, La pata..., p. 318

196. J. Campbell, The Hero..., 217: 'the hero soul goes boldly in - and discovers the hags converted into goddesses....'.

clarifying properties of the myth of the hero and the degrading properties of allusions to particular myths. Ayala is seen here as a writer who both looks up to and down upon his characters without reconciling the two points of view.

CHAPTER IV

THE SHORT NOVELS AND SHORT STORIES

THE SHORT NOVELS AND SHORT STORIES

4.1 The return to innocence

Whilst Ayala was writing novels in which the most obvious, if not the most successful, use of myths was to degrade and in which the structural use of myth was unobtrusive, he was writing short stories which show more clearly his 'transcendental' side. In all the short stories which follow, the motifs and themes of the myth of the hero are much more evident. The starting-point, as in Chapter III, is the crisis of around 1905 which produced the irony and degradation of Tinieblas en las cumbres. In the short stories, however, the harmonious world is regarded with nostalgia, and the present with sadness rather than sarcasm. Structurally, there is less conflict between the different properties of myth, and a greater intrusion of myth in the plot.

The underlying structure of a number of Ayala's stories written between 1906 and 1913 is the loss of innocence and the protagonists' longing to regain it, or in the case of Artemisa (1907), avoidance of its loss. The protagonists are essentially heroes who refuse the 'call' and reject the mythical quest. As a result they are alienated and fail to find any meaning in the world. This is already seen in a short story of 1905, La última aventura de 'Raposín', which in most other respects is one of Ayala's sentimental and melodramatic stories about unusual events in the Asturian countryside, and not at first sight mythical. 'Raposín' is a folk-figure who wants to regain the life which he had abandoned in his youth on becoming a bandit. In other words, he wants to return to his mother and to the refuge of the Church, which he sees as a friendly, welcoming place in which even the statues of the saints recognise him.

Yet his mother is dead and the Church, 'más de hermano mayor, ya valetudinario, que de madre',¹ is only interested in retrieving its stolen property. 'Raposín' is condemned to being a prodigal son who will never return successfully.² Yet this archetype is not in the foreground:

'Raposín' is at first sight an extraordinary invented character and a local myth, 'aquel hombrecillo que tenía aureola de legendarias fechorías',³ and is interesting in his own right. This type of folk character tends to disappear from Ayala's stories around 1905, although it reappears in some of the novels as a secondary figure, to be replaced by the kind of characterisation found in Gloria in Artemisa. She is a more ordinary character onto whom a mythical significance is grafted to make her universal. Ayala is now concerned less with invention than with establishing mythical links. As a result there emerges a clear second level on which the meaning of the story is to be found, with the help of the narrator, whereas before it was only implied. The mystery and sentimentality of the 'Raposín' stories give way to clarity and impersonal awareness. Whereas 'Raposín' 's subjective states remained beyond the grasp of the narrator, Gloria's are objectified: she is Artemis. There is therefore a conscious division between the material from which the story is made and the meaning that it contains.

The way in which Ayala uses the myth suggests that its function is to avoid the single point of view which was used for 'Raposín' and which undoubtedly led to sentimentality and lack of clarity. He uses two connected Greek myths: that of Artemis, daughter of Zeus, eternal virgin and enthusiastic huntress, and in the dénouement that of Atlanta, a favourite of

1. Ayala, La última aventura de 'Raposín', Obras Completas, I, p. 932.

2. Ayala, La última aventura..., p. 930: 'Volvió a los hombres, y los hombres huyeron de él o le hostigaron ya decadente'.

3. Ayala, La última aventura..., p. 936.

Artemis and equally zealous in remaining a virgin and hunting wild boars.⁴

The connection between these pursuits is that the wild-boar of the myth can be taken as a symbol of sexual energy. In this way Gloria herself is not used as a symbol. The distance between the real level and the myth is further accentuated by the fact that the similarity between Gloria and Artemis is first introduced, by don Robustiano the priest, as a joke, and not as a serious comment from the narrator. The priest calls her 'Gloria, blanca y sin tacha como Artemisa',⁵ 'la inmaculada Artemisa',⁶ 'diosa gentilísima'⁷ and 'su respetada diosa',⁸ savouring the classical past in the same way as he savours cognac. Yet from this unexpected source comes a premonition of future events:

A tus flechas se atribuyen las muertes súbitas. ¿ Cuántos jabalíes recibirán cerdosos muerte desastrosa de tus manos, diestras en el manejo del arco y en el gobierno de la flecha, que parte veloz y cortante como grito de golondrina? ⁹

The formal structure consists in the protagonist conforming to a mythical precedent which was only introduced as a joke. Gloria is therefore seen as Artemisa from a number of different points of view, and the story about her thus has a sense of unity.

The narrator takes up the reference to the myth and from time to time calls her Artemisa. Yet he is aware from the very beginning that

4. The many references create a mythical atmosphere: Artemis's father was Zeus, Gloria's is called don Jovino; the priest refers to her as 'blanca y sin tacha', recalling the incident where Artemis daubs her face in white mud as a disguise; both Gloria and Artemis prefer the country to the town; Gloria's determination to hunt reflects Artemis's request for a bow and arrow; the crow appears as a bad omen in both the myth and the story.

5. Ayala, Artemisa in Bajo el signo de Artemisa, Obras Completas, II, p. 936.

6. Ayala, Artemisa, p. 942.

7. Ayala, Artemisa, p. 957.

8. Ayala, Artemisa, p. 958.

9. Ayala, Artemisa, p. 931.

there is something mysterious about Gloria. He describes her dancing and 'ejecutando, entre risotadas, cabalísticos ademanes..., al modo de sacerdotisa joven que conjurase a los astros en tono festivo'.¹⁰ Like many of Ayala's heroines, she is connected with some kind of ancient ritual and is primarily an archetype, in this case archetypal innocence. Her beauty is essentially classical and harmonious: don Robustiano compares her to a Greek statue and the narrator agrees:

Y así era; su brazo, tendido hacia el frente, hacia lo futuro, era portador de un laurel invisible; su cabecita entre la penumbra tenía indecisiones de visión fugitiva, y todo su cuerpo, aparentemente flotante, volaba como el de una criatura vestida de viento y de gracia alada. 11

In the early part of the story the myth is used to describe the most ephemeral qualities as they appear to the narrator at a particular moment, which is then frozen in the mind of the reader. Generally, the descriptions of Gloria are intended to appeal to the mind rather than the senses.

Gloria's paganism is suppressed by Tomásón her fiancé after whose arrival she is, 'ya no diosa griega, sino doncella cristiana'.¹² Tomásón disapproves of her innocent fooling around with her brother and her delight in pretty clothes: for him nothing can be innocent and her concern with her appearance can only mean that she will be unfaithful. He is associated with the wild boar of the myth which in turn could be interpreted as a symbol of sexual energy. Indeed, the descriptions of Tomásón and the wild-boar are almost identical:

10. Ayala, Artemisa, p. 925.

11. Ayala, Artemisa, p. 933. The same image, connected with the enthusiasm of youth, appears in Ayala's poem 'El entusiasmo' in El sendero andante.

12. Ayala, Artemisa, p. 935

Tomasón¹³

ciclópeo torso echado
hacia delante

los ojos flamígeros

la boca entreabierta

Boar¹⁴

de su pecho enorme

sus ojillos... arrojan llamas

sus dientes chocan entre sí

Gloria is at once fascinated and repelled by such energy: 'lleva dentro un monstruo espantable, que apenas si asoma de vez en vez. Esto es lo que me atrae y fascina en esa alma lóbrega y ese cuerpo gigante'.¹⁵ The conflict in the story is therefore between the innocence of Gloria and the sexual energy which she inspires in Tomasón and which in turn appears to Gloria as animal lust. This duality is to be found throughout the descriptions of nature in Artemisa. On the one hand there is the cruelty and brute force of the dogs when they tear apart first a bat and then a crow, and the very idea of hunting the boars, and on the other the harmonious and beautiful nature which appeals to Gloria. This is best exemplified by the descriptions of the trees in the forest which look like columns: in some ways the world is almost geometrically ordered. Clearly the material out of which the story is made is to a great extent a development and interpretation of the Artemis - wild boar opposition of the original myth.

Gloria's association with Artemis is due to her fear of sex; she wants to remain a virgin. This fear and disgust is apparent in her dream when, in her 'lecho virginal', she imagines that monsters are coming to attack her. All her fears are connected with being touched: the monster which she fears approaches her bed and puts its head close to hers. When in a sense the dream comes true and someone does try to get into her

13. Ayala, Artemisa, p. 962.

14. Ayala, Artemisa, pp. 960-1.

15. Ayala, Artemisa, p. 938.

room, it is the hands which she sees first. Although the intruder is never identified Gloria automatically thinks that it is Tomasón, clearly associating him with being raped. This unconscious side of her personality, which both she and society repress, is awoken by the hunt which takes place on the following day. Although she is referred to exclusively as 'Artemisa y su hueste',¹⁶ she is not allowed to hunt alone and is expected to be a mere spectator. When the Artemis side of her character is repressed she turns in on herself. The play which the narrator makes between the two names is well shown at this point:

Iba [Tomás] un tanto resentido con Gloria a causa de que Artemisa, inflamada de fuego bélico e impaciencia, no atendría tanto a su amante como él deseara, y en lugar de repetir las mil veces repetidas frases amorosas cuidábase más de las presuntas víctimas que de la otra víctima, no menos montaraz y brava que los jabalíes, pero ya cobrada: Tomás. 17

Gloria is continually referred to as 'Artemisa', as the narrator is concerned to bring to the surface thoughts of which she is herself perhaps not aware. Her resentment at not being able to take an active part in the hunt grows until she rebels. After this point she is referred to as Gloria because the unconscious level of the story has been brought to the surface. The wild boars, for example, are no longer the mythical ones which Artemis hunted, but real ones. Gloria can only be freed from the conflict with her unconscious by working it out, which she does by killing Tomasón when, like a wild boar, he attacks her. That Gloria is in a dream-like state where her unconscious fears will rise to the surface¹⁸ is shown by the description of

16. Ayala, *Artemisa*, p. 954

17. Ayala, *Artemisa*, p. 956

18. see J. Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, second edition, New York, 1968, p. 64. He explains that the unwilling hero isolates himself from the world through willed introversion which 'drives the psychic energies into depth and activates the lost continent of unconscious infantile and archetypal images'. Gloria is very much the unwilling heroine.

her face immediately before her murder of Tomásón and subsequent suicide:

El rostro de Gloria quedó muerto de estupor. Cegáronse sus pupilas, como si la lumbre que las inflamaba poco antes se derramase en el alma, iluminando, esclareciendo lobregueces. Luego, sus ojos solares volvieron a arder como nunca, irritados, fatales. 19

By taking this action Gloria becomes one of those heroines who refuse the call and prefer to remain forever in child-like innocence. She had never imagined what sex was and is disgusted when she finds out.

The use of myth in this story gives a sense of cohesion and is never decorative. It reveals Gloria's unconscious thoughts with great clarity and precision and without intervention from the narrator. But above all, the mythical conflict reveals a complete view of the world, the opposition between nature as harmony and beauty and nature as brute force, which is what the story, and perhaps the myth, is really about.

Sonreña (1909), unlike Artemisa, has an implied mythical structure which is closer to that found in the Alberto novels: it is based on a series of loosely connected images which do not give the story a strong shape. Indeed, there is no single myth to be found in it. The balance of forces which reigned in Artemisa gives way to an apparently chaotic and haphazard world in which the cohesive force of an explicit myth would be inappropriate. The first-person narrator who introduces the story can see no order whatsoever:

Platón fue harto optimista, tal vez extremadamente irónico, al asegurar que los hombres somos juguetes de los dioses. Hombres y mujeres van y vienen, vienen y van, y tejen la vida deleznable, quizá, quizá, sin orden ni concierto, sin pauta ni patrón que unos inmortales bien humorados y

sañudos hayan preestablecido por gozarse en el afán tortuoso de unas pobres criaturas efímeras. 20

The rest of the story consists of another first-person narrative by another narrator who is also unable to make any sense of the world or the haphazard series of events which led to his marriage, the death of his wife and an affair with an old flame. This well-worn device of using two narrators, one of whom claims to have found the story in a drawer, is intended to isolate the meaning, conveyed by the implied narrator who tells the whole story, from the events and to make the story sound artificial; it is typical of Ayala's early writing.

Sonreña is concerned with a hero who has already made one 'journey' but who has not gained a sufficient insight to understand the world to which he returns, in this case his home town. He is unable to come to terms with the fact that time has changed the town, but in a meaningless way as the inhabitants are, for him, still in a state of 'prístina e infantil miseria'.²¹ The girls whom he knew have now got married, to be replaced in the paseo by similar ones whom he does not know. His only answer to the problem of creating permanence and stability is to make myths of the girls:

Mis ojos debían de arder, con una llama mística y devota.
Idólotra y politeísta, mis paisanas eran para mí encarnación
codiciadora de otras tantas divinidades. 22

Again, a character who cannot face reality turns to his store of archetypes. Myths are seen here as a bulwark against reality and not a key to its meaning, which is typical of Ayala's ambiguous attitude to them.

20. Ayala, Sonreña, Obras Completas, I, p. 819.

21. Ayala, Sonreña, p. 824.

22. Ayala, Sonreña, p. 829.

The 'call to action' comes when a friend suggests that Fernández ought to get married:

Mi amigo creyó hablar por cuenta propia y era la Naturaleza, la eternidad de la materia, no sé qué fuerzas nebulosas que había en mí, la voluntad de lo ciego. ²³

This insight into the next world serves only to convince him that the world is ruled by some mysterious and blind energy. Like both Alberto and Marco de Setignano he must now undertake some action, even if he fails to understand it. Fernández's journey to his previously abandoned novia, Esperanza, takes him to the sea, an image of power which he can recognize: 'La Humanidad tiene en la madre agua infinitos de energía latente'. ²⁴ The fishermen whom he sees there are 'cara a cara con el infinito', ²⁵ and have a sense of the presence of God which he can never achieve. The return to the novia represents his attempt to link himself with this energy and to return to an innocent state in which its presence will not frighten but convince him of the presence of God. It is therefore full of images of the quest. For example, the first person he meets seems to him like a 'sibila aviesa', ²⁶ until she explains that Esperanza is still alive, when she becomes his 'ángel tutelar' watching over his state of 'paradisíaco infantilismo'. ²⁷ Esperanza is a symbol of perfect innocence and takes him back to a similar state so that he becomes 'tímido, con una santa timidez de pericia'. ²⁸ His new life with Esperanza, which starts in a garden, represents a completely new beginning, in which all is harmony

23. Ayala, Sonreña, p. 832.

24. Ayala, Sonreña, p. 831.

25. Ayala, Sonreña, p. 835.

26. Ayala, Sonreña, p. 836.

27. Ayala, Sonreña, p. 837.

28. Ayala, Sonreña, p. 841.

and peace. They are like the 'desposados de la Grecia antigua':²⁹ time has stopped and stability reigns. Fernández has ordered a chaotic world by returning to his childhood innocence.

Yet this return to the Church, nature and family life is not informed by any understanding of the world, which will continue to intervene and thwart all his plans. By a series of incredible 'novelistic' coincidences, which are meant as evidence of a disordered world, he meets Elín, an old flame, with whom he sleeps, again obeying 'la voluntad inconcusa del universo'.³⁰ In other words, Fernández has some of the world energy, but it is haphazard and incomprehensible. When Elín goes away he realises that to understand each particular event he needs absolute knowledge:

¿Cuándo llegaría el horizonte final, el gran derrumbamiento o catarata del torrente desmandado que antecede al instante en que se me meten por lo absoluto los ojos de la conciencia?³¹

Harmony with the universe depends on both energy and insight; Fernández has neither because he is firmly rooted in this world from which there is no release. The problem is therefore different from the one which Gloria faced because here the world is a hostile place: the only possible harmony is to be found in an illusory retreat from it. Whereas Gloria could choose not to live Fernández has no choice and will always be buffeted by an impersonal and arbitrary fate. By the end of the Sonreña, Fernández's tale has become one of the anecdotes which so disgusted him at the beginning. He is a failed hero who cannot reconcile the energy which exists in the universe and his own desire for stability.

Whereas the myth in Artemisa has a psychological treatment and in

29. Ayala, Sonreña, p. 845.

30. Ayala, Sonreña, p. 855.

31. Ayala, Sonreña, p. 856.

Sonreña a metaphysical one, in Sentimental Club (1909) the same theme of the return to origins is treated ironically: there may be no past state worth returning to. There also seems to be a growing tendency towards abstraction: whereas 'Raposín' was a powerful figure in his own right, and Gloria, although linked to Artemis, was an individual, Fernández has almost no personal characteristics whatsoever, apart from being a 'hero', and the protagonist of Sentimental Club is the purely abstract Ulises. The sketch takes place in a hypothetical future utopia so that its past is the Spain of 1909. In this utopia the past, or origin of things, has been abolished and the authorities declare that the world was never any different: Fernández's aim of stopping time and achieving stability has been achieved, but at great cost. The characters, having virtually had their personalities erased, are asking such questions as '¿para qué vivimos?' and '¿qué plan tiene todo esto?'³² That is, having achieved a perfectly innocent world in which there are no vices, conflicts or wars, they want to lose innocence and gain experience. Ulises endeavours to supply answers by delving into the forgotten past and conforming to the mythical precedent:

He desentrañado el secreto de nuestra planeta, he traído a mí lo antiguo y he vivido con los muertos. Todo lo que fue lo conozco de una manera cierta y lo voy a revelar ante vuestros ojos.

He is the hero who accepts the challenge and after a series of illuminating experiences returns to the world as a preacher and educator. Sentimental Club is an account of his teaching.

In the first stage Ulises recreates the world through the recreation

32. Ayala, Sentimental Club, El cuento semanal, Madrid, 22/10/1909. All references to Sentimental Club are taken from this, the first edition, which has no page numbers.

of language; certain sensations are associated with the words which denote them. By naming them the characters repeat the process of the creation and bring to life a whole range of personal feelings. This recreation continues with words which do not naturally represent the objects to which they refer such as 'rey', 'digestión', 'ministro', 'carambola', 'calderón', 'rima', 'soneto', 'besos' and 'amor'. When he explains their meaning modern civilisation appears as a strange mixture of sophistication and savagery which the inhabitants of the unified and rational utopia cannot understand. To their untutored minds such a world has very little meaning, although it is capable of satisfying their instincts.

In the second stage Ulises recites a poem recounting the origin of the universe where the prime-mover is seen to be love and the main characteristic, harmony. In this way he has clearly seen beyond the superficially antagonistic forces at work there to discover something deeper. The characters all decide to start a revolution which will restore this past, singing his poem as they do it, but each begins to exhibit one of the seven cardinal sins. The old chaotic world is about to be reborn, so Ulises decides to put off the revolution until another day. The message of Sentimental Club is quite clear: the energy which animates the world and is necessary for its survival is incompatible with ideas of harmony and the general good. There are two alternatives: the deathlike peace of Gloria, Fernández's fake innocence and the uniformity of the future utopia or else the brutal energy of Tomasón, the arbitrary world of Elín and the cardinal sins of the world which Ulises refuses to revive.

La Araña (1913) deals in an abstract and rather more literary way with the same problem. Like many of Ayala's short stories it is set in a

privileged location. The café from which the story takes its name is an 'ángulo de penumbra' from which the thoughts and sayings of the characters spread to the four corners of the world. The description of the café as 'cúbico' again shows that all dimensions come together at that particular point. The café is the centre of the world, a kind of 'world navel' where the truth may be revealed and opposites reconciled.

The two conflicting characters are the positivist, who would attempt to change the nature of things, and the mystic who would attempt to attain a clearer vision of things. When each has told a story ridiculing the other the conflict remains unresolved, until a third character, don Pedro tells the story of León, 'el celoso postumo', where the question of the possession of the two worlds is most apparent. When León is alive he misinterprets reality at every step; when his wife is faithful he is jealous and when she deceives him he believes in her fidelity. It is only from the next world that, after his death, he can see the truth and forgive his wife for her continuing infidelity. In other words, action depends on the superior vision 'sub specie aeterni' that he has gained on entering heaven. Yet there is virtually no chance of his returning to earth enriched with this vision: when he does return it is as a capon which is eaten by his widow and her lover. Again, possession of the two worlds is an impossible ideal, which explains the failure of all the heroes of these progressively more abstract early stories.

4.2. The figures of Odysseus and Prometheus in Prometeo

4.2.1 Ayala's early heroes fail because they are unable to reconcile the chaotic, arbitrary and unjust, yet energetic and vital world with the peace and order of a harmonious, comprehensible and static, yet dead world. From their point of view the two appear opposites and they tend to retreat into themselves. The importance of Prometeo is that it recognises these difficulties and suggests that the only solution is one provided by a superman who can embody both action and thought in the real world. There is therefore a logical development from Sonreña: if ordinary humans fail, a superman is needed. Ayala takes up once more the figure of Odysseus, already used in Sentimental Club, and examines the idea of a collective salvation for all mankind, whereas in the Alberto novels he continued to think in terms of the individual.

This change in subject involves a slightly different technique because as the saviour is the ultimate in human achievement the world in which he lives must embody all the contradictions apparent in a diverse world. There must be a much stronger clash between the various elements. Whereas before Prometeo the myth was illustrated by the narrative, here the narrative becomes a burlesque version of the myth; that is, the narrative is no longer an invented parallel with the myth, but is made up of degraded mythical elements. The result is that there is no longer a single point of view from which to watch the action because the myth of Odysseus is contaminated by the lower level. In this way the myth heightens the differences between the two principal levels of the story and at the same time unifies them. The universal symbolism and the burlesque narrative, though far apart, are seen

to be aspects of the same subject. The principle technical difficulty in Prometeo is therefore how to maintain the balance between the burlesque and the myth because they are no longer separate: the myth even exists in the mind of one of the grotesque characters, and the grotesque narrative is constructed from elements of the myth. As a result there is a continual tension between the seriousness of the original myth as a symbol of modern man, and its degradation. This tension reflects the tensions in a world which is infinitely varied, yet essentially the same. Prometeo therefore contains a variety of mythical levels.

In the first place there is the pure myth, hardly ever seen directly apart from a few literal translations, which must be supposed to exist in the memory of the reader. The poems represent a partial displacement of this and constitute a modern interpretation of the idea of the saviour-figure or myth of the hero, which appears again on the still lower level of Marco's relationship with the myth. Below this there is the total degradation of the myth of Odysseus in which even the slightest details are deformed almost beyond recognition and the characters reduced to the stature of puppets. This mixing of styles in the adaptation of an ancient epic has precedents in the tradition of the heroic-burlesque poem, of which Ayala says:

El poema heroico-burlesco es hermano menor de la epopeya.
Por lo menos, le acompaña a la zaga y se proyecta como la
sombra al cuerpo; sombra que se deforma. 33

In comparison with the epic it is an 'espejo grotesco que le sigue, le refleja, le descoyunta y quiere humillarle'.³⁴ Ayala concludes that such works are, 'por virtud de la transformación de los tiempos... un género

33. Ayala, 'Sobre los poemas heroico burlescos', Obras Completas, II.

p. 497.

34. Ayala, 'Sobre los poemas...', p. 497.

mixto y transitorio entre el poema burlesco y el cuento filosófico de Voltaire'.³⁵ This is the literary lineage of the type of parody which he attempts for the first time in Prometeo. Like the short stories of Voltaire, it is a light-hearted burlesque with a bitter message. The original myth is only there so that it can be transformed, and in the early chapters, deformed. When the narrator's point of view is high, the shadow of the myth is sharp, with little deformation, but the lower the vantage point the more grotesque the narrative. The importance of the myth is therefore as a central figure which can be seen from different angles, and not, as in Artemisa, as an emblem representing the main conflicts.

Ayala's narrative deals only with events from Odysseus' departure from Calypso's island to the meal scene at King Alcinous' palace, which in the original constitute a turning-point in the action. Other references are included for the symbolic value which Ayala attaches to them, and are not deformed. Although the creative element of Prometeo is concerned with changing the original, Ayala also includes a number of literal translations which are intended to eliminate all sense of the physical reality of the story. Indeed, many of the scenes are impossible to visualise. The intention is probably to underline the fact that Prometeo takes place entirely in a literary world. This reliance on a literary model is new in Ayala, and here is probably due to his attempt to provide all aspects of modern reality with a mythical precedent. If the model did not contain all the details necessary for the development of the story the systematic degradation of all reality would not be possible.

35. Ayala, 'Sobre los poemas...' p.497.

4. 2. 2 Degradation of the myth

The degradation of the myth is a case of reason destroying action. In the modern world no action can speak for itself, but must be analysed and thus demeaned. The modern novelist's concern for detail turns the epic style into farce and makes the 'estilo alegórico, épico y desafortado'³⁶ sound quite hollow. The muse of the modern novelist is the 'diosa cominera de estos días plebeyos, diosa de la curiosidad impertinente y del tedio fisgón que no te gozas si no es hurtando entre las cenizas del hogar ajeno'.³⁷ Whereas action in the world of myth and literature is pure and demands no explanation, modern action, such as Marco's stay with Federica Gómez, the modern Calypso, can be accounted for in the most minute psychological terms which have the effect of demeaning human acts:

Tal fue la razón de que comenzar a a hacerle cucamonas a Federica Gómez, mujer sentimental, vehemente y metida en mantecas, viuda por contera. Federica se apasionó por Marco, y Marco, por pasatiempo, se dejó ir a donde ella llevase, y fue a una hermosa casa de campo así que comenzó el estío, y, por desgracia, con el estío el hastío de Marco. ³⁸

There are no more mysterious or supernatural forces to imprison the hero, but instead logical psychological reasons. The anguish that the real Odysseus feels is replaced by boredom. It is hardly Marco's fault if his Odyssey turns out to be a farce; he is living in a world where physical reality dominates. All the references to the myth in the first chapter of Prometeo are in the same vein, and are a thorough degradation of almost every detail:³⁹

36. Ayala, Prometeo, Obras Completas, II, p. 601.

37. Ayala, Prometeo, p. 594.

38. Ayala, Prometeo, p. 612.

39. Ayala, Prometeo, pp. 595-600.

AYALA

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|--|---|
| 1. 'Llevaba ya el magnífico Odiseus cuarenta días en poder de la mimosa ninfa', (595) | Seven years |
| 2. Calypso lives in a 'casa de campo' | In a cave |
| 3. Not isolated | Isolated |
| 4. No gods | Athene comes to see her |
| 5. Hysterical pleading keeps Marco with Federica (596) | Calypso has magical power over Odysseus |
| 6. Marco wiles away the time swimming(596) | Odysseus weeps in despair |
| 7. Marco decides to leave her (596) | The gods decide his departure |
| 8. Marco ties logs together to form a raft in secret and pays workers to drag it down to the beach (596) | Odysseus makes a proper boat in the open and drags it to the beach himself. |
| 9. Events happen <u>as if</u> the gods were present (597) | The god's arrival is the literal truth |
| 10. Marco buys wine at a tavern (597) | Wine brought by Calypso |
| 11. Mean mercantile spirit of 'así sales ganando' (597) | Calypso is generous |
| 12. 'Vino y aguardiente' (597) | Nectar and ambrosia |
| 13. Federica is angry (597) | Odysseus faces the anger of Poseidon |
| 14. Marco has a drink and falls asleep while the stars look after him (598) | Odysseus steers the boat and does not sleep |
| 15. Marco is only at sea for one night and never drifts far from land (598) | Odysseus spends 17 days at sea |
| 16. Although he is drifting Marco feels that he is in control (598) | Odysseus is steering but feels helpless |
| 17. Marco almost gets to the shore before the storm breaks (598) | Odysseus is still far out at sea |
| 18. Marco has another swim (599) | Odysseus is swimming to save his life |

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| 19. Marco is immediately tossed up on the shore (599) | Odysseus swims for two days |
| 20. Perpetua Meana's dream is not caused by divine intervention (599) | Nausikaa's dream is caused by Athene |
| 21. Perpetua's reaction to the dream is: '¡Qué sueño más chusco!' (599) | For Nausikaa it is a message from the gods |
| 22. Agamemnon is a mule (599) | A god |
| 23. Marco gets up because he is hungry (599) | Odysseus gets up because he wants to see other humans |
| 24. Marco is discovered (600) | Odysseus gets up and goes to Nausikaa |
| 25. Marco kneels in front of her (600) | Odysseus decides not to kneel |
| 26. Marco receives no help from the goddess (600) | Odysseus is helped by a goddess |
| 27. Perpetua's reply to Marco is: 'Ha perdido el seso' (600) | Nausikaa's is: 'Sir, your manners prove that you are no fool'. |
| 28. Marco demands certain things | Odysseus is humble |
| 29. They give Marco sheets to wear (600) | Odysseus is given a tunic |
| 30. Marco will be given food and drink later (600) | Food and drink are given immediately |

There is scarcely a single detail which is not a grotesque echo of the Odyssey.

All the supernatural forces become psychological ones; natural dangers and hazards are systematically reduced; sometimes Marco does the opposite of Odysseus, and action is replaced by inaction. As a result the characters appear like puppets, each a grotesque miniature version of the original. 40

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40. In Pilares (1909), an early version of Marco, Matel de Setignano, illustrates well the way Ayala uses the word 'myth': modern man is a myth because he does not have an 'authentic' existence and is forever tied to physical existence: 'No, don Deogracias, no son mitos. Mitos somos nosotros, usted y yo, todos los presentes, excepto ese Xuanón, que conserva aún la traza y el pergeño de los héroes antiguos. Primero hubo dioses, luego semidioses, más tarde héroes, luego hombres; continuó degenderando la especie, y hubo semihombres. Ahora, amigos míos, hay ex hombres, ex hombres nada más'. Ayala, Pilares, Obras Completas, I, p. 905.

This is achieved by concentrating on the minute details of the Odyssey rather than the general structure and is probably why Ayala chose a model which had been crystallised in literary form: a myth does not usually contain many details. Although Marco's actions are not necessarily grotesque in themselves, they are made ridiculous because each is seen to be a mythical action displaced towards the material world. The farce of Marco is therefore a question of technique: Chapter I therefore includes no invented material about Marco but only derivative aspects.

It would be wrong to suppose that the degradation of the myth is gratuitous or that the reduction of Marco to the status of a puppet is necessarily a criticism of him. The first chapter of Prometeo merely makes explicit a view of the universe already apparent in Sonreña. The modern world has become a finite place where phenomena can be explained rationally. It is a purely material world limited in space and time. For this reason all the displacements of the myth operate in the same way to make it reasonable and physically possible. Human actions are therefore always potentially ridiculous because the fact that they are simply the effects of certain causes makes them so insignificant. The problem for the novelist is how to give some sense of the restrictions of such a world. Ayala's answer is to compare it with a world which is not limited and where actions are authentic and cannot be dismissed as insignificant. One of the qualities of myth is that whatever happens in it always appears significant.

This pessimistic world-view, in which heroes are farcical, tends to blunt the use of the myth for social criticism. If the whole world is degraded there is nothing unusual in Spain's degradation. The misapplication of

elements of the myth to Spain therefore becomes a joke rather than serious criticism. Spain turns into a kind of never-never land, less credible than the isolated islands in the Odyssey, with Seville as the land of the lotus-eaters because of the 'amenazadora olvidanza de todo',⁴¹ which makes it so apathetic. In Salamanca, 'las moradas del recuerdo, pobladas por las cabezas vacías de los que dejaron de existir',⁴² he meets Tiresias, or Unamuno. This is the only occasion when the colourful yet arbitrary degradation of Spain is really connected with the theme of the story:

Infortunado, has venido a unas regiones a donde no se puede llegar sin haber perdido la humanidad. Ya no eres hombre, ni podrás recobrar tu estado de hombre. Serás, de aquí en adelante, un recuerdo de hombre.

This is the '98 generation's view of the problem of Spain as a spiritual crisis and does not necessarily reflect Ayala's own at that time. In any case, it does not need a reference to the Odyssey, which is inevitably far-fetched and tenuous, to make such a point. The social criticism gains nothing by being masked in mythology. It is possible that Marco's 'Odyssey' through Spain is only included so that his life will have a similar structure to that of Odysseus. Indeed, the application of the myth to modern Spain corresponds to Marco's, and not the narrator's, point of view because the modern Odysseus is well aware of his literary precedent which colours his whole world-view.

41. Ayala, Prometeo, p. 608.

42. Ayala, Prometeo, p. 608.

4.2.3 Marco and the myths

If Chapter I of Prometeo shows that Marco has little in common with Odysseus and that the modern hero's quest is likely to be a farce, Chapter II, taking a different perspective, makes it clear that Marco is in some ways a modern counterpart of the ancient hero. The difficult technical problem of achieving this shift of point of view so that Marco, and all mankind, can appear grotesque and yet at the same time noble, is done by looking at the myth through the eyes of Marco, for whom the Odyssey represents complete knowledge of the world, one of the 'jugos más quintaesenciados, rancios y generosos del corazón e intelecto humanos a través de los siglos' which Marco assimilates 'en sangre y carne de su espíritu'.⁴⁴ The very myth which, through the narrator's 'estilo alegórico, épico y desafortado'⁴⁵ made Marco look ridiculously small is at the same time Marco's own key to knowledge of the world. Marco is therefore the first of Ayala's characters to have a specifically literary view of the world, with the result that he can be seen from different points of view: as a false Odysseus and as a real one.

The attraction of the Odyssey for Marco is shown to lie precisely in its mixture of heroism and comedy: Odysseus may be a powerful hero but he is also totally at the mercy of gods who at times appear meanly human. This heroic-comic view of the world becomes attractive to Marco when his ideals of heroic action are becoming tarnished in what, in the 1942 prologue to Troteras y danzaderas, Ayala was to describe as the 'período de las nubes': 'El yo se siente huérfano y como algo espúreo, en un mundo refractario, impasible e indiferente a la quimera de señorío que sobre él nos habíamos

44. Ayala, Prometeo, p. 605.

45. Ayala, Prometeo, p. 601.

adjudicado, a título gracioso y temerario'.⁴⁶ The absurd world in which the real Odysseus drifts from island to island at the whim of the gods is no less absurd than Marco's own, in which physical reality dominates. Just as Odysseus struggles against Poseidon, who can blow him off course, so Marco struggles against the crushing material world and especially the passage of time:

quería su propia exaltación hasta un grado máximo, a modo de grande dique levantado en mitad del caudal de las edades, que detiene y recoge todas las aguas del pasado en un ancho y profundo remanso...⁴⁷

The Odyssey therefore constitutes complete knowledge of the past, Marco's way of conquering time, and a summa which will enable him to advance into the future, enriched, like the archetypal hero, with total understanding. The difficulties which Odysseus faces make his own difficulties, and failure to find heroism in the modern world, a justifiable part of the natural order of things. After reading about the origins of things, 'la mente se le aguzaba y se le infundía como una nueva vida'.⁴⁸ Also like Odysseus, Marco's life is an attempt at a successful return, although whereas the Greek hero was returning to an Ithaca which existed, Marco's return is to a lost cultural tradition, which he mistakenly believes he will find in modern Spain. His aims are quite explicit: 'Para Juan, la tradición viva, la verdadera tradición, debía ser un misterio de trinidad una, eternamente renovado, fuerza, gracia, astucia'.⁴⁹ Clearly, however, his knowledge of the myth, which serves him as a rationalization of the present situation, is also a compensation for his failure to reconcile these opposites.

46. Ayala, prologue to Troteras y danzaderas, Losada, Buenos Aires, 1942, p. 16.

47. Ayala, Prometeo, p. 603.

48. Ayala, Prometeo, p. 605.

49. Ayala, Prometeo, p. 606.

Odysseus was a man of action and known for his astuteness and grace, but Marco can only become Odysseus when drunk: his energy is spurious. It is therefore significant that the theme of Odysseus is introduced precisely at a time when Marco's ideal of heroic action is becoming tarnished: neither bullfighting nor capitalism offer the right balance of the three virtues. Marco's energy is continually dissipated. If, as Ayala says in Principios y finales de la novela,⁵⁰ the epic is a poem celebrating youth and the novel the genre of experienced middle age, Marco's epic is at the point of becoming a novel. This is because the energy of his youth is gradually being wasted through drink, over-eating and the onset of middle age. Marco's identification with Odysseus is therefore an attempt to stop the passage of time.

Marco's renunciation of energy and determination to become the man of thought rather than action is, on the personal level, an admission of failure, and an illusory sacrifice. It corresponds to the mythical hero's renunciation of the self - one of the things which made Marco like the gods. was, it is stressed, his physical appearance- but like everything on the physical level of the story, it is treated ironically because Marco is getting old. Yet on the more abstract level, which in Chapter II onwards balances the low level, his renunciation of action in order to create the real saviour represents regeneration, and is not ironical. The man of thought will create the word which will become man. Here mankind is trying to compete with the gods. By deciding to create the new Prometheus, Marco is not just determined to have a son, which would be the interpretation on the personal and degraded level, but is trying to save mankind. The Promethean figure

50. Ayala, Principios y finales de la novela, Madrid, 1958, pp.9-10.

is impersonal. On this mythical level, Marco is the hero who strives for a union with the next world through a saviour who is both God and man. In other words, Marco is trying to create Christ.

Nevertheless, even this has a counterpart on the physical level. Marco will have to father the perfect child, and so chooses the perfect wife, the essence of femininity. Whereas most saviours are given by God, this one will be the product of the human intelligence: 'El matrimonio debe ser una obra sabia de selección de la especie. Y lo que les está vedado al común de las gentes les es otorgado a algunos elegidos como por vía providencial'.⁵¹ In other words, Marco thinks he lives in a world where, as everything can be explained scientifically, man can rule nature. Marco therefore becomes a symbol of modern man, and is certainly connected with an issue which Ayala discusses in one of his essays, 'La bestezuela humana'. In his first visit to the United States in 1914, Ayala had come across a 'Better Babies Campaign', which was designed to encourage the production of 'standard children': 'Standard en inglés viene a ser algo así como arquetipo, o cuando menos, el más alto tipo de perfección asequible'.⁵² This^{is} done by matching the parents, which Marco does by pairing his own energy, brute force and intellect with Perpetua's femininity, and which ironically turns child-bearing into a kind of human cattle-rearing and makes human beings like animals. The attempt to create the perfect human being, the God-man, therefore involves a denial of man's humanity. Marco fails to understand that the world is not a system of strict cause and effect and that he will never be able to determine the future

51. Ayala, Prometeo, p. 626

52. Ayala, El país del futuro, second edition, Madrid, 1959, p. 41.

by mere thought and physical strength. The world is an infinitely varied place which, if it can produce a handsome and intelligent Marco can also produce his opposite. The importance of the myth of Prometheus is that it focuses attention on the central issue of both the story and the myth of the hero: man's attempts to dominate the world.⁵³ Unlike the story of Odysseus it cannot be systematically degraded, although ironically Prometeo is a human who destroys himself, whereas Prometheus was a god destroyed by the gods. Instead, it is used, as was the myth in Artemisa, as an emblem, summarising the issues at stake.

4.2.4 The symbolic value of the myth

In the poems which precede each chapter the theme of Odysseus is no longer contrasted with modern reality, as in Chapter I, or balanced with it, as in the rest of the narrative, but seen to be an archetypal representation of it. There is in the poems no conflict between the levels. The poems represent the lyrical and therefore sympathetic spirit which will encourage the reader to identify with Odysseus and with the Marco who is elsewhere degraded:

Tú, como yo, todos, hermanos,
todos somos como Odysseus, 54

The poems contain a number of motifs taken from the Odyssey and presented in a form which makes them equally applicable to Marco, Odysseus and the reader. They are, as might be expected, the most archetypal motifs

53. This issue is well summarized by R. Cansinos-Assens, La nueva literatura, IV, Madrid, 1927, p.82: 'El mundo occidental hace examen de conciencia y piensa si no habrá errado al conceder la primacia al intelecto sobre el corazón, dejándose vencer de la ambición de dominar al mundo de la materia, que le ha contagiado de su insensibilidad y aridez'. It could be argued that Marco is a man who tries to use his intelligence to dominate the material world and is finally dominated by it.

54. Ayala, Prometeo, p.601

which without being abstract, because they refer to some kind of physical reality, are distant from everyday reality and constitute a level full of meaning. The use of poems to crystallise meaning is not new in Ayala, and is seen in La pata de la raposa, where the poems summarised Alberto's attitudes to life. Yet in Prometeo the poems are made out of the same material which is degraded in the prose narrative. Ayala, it could be said, has not yet found a way of incorporating into the narrative the meaning which he wants it to convey and must therefore present it separately to avoid modern reality becoming an allegory. The difference between the various treatments is one of point of view: if before, in the narrative, it was very low and receptive to great amounts of detail, in the poems it is very high and only sensitive to the general outline. The problem which Ayala faced has not yet been solved: if the universe is multifaceted and yet unified he must find a narrative form which is itself many-sided. Whereas the narrative shows the personal reasons for Marco's failure, the poems enable the reader to see Marco's actions in a different light and discover the universal reasons. To do this the poet will have to go back in time and unearth certain key words:

Arriscándose, la cabra
ramonea el fruto tierno
- savia vieja al sol hodierno -
El poeta, la palabra,
yema frágil de lo eterno. 55

The poems, by recalling certain motifs directly, will present the essential and complete meaning of the theme of Odysseus. As a result, Marco's actions are seen as determined by an external force; his actions are no longer seen as evolving in time, but as being continually repeated. This other view of Marco, so different from the first, in which Marco existed in time and space, has to be presented separately.

The first motif is the sea-journey, which is the mythical counterpart of Marco's travels and in particular of his flight from Federica Gómez.

The first poem turns Marco's flight into a call to action and perpetual renewal: man will be able to create himself by dreaming. This is one of the first times in Ayala that the mythical motifs of the progress of the hero are directly mentioned:

Sé tú mismo tu dueño, sé isleño.
Haz de tu vida prodigioso sueño
renovándose sin cesar.
Abrázate al flotante leño. 56
Echate a navegar por la mar.

The sea becomes therefore a place of endless possibilities where the hero can choose what he is to become, whereas the land meant stagnation. Whereas the sea-journey in the original myth was a prelude to return, here it is merely a place where anything can happen and where the hero can apparently determine his own future. The modern hero's trials are of a different nature from those of the archetypal hero, who at least had a destination. The sea-journey has become in Ayala an opportunity for the exercise of energy, regardless of results.

The poem which precedes Chapter II deals straight away with the problem of the return of the hero which, as has been shown, is the principle mythical theme of all the short stories dealt with in this chapter. How is the hero to be recognised in the real world? The whole process of transformation means that the hero becomes the opposite of what he was before, abandoning his former self:

El rey se tornó en un mendigo. 57

This theme again has its counterpart in the parts of ^{the} prose narrative dealing

56. Ayala, Prometeo, p. 593.

57. Ayala, Prometeo, p. 601.

with the clothes which Marco is to wear and ^{with} his true identity. Just as Odysseus was the only one able to string the great bow, so the modern hero will be some kind of superman. Yet this idea is questioned in the poem: everyone is a kind of Odysseus, each with his own bow. The aim of the true hero is not, therefore, to distinguish himself from the rest of humanity, but to undertake a 'quest' which is the normal state of all mankind:

Tú, como yo, todos, hermano,
todos somos como Odysseus,
todos poseemos un arco,
para los demás imposible,
para uno mismo ágil y blando.
Todos apuntamos al cielo.
Si alguno no apunta... ¡menguado! 58

Clearly there is emerging here an idea of the hero as a common man, and of the human condition as itself potentially heroic. The superman is in this sense merely a rationalisation of mankind's common efforts. The final stanza of the poem in Chapter II changes the whole sense of the hero's return to the world: whereas the traditional hero might be expected to save mankind, or, like Odysseus, to regain his kingdom, the modern hero will be expected to fit in. This is a marked development from the Alberto novels, where the hero failed because he tried to do too much. Ayala's later heroes, starting with the pragmatic don Guillén, will have no such illusions.

The other poems are concerned with the theme of the union of the two worlds, and turn, in Chapter III, to the idea of personal success and excellence, achieved through energy. Man is like the gods of mythology because of his body, which combines the two opposites of energy and order. Man defeats the passage of time, not by individual effort, but by

his urge to reproduce, which is common to all men. Hence the poem refers to 'el Hombre' in general. Through love and sexual energy man is therefore in contact with this eternal energy which is not always disordered as it was in Sonreña but gives order to the world:

Somos las hercúleas columnas
donde el orbe apoyado está.
En torno nuestro, cual guirnalda,
se ha enroscado la eternidad. 59

Before in Ayala, energy always tended to be seen as the opposite of order and this is the first sign of a possible reconciliation. Physical beauty is also seen as a reflection of the essential harmony of the world, whereas before, in Sonreña for example, it was often seen as a destructive element. The human body is therefore seen now as a magical place in which the divine becomes human:

¡ Cantemos la hermosura de la vida
corporal ! En el cuerpo se concentra
toda la vida.....
..... Naturaleza,
sin el deseo de dos cuerpos mozos,
es caótica, sorda, muda y ciega. 60

The mythical significance of the human body explains the continual references to Marco's good looks, and the importance he attaches to producing a son.

Yet the last poem explains the impossibility of joining the two worlds in this way; man can not become a god because the only real salvation is for God to become man. The pagan imagery associated with the hero dissolves to become 'pobre templo de paganía', now in 'negras ruinas'. The gods have lost their power and are now 'sombras efímeras' which flee

59. Ayala, Prometeo, p. 613.

60. Ayala, Prometeo, p. 616.

before the 'informe imagen de las víctimas', In place of pagan imagery there is Christian imagery: 'la lámpara del espíritu'. The gods have hidden behind the 'higueras bíblicas', and the voice which Odysseus hears is the Christian 'voz incógnita/que habla con música benigna'.⁶¹ The imagery of the fig-tree is very important because Odysseus saves himself from Scylla and Charybdis by clinging to one. The way now for man to save himself from the conflict of opposites (energy - order, for example) is to cling to a 'higuera bíblica'. Ironically, Prometeo, who is not saved, hangs himself from an ordinary one. There is therefore a continuity of images, especially mythical ones, between the levels of Prometeo.

Clearly Prometeo involves a change in the nature of the hero. If man is to earn immortality himself he must be a superman and, like Prometheus, steal fire from the gods, but the message of Prometeo is that man cannot earn it by his own superhuman efforts. God must become man. The task of the hero will now be to know and understand this truth, and as a result, one of Ayala's later heroes will be a priest.

A number of conclusions can also be drawn about Ayala's use of myth in Prometeo. First, he uses myth to present a world which is infinitely varied, yet always unified. The same myth can appear grotesque and yet at the same time be a key to the meaning of the story: its external structure is also the main character's fantasy. Marco dreams of the mythical level which in turn demeans him and gives him some sort of dignity. Second, Ayala is not yet prepared to allow mythical elements to intrude too much into the narrative, and separates the different treatments of myth to avoid the narrative becoming allegory. If the world is in some respects

61. Ayala, Prometeo, p. 629.

absurd the sense given by the myth must be kept apart. Nevertheless, echoes of the myth are to be found in the prose narrative, which thus gains in seriousness. Third, there is an attempt in Prometeo to link the three stages of the hero's development with the development of each particular man (the three épocas which are outlined in the prologue to Troteras y danzaderas) and to the whole history of mankind (the Odyssey is the youth of mankind, followed by Christianity, which is its maturity).

4.3 Rebirth

After Prometeo Ayala's 'mythical' stories are mainly concerned with rebirth and can be placed in two groups. In the first ultimate truth lies in God alone and Ayala presents the mythical elements directly. These stories have no 'literary' framework and the characters are therefore seen from a single perspective. The hero progresses from a state of total darkness to total light, with no hint of relativity, and dies, with the implication that he will go to Heaven. As they involve the death of the hero there is in two of them an element of 'tremendismo' and La caída de los Limones (1916) and Justicia (1928) are crime stories. The other group, in which the hero learns to overcome some problem and live in this world, has no religious element and is full of literary references, usually to the honour theme. These are usually set in Pílares, are more grotesque and more conscious of their artificiality. A rough parallel can be drawn between the first group and Belarmino y Apolonio and between the second and the Urbano and Simona and Tigre Juan novels.

In La caída de los Limones the basic mythical theme is the conflict

between good and evil, which is made clear in the second poem:

En la campal llanura de los cielos,
dos campeones búscanse sin fin.
Uno es el día, el blanco caballero.
Otro es la noche, el negro paladín. 62

This battle between light and darkness, which recurs throughout the story, is the traditional image of the fight between the forces of good and those of evil. The goal of the hero is to rise above good and evil, and perhaps for this reason there are no moral judgements in the story. Arias does wrong in killing Lola, but the only person to condemn him is a bigoted republican politician who shows no real concern for justice and would hang the whole Limón family if he could. Arias's execution is not presented as punishment for a crime but as a ritual death which must precede rebirth. Human justice is too far degraded in the story for it to count for much at the end. Arias only dies because he confesses as a result of his reawakening. Death and rebirth are therefore one and the same thing. La caída de los Limones is therefore unusual in being about the next world more than this.

Like many children in Ayala, Arias only has the minimum of physical existences : he is born physically weak and morally disturbed and is named in an heroic tradition 'en recuerdo de un antepasado glorioso, conquistador de vastos reinos en las Indias occidentales'.⁶³ He is born into a fairy-tale world (poem VI begins 'Una vez, érase que se era'⁶⁴) which the reader knows to be illusory, but then, as the narrator points out, Guadalfranco has never existed. The house of the Limones is the 'país de las hadas'⁶⁵ and Arias himself is an unreal figure, described mythically: 'Arias poseña,

62. Ayala, La caída de los Limones, Obras Completas, II, p. 679.

63. Ayala, La caída..., p. 688.

64. Ayala, La caída..., p. 696.

65. Ayala, La caída..., p. 689.

sin duda, peregrino hechizo de su persona. Quienes le rodeaban le rendían culto. Era como un centro misterioso de atractiva adoración'.⁶⁶ Already Arias is more than a human being: he is the fairy-prince of the tales, whose early life as a 'príncipe, hermoso y benigno'⁶⁷ could only be realised in the pages of a book. Like Marco, but without his intellect or physical strength, Arias turns in on himself and, unable to face the world, resorts to archetypal symbols, dreaming of being a ruler, although his attempt to conquer lands for the king of Spain is a failure. His main dream is of attaining total power: 'En ellos [his father and sister] residía la dispensación del bien y del mal. Y llegaría un día, ya no lejano, en que él, Arias, heredase el feudo paterno y el arbitrio soberano sobre la ciudad de carne y sangre'.⁶⁸ Clearly the portrayal of Arias is so abstract because the mythical element has gained ascendancy over the realistic element.

Arias's cruelty is not simply to be explained in psychological terms. His killing of Lola is explained in terms of light and darkness, that is, absolute good and evil: 'Si hubiera hablado, creo que no la hubiera matado, se hubiera hecho la luz'.⁶⁹ He has always lived in darkness, in a shadowy world of his own making where nothing really exists except for his heroic dreams and where he can form no connection with anything outside himself. Poem X shows the mythical situation which lies behind this:

En principio era la sombra;
la sombra letárgica y caótica;⁷⁰

Arias is in a primeval state where the world has not yet been created in his mind, because words have little meaning. In this state, he did not even

66. Ayala, La caída..., p. 691.

67. Ayala, La caída..., p. 691.

68. Ayala, La caída..., p. 700.

69. Ayala, La caída..., p. 717.

70. Ayala, La caída..., p. 714.

know that he was committing murder, and had no cause for guilt. When he realises the meaning of what he has done he confesses the truth and dies for it: as in myth, the hero has to die before he can be reborn. His execution is therefore a process of redemption, and is paralleled by the birth of a child in the pensión in which the story is set, appropriately, bathed in full sunlight. The important point about La caída de los Limones is that the prose narrative is so penetrated by the myth, which is not kept to the poems, that it can not be read literally.

In Justicia (1928) too the obvious social content is balanced by direct reference to myth. Justicia deals with the passage of an individual from darkness to light and the crucial events of the story are illuminated by mythical references. The opening of the story shows Tinoco plunged in physical and spiritual darkness. His smithy is like a cave, and is meant to represent some kind of underworld in which he is imprisoned. He is equally imprisoned within himself, which is seen in the description of his head: 'Frente muy angosta, sin cabida si no es para una sola idea, y ésa apretada, incómoda, en tortura, hasta constituir obsesión'.⁷¹ He is imprisoned in time, being forced to repeat the same actions every day. This imprisonment, a common mythical theme, is generally indicative of the fact that the initiate has not yet grown up, and is still in a childlike state. Indeed, the beginning of the story sees him actually preferring the darkness of this state:

¡qué dulce, qué suave, qué aterciopelado, qué acariciador
para él, ahora, el negro silencio! Abre los ojos y siente
en ellos el tacto terso y frío de la sombra, como de
azabache. Y el tiempo va fluyendo. ⁷²

71. Ayala, Justicia, Obras Completas, II, p.1138.

72. Ayala, Justicia, p.1141.

This is the case even after the 'call', represented by Melania la Prieta, who encourages him to break his chains. As Campbell points out,⁷³ this call is often made by a mother-figure, often the Virgin Mary herself, and in Greek mythology by the ambiguous Mercury, who has a dark, satanic side. Melania is this dark side, being called an 'ángel de azabache': 'Como desde el infierno en la gloria te columbro. Eres un ángel, pero un ángel negro. Un ángel de azabache. Todos los demás ángeles son de nácar, turquesa y coral rosa'.⁷⁴ Her dramatic purpose is to call Tinoco to a new life, where they will both be reborn ('Si me quisieras, resucitado serías').⁷⁵ It is interesting that here Ayala makes no attempt to provide realistic explanations of these statements, but presents them directly. The second traditional figure at this stage is the evil hag, here his mother-in-law who is described as an 'estantigua',⁷⁶ and who condemns Tinoco to Hell in the most picturesque terms. Thus, one woman represents imprisonment and the other, the freedom which leads him to murder the mother-in-law, his wife and her sisters. All the forces of evil which were suppressed in him come to the surface to be purged by his brutal action.

There follows the transformation of the hero. Even his appearance changes after a year in prison and the women of Reicastro see in him a resemblance to Christ. Under the persistent care of the Jesuits, whom Tinoco sees as the Three Wise Men, he arrives at the truth and recognises that he committed the crime when he was 'not himself' ('; Pero no era yo! ').⁷⁷ He is now a new person, capable of distinguishing good and evil, and in a state of complete clarity:

73. J. Campbell, The Hero..., pp.71-3.

74. Ayala, Justicia, p.1140.

75. Ayala, Justicia, p.1140.

76. Ayala, Justicia, 1141.

77. Ayala, Justicia, 1168.

Las alucinaciones se espaciaban más y más, y las frases aisladas, simétricas, como ventanas por donde se podía atisbar el interior trastorno del espíritu, evolucionaban gradualmente de estilo, desde lo torturado y diabólico hacia los suaves giros y laceradas quejas de amor, a lo divino, semejantes al habla de los místicos. 78

Tinoco's transformation also shows the last stage in the mythical development: the renunciation of the self. This 'camino de la penitencia y perfección', which will lead him to God, must end in his own death. At the end of the story, Tinoco is virtually a saint. Behind all the grotesque events of the town of Reicastro, a character undergoes a process of personal transformation which is in no way marred by the relativity of human affairs. He achieves an authentic existence which is absolute: he comes to know God. The fact that this authentic existence cannot easily be described realistically leads Ayala to rely entirely on the images and structure of the myth of the hero; Tinoco is as near as Ayala ever gets to the pure hero and as far as he ever strays from realistic psychological explanations. For this reason Justicia is to be compared with Belarmino y Apolonio.

The other tendency in Ayala's later short stories is less concerned with ultimate questions. They are more literary and conscious of their own artificiality, are to be compared with the Urbano and Simona and Tigre Juan novels and can be well illustrated by La triste Adriana. The most common literary theme in them is the honour question, which perhaps here has less to do with the 'problem of Spain' than with the peculiar demands it makes upon the protagonists. They are forced to see reality clearly and then act upon their conclusions: that is, success demands a combination of the two psychological types which so preoccupy Ayala, the reflective type and the man of action. Honour is therefore to be seen as one of the challenges faced

by the hero in his struggle to reconcile opposites.

It is significant that when the literary framework predominates the mythical structure is only implied. This is probably because the two perspectives conflict. The myth of the hero is an absolute structure, which cannot be treated with irony, whereas the literary level is a constant source of irony and grotesque comparisons. Consequently, the stories less concerned with ultimate questions are consciously artificial. This artificiality is one of Ayala's techniques for overcoming the inherent thinness of the narrative form and the impossibility of literature reflecting the whole of life. Ayala therefore presents 'real' characters who are at the same time entirely artificial and have been used countless times before in literature. The literary world is then seen as an act of creation analogous to God's own act.

Good examples of the consciously literary approach are Luz de domingo (1916) and Pandorga (1922). In the former the avenging hero, who should be there, is conspicuous by his absence, which is made clear from the first page:

¡ Quál ventura serie esta, si ploquiese al Creador,
que assomasse essora el Cid Campeador ! 79

Yet whereas in the original the Cid is simply elsewhere, the line here means that there is no Cid. If the situation of the rape of Balbina resembles superficially the incident with the Infantes de Carrión, the story soon shows all literary parallels to be irrelevant. There is no hope of justice, because the victims can take no action; the father is too old to take secret vengeance, and the townspeople are only concerned with gossip and there can be no popular justice. Far from representing the weight of tradition in the town,⁸⁰ the references to the Cid are intended to show a long decline over the centuries. Other references, too, provide a foil for the ironic comments of the narrator.

79. Ayala, Luz de domingo, Obras Completas, II, p.638.

80. see E. Matus, 'El símbolo del segundo nacimiento en la narrativa de Ramón Pérez de Ayala', Estudios Filológicos, 5, 1969, p.167.

For example, the helpless protagonist is named Castor, after the god of shipwrecked sailors, and yet perishes by drowning; the gang which rapes Balbina is called the Becerriles, after a Captain Becerro who carefully waited till the English had left Cádiz before making a triumphant entry into the city.

The account of the origins of Pandorga, in the story of that name, is in the same line of ironic description. God created Pandorga, but forgot to colour it so that the village is indistinguishable from the surrounding countryside. In fact, Pandorga barely exists at all, and the events there are all portrayed in the most inappropriate way possible. The chapter dealing with the death of a villager is an 'entremés' and that dealing with a futile dispute about a cow is a real drama. The two forms are inverted: the tragic becomes trivial because human beings are not to be taken seriously and the trivial arouses great passions. This double process of exaggeration and diminution is what would happen before the deforming mirrors of the callejón del gato and one of the characters attending the dying cow exclaims: '¡Qué tragedia!'.⁸¹ These two stories represent the extreme of Ayala's conscious artificiality, and predictably, contain few or no mythical references. A greater balance is achieved in La triste Adriana.

The general structure of La triste Adriana is, despite the presence of the honour theme, the question of renewal. The honour theme is treated in a quite different way from Tigre Juan and El curandero de su honra as here a completely authentic existence may involve following the literary precedent. Adriana's marriage to Federico is symbolised by the same

81. Ayala, Pandorga, Obras Completas, II, p.1129.

images of death and imprisonment that are found in Justicia. The only time that they are together is at night in a bedroom described as an 'antro' and 'caverna'⁸² in 'lo más profundo y lóbrego de la vivienda'.⁸³ The room is 'semejante a un hipogeo egipcio, a propósito para dormir allí el negro sueño inquebrantable'.⁸⁴ They are clearly at the second stage of the evolution of the hero: all is darkness and mist and they are dying, in order eventually to be reborn. Federico is undergoing the 'período de las nubes' which corresponds to the second of the three mythical stages.⁸⁵ As often occurs in Ayala, the passage to the third stage involves a redefinition of terms. At the beginning, Federico considers that 'El hombre, cuanto más hombre, más descuidado de su persona' and that 'El deber primordial de la mujer es la belleza'.⁸⁶ They will arrive at a conception of the sexes which is less dependent on appearances, and come to a new definition of the words 'hombre' and 'mujer'. Their task is to make sense of the terms, where before there was chaos.

This dark period of uncertainty is characterised by the inversion of the traditional theme of honour. The purpose of the inversion is not to degrade modern reality, or to satirize the Golden Age concept, but to demonstrate an inauthentic approach to existence. Adriana, like Herminia, reads cheap novelettes and dreams of tragic occurrences: 'Complacéase, sobre todo, con ensueños lamentables y trágicos. Las angostosas fábulas que forjaba concluían siempre en catástrofe'.⁸⁷ This ability to see an avenging husband in place of her own ineffectual Federico leads her to turn

82. Ayala, La triste Adriana in El ombligo del mundo, Obras Completas, II p.762.

83. Ayala, La triste Adriana, p.761.

84. Ayala, La triste Adriana, pp.761-2.

85. Ayala, prologue to Troteras y Danzaderas, Losada, Buenos Aires, 1942, pp 16-17.

86. Ayala, La triste Adriana, p.763.

87. Ayala, La triste Adriana, p.765.

reality upside down, seeing 'presagios funestos' when he is only in a bad mood. Just as she cannot see others, so others cannot see her. Pachín Cueto, the local don Juan, sees that at one point she appears indifferent, interprets this as a sign that she wants him, and is surprised to find that she is really indifferent. Only the reader is able to see the reasons behind all this confusion, which Pachín describes as a 'comedia'. The real reason why she wants to be tempted by Pachín is to be able to prove her innocence to Federico: honour is one of the trials she must go through to be reborn. As usual, the rebirth is not explained psychologically; it just happens. After a 'mythical' seven days she can say: 'Soy más mujer que antes; soy mujer por primera vez; hoy ha nacido una mujer'.⁸⁸ Her rebirth is aided by her meeting with the exemplary Xuanón, whose love for Calandria is eternal, who speaks a natural language (as opposed to that of Federico, who is a 'modernist' poet) and who puts the honour question back on its feet: he will kill Calandria if she is unfaithful. As a result, 'Adriana imaginó que resucitaba de entre los muertos, en un universo ingrávido, de formas etéreas'.⁸⁹ Xuanón can therefore be said to represent natural energy, which must be reawakened in Federico before he can be reborn. He is at first unwilling to suspect Adriana of infidelity (another inversion of the honour theme) and only realises his role when he hears that Xuanón has already stabbed Pachín. Federico tempers the vitalism of Xuanón by refusing to take vengeance: 'Me han robado el corazón. Tú eras mi corazón. ¿Debo matar mi corazón, fuera de mí? ¿Para qué? Ya estoy muerto'.⁹⁰ With the old Federico dead, a new one can be born. As Adriana says: 'Estás resucitado. Ha nacido un hombre.

88. Ayala, La triste Adriana, p. 787.

89. Ayala, La triste Adriana, p. 778.

90. Ayala, La triste Adriana, p. 796.

Eres mi esposa y eres también hijo mío, obra mía... Vida nueva, vida mía'.⁹¹ Ayala is clearly interested neither in the tragic situation where the deceived husband kills his wife nor in the farcical one where he fails to do so, or kills by accident, but in the refusal of the protagonist to take part in the drama. The drama serves as a background against which the characters can change: both become the opposite of what they were before. In this way the characterisation is very limited, each being merely a 'persona' or 'mask'. The reason probably stems from Ayala's awareness of the limitations of fiction: the novelist cannot include the whole of life, and to present even a part of it he must resort to tricks and illusions. La triste Adriana makes no attempt to portray life: each level simply reveals, behind it, another level, from the realistic narrative to the literary theme and the archetypal level.

4.4. Conclusion

The protagonists of all these short stories are at some stage in the development of the mythical hero. They live in a world in which human beings are 'ex hombres, nada más', and are frightened by a world which is full of contradictions. In the early period they refuse to accept this world and sink into dreams in which the clash of opposites, Hell and darkness are frequent images. Their aim at this time is to return to a past state of innocence which is remembered from their childhood and so they refuse the 'call'. For each level of reality an appropriate language is needed, and particular myths are used to distinguish between subjective states and

91. Ayala, La triste Adriana, p.796.

objective situations. Such imagery enables the subjective states to be treated economically and comprehensibly. The turning-point comes with Prometeo, in which the hero's task is redefined as a search for God which can be undertaken by each individual. The universe no longer seems frightening but often merely farcical and grotesque and is often portrayed in purely literary terms. The heroes of the later stories are usually successful and some, deprived of all personal characteristics, ^{nearly} become 'pure heroes' who achieve a real contact with the next world, in stories which are more abstract and built up entirely from elements of the myth of the hero. A good example of this 'purer' and non-literary approach is, as we have suggested, Belarmino y Apolonio in which the undegraded elements of the myth of the hero have an effect on the form of the novel.

CHAPTER V

BELARMINO Y APOLONIO

AS A MYTHICAL NOVEL

BELARMINO Y APOLONIO AS A MYTHICAL NOVEL

5.1 The mythical novel

The difference between a symbolic novel and a mythical one is that whereas in the former one level of reality is represented by a quite different, more easily manageable and concise one, in the latter 'novelistic reality' is a representation of some higher and coherent pattern which has an objective existence independent of all adaptations. The mythical level is in a sense more real than the invented characters in the novel, precedes them in time, and is perfectly self-sufficient. Whereas a symbol cannot exist without the object it symbolises, a myth can and does. Belarmino and Apolonio may be symbols of the philosopher and the dramatist, but the contrast between them is seen in the context of the 'reconciliation of opposites', without which true knowledge of this world and the next is impossible, and which is the goal of the hero as he undertakes the mythical quest for knowledge. The quest of the hero, as traced through Ayala's short stories and novels, becomes a quest for knowledge, for the ability to see the harmony of a world which so often appears discordant and hostile. Although Belarmino y Apolonio could be called a mythical novel merely because it contains symbolic figures, it seems right to suggest that symbols alone do not make a mythical novel, but that, apart from clear references to mythical situations, a function or framework analogous to myth must be found before a novel can justly be called mythical. The references must constitute a complete framework which is consistent with the meaning of the work. This chapter will try to elucidate the mythical level in Belarmino y Apolonio.

Space and time are treated mythically in this novel, where the whole

action is viewed from a privileged place, a fount of knowledge which recalls the mythical 'world navel': the Spanish pensión. The narrator is a disciple of don Amaranto, the 'filósofo de las casas de huéspedes' and, having lived in pensiones for years, discovers, through living in one, the drama of Pedro and Angustias and the tale of Belarmino and Apolonio. Don Pedro/Guillén tells his story in a pensión, and the meeting with Angustias takes place in one. All the action either originates or is remembered in a pensión. It is not unusual for Ayala to create a privileged spot from which the action can be viewed: in La Araña, the 'café cúbico' was, as has been shown, the centre of the universe, and in La caída de los Limones the action was introduced from a pensión.

The significance of the pensión is explained by don Amaranto.

The pensión, he says, is almost in a state of nature, food being eaten almost uncooked.¹ Life there is consequently more primitive and humanity closer to its origins. It is the ideal place to see people from the two contrasting points of view which don Amaranto considers necessary. People live so close to each other that by eavesdropping their secret drama can be discovered, and by watching them across the round table² one can look at them from a distance. There is in addition a wealth of scientific knowledge in the pensión as it is there that opositores live.³ Don Amaranto

1. Ayala, Belarmino y Apolonio, Obras Completas, IV, p.13.

2. Ayala, Belarmino...., pp.18, 21 and 32. Across the round table of the pensión one can focus attention on characters who would normally not attract attention: they are forced to be actors. The idea of the round table itself has mythical associations, being a place at which all things can come together. The idea of the circle reappears in Belarmino's speech in the Círculo Republicano, p.43, where the Republic is seen as the ideal, a magical place where the circle can be squared, that is, where all opposites can co-exist.

3. The pensión is therefore a gathering of wise men.

claims that the pensión is a 'summa' or 'Biblia', in which all things are written.⁴ This is significant in that the Bible is often regarded as a fund of archetypal images and of all knowledge of the next world. As Ayala looks on the novel itself as a 'summa', the pensión is obviously an appropriate setting for it, the implication being that in the pensión the novelist will find material in a suitable state for inclusion in the novel: he will not go out into the streets to observe all life, but will remain in the pensión, which is already a 'breve universo'. Because in the pensión the two points of view (drama and philosophy) can be reconciled it takes on the importance of the world-navel, through which a glimpse of the harmony of the universe may be obtained. The pensión, often described as 'cavernosa' is also likened to the cave of Plato,⁵ in which glimpses of the eternal archetypes can be seen as shadows on the wall. The people who enter the pensión will be seen as shadows of archetypes in the next world. It is in the pensión, then, that a glimpse of the next world will be gained. The narrator is at the very centre of things: continual references are made to the round table which is the centre of the life in the pensión, which is itself in the centre of Madrid,⁶ and therefore at the centre of Spain.

The novel begins in an epitome of this world and moves to an epitome of the next: the old folks' home where many of the principal characters end, just the same as they have always been, and where the final reconciliation

4. Ayala, Belarmino...., p.15.

5. Ayala, Belarmino...., pp.19-20. In the pensión, the shadows of the eternal archetypes are to be seen. The pensión is a more truthful 'breve universo' than the novel, in which the images are further removed from the eternal archetypes, and are therefore 'sombras de sombras'.

6. Ayala, Belarmino...., p.24.

can take place. The technique of finishing a narrative in this kind of limbo, where a definitive vision of the events can be established is also to be found in La Araña. It is significant that the reconciliation can only take place outside normal life, in a place where time has been abolished. The asilo is, however, also a part of this world; Apolonio depends upon funds from don Guillén to buy Vichy water, and Colignon arrives periodically laden with cakes for Belarmino and Apolonio.⁷ At the very end, the arrival of telegrams calling the two shoemakers back into the real world is a sign of the ultimate lesson behind the myth of the hero: that the two worlds exist together and can be united in this world.

5.2 Mythical time

The essence of mythical time is that it exists outside the natural flow of time in a kind of perpetual present.⁸ Events in myths happened at some unspecified time in the past with which there is no direct contact, and are repeated each time the myth is retold. As time even within the myth is always the present, there is not much room for cause and effect or for the sense of time passing. Everything can be seen at a glance, regardless of how long it might, logically, have taken to happen. Neither is there room for the usual contrast between 'time by the clock' and the subjective experience of time. If time appears at all it is connected with seasonal change, the yearly cycle of seasons, or the passage of the earth

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7. Ayala, Belarmino..., pp. 205 and 209-10. The Vichy water is real enough, but could also be taken as a reference to water as the giver of life, because that is what it does for Apolonio at this point.
 8. The discussion on mythical time is derived from A.A. Mendilow, Time and the Novel, New York, 1952, reprinted 1965, pp. 135-43.

round the sun each day, all of which are constantly repeated. The progress of the hero through three stages, the second of which is a period of darkness and confusion, is attributable to this pattern,⁹ and, as will be shown, is present in Belarmino y Apolonio as the only real measure of time.

Ayala arranges the novel on three separate and unconnected levels of time which are only brought together at the time the narrator begins to tell his story. The narrator, having met don Amaranto at some unspecified time many years before, sets out, in the present, to write about Belarmino and Apolonio about whom he heard at another unspecified time in between in the course of a dramatic episode which lasted for one week and during which the events of the previous twenty-five years were recounted, although not strictly chronologically. But as the six days with don Guillén are adrift in time there is no connection between the lives of Belarmino and Apolonio and the present other than memory and the fact that the narrator is writing about them. The novel therefore has three beginnings and a central action in the pensión which is in the past with reference to the time of writing, but in the future with regard to the lives of Belarmino and Apolonio. Although the 'presents' are the result of the past, the reverse is also true because the past would be consigned to oblivion were it not for the recreation of events either by don Guillén or the narrator. The aim is to show a complicated, and deliberately dislocated, series of events coming together at a single point. The passage of time between the three levels is left deliberately vague because the reader is expected to see them all simultaneously, the one superimposed on the other.

9. The cycle of the departure and return of the hero is traditionally with the daily passage of the earth round the sun.

When the narrator presents the action, as he does in Chapters I, II, III, V, and VI, he does so in small scenes whose location is easily identifiable, but which are dislocated from other scenes by a mysterious lapse of time about which nothing is said. These scenes tend to begin with 'un día', 'una tarde', etc.. The result of this arbitrary arrangement is that the events could easily be presented in any other order. Paradoxically the fragmentation of time is to avoid the fragmentation of the character.¹⁰

If a character is shown developing through time, he inevitably appears different in different situations; Ayala avoids this by presenting isolated scenes which can be superimposed in the mind of the reader, thereby hindering the linear development of the novel, but giving a composite picture of Belarmino, who is a mixture of all the attributes which are shown in the various scenes. The turning points in his life, bankruptcy, the flight of Angustias and entry into the asilo, are all treated indirectly. Instead, the narrator dwells on certain illuminating moments which present different, and sometimes contradictory, aspects of his character such as the scene in the Círculo Republicano in which Belarmino is an actor. As a result, changes appear abrupt: the last paragraph of Chapter VI deals with Belarmino after he has abandoned philosophy and its last section begins appropriately with the words 'Una vez era' which take Belarmino out of any time-sequence.

The time which Belarmino spends in this state of introspection and apparent indifference, although not fixed in 'time by the clock', lies between two points in the seasonal cycle. The escape of Angustias and Pedro takes place when the weather becomes calmer in autumn. Although many years pass before he is to meet Angustias again, he does so at Easter, or more

10. This paradox is also mentioned in A. A. Mendilow, Time..., p.135.

or less at the beginning of spring. Belarmino's separation from his daughter is therefore a kind of perpetual winter, a time associated with the death which precedes rebirth. Belarmino's 'salvation' comes at midday on Easter Sunday: a time when the sun is at its zenith, and when Christ is risen. It seems clear that time has a symbolic value in Belarmino y Apolonio, but as the symbolic references refer to a preestablished and autonomous pattern, which, as Campbell has shown, runs through most myths, it would be better to call it a mythical time-sequence.

All the events in Pilares are seen in relation to don Guillén's life and to the crucial six days in Madrid in which he recreates his past life, and which end on Easter Sunday. Through don Guillén events which previously drifted in time can be placed. For example, it is only through him that the reader learns that Belarmino went bankrupt shortly after the arrival of Apolonio, an important point which relates the lives of the two cobblers, and that Apolonio's bankruptcy was not long after the flight of Pedro and Angustias. Don Guillén's life is the only one in the novel which is clearly measured in terms of time by the clock. He arrives in Pilares, just before the bankruptcy of Belarmino, at the age of 13, three years after the death of his grandfather, and leaves for the seminary at the age of 15. The adventure with Angustias takes place when he is 20: and so Felicita must have entered the 'asilo' at much the same time. After 12 years in the seminary he becomes a priest (age 27) and after 7 years as chaplain to the viuda de Neira is procured a canonry by the dying duquesa de Somavia, who therefore dies when he is 34. The lapse of time between the arrival of Apolonio and the reconciliation is something like 25 years. It is interesting that whereas Ayala pays little attention to time in the drama of Belarmino and Apolonio,

he is careful to establish the strict chronology of don Guillén's life. As a result, all the events in the novel can only be dated by reference to don Guillén, who is thus placed at its very centre. ¹¹

Don Guillén's life, in turn, follows the three-part structure associated with the progress of the hero from darkness to light, in which there is a preestablished order of events. He is separated from his father by the duquesa de Somavia who is his patron, and in a sense a kind of fairy godmother who can assure him worldly success. The time of initiation begins with his nightmare stay in the seminary in which he is virtually incarcerated with a group of seminarists who are only half human, and where spiritual life is wholly absent. The familiar structure is continued with the adventure with Angustias, who is described elsewhere as a saint. This episode is treated as an exodus to a promised land. After the failure of the adventure, don Guillén discovers, through the hymns of the breviary and the enthusiasm of the early Church, the fact that this world and the next are not wholly incompatible. The middle stage involves a seven year stay with the marquesa de Neira which includes the theme of the treasure (here literally the fortune which she proposes to leave to him), which has a mythical significance, and will be the practical means by which the final reconciliation of opposites is made possible. The final stage, or salvation, occurs on Easter Sunday and coincides with the resurrection of Christ. Don Guillén is therefore reborn, and will be able to live, some would say cynically, in both worlds. The few days in the pensión represent a coming together of all the experiences in his life, which can, at the end, be seen

11. Don Guillén is the only character in the book to be aware of both subjective and objective time. For don Guillén, Ayala, Belarmino. . . . p. 165, the past can exist as memory in the present, and so his whole life of nearly forty years can be reduced to fifteen minutes.

as harmonious. The importance of the mythical pattern on the time-sequence of the novel is that it goes beyond the usual conflict of objective and subjective time: don Guillén's life may be seen as a period lasting 25 years, many of which seemed longer to him, or as three night-time conversations which pass quickly for the narrator, but is in any case a journey which falls easily into three well-defined stages, a rhythm found in the myth of the hero and in many of Ayala's novels.

5.3 The mythical viewpoint

The novel is overshadowed by a mythical time in the past when complete knowledge of the universe was possible, when the essence of all objects floated on their surface, when to name an object meant to know it and its origins.¹² The whole universe could be explained in terms of myths, and no other point of view was possible. This time is introduced by don Amaranto, who evidently misses this lost understanding of a harmonious world. In the modern world objects have been divorced from their essences by the multiplicity of points of view offered by art, science and rational thought. Man can not look at each object from all the points of view simultaneously and cannot therefore acquire true knowledge. Don Amaranto's maxim that 'el drama y la filosofía son las únicas maneras de conocimiento'¹³ suggests that drama and philosophy will be in some way the same as the old myths and will be able to replace them.

The question of why drama and philosophy should be a modern

12. Ayala, Belarmino..., p.17 There exists in many of Ayala's works the vague memory of a better time in the past. In earlier works, such as La última aventura de 'Raposín', Sentimental Club, Prometeo and La caída de los Limones characters actually try to return to it, or recreate it in the present, with disastrous results.

13. Ayala, Belarmino..., p.20.

substitute for myth is a difficult one. Certainly one answer lies in the importance each attaches to the individual. The 'dramatic' viewpoint gives greater importance to the value and interest of the life of every individual, each one having his own unique drama. In tragedy at least, fate or destiny plays a decisive role and so it could be said that some eternal power has taken an interest in the individual, therefore linking him with the next world. This is a position which is developed by Apolonio.¹⁴ The philosophical view will naturally be more distant and look at man in general rather than man in particular, seeing him in a wider context and concerned more with archetypal man. This is no more than a rational explanation of what Ayala was trying to do in the Alberto novels, in which the myths were used to present Alberto as more than an individual. There has therefore been a change in the significance which Ayala attaches to myths, which is probably explicable by the fact that in Prometeo he was prepared to take a single mythical character as a basis for his own, because mythical characters are not merely generalisations but, in their own way, highly individual.

By presenting Belarmino y Apolonio from these two standpoints Ayala is in a sense recreating the function of the myths, in which the world was seen as a harmonious conflict, a paradox which is echoed in the final embrace of Belarmino and Apolonio. The drama, in this case, would look for conflict and the philosophical view would look for harmony. In this way, the idea of myths rather than their adaptation is of central importance.

Myths are a way of looking at the universe so that it appears harmonious. Belarmino, through the invention of a new language in which words will correspond to the objects which they denote, is concerned with creating such a harmonious world. In fact he is returning to the mythical origins of

14. Ayala, Belarmino...., pp.108-9.

language as they were formulated by Max Müller, with those work Ayala was familiar.¹⁵

Belarmino's aim is to name objects anew so that each word is appropriate to the object it represents.¹⁶ The word will therefore correspond to one of the attributes of the object, and as a result different objects having similar attributes will be synonymous. The word cameló comes to mean priest because each bears a burden: the camel its hump and the priest his responsibilities.¹⁷ As a result, each object is reduced to a single characteristic, as seen by Belarmino. So, although Belarmino is supposedly creating a new language, he depends totally on the words offered by the old one. Basically, things are named by analogy, with the resulting ambiguities. This stage of naming by analogy is discussed by Max Müller, who refers to it as 'mythopoeic'.¹⁸ When language is created by analogy original meanings tend, in the course of time, to be forgotten because, as each object has many attributes, it will tend to have a variety of names, some of which are used arbitrarily. There are therefore a number of redundant words whose

15. C. Clavería was the first to point out that Belarmino's invented words might be connected with Müller's theories in 'Apostillas al lenguaje de Belarmino', Cinco estudios de literatura española moderna, CSIS, Salamanca, 1945, p. 76. He explains the process by which Belarmino recreates the world: 'Nombrando, que es para él lo mismo que conocer y que crear, Belarmino recrea el mundo, y las palabras aplicadas por él a su pensamiento adquieren una realidad sustantiva y propia y un sentido prístino y mitológico, distinto al que la rutina de los hombres les dió'. Later, pp. 77-8, he asks 'si el primitivo valor quasi-religioso y mítico de la palabra que encontramos en la obra de Pérez de Ayala no procede del uso frecuente que hace y del sentido genérico que, dentro de su teoría, da el célebre profesor de Oxford a la mitología, como fuerza que el lenguaje ejerce sobre el pensamiento en todas las esferas de la actividad espiritual'.

16. Ayala, Belarmino..., p. 101.

17. Ayala, Belarmino..., p. 106.

18. F. Max Müller, 'Comparative Mythology', Selected Essays, I, London, 1881, p. 358: 'Hence, the only definition we can give of language during that early state is, that it is the conscious expression in sound of impressions received by all the senses'.

meaning is no longer clear, as each person will tend to use a different analogy when naming. Expressions which contain these words will therefore become incomprehensible without explanation. Myths are the rational explanations of the irrational and subjective process of naming, and so constitute a bridge between the rational and the irrational. The same can be said of Belarmino's etymologies which are rigorously logical as long as one does not know the true one. Belarmino's words, then, are embryonic myths.

Belarmino's language fails for the same reasons that mythopeic language failed. His use of analogy, and belief in a harmonious universe, lead him to try to express everything in a single word, which is the logical consequence of the belief that all creation is a unity. This word would be extremely ambiguous, and inhibit all communication. It would serve to express Belarmino's thoughts, but would mean little to others. Belarmino's failure is a failure of language, which serves to name particular objects, but not to express the unity of the universe.

By contrast, Apolonio sees the next world as continually present in this. The gods intervene continually to provoke conflicts between superior human beings.¹⁹ Meaning is not to be found within himself, but outside, in the dramas which the world offers. For Apolonio the world is full of signs and portents which point to divine intervention. The drama which Apolonio sees is melodrama, in which there is a clear-cut conflict between good and evil. As a result, he tends to see the same kind of conflict, continually repeated. In all of them he is the hero, or lover, and if his fate is to suffer at the hand of destiny, he relishes it the more. In short, when

19. Ayala, Belarmino . . . , pp.108-9 and 116.

Belarmino sees the similarity of all things, Apolonio sees conflict and drama. In the absence of what he would consider real drama, he has to invent, and does so by reference to literary or mythical figures. Myths which in this case are often in the form of literary figures, are, for Apolonio, a substitute for the real thing, and by looking to them he disregards the real world. By considering himself a hero he only makes himself look smaller and more ridiculous. In his treatment of Apolonio, Ayala returns to the concept of myths used for comic degradation which was seen in Tinieblas en las cumbres, Troteras y danzaderas and Prometeo.

Both Belarmino and Apolonio are aspects of the same mythical figure, the trickster or wise fool. Although both are concerned with discovering the universe, both are incapable of living in it. They are both failures, Belarmino as a philosopher and Apolonio as a dramatist. Jung makes it clear that the trickster is superior to other men because he is creative and has certain superhuman qualities,²⁰ but inferior because of his unconsciousness of the world around him. For Jung this figure, which lies behind the Pulcinella figure of the Comedia dell'arte, survives in modern life as the clown. This is not to say that Belarmino and Apolonio are versions of Mr. Punch, or descended from the commedia dell'arte, but that they are all manifestations of the trickster archetype. Jung holds that the trickster is the opposite of the saviour, and is frequently seen in direct contrast with him. This is the place which Belarmino and Apolonio take in the novel. Although they have traditionally been seen as opposites, they are complementary figures, abstracted from normal conditions. Usually they would

20. C.G. Jung, Four Archetypes: Mother, Rebirth, Spirit, Trickster, London, 1972, pp. 143 - 144.

merely be conflicting tendencies within a single character, and are separated in Belarmino and Apolonio to avoid the need for a psychological analysis and in the interest of clarity. They are to be contrasted with don Guillén, who alone in the novel is an actor, that is, a man of action, and also a contemplative type. He succeeds where they fail.

5.4 Don Guillén: a pragmatic hero

Don Guillén is the great unifying force in the novel: he both takes part in the action and is able to stand back and recount it, and is therefore both actor and spectator, subject and object. In this reconciliation of opposites he exemplifies the theme of the whole novel. He is the only character who is allowed to present his own story in his own terms. Apart from a few asides from the narrator, there is no outside view of him.²¹ As his array of names suggests, he is many things, and it is hoped to show that his character is meant to represent a coming together of all the contrasts, a role which has traditionally been considered as that of the mythical hero, who at the end of a time of suffering returns to the world with a profound knowledge and understanding.

It is useful to consider more closely the three stages into which his career falls. He is not responsible for the separation from his earlier way of life, but is thrown into the seminary by his protectress the duquesa de Somavia. This is a totally alien situation, which he regards as a kind of Hell, inhabited by inhuman creatures. In this place Angustias is transformed into a saint, and even likened to the Virgin Mary.²² In this way,

21. See Ayala, Belarmino..., pp. 31, 164 and 196. These are the only instances of direct intervention.

22. Ayala, Belarmino..., p. 174. The narrator, however, intervenes to present this image in a grotesque light, p. 25: 'Se parecía a una virgen de Rafael algo ajada'.

Angustias is, at one time or another, all women: she appears in don Guillén's imagination as a mother; she was for a short time his bride; she is for a time Tirabeque's mistress and at the end don Guillén treats her as his sister. She thus fulfils all the roles of the goddess in the myth of the hero. As Campbell says, 'the meeting with the goddess (who is incarnate in every woman) is the final test of the talent of the hero to win the boon of love... which is life itself enjoyed as the encasement of eternity'.²³ Angustias is the saviour of don Guillén, and the narrator heightens her importance by presenting her first, in such a way that the reader knows that such a meeting is bound to take place.

The adventure with Angustias is itself spiritualised by don Guillén, who in his account treats it as an exodus to the Promised Land.²⁴ Even the weather is treated in a mythical fashion: there is a downpour which he compares to the Flood. The symbolism of the rain would be meaningless if it were not for the biblical precedent, and is to be considered as a mythical image as there is a well-defined pattern behind it. His belief is that all humanity will perish in it and that they will begin the heroic task of starting everything anew.²⁵ The first attempt to possess Angustias and all that she represents is a failure through the intervention of outside forces which are grotesque, and represent the evil beings which will attempt to thwart the hero.

The initiation of don Guillén takes place in the seminary and at San Madrigal, at each of which he spends seven years, seven being a magical number often connected with the return of the hero (the seven days of the

23. J. Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces, second edition, New York, 1968, p. 118.

24. Ayala, Belarmino..., p. 179. These are all typical images of renewal.

25. Ayala, Belarmino..., p. 179.

week). In the seminary he loses all faith, having come to the conclusion that 'las piedras angulares sobre que se asienta la Iglesia eran otros tantos fraudes'.²⁶ In San Madrigal, which is a kind of desert, he spends a period of seven years in almost complete isolation, at first pursued by the marquesa, a 'matrona de Efeso',²⁷ who represents woman as a temptress, and who offers him her fortune, which he accepts only on condition that he use it to some charitable end. He undergoes three types of test: religious, moral, and social, which reflect the three victories which he achieves during this period.

His first victory, which points to a comparison with Christ himself, is to take all Angustias's guilt upon himself.²⁸ Such comparisons with Christ, who for this purpose can be taken as the hero of heroes, is not confined to don Guillén's own point of view. On first seeing him the narrator was struck by the momentary and illusiory similarity of the red slippers he was wearing with the pierced feet of Christ, and even by the impression of a halo around his head.²⁹ When Angustias meets don Guillén and throws herself at his feet, she is, as the narrator points out, repeating the scene with Mary Magdalene, which figures in three hymns in the breviary, edited by cardenal Belarmino, and earlier quoted by don Guillén.³⁰ In this way, the relationship between them is made timeless, and broadened: their adventure is not, therefore, a romantic interlude to be regarded as secondary to the main theme of the novel.

In the second place, his attitude to society changes, as he rejects

26. Ayala, Belarmino..., p. 181.

27. Ayala, Belarmino..., p. 184. The same image occurs in La pata de la raposa, Madrid, 1970, p. 85. Ayala often seems to repeat secondary characters, basing them on a single archetypal motif.

28. Ayala, Belarmino..., p. 183.

29. Ayala, Belarmino..., p. 28.

30. Ayala, Belarmino..., p. 194.

most of the forms of social organisation which are associated with the modern age. Each devotes more attention to some areas of human activity at the expense of others, when in don Guillén's ideal society all would be present.³¹ His ideal is one of harmony of all things in a state of anarchy in which happiness is possible. In conclusion it can be said that don Guillén is a hero who is concerned with living in the real world, one whose discovery of certain eternal truths does not lead him to reject the world and live a life of asceticism.

The truths which he finds are concerned with religion and immortality. As Sara Suárez says, his life is in a sense an image of the development of the Church.³² He discovers the true nature of the spirit, and the fact that immortality is of the spirit, not the body. This realisation is a clear development from the situation of the hero at the end of Prometeo, in which the final poem warns that Marco's fault was his lack of faith.

His triumph cannot, however, be complete until he has been re-united with Angustias, the goddess-figure. This meeting takes place on Easter Sunday, just as a new day is dawning, and as a result, takes on the significance of a resurrection and a new beginning. There is even a reference to the gift of tongues,³³ in what is a mythical as well as a literal situation. The significance of the references to the archetypal myth is that it provides a pattern for the whole of don Guillén's life.

The importance of don Guillén in the novel is that he manages in his own life to reconcile many of the apparent inconsistencies and contradictions

31. Ayala, Belarmino...., p.187.

32. See S. Suárez Solís, Análisis de Belarmino y Apolonio, Oviedo, 1974, p.168. The same linking of the life of a character with an entire historical process occurs in Prometeo, see Chapter 4.2.4.

33. Ayala, Belarmino...., p.195.

of the world outside. He is, for example, the only character to see that Belarmino and Apolonio are not opposites, but that they have much in common.³⁴ In this way he goes beyond the apparent contradictions of the theories of don Amaranto and Escobar. His reading of the breviary combines Apolonio's delectation of the sounds of words regardless of their meaning and Belarmino's aim of revealing the real meaning of words. Language is for him both a means of understanding - his insight into spiritual life is gained through reading Paul's epistle to the Corinthians - and a way of expressing himself - he preaches in the royal chapel and is, the narrator adds, a 'pico de oro'.³⁵ He is able to act in a 'drama de conciencia', yet can also tell the whole story to the narrator. Although all the characters in the book are presented once as actors in a drama, and once as spectators of another, he is the only one to do so without appearing ridiculous and in whom action and contemplation are complementary: Belarmino and Apolonio, for instance, cannot live without each other. In conclusion don Guillén is the first character in a novel by Ayala to progress successfully through the three stages of the initiation of the hero: he is both a man of action and a contemplative man.³⁶

It is not difficult to see why Ayala makes of don Guillén a mythical hero. As don Guillén must act in and recount his own life, there is little

34. Ayala, Belarmino..., p.172: 'El decía profesar la filosofía, pero yo digo que tenía mucho de poeta; así como mi padre, Apolonio, que decía profesar la dramaturgia, tenía mucho de filósofo'.

35. Ayala, Belarmino..., p.24.

36. Ayala, Letter to Miss P. A. Preston, 21/2/1955, included in M. B. McCall, An Analysis of Ramón Pérez de Ayala's Novels as a Plea for Freedom, Ph.D., Bryn Mawr, 1959, p.284: 'yo, desde gérmenes humildes, he querido insinuar dos aspiraciones permanentes del espíritu humano hacia dos formas superiores de la vida: filosofía y drama; contemplación y acción'.

room for the narrator to make comments. If the narrator were to do so he would either present a different version, thereby discrediting don Guillén, who is after all meant to be an ideal, or he would merely confirm everything he says, thereby lengthening the novel. The narrator/author must therefore present the distant, generic view of don Guillén within the hero's own account of himself: he is after all, meant to be a reconciliation of all opposites. Don Guillén presents himself as an individual, with a personal drama. He first appears on the 'real' level of the novel, as opposed to the fantasy in *Pilares*, in which the narrator is an actor and therefore unable to offer an omniscient viewpoint. Then, by becoming the narrator himself, don Guillén is able to present his own actions in the distant and ill-defined past, in which he also appears as a generic character. The mythical viewpoint, from which all the references and the general pattern are seen, is therefore that of don Guillén himself and, significantly, is never contradicted or ridiculed by the narrator, who clearly looks up to him.

A second reason for the mythical treatment of don Guillén is concerned with Ayala's ideological position. There is always a tendency in Ayala, apparent in Belarmino y Apolonio, to see the world in terms of contradictions and ridiculous contrasts, a hopeless mixture of conflicting points of view. Yet there is an equal desire to establish harmony and truth:³⁷ in the prologue to Troteras y danzaderas he states that the aim of

37. F.W. Weber, The Literary Perspectivism of Ramón Pérez de Ayala, Chapel Hill, 1966, p.12: 'He envisions an ultimate cosmic harmony that perfectly reconciles all conflicts and contradictions; although man cannot rationally grasp this total reality, he can intuit it through aesthetic experience, imitate it in a work of art, affirm and revere it in the practice of tolerance'.

the later novels was to show some of the eternal norms in action,³⁸ a task which is incompatible with the narrator's explicit intention of holding no particular point of view. Ayala's answer in Belarmino y Apolonio is to divorce the narrator from the presentation of such norms by having a character tell his own story, having established him as a hero. Don Guillén is a mythical hero representing a reconciliation of opposites and stability in a relativistic world.

It is worthwhile pausing here to discuss the nature of Ayala's hero, who differs in many respects from the protagonists of his earlier novels. In the first place, don Guillén is a man in whom thought does not preclude action. For him external reality exists, and he is concerned with living in, and rising in, the real world. His success, due to his ability to preach, marks him out as an actor and yet, as the narrator points out, he is no hypocrite. Nor does he suffer from abulia like Alberto, though not through lack of thought as he is seen as a moderately scholarly type, though significantly he has no desire to be a creative writer and confines himself to translations. Although he has certain ideas about social organization, he makes no real attempt to carry them out and entertains no grandiose notions of being a superman or becoming the father of one. Instead, he lives and profits by the values of the real world, taking care to distinguish them from spiritual values, although observing both. He can therefore believe in the Spirit and have faith in God: 'Creo en el espíritu y soy continente: todo el resto es secundario'.³⁹ In this he is

38. Ayala, prologue to Troteras y danzaderas, Losada, Buenos Aires, 1942, p.19: 'me apliqué a escribir otras novelas largas, que se proponen la recreación en presente de algunas de las normas eternas y los valores vitales; y son Belarmino y Apolonio. . . .'

39. Ayala, Belarmino. . . . p.183 .

unlike Marco whose main fault, as has been shown, was to neglect the Spirit, which makes all men the children of God. In this circumspect and careful way, don Guillén lives in both worlds, the traditional achievement of the hero. Some would say that he is cynical, but the narrator points out that he is quite sincere. His acts are limited in scope but revealing, his first act after his conversion being to take all Angustias's guilt upon himself, in an act of penitence. In this way, he is prepared to renounce himself, but not totally, as he is always pragmatic and aware of the world: he only breaks the fast in secret, and will not live with Angustias. In conclusion, although not particularly likeable, Ayala's pragmatic hero is admirable in that, unlike all his previous creations, he reconciles certain opposing attitudes: he is neither a philosopher nor a dramatist, hypocrite or saint, but a balanced and stable mixture.

5.5 The 'mythical quality'

It can be held that Belarmino y Apolonio is a mythical novel in the sense in which C.S. Lewis uses the word.⁴⁰ In the first place, the mythical structure of don Guillén's life is extra-literary: it is an abstraction, which, although to be found in many myths and literary figures, is not itself literary. In his creation of the character of don Guillén, Ayala goes back to the essence of the myth of the hero, refusing to identify him with any particular figure of literature or mythology. As has been shown, he is sometimes associated with Christ, and as the narrator says, takes part in the 'drama de los dramas',⁴¹ the death and resurrection of Christ. The

40. C.S. Lewis, An Experiment in Criticism, C.U.P., 1961, pp. 40-9.

41. Ayala, Belarmino... p.164

understanding of the mythical pattern depends, therefore, on the reader's own knowledge, an element which opens the novel to extraneous material. The novel is thus not an invention, as the narrator claims, but neither is it open to the whole world. Its references to the outside world are, however, confined for the most part to the mythological world.⁴²

C.S. Lewis's second characteristic of mythical literature is that it does not call for suspense or surprise, but is felt to be inevitable. In Belarmino y Apolonio the complicated time-sequence destroys the linear flow of time on which suspense depends. Many events, by being treated twice from different points of view, do not serve the development of a plot. Lewis points out that myth 'works upon us by its peculiar flavour or quality, rather as a smell or chord does'. It is clear that Ayala meant Belarmino y Apolonio to be seen in depth, rather than as a linear progression; all the characters are intended to be seen from two points of view at the same time; Felicita is very timid with Novillo, but full of energy when it comes to organizing the elopement. The reader is meant to think of the novel as a series of contrasts reconciled in don Guillén. For this reason time is virtually abolished: don Guillén's life will fit just as easily into six days, two nights or the thirty-eight years which he actually takes to live it. The characters are then, in C.S. Lewis's words, 'permanent objects of contemplation'.

He also claims that in myth the reader feels no sympathy for the particular characters, but only for man in general, believing that 'the

42. F.W. Weber, The Literary Perspectivism..., pp. 38-9. She argues that as Ayala is an ironic novelist, his novels must be open to the outside world, so that the illusion of the 'closed precinct' may be destroyed. She fails to point out, however, that only a very limited amount of the outside world is allowed to intervene.

pattern of their movements has a profound relevance to our own life'. Certainly, the scenes in Pilares, being set apart in time from the present and filtered through the narrator's imagination and don Guillén's memory, are distant and the characters, although enlivened by countless picturesque details, are not seen as individuals but rather as a battleground for opposing forces. Through the figure of don Guillén, who demonstrates the divine life that exists in all men, the novel is, however, seen to be profoundly relevant.

The final characteristics are that myth is 'fantastic', 'grave,' and 'awe-inspiring', elements which do not at first sight appear relevant. Yet Belarmino y Apolonio is presented as an invention of the narrator, or fantasy. Although full of comic touches, comedy is presented as a contrast to tragedy and drama in a world in which all pairs of opposites co-exist. It is not, then, a comic novel or even a parody, as don Guillén, who possesses all the qualities of Belarmino and Apolonio, is a serious character, and never parodied: he is, as has been shown, a reconciliation of the two shoemakers who manages to live in the real world. The awe-inspiring reaction is to be seen indirectly only, in don Amaranto's method of looking at characters from a distance after coming into close contact with them. His spirit, as the narrator makes clear, pervades the whole novel. It could be concluded that although Belarmino y Apolonio is not a reconstruction of particular myths, it is profoundly concerned with myths and has a mythical quality.

CHAPTER VI

THE URBANO AND SIMONA NOVELS

THE URBANO AND SIMONA NOVELS

6.1 Critical reception

The relatively large number of related mythical and literary themes in the Urbano and Simona novels, although giving structural support to the narrative and a certain resonance to the characters, has not always won praise from the critics. Luna de miel, luna de hiel and Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona, although widely praised on their publication,¹ have since been subjected to more criticism than all Ayala's other novels, and usually for their use of myth. If the validity of Ayala's mythical method was ever in question, it is in these novels. D. L. Fabian, for example, asserts:

In an attempt to adapt the charming pastoral myth of Daphnis and Chloe to the modern world of Freud and abulia, Ayala has transformed its characters into a pair of pathetic paper cut-outs.²

He is one of the many critics who reject the novels for their lack of verisimilitude, assuming that their theme can be reduced to don Leoncio's short disquisition about sex education, and that the Daphnis and Chloe theme is in some way illustrative of it. Yet the Daphnis and Chloe references are only a small part of a web of mythical allusions, and perhaps the author never intended to adapt them or to use them to support any social argument. Indeed, the unrealistic characterisation resulting from the inclusion of myths may be intentional, serving as a contrast with the recognizably real social situation.

The most serious difficulty in approaching the Urbano and Simona

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1. See M. Azaña, 'Luna de miel, luna de hiel y Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona', La Pluma, VI, Madrid, 1923, pp. 409-13 and C. Rivas-Cherif, 'Ramón Pérez de Ayala : Luna de miel, luna de hiel', España, Madrid, 3/2/1923 and C. Rivas-Cherif, 'Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona', España, Madrid, 10/2/1923.
 2. D.L. Fabian, A Critical Analysis of the Novels of Ramón Pérez de Ayala, Ph.D. Chicago, 1950, p. 157.

novels lies in the improbability of anyone reaching the age of twenty totally innocent, as W. A. Dobrian says, begging the question:

A plea for sensible open-mindedness in sex education, the Luna de miel series is doomed from the start by the utter implausibility of the situation it seeks to develop. ³

This would be true if the novels were a 'plea for sensible open-mindedness'. If the novels are to prove anything about society, the characters' difficulties must be seen to derive from a fault in that society. Yet Ayala stresses that doña Micaela's own method of education involves eliminating all contact with society, and is an exception. Amorós argues that the method is a caricature,⁴ but it must be more as Urbano is totally innocent, and not through society's, but his mother's fault. Most critics have seen this innocence as merely ignorance of sex and drawn the conclusion that the whole series is about sex-education. Yet Urbano's innocence is linked to a traditional 'literary' innocence and ultimately to the innocence of man before the fall. He is by no means the only innocent character in the books; his parents, don Cástulo and doña Rosita are all innocent in some way. The problem for Ayala was presumably that if he were to deal with the universal theme of the loss of innocence in a novel with an unquestionably 'realistic' level, he would have to present characters who were innocent in some particular area, such as sex. And in accordance with his practice of dealing with essences, dictated by the mythical technique, he would have to create at least one totally innocent character. Yet in a mythical context there is nothing abnormal about innocence. The reason for the adverse criticisms is that in the Urbano and Simona novels

3. W.A. Dobrian, The Novelistic Art of Ramón Pérez de Ayala, Ph.D., Wisconsin, 1960, p.192.

4. A. Amorós, La novela intelectual de Ramón Pérez de Ayala, Gredos, Madrid, 1972, pp.321-2 .

Ayala allows the mythical and literary levels to intrude upon the literal level to an unprecedented extent with the result that they become clumsily entangled, the literal level becoming saturated with mythical and literary echoes. One of the purposes of this chapter will be to pick out the mythical elements and show how they form a coherent pattern.

A further criticism is that the novels lack unity, there being no fusion of the structure of the classical tragedy of the first half and the adventure novel in the second. J. Matas argues that, despite the theories of don Cástulo, the downward movement of tragedy in 'Cuarto Menguante', although essential to the purpose of the book, clashes with the episodic structure of Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona.⁵ As a result, he claims, there is no sense or order in a novel which is meant to portray the resolution of chaos and the reign of the 'norm'. Matas would expect some kind of reconciliation as in Belarmino y Apolonio, when in fact the reconciliation is of a different, and less optimistic, kind. This chapter will try to show that the only unifying force in the novels is the progress of the hero, which is traced consistently through all four parts.

The critic who has placed most emphasis on the mythical nature of the novel is Andrés Amorós, who describes it as,

un profundo mito humano: el de un hombre y una mujer que buscan la plenitud humana desde la inocencia, pasando por el doloroso descubrimiento de la vida y venciendo con sus trabajos los obstáculos que la sociedad pone en su camino.⁶

Apart from mentioning the general theme, however, he does not discuss its treatment, or relate it to the host of mythical and literary references which

5. J. Matas, Contra el honor, Hora h, Madrid, 1974, pp.120-1.

6. A. Amorós, La novela intelectual...., p.357.

presumably underline it. He takes for granted that the obstacles are social, and that the 'profundo mito' could easily be altered by reform of the educational system, when in fact obstacles of some sort are an eternal component of the theme. Whereas he, with most critics, have concluded that the difficulties of Urbano are abnormal, it will be the purpose of this chapter to show that they are an image of normality.

6.2 The biblical theme

The mythical - literary level of the two novels includes references to the very origins of mankind. By introducing the theme of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise, and linking the fortunes of Urbano and Simona with it, Ayala presents them not as victims of a perverse educational system, but as eternal figures undergoing experiences common to all mankind. The fall is therefore not a past event, but a continually re-enacted initiation into the world. It is interesting to note that one of the novels planned by Ayala, but never written, was about the creation of the world and that many of his short stories are about the concept of innocence versus experience; it is consequently not unreasonable to suppose that the references to the creation and fall of man have a special importance for Ayala.

The first mention of Adam and Eve comes from doña Micaela, whose intention of creating the perfect man involves creating a perfectly innocent one. Ironically, a state which is in myth a starting-point becomes for her a goal. She is trying to re-create humanity, abolishing the fall, and thereby releasing man from the burden of original sin. Urbano is thus often referred to as an angel, and he and his future wife will be

'como Adán y Eva antes del pecado'.⁷ The idea of the perfect man is clearly not new in Ayala: Fernández, in Sonreña, wanted to return to innocence and Marco de Setignano had projects for the renewal of humanity and like doña Micaela was concerned with producing the perfect human being. The difference is that now perfection is seen as freedom from sin, whereas before it consisted in energy and will-power. Marco's projects come to nothing, whereas Urbano's innocence is not rejected, but redefined in the course of the novel.

The case for treating Luna de miel, luna de hiel and Los Trabajos de Urbano y Simona as more than 'a plea for sensible open-mindedness in sex education' rests mainly on the mythical treatment, which turns Urbano's questions about what to do with Simona into a quest for all knowledge. Urbano is thus forced into eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge, a situation which is reflected in the period he spends in El Collado, a modern equivalent of paradise. At the beginning he is 'tan niño, simple e inerme ante el mundo como en la aurora del uso de razón'.⁸ That is, he is about to start using his reason, which was Adam's crime. Just as the Garden of Eden was created for the pleasure of man, so Urbano's relationship with his surroundings is at first passive and unquestioning. In this Simona, often likened to a goddess, becomes God himself:

Como Jehová, en el edén, nombraba, para el solo hombre que entonces había sobre la tierra, las cosas por su nombre, dándole a entender que no tenían otra finalidad sino solazarle y servirle....⁹

7. Ayala, Luna de miel, luna de hiel, Obras Completas, IV, p. 226.

8. Ayala, Luna...., p. 258.

9. Ayala, Luna...., p. 302.

But as soon as Urbano takes possession of paradise he begins to question it, and develops an 'inquietud' on realizing that he will never know everything about it and that he will remain forever a child. The loss of innocence becomes a religious rather than a psychological problem:

Para él, comenzaba el mundo a salir de la nada; pero comprendía que nunca saldría del todo; que, por mucho que él avanzase, siempre llegaría a un límite donde no podría avanzar; en el umbral de esa zona de misterio debería alzar implorante el corazón hacia el Padre que está en los cielos. 10

It is clear that the Urbano and Simona novels begin where Prometeo left off: with the humble realization of God's mysterious power. Nevertheless the rest of the book is taken up with the stages of Urbano's fall into the world; he asks continual questions about everything he sees, which at first appears chaotic. When the process of the fall has been established, Ayala introduces an echo meant to pinpoint the position:

Sentía el torso de ella tan contiguo a sí mismo que se figuraba como si él, Urbano, estuviera desnudo; y, sin saber por qué, se avergonzaba. 11

That is, before they are literally thrown out of paradise he has already begun to lose his innocence, a process which is seen as both inevitable and natural.

The awareness of the myth spreads from one character until several are conscious of it. As we have seen, doña Micaela was the first; then the narrator took it up giving it the authority of his omniscient view; finally don Cástulo tells Urbano to read Genesis. Although unable to understand it at first, he eventually appreciates it ('No faltaba detalle.

10. Ayala, Luna . . . , p. 305.

11. Ayala, Luna . . . , p. 341.

El y Simona eran Adán y Eva' ¹²) and is able to see himself from a quite different point of view, as part of a universal pattern; order replaces chaos. This presents Urbano with the greatest of all his problems: he now knows what is going to happen, and can look down on the events with an intellectual and knowing detachment which inhibits action just as much as innocence/ ^{did.} Indeed, the expulsion from El Collado strikes him as less 'digna' or 'decorosa' than the original. ¹³ The awareness of the myth only serves to widen the gap between the ideal and the real world, a theme which will be discussed later.

There remains the problem of the justice of Urbano's fall from paradise, which can only be explained by reference to the end of the process: entry into the Kingdom of God. This is done by doña Rosita, for whom the Day of Judgment is a final, and equitable, settling of accounts. ¹⁴ Although the world into which Urbano is thrown appears chaotic, and his reason for being there arbitrary and unjust, doña Rosita justifies it all in terms of the next world, which for her is closely linked with this world, in which paradise is to be found. After the death of doña Rosita there are few references to the Bible, the basic structure having been made clear. On the mythical level, the novels are set between Heaven and Hell, with occasional excursions into both.

6.3 Literary genres

The two novels are mythical in the sense that they are consciously generic; the mythical level is composed, not just of references to mythical

12. Ayala, Luna..., p. 344.

13. Ayala, Luna..., p. 358.

14. Ayala, Luna..., p. 365.

situations or literary figures, but also of echoes of literary forms.

Urbano's life may, at first, be a grotesque tragedy, but his teacher, don Cástulo, comes to be aware of a genuinely tragic pattern behind the events. Urbano's generic identity changes. Thus, don Cástulo's final discovery of the 'verdadera tragedia'¹⁵ is a sign that the archetypal pattern is still present. As we have seen elsewhere, Ayala's treatment of myth is by no means all grotesque, and in this case is not connected with social criticism, but with the identity of the individual.

One of don Cástulo's main worries is to decide which genre the events belong to; that is, to establish the archetypal form which reigns over the action. This concern has been dismissed by Matas: 'la reflexión sobre la forma de los libros es un sobrepuesto inútil al tema'.¹⁶ Yet don Cástulo's interest in the classics and wish to relate the events to a classical form are ways of bringing order and harmony to a world which he sees as chaotic. This conflict between chaos and order is central to the novels: doña Micaela's reaction to her own childhood is to impose order on Urbano's; for Urbano himself, education involves discovering the sense behind appearances; the novels contain many situations based on a contrast between what is and what appears to be. Don Cástulo's preoccupation with literary genres, and in particular the classics, is therefore an essential part of the novels. His first approach is to seek order through detachment from events. The tragic form is therefore, incidentally, a convenient way for him to abdicate responsibility. His awareness of the tragedy is matched by the hope that the events might turn out to be 'egológicos', and so he tries to submit

15. Ayala, Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona, Obras Completas, IV, p.390.

16. J. Matas, Contra..., p.115.

Urbano and Simona to a 'disciplina poética', with Daphnis and Chloe as models.¹⁷ For him, life must correspond to a preestablished pattern if it is to be authentic. This imposition of order is, as in the case of Teófilo Pajares, with whom don Cástulo has much in common, an illusion, in which the literary figures obscure a direct perception of reality and are anti-vital. As a spectator, he has an inauthentic view of the situation, which cannot account for his increasing involvement and identification with Urbano. His 'conversion' to romanticism indicates nothing more than that he cannot understand events and that he sees the world as a hostile place. At this point he is in the right psychological position to see the true tragedy of Urbano : he both identifies with him and sees him from a distance. There is in Luna de miel... the structure of a tragic fall of a whole order dissolving to be replaced by a new one, and don Cástulo's remarks provide a commentary on it. He can therefore say, at the beginning of Los trabajos... that he is witnessing an 'auténtica tragedia' (as opposed to an inauthentic one). The 'tragedy' begins in a grotesque fashion, with what Matas has called 'gracioso lenguaje "mítico" ',¹⁸ to become a real tragedy in accordance with Ayala's theories on the subject. It is therefore not surprising that most of the references to tragic form come, as Matas points out, at the end of Luna de miel... It can be concluded that the tragedy, as witnessed by don Cástulo, is the fall of the innocent Urbano and his expulsion from paradise.

There is therefore a complicated relationship between the archetypal and the realistic level. This latter appears a formless and meaningless

17. Ayala, Luna..., p. 285 .

18. J. Matas, Contra..., p. 86

grotesque tragedy. Indeed, it is, as we shall see, both unnatural and an inversion of the norm. The aim of the book is not to impose an order on it, but to reveal to the reader an order and stability which perpetually lie behind it. There is a familiar pattern: the literary level appears at first to be completely divorced from the modern situation, and is later seen to be relevant. It is in this context that the themes of *Daphnis and Chloe*, and *Persiles y Segismunda* should also be seen.

6.4. Daphnis and Chloe

Ayala's use of the *Daphnis and Chloe* theme appears at first to be balanced between contrast with the original and the continuity of a tradition. On the one hand, numerous echoes emphasise the literary nature of Luna de miel... and Los trabajos... and on the other, don Cástulo's distortion of the literary precedent leads the reader to question its relevance. The theme is first introduced by Cástulo himself, and constitutes his first evaluation of the loves of Urbano and Simona; he expects to witness their growing love just as the narrator of the Greek novel did, distantly and without emotion. By emphasizing continuity, Ayala blurs the distinction between fiction and reality, and by suggesting differences he is able to comment on the modern situation.

As usual, the first allusion comes from a character who cannot see the situation clearly. Don Cástulo is reminded of the similarity when doña Micaela says that Urbano and Simona are 'como dos recién nacidos'.¹⁹ Even at this early stage he changes the facts by trying to use the Greek pastoral novel as a textbook, when it is in fact escapist literature. The

19. Ayala, Luna..., p. 226.

parallel is incongruous because whereas Daphnis and Chloe live in a bucolic setting, marry, and go out into the world, Urbano and Simona are married first and then sent off to a paradise to learn about love. When Cástulo realises that his own innocence prevents him from looking down dispassionately on the lovers he rejects any possible similarity, and makes no further references to it; one of his illusions has been lost.

After this unpromising beginning, the theme takes on greater significance when it is adopted by the omniscient narrator who shows that events are not determined by psychology or social situation, but by literary precedent. This repetition alters the significance of the passage of time, by showing that actions do not always respond to their immediate cause, but follow a pattern. The pattern concerns three aspects of the Greek original: the plot, the setting, and the treatment of innocence and love.

Both Daphnis and Chloe and the Urbano and Simona novels are in four parts, with a time-sequence linked to the passing of the seasons, beginning and ending in spring. In both cases the lovers spend some time in the earthly paradise, making some progress towards consummating their relationship before being separated by outside forces, which are either literally or metaphorically associated with the sea. The period of enforced separation, which in both cases is associated with winter, is a preparation for renewal and involves, in the third section of each novel, instruction about sex from a third party. The happy ending is in both preceded by numerous obstacles, and involves a discovery of identity. At the centre of both there stand the lovers, whose devotion is never questioned, and whose innocence forces them to discover love. As a result, Ayala's novels are not open, but hermetic, and restricted to a narrow narrative framework. Objective time

(time by the clock) is irrelevant, as the events follow the preestablished pattern, which enables Ayala to neglect the plot without hindering the forward movement of events. In any case, once the theme of Daphnis and Chloe has been established, the happy ending is already implied.

The pastoral setting of El Collado, like the 'field and farm of Mytilene' is situated between, and contrasted with, two outside forces: the city and the sea. The sea represents the unpredictable, and is connected with change. In Luna de miel... the sight of the model ships hanging in the Church reminds Urbano of the fragility of human life, and the subsequent visit to the shore confronts him with two forms of change: marriage and death. In Daphnis and Chloe, the country is attacked from the sea by raiders, and when Chloe is abducted, she is taken off by sea. Indeed, when Urbano is suddenly carried off by doña Micaela, he imagines that he is in a boat carried away from the shore by a storm. The sea therefore represents danger and the unknown, in contrast to the land, which represents stability.

On the other side, there is the town, which also represents a threat as in the Greek novel the raiders originally come from it. Indeed, the pressures of life there made the parents of Daphnis and Chloe abandon their children. In the same way, Pilares contains all the undesirable elements of the books: it is there that the seven sisters imprison Simona, that the seedy Palomó lives, and where doña Micaela had her first experience of Hell. But the contrast is not a simple one between nature and civilization: just as El Collado is too civilized and divorced from nature, the town of Pilares is often presented as a place where man's natural instincts run wild.

In the idealised pastoral setting of Mytilene nature is helpful and

harmonious: the protagonists enjoy the protection of the nymphs and local deities and are never at odds with nature: Daphnis, for example, can train his goats and the sheep hardly ever stray. Indeed, the lovers are presented submerged in nature, and Chloe's beauty is always compared to the beauty of the surroundings. The protagonists live in harmony with nature, which is also their teacher, albeit a slow one. In Ayala's novels this relationship is broken. Nature has become a mystery whose workings can never be understood. Urbano and Simona, although living in the country, are divorced from nature, neither working in it nor learning from it (the name 'Urbano' is significant here). Indeed, don Cástulo's projects fail because Urbano and Simona cannot be expected to behave naturally, having had nature bred out of them. Nature is therefore a poor teacher, and indifferent to the lives of human beings. When Simona is ill, Urbano resents this indifference, a point illustrated by his killing of the crow. Whereas nature in Daphnis and Chloe is a dream made for man, in Ayala there is little contact with it. The problem which Ayala tries to illustrate is that, for the modern Urbano, nature can never be a dream because it implies animality.

Nature in Daphnis and Chloe is also a magical place where the gods can change the course of events by raising storms, and do so to help the humans. Daphnis and Chloe regularly give offerings to the nymphs, nature being a direct contact with the next world. There is a mythical presence in Mytilene. Yet the magical aspect of nature is treated quite differently in Ayala, where Urbano is simply bewildered:

La Naturaleza se le presentaba a Urbano un aspecto aderezado,

algo escénico, que le recordaba la única vez que su madre le había llevado a ver una función de magia. 20

Whereas nature in Daphnis and Chloe is magical through close contact with the next world, in Luna de miel... it is magical only because it cannot be understood. In conclusion, it could be said that whilst in the Greek pastoral animality and humanity co-exist, in Ayala they are separated and put into conflict. Daphnis and Chloe is used as the mythical origin of the idea of pure love and innocence, unmarred by animality. Indeed, it is perhaps because Daphnis and Chloe is the first treatment of love in western literature that Ayala made use of it.

The development of love differs in several respects. In the first place, Daphnis and Chloe are free to choose; fate may be present, but it only serves to remind us that they are really meant for each other. Their parents are shown to obey the gods. In Luna de miel..., however, fate is brought down to earth in the person of doña Micaela, whose influence results in an erosion of her son's will-power. The Greek pastoral lovers feel desire but do not know what to do about it, while Urbano is merely dimly aware that he ought to do something. Indeed, the Greek pair know love itself before they know the word for it (they are in fact seeking to define what they already feel) whereas Urbano and Simona are shown of all natural instincts. Both pairs do however arrive at a stage of languid inactivity, punctured by extremes of happiness and unhappiness, which is the result of their frustration. But knowledge only makes things worse for Urbano. The reason is that nature in the ideal pastoral world

20. Ayala, Luna..., pp. 300-1.

is harmonious, whereas in that of Urbano and Simona it is seen as discordant. In conclusion we can say that Urbano and Simona are reminiscent of Daphnis and Chloe because they are so different: the allusions are meant to heighten this difference.

6.5 Persiles y Sigismunda

If we agree with Ayala that 'el autor es tanto más original... cuanto más remotas son las resonancias que en él se concentran',²¹ Luna de miel... and Los trabajos... must be counted his most original novels. Through their clear connection with Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda they look back to the byzantine novel, which Ayala may have found to be a suitable form for the same reasons as Cervantes. In the first place, the byzantine novel is the natural and archetypal form for pilgrimages and quests: the characters set out and after many adventures achieve some exemplary goal. In Persiles y Sigismunda this is a Christian ideal, 'la cumbre del amor humano y cristiano'²² and in Ayala, human love seen as a balance between the spiritual and the animal. In the second place, the conventions of the byzantine novel allow the whole world to be encompassed. Although there is no travelling in Luna de miel... and Los trabajos..., they are centred on two representative locations: the land versus the sea and the town versus the country, which are all contrasted as in Cervantes's novel. Just as in Cervantes there is an attempt to outline a panorama of human relationships.

The Persiles y Sigismunda theme is clearly behind the title of Los trabajos... and, unlike the others discussed here, is presented solely

21. Ayala, Las máscaras, Obras Completas, III, p. 161.

22. J.B. Avallé-Arce, Introduction to Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda Madrid, 1969, pp. 25-6.

from the point of view of the omniscient narrator. There is no question of the characters themselves identifying with Persiles and Sigismunda, or having contrasting views of the literary archetype. In this sense, it is used impersonally and is objective, its importance being to shed light on the relationship between the narrator and the text. There is a sense in which the narrator is not fully responsible for the text, and that the novel is not his invention: Cervantes has had a hand in writing it. It could therefore be concluded that Urbano's innocence is the conventional innocence of the hero of such a novel: the hero will start (as in Persiles y Sigismunda) as far away as possible from the goal which he is to achieve. The difference is that Persiles's journey is partly physical, and Urbano's is completely spiritual. The inclusion of the archetypal theme therefore restricts the possibilities of the plot and, by referring backwards in time, distorts the usual linear sequence of events. In this way a sense of continuity with the past is achieved, together with the feeling that events are not to be taken at their face value. Whereas the plot could be considered, in musical terms, as the melody, the references are a kind of orchestration. At the same time, the literary pedigree of Luna de miel... and Los trabajos... is to be found in the byzantine novel and ultimately in its predecessor, the epic.

The plot-structure of Persiles y Sigismunda and the Urbano and Simona novels is remarkably similar, both tracing the difficulties of a pair of ideal lovers from the birth of love to marriage and 'clarity'. As Casaldueiro says, the material world needs illumination from the next.²³ This final harmonious

23. J. Casaldueiro, Sentido y forma de Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda, Buenos Aires, 1947, p.17: 'el mundo real... no tiene sentido en el Barroco si no se le ilumina fuertemente con el mundo ideal'.

stage involves a discovery of identity: Periandro and Auristela become what they have always been (just as the end of Los trabajos... confirms a marriage which has always been there), and Urbano becomes Juan Pérez, i. e. anyone. Persiles and Sigismunda too lose their special position as novelistic heroes to become simply the grandparents of their grandchildren. In both cases the protagonists return to normal life, an integration into reality. In both cases, however, the hero begins as a perfect being: Periandro is continually performing deeds to prove it, and Urbano begins in the hopeless perfection prescribed by his mother. Both novels begin, then, with the lofty perfection of characters divorced from reality who gradually become authentic individuals in a balanced and harmonious world, although in Ayala the harmony is threatened, and only exists inside the characters.

Ayala follows the Cervantine technique of beginning 'in media res', showing the decisive event which will throw the hero out into the world. In Persiles y Sigismunda he is literally dragged out of a hole in the ground, and in Ayala it is, as we have seen, associated with the myth of the creation. In both novels there follows an account of past actions, but whereas Cervantes lets his characters stand up and tell their own stories, Ayala intervenes, summarizes and analyses. There is however the same breaking up of the time-sequence in the interests of complete understanding. The imprecise time, and lack of a strong plot mean that digressions and flash-backs can be introduced without disrupting anything. In both cases the lovers are separated, as soon as the preliminary situation has been explained, in a catastrophe brought about by one of the negative aspects of life: in Cervantes lust, and in Ayala, ignorance. The second part begins with an involuntary reunification, in which the characters are forced to adopt a disguise:

Periandro and Auristela pretend to be brother and sister and Urbano and Simona (who have been taken as brother and sister) are only pretending to be married. In both cases the third part involves a move to a more recognizably real world: in Cervantes the primitive Christianity of the desert island is superseded by the institution of the Church and in Ayala the pastoral existence in El Collado is following by a return to the town, in which social and commercial forces come into play. The climax of both is so similar that it is difficult not to see an echo. Both heroines feel at the last moment a religious vocation which threatens to disrupt their relationship: Auristela decides that she will get to Heaven quicker without Periandro, and Simona wants to stay in the convent to help a dying woman. Again, both heroines fall ill in such a way that they are less attractive, and as a result suffer a fit of depression in the belief that they have lost their beloved. Both novels therefore have a similar structure: although the reader knows that everything will turn out well in the end, the protagonists face a number of obstacles which contribute to the suspense of the ending. As a result, the characters are not seen as completely free individuals with the ability to make their own choices.

Within this general framework there are a number of echoes related to some of the main themes of the Urbano and Simona novels. The first of these concerns the production of the perfect king, the ambition of the savages in Persiles y Sigismunda which is echoed by doña Micaela's aim of producing the perfect man. In both cases such ambition provokes the action and leads to a catastrophe, including the separation of the lovers. Both novels, then, begin with a dream of perfection, and in the light of the

comparison, doña Micaela's dream appears savage and barbaric.

In addition, the identity of the protagonists is continually being mistaken; in Persiles y Sigismunda they spend most of the novel under assumed names, and both pass off convincingly as members of the opposite sex. Urbano and Simona, apart from being taken as brother and sister, are not really married when they appear to be, and when they feel married find that society considers them unmarried, with the result that Urbano has to elope with his own wife. Indeed, the final scene of Los trabajos... is reminiscent of Persiles y Sigismunda in that Simona is dressed as a boy. But whereas in Cervantes these are literary devices in Ayala they are merely echoes of devices, although they serve the same purpose. In Los trabajos... such mistaken identities betray an unstable and unsatisfactory situation in which appearances never correspond to reality.

The relationship of Persiles y Sigismunda to Ayala's novels is not, however, confined to technique. Both are concerned with the contrast between instinct and reason, or man and nature. Indeed, Ayala's pair of novels sets out to question how natural man is. As Casaldueiro points out, there are two ideas of man in the Persiles y Sigismunda: the 'hombre-fiera' who is subject to passions, and the 'hombre-rey' who dominates them.²⁴ There are two corresponding habitats, 'monte' and 'palacio', in which Persiles y Sigismunda is set. The islands which the travellers visit can be divided into those which are desolate and those which have been settled by man. On the 'isla de las ermitas' we see harmony between nature and the restraining hand of man. In Books II and III of Persiles y Sigismunda

24. J. Casaldueiro, Sentido..., pp.19-20.

there is an even clearer contrast between the confusion of the real world and the peace of the various retreats, often hillsides and churches, where man finds rest. In Ayala too we can see the contrasts not just between the town and the peace of the country, but between change and movement and the timelessness of certain characters, like Paolo and doña Rosita who live in their own worlds. In this respect, Ayala reverses the original situation, in which restraint is seen as beneficial: Urbano and Simona, having suffered too much restraint, are expected to become more animal.

Just as in Persiles y Sigismunda, characters in the Urbano and Simona novels can be divided into those who follow instinct and those who do not. In Persiles y Sigismunda there are a number of chaste lovers, Manuel de Sosa, Cortino and Leonor and Persiles and Sigismunda, who are contrasted with those who just want sex: the witch and Rutilio, the two sailors, Rosamunda, Cenotia and Policarpo, all of whom cause some kind of catastrophe by their lust. Finally there are a number of natural physical attractions, Antonio (father) and Ricla and Arbolánchez and Ambrosia, where everything turns out well in the end. Urbano and Simona correspond to the group of chaste relationships; animal love is exemplified most eloquently by the two cats in El Collado, Pentámetro, doña Victoria and by don Leoncio and María Egipciaca, whose relationship, like Policarpo's lust, is meant to ridicule aged passion. There are also a number of natural relationships which start with physical attraction and end happily, such as that of don Cástulo and Conchona. In both Cervantes and Ayala the novel is used to present a panorama of human relationships, and in each life is seen as a conflict between instinct and reason. Yet Ayala introduces two significant changes.

His characters are made up of contradictions: don Leoncio needs both the physical relationship with María Egipcíaca and the companionship of his wife. Whereas in Cervantes the contradictions cause conflicts between characters, in Ayala they create internal instability. In the second place, the treatment of innocence is different. Ayala's characters are not fighting to preserve their innocence, but to lose it: they are grotesque versions of the 'perfect Christian lovers', in whom restraint has gone so far that natural actions are impossible. Yet the relationship between Persiles and Sigismunda is also inherently unstable, for as long as they conceal their true identity they are subject to the advances of others. So, Arnaldo makes advances to Auristela, inducing fear in Periandro, and Sinforosa makes advances to Periandro, inciting jealousy in the less perfect Auristela. Indeed there is in both novels the implication that woman is inferior: Urbano does not want Simona to become more tolerant than he after her experiences in the convent. In the second part of both novels, innocence is attacked, although in Ayala it becomes an attack on the idea of innocence. Whereas in Cervantes the chastity of Auristela proclaims her virtue, in Ayala natural acts are just as difficult to achieve. Yet the structure is very similar. Just as Persiles and Sigismunda must make the arduous pilgrimage to Rome before they can be married, so Urbano and Simona must undertake an equally arduous journey to knowledge about the world before they can consider themselves truly married.

Both Cervantes and Ayala present a view of the world which develops in a similar way. The first half of both works shows the characters in a hopeless situation, in a world where they are dominated by an arbitrary fate.

The first two books of Persiles y Sigismunda present the characters floating helplessly at the mercy of the winds. Accordingly there is in Ayala an accumulation of images of the sea, and Urbano himself is compared to a suitcase, despatched from one place to another, with no sense of his own purpose. In both, the world is a place of infinite possibilities, where good and evil, happiness and unhappiness go hand in hand. There is in both a sense of meaninglessness only relieved by a few exemplary characters, often Christian. Cenotia and doña Rosita both die an exemplary Christian death, trusting in God's justice and announcing that all will be well with the heroes. These two deaths occur at almost identical stages in the plot, at the end of the sections outside society and as the protagonists are about to return to the real world. There is in both an uneasy balance between arbitrary fate and eternal order. In both the characters move to a more ordered world. In Persiles y Sigismunda this is symbolised by the established Church, and in the Urbano and Simona novels by their ability to make the institution of marriage meaningful.

The parallels between the two novels also involve the relationship of the author to his work. One critic has pointed out that the narrator of Persiles y Sigismunda adopts two contrasting attitudes towards the material: there is the 'conservative' narrator, who insists on the truth of what he says, and the 'playful' one, who laughs at his own stylistic devices, asking the reader to believe uncritically, and saying that the experienced reader will do so.²⁵ The least plausible episodes of the first two books are written by the 'conservative' and the more realistic second half by the 'playful' narrator. Ayala too makes no concessions to the reader in the first half

25. A.K. Forcione, Cervantes, Aristotle and the Persiles, Princeton, 1970, pp. 270 and 279.

of the Urbano and Simona novels. Although they are the most unlikely, he treats the explanations for Urbano's education with a medical detachment, and the introduction to doña Micaela reads like a medical textbook. Yet doña Rosita finds the consequences of her mania, the education of Urbano, incredible and even the reader's belief is taxed to the limit. When the action takes a more credible turn, with Urbano's return to Pilares at the beginning of Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona the narrator begins to question the verisimilitude of the tale, and to underline its literary nature more overtly.

Just as some of the characters of Persiles y Sigismunda offer critical judgments (Mauricio the neo-Aristotelian, Transila, uneducated but interested in a good tale, and Periandro the creative artist who needs a certain amount of freedom for his tale) so in the Urbano and Simona novels the story and literary criticism go hand in hand. The question of verisimilitude, brought up predictably by don Cástulo, is an echo of the literary preoccupations of a past age. His conclusion is Cervantine: that the reader should treat events as if they actually happened, no matter how unlikely they appear. The onus of belief, as often in Cervantes, is placed firmly upon the reader, and depends upon confidence and understanding. Two parallel passages stand out:

Os reís de la tragedia como os reís de la mitología. Los mitos los juzgáis inverosímiles y los calificáis de cuentos de viejas. Lo que no comprendéis, decretáis que no existe. 26

and:

Las cosas de admiración
no las digas ni las cuentos;
que no saben todas gentes
cómo son. 27

26. Ayala, Los trabajos...., p.390.

27. M.de Cervantes, Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda, Castalia, Madrid, 1969, p.381.

Of course, in Persiles y Sigismunda many of the critical comments refer not to the work itself but to the stories which many of the characters tell, and which, as in the case of Periandro, become miniature works of literature. In Ayala, the characters do not have the freedom to invent their own stories, but often tend to judge life as if it were literature, and to stand aside from the main plot in order to pass comments on it. For example, 'Cuarto Menguante' sees the opposing views of doña Micaela and don Leoncio about the education of Urbano. 'Cuarto Creciente' becomes a series of little scenes, at the end of each of which doña Rosita and don Cástulo have theoretical discussions on the progress of the protagonists. In many of Ayala's novels there are characters who, although taking little part in the action, are concerned with commenting on it. They form a bridge between the literary characters and the reader, and are often not drawn from any literary myth. Such a one is don Cástulo.

This leads us to the question of originality and invention. What might appear in Ayala's novels to be the invented, and purely literary part, is in fact a remarkably detailed reconstruction of a model, just as in Persiles y Sigismunda Periandro's tale strikes the reader as more of an invention than the rest of the novel. Ayala's invention consists in combining the models, and in allowing a few characters to comment, from opposing points of view, on what he considers the vital problem, which in the Urbano and Simona novels, is the conflict between nature and knowledge. His originality lies in the way he traces the theme back to its origins, which invariably means myth and literary tradition. The figures of Persiles and Sigismunda are therefore particularly appropriate because they too are 'mythical heroes'.

The importance of tradition changes the role of the narrator in the work. His main task is to remind the reader of what he already knows, and the reader's task is to recognize. In this way, the reader is forced to stop reading in a linear fashion, to look behind all the events, and to see them as a static pattern. In this way, the 'truth' is divorced from the 'fictional' elements. It remains to show the nature of the 'truth' which underlies the events, which inevitably brings us to the mythical pattern.

6.6. The myth of the hero

The 'truth' behind Urbano is concerned with that area in which he can be identified with all novelistic heroes and not just Persiles: the myth of the hero. There is a sense in which he is not differentiated from other heroes, does not exist as an individual invention and conforms to a pattern. Although, unlike the pragmatic don Guillén, Urbano begins in complete innocence, the two suffer the same process of death and rebirth: the old Urbano must die before a new one can be born. It is not surprising, then, that the Urbano and Simona novels are full of images of death and rebirth. Urbano's innocence is no more than the extreme situation ('situación límite') which precedes renewal. Urbano is in many ways a development of the don Guillén figure. In the first place, his whole life is presented, and in the second the issue of knowledge is raised. Again, whereas don Guillén is a pragmatist, realising his limits and living to a certain extent in a world of his own creation, Urbano is faced with the problem of living with others. If the moral of Belarmino y Apolonio was 'Existir, multiplicarse y amar',²⁸ don Guillén accomplishes the first and last and it is for Urbano to 'multiplicarse',

28. Ayala, Belarmino y Apolonio, Obras Completas, IV, p. 219.

Yet Ayala balances the purely mythical interpretation of Urbano's life by insisting on the psychological reasons for doña Micaela's system of education. In this way, Urbano is also the victim of a mania and his difficulties are not serious.²⁹ Yet don Cástulo is made to point out that the idea of the perfect son brought up in isolation goes back to Plato and is to be found in La vida es sueño. Just as Simona is often referred to as a princess, so Urbano is ^{like} the prince kept in isolation because his father fears his rivalry. There is therefore a conflict between the two views, and it is the purpose of this section to show that the often disputed unity of the Urbano and Simona novels lies on the mythical rather than the individual and invented plane.

Urbano's upbringing is a good preparation for complete alienation in the world. He is taught to learn without looking for sense or meaning, and as a result the world seems chaotic and without order. This world is ruled over by doña Micaela, whom don Cástulo refers to as Jehová (i. e. a vengeful god), whose power is used in an arbitrary fashion. She is referred to as a 'cosmic force',³⁰ and represents a kind of untamed primeval energy. The effect on Urbano is presented in terms of the already familiar nightmare period in the myth of the hero. His personality is divided, and he sees himself: 'con faz cadavérica, los ojos como cuajados en una visión de terror eterno'.³¹ As don Cástulo later points out, Urbano is at this stage a monster, having had all natural instincts suppressed.³² It is the

29. For a discussion of what Ayala means by 'serious', see Ayala, Las máscaras, pp. 36-40.

30. Ayala, Los trabajos..., p. 389.

31. Ayala, Luna..., p. 275.

32. Ayala, Los trabajos..., pp. 387-388.

mythical descent into Hell.

The period spent with Simona in the garden paradise is presented as the beginning of rebirth, when the whole world comes into being and his senses are awakened, with the help of Simona who is a kind of goddess ruling over the garden, and often associated with light.³³ In this way, she is the first of the helpful figures whom Urbano meets, and plays the role of the fairy princess. She is therefore a purely abstract figure whose lack of realism must be attributed to the mythical structure.

One of the stages, or tests through which Urbano must pass, is connected with language. His ignorance of reality is shown by the fact that although he knows plenty of words, he does not always know how to apply them.³⁴ With the help of Simona, the names of things are established and chaos begins to be replaced by order: 'la realidad de las cosas y la realidad de su propio cuerpo y de su espíritu se despertaba por entonces de la nada nebulosa que era su anterior estado, la de él y la del universo'.³⁵ This process of reawakening takes place just as another important symbol is introduced: the Via Crucis in the Church at Penduelas. Far from exemplifying the 'tragic structure' of Luna de miel... it is surely an image of the journey which Urbano is to undertake, and which will lead him through the aptly named Calle del Calvario to salvation.

One of the principles of human psychology which Ayala explains at the beginning of Luna de miel... is that the human mind is made up of opposites in a continually uneasy balance. Urbano is both a man of action and an introvert, and his task will be to reconcile these two halves of his

33. Ayala, Luna...., p.295: 'como la Aurora homérica, despertando... a las flores'.

34. Ayala, Luna...., pp.271 and 321-2.

35. Ayala, Luna...., p.304.

character. Indeed, the world in which Urbano finds himself is full of contrasts and paradoxical situations. As it is traditionally the hero's task to resolve contrasts and find the essential harmony of the world it is difficult not to see Urbano as fulfilling the role of the hero. We have already commented on the dislocation of his character between the inner and outer man, but there are many more. The trip to the seashore on the Sunday afternoon introduces him at one and the same time to death and marriage: the fact that they are both connected with the fishermen brings out the contrast of happiness and unhappiness. In the scene on the shore human activity also appears meaningless: the aristocrat committed suicide 'por gusto'. Again, the misfortune of his expulsion from 'El Collado' comes at the time when he and Simona appear to be about to consummate their marriage. Indeed, there comes a time when his own wife is forbidden him by society and he is forced to elope with her. Another source of contradictions springs from the question of knowledge. In theory it is better to learn from nature but, as doña Rosita points out, you cannot learn if you first do not know what to look for. Yet knowledge from books too is a method of education which does don Cástulo no good.

Urbano's education appears to be further hindered by the apparent incompetence of his teacher, don Cástulo, who is the very antithesis of a good teacher and is presented as a parody of the teacher in Rousseau's Emile. Don Cástulo uses Rousseau's idea of the negative education as an excuse for doing nothing and applies to Urbano the principles for teaching boys under the age of twelve. He proclaims in doctrinaire fashion that Urbano 'return to nature' even though he is incapable of doing so. He continually distorts Rousseau's statements, saying:

los libros, el mayor azote de la humanidad. 36

when in the original it is:

La lecture est le fléau de l'enfance. 37

He roundly condemns all books, itself a contravention of Rousseau's ideas, when Rousseau was talking about the dangers of the wrong books getting into the hands of under-twelves. Don Cástulo goes on to say:

Sumérgete en el agua de la Estigia. 38

which would probably be meaningless to Urbano, when in the original it is:

trempez-les dans l'eau du Styx. 39

Here, Urbano is expected to bring himself up, whereas in Rousseau the teacher has a very important part to play. In conclusion, Don Cástulo is dogmatic where he should be an unseen influence, and absent when he should direct. It is only after his 'initiation' that Urbano comes to understand that the education given by don Cástulo, ineffective and incompetent as it seemed, did in fact do some good.

One of the characters who most nearly and unequivocally fulfils a mythical role is doña Rosita, the fairy-godmother figure, for whom don Leoncio feels a kind of religious reverence. She gives advice and gifts - the mythical amulets - which symbolise constancy in love and which Simona keeps till the end of the book. Her importance lies partly in the fact that she seems to abolish time. Symbolically, she wears a miniature of her own grandmother who closely resembles Simona now and herself in the past. Her memories of her sea-captain husband are still fresh, and she is always able to recapture the past. Indeed, she even resembles Simona in being

36. Ayala, Luna..., p.323.

37. J.-J. Rousseau, Emile ou de l'education, Garnier, Paris, 1964, p.115.

38. Ayala, Luna..., p.323.

39. J.-J. Rousseau, Emile..., p.20.

separated from her husband for long periods. In a strange way she is as innocent as Simona, a fact which suggests that innocence is not necessarily a temporary lack of knowledge, but a permanent characteristic, unconnected with sex, and with more to do with a religious attitude to life. She is one of the few characters in the book who appear as a reconciliation of opposites: she is as innocent as the virginal Simona, and yet a mother; she exists in this world, but also, through her religious faith, in the next, of which she has a very clear idea; and she exists on different levels of time. Her dramatic function in the book is to give hope for the future and to warn against the dangers of losing innocence completely, which she does by asking Urbano and Simona to do something irrational each year in her memory.

'Novilunio' is, as might be expected of the third section of the book, full of images of Hell: Urbano descends into it for two days, doña Micaela reinterprets her previous experience of it, and the seven sisters are crudely symbolic of it. After his discovery of sex, Urbano decides to retire from the world and become a monk, a typical sign of the rejection of the 'call'. 'The problem is the impossibility of reconciling opposites: he feels that he is expected to remain pure and yet at the same time become an animal. This sort of knowledge is the light which burns rather than illuminates, and leads Urbano into an 'ensueño indeciso', a period of spiritual death. When he emerges after two days, don Leoncio calls him 'Lázaro resucitado'.⁴⁰

Sex, then, appears as the last of the mysteries which Urbano has to uncover in order to be reborn:

40. Ayala, Los trabajos..., p. 416.

Ahora sí que se cerraba una etapa de su historia y se iniciaba otra, larga quizá, acaso tediosa, tal vez combativa; pero él iba a ser, y no el designio ajeno, el hacedor de su propia historia. ⁴¹

Although this passage is concerned with Urbano's subjective attitudes, it occurs at this point because the mythical structure demands it. Reintegration with reality follows the hero's emergence from Hell. The old Urbano, whose religious feelings depended on an awareness of his own ignorance, has now died. He refers to himself as a new man: 'el nuevo Urbano'. ⁴²

This new man must next pass through one of the most important stages of transformation, atonement with the father. Don Leoncio points out in a conversation with the mature Urbano that they had never been very close, and their conversation after Urbano's period in Hell takes on the significance of a reconciliation. In the course of their talk they are shown to be very similar, just as Simona had much in common with her grandmother. In the first place, both feel that they are being reborn: 'comienzo a vivir, en todas las acepciones de la palabra, hijo mío, en todas las acepciones'. ⁴³ The similarity which don Leoncio notices between Simona and María Egipciaca, his mistress, makes him aware that they have similar tastes, and he also discovers that they have a similar outlook on life: 'Parece que con mi sangre has heredado algunos de mis gustos y mis principios, aunque siempre los he guardado para mí'. ⁴⁴ It is as if don Leoncio were discovering for the first time that Urbano was really his own son. Before that, doña Micaela had taken upon herself the roles of father and mother;

41. Ayala, Los trabajos..., p. 448.

42. Ayala, Los trabajos..., p. 453.

43. Ayala, Los trabajos..., p. 453.

44. Ayala, Los trabajos..., p. 454.

the atonement represents a return to normality.

The renewal of Urbano and don Leoncio is balanced by the steady decline of doña Micaela; it is as if the new Urbano cannot emerge until the old doña Micaela has disappeared. He inherits many of her characteristics, decisiveness being the most apparent. Her previous life has, on her own admission, been a kind of Hell, and in 'Novilunio' she begins to emerge from it, in the hope of gaining paradise. She hopes for a new start with don Leoncio, and a new child to replace Urbano. Before long she can say that the old doña Micaela has died, and by the end of 'Novilunio' she is as innocent as before she was knowledgeable, and in a state of 'beatitud dichosa', confusing all aspects of reality, especially sexual ones. She represents, in don Cástulo's words, the 'Santo destino de la mujer',⁴⁵ which in his view consists in self-sacrifice: she will die so that Urbano may live. This is one of the points where there can be no psychological explanation of her conduct, with the result that the mythical level, with its references to Hell, Lucifer and paradise, comes to the fore: 'vivía ahora en estado de beatitud dichosa. Había ascendido al paraíso hallándose todavía en carne mortal'.⁴⁶ The important point is that doña Micaela is not just a psychological case, but, through her experience of Hell and constant references to it, a mythical figure.

Simona too, passes through a period of hellish darkness with the seven ugly sisters, 'de fosca catadura brujesca',⁴⁷ whose appearance in the novel turns it into a fairy story. They represent unrelieved evil;

45. Ayala, Los trabajos..., p. 479.

46. Ayala, Los trabajos..., p. 475.

47. Ayala, Los trabajos..., p. 481.

even the kisses of Trifona, the eldest, are sinister: 'Huélele la boca a cementerio, a iglesia y a infierno...'.⁴⁸ They are the evil monsters which are appropriate to this stage of the progress of the hero and heroine, and their presence firmly establishes the conflict in Los trabajos... between good and bad: they are completely bad, just as Simona is completely good. The usefulness of a mythical structure here lies in its clear distinction between good and evil. Ayala's 'liberal' views would normally preclude such a sweeping distinction, which is however, essential if the novel is to have a moral message. On this mythical level, where fairy princesses like Simona and evil witches like the seven sisters can exist, with no threat to the 'liberal' tolerance which Ayala advocates, essential good and essential evil can be brought into conflicts which would not normally be possible. The 'strong simplicity' which we have already discussed is therefore not just a question of characterization but also a moral one: the Urbano and Simona novels are to a great extent a fight between good and evil.

Simona is never seen directly, but always through a veil of images which make her the fairy princess of the tale, yet unconvincing as an individual character. She is referred to as the 'Emperatriz'.⁴⁹ In her relationship with Urbano she is presented as a goddess: 'Tú eres su dueña, su esclava, su diosa',⁵⁰ and is called 'angelical' and compared to Snow White. The development of Urbano, like that of any mythical hero, focuses on his becoming worthy of this prize. She is a harmonious

48. Ayala, Los trabajos..., p.511.

49. Ayala, Los trabajos..., p.535.

50. Ayala, Los trabajos..., p.436.

mixture of all women. We have already seen how don Leoncio thought that she resembled María Egipciaca; when in the convent she becomes, for a while, a fallen woman. She is also a wife, a widow, a deceived lover and at the end of the book about to become a mother. In a sense, she is even meant to be reminiscent of the Virgin Mary.

Her importance in the book is as the prize which Urbano must win through his personal transformation. To this end he must reconcile the opposites in his character, and indeed all the conflicts in the book. As Paolo thinks: 'Le había visto transformarse, de repente, de niño zangolotino en hombre independiente y original'.⁵¹ This independence and originality is based on Urbano's understanding of one of the fundamental themes of the book: the conflict between nature and reason. This is revealed in an important passage following his reconciliation with his mother, and which constitutes the peak of Urbano's enlightenment.

¿ Es que llevamos todavía en la caverna de nuestro pecho al hombre primitivo, estúpido y sanguinario? Evidentemente. ¡ Oh, qué alegría descubrirlo, conocerlo ! Porque en cuanto una cosa está conocida, está asimismo dominada. Lo único que no se domina es el misterio. Ya te tengo sujeta e inmóvil, bestia cavernaria, padre de los sentimientos bajos. No me dejes dominar de estos sentimientos. Yo los domino, puesto que los conozco. ¡ Y con qué sencillez he triunfado ! Parece que si siempre pudiéramos comprobar cómo funciona el mecanismo de los telares con que nuestra alma teje sus ensueños, sus ilusiones, sus codicias, sus odios, sus desabrimientos, sus resentimientos, sus envidias, sus vanidades, sus recelos, sus espantos, la mayor parte de los conflictos de conciencia desaparecerían. 52

There will therefore be no conflict between happiness and unhappiness, as an awareness of both is itself an affirmation of life. Man's animality is dominated, not by doña Micaela's ruthless suppression, but by understanding.

51. Ayala, Los trabajos..., p.505.

52 Ayala, Los trabajos..., pp.472-3.

Even the conflict between 'el alto magisterio de don Cástulo y sus enseñanzas incomparables, sentimientos delicados, pureza de intenciones, amor a la belleza, desinterés en los pensamientos, culto de la inteligencia, elegancia del espíritu'.⁵³ and the demands of daily reality appear to be capable of solution given time. Above all, the two halves of Urbano's personality, the 'hombre externo, activo y práctico; otro, el hombre espiritual, discursivo y analítico',⁵⁴ are both fully occupied. He is therefore a balanced and harmonious unity and worthy of Simona. The development of Urbano's personality clearly owes less to normal psychological processes than to the mythical content of the novels, which involves the balancing of all opposites in harmony. This is clear from a short description of one of Urbano's dreams:

A solas en el lecho, tardó en dormirse. Estaba febril. Luego soñó verse suspendido en el aire, como un péndulo, y oscilaba vertiginosamente desde una región diáfana y luminosa, que era el paraíso, hasta una zona negra y pavorosa, que era el infierno: de aquí y de allá, sin punto de sosiego.⁵⁵

Such a description is less concerned with what Urbano actually dreamt than with a fairly abstract interpretation of his position: without Simona he can not achieve paradise. Now, paradise is hardly a psychological concept, but rather a theological one, and one which is constantly present in the myth of the hero.

Urbano's final victory and integration into reality can only be accomplished with Simona, as they are 'los dos polos del universo'.⁵⁶ Their relationship is thus placed, not on a sentimental footing, but in universal, cosmic terms. Nature, concludes Urbano, is divided into the eternal feminine and the eternal masculine and as Simona 'asumía el tipo

53. Ayala, Los trabajos..., p.471.

54. Ayala, Los trabajos....., p.470.

55. Ayala, Los trabajos....., p.513.

56. Ayala, Los trabajos....., p.528.

de la perfección femenina', ⁵⁷ it is for him to be the ideal of masculinity. In this way the two characters lose their individual identity and become purely abstract eternal forces: Simona and Urbano are complementary opposites.

For this reason Urbano cannot accept the fact that nature would continue if Simona died, and so shoots the crow which by its singing proclaims the unchangeability of nature. Simona's illness is a purely mythical event:

Todo era primavera. Y Simona estaba en su primavera dormida y como muerta, no de otra suerte que el Adonis mítico parecía muerto o dormido durante el invierno para resucitar con su juventud perenne a cada nueva primavera. Simona iba a resucitar. 58

Urbano waits at her bedside 'como una figura de piedra labrada en un sepulcro en espera de la resurrección de la carne'. ⁵⁹ When she does recover, 'Urbano veía a Simona como una resucitada, una mensajera del país de las sombras, una persona distinta, puesta que había resucitado en un cuerpo distinto...'. ⁶⁰ In this way Ayala diverts all attention from the events onto the mythical plane which is concerned with transformation and renewal.

Urbano himself recognizes that they have begun a new life, and that neither is the same as before. This is perhaps the real reason why, during the hold-up by bandits, Urbano says that his name is Juan Pérez and Simona's, Pedro Fernández: they have become anyone, absorbed into the rest of humanity.

The solution which Ayala proposes here to the problem of the hero's integration into the world is significantly different from that in Belarmino y Apolonio. Don Guillén achieved great knowledge of the world, and a sometimes cold and pragmatic detachment from it. Urbano and Simona will just produce

57. Ayala, Los trabajos..., p. 528.

58. Ayala, Los trabajos..., p. 540.

59. Ayala, Los trabajos..., p. 541.

60. Ayala, Los trabajos..., p. 543.

children, a solution which was carefully avoided in Belarmino y Apolonio by making don Guillén a priest. Urbano and Simona will continue to live in a dangerous and chaotic world, which they cannot change in any way as, unlike don Guillén, they are powerless. The paradox of the Urbano and Simona novels is that although Urbano suffers for his innocence at the beginning, it is to a kind of innocence that he returns at the end.

6.7 Conclusions

Luna de miel... and Los trabajos... are the first of Ayala's novels to attempt to combine literary and mythical figures in response to certain problems of composition. The first of these is the difficulty of using the novel to present convincingly an abstract subject. The essay-like passages from the narrator, and even some of the characters, would damage the form of a traditional novel, even if related to its theme. Ayala therefore adopts the episodic form of the byzantine novel where continuity of plot is not essential, and which can without danger be broken up; it is in the nature of the byzantine novel to be studded with digressions. Mythical references fit in well with abstract and essayistic passages as they have a common focal point: the narrator.

If there is a sense of unity, it is very flexible. Urbano and Simona are to be seen in many different ways: as Adam and Eve, Daphnis and Chloe, and Persiles and Sigismunda. The reader is therefore invited to look at them from many different points of view, and on different levels: as individual characters, as literary characters and as mythical figures. This diversity is probably an attempt to deal with the difficulties of using the type of

characters which are involved in a novel with an abstract subject. It is not enough for Urbano to be a modern Spanish youth who happens to be innocent; he must be innocence itself. By accumulating references to various figures Ayala emphasises what they all have in common: a quest which involves change from one state to another, a rejection of the past and a sense of renewal. Yet not all the references are treated with the same seriousness: those suggested by don Cástulo often tend to be ridiculed. In this way Ayala, instead of probing deeper into the characters, tends to move round them, illuminating different facets one by one. Consequently, they lack the 'strong simplicity' of the mythical novel. Yet there is always the central core, usually associated with the most remote of the references, the expulsion from paradise of Adam and Eve and the myth of the hero.

Another of the problems which Ayala must have faced is concerned with the treatment of innocence. Thanks to the mythical background, Urbano's innocence is seen as the innocence of all mankind when compared to the knowledge of its creator; man must always remain innocent if he is to have an idea of divine knowledge. In a book about the conflict of innocence and knowledge, Urbano must achieve the right amount of knowledge to live in this world, and the right amount of innocence to continue to live in the next. The knowledge of doña Micaela for example, is excessive and leads to the suppression of natural instincts, among them sexual and religious ones. As Urbano is a battle-ground for many of Ayala's ideas, there must be behind him some form which will hold all of them together.

Again, the Urbano and Simona novels are about the conflicts between good and evil and between order and chaos. Ayala therefore needed a suitably detached form to present such forces dispassionately, without

judging. Accordingly, the presentation of evil forces as witches or evil spirits avoids all sense of identification between the reader and the characters, who can then be seen for what they are: forces which operate in the universe, but not particular characters, who are necessarily a mixture of different forces, and always justifiable. The myth of the hero presents such a succession of figures in morally neutral terms. In conclusion, we can say that the presentation of 'normas universales' necessitates the use of mythical structures, and that in the Urbano and Simona novels the mythical and literary figures achieve a predominance which they have never had before.

The Urbano and Simona novels treat basically the same mythical subject as Belarmino y Apolonio, giving greater emphasis to one of the most common themes of Ayala's short stories, the conflict between brute energy and order. In order to illustrate this conflict, Ayala has recourse to many literary figures and therefore follows the 'literary' as well as the 'transcendental' line of Prometeo. Ayala invents less of the plot than in Belarmino y Apolonio, and allows literary patterns and mythical structure to come much closer together than in Prometeo. The level of essential meaning is of course occupied by the myth of the hero, and the level of plot and character, in order to draw it closer to this transcendental level, is occupied not by observed reality but by many diverse literary figures. Ayala therefore chooses as the material which he will enlighten a kind of reality which has already been consecrated by tradition. He therefore stacks the cards in his own favour. He makes his points about the conflict of brute energy and order, innocence and knowledge, but at the cost of eclipsing the ordinary reality which the myth of the hero is meant to illuminate, as it did in Belarmino y Apolonio, and of confusing the different levels of reality.

CHAPTER VII

THE TIGRE JUAN NOVELS

THE TIGRE JUAN NOVELS

7.1 Introduction

If the general trend so far has been for the literary figures to decrease in stature in successive novels, descending from the unattainable ideals of Marco's Ulysses to the less ironical use of literary myth in the Urbano and Simona novels, the Tigre Juan novels mark the stage at which the literary models no longer dwarf the real characters. For example, Tigre Juan's performance of El médico de su honra is only allowed to become grotesque for a moment, and his refusal to imitate don Gutierre in his own life does not represent personal failure. This attempt to maintain the seriousness of the invented characters is typical of the Tigre Juan novels, in which the bulk of meaning is conveyed by what they say about themselves in a series of platonic dialogues. Many of these dialogues are concerned with the literary figures which haunt the characters' imaginations, and which are therefore seen indirectly. The importance of the literary figures lies therefore in their symbolic value for the protagonists who define themselves by arguing about them from different points of view, and are not presented simply by the narrator. This new technique is an improvement on the one used in Luna de miel, luna de hiel and Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona and probably responds to one of the faults of these novels. As F. W. Weber says: 'Because Pérez de Ayala here rendered myth as actuality, the personages and setting do not take on a mythical aura, as they might have done in a more suggestive, symbolic treatment. Since the myth is by nature refractory to literal interpretation, the two elements remain inconsonant and jarring'.¹ By letting the characters talk about them, Ayala puts the

1. F. W. Weber, The Literary Perspectivism of Ramón Pérez de Ayala, Chapel Hill, 1966, pp. 98-9.

literary figures back where they belong, as ideas and aesthetic objects. This is therefore a different attempt to avoid presenting the 'real' characters as symbols.

The fact that no single character represents fully Ayala's ideas on don Juan has led two critics to conclude that the Tigre Juan novels are used to condemn the burlador figure: 'What he disliked, and attacked in Tigre Juan, was the popular version of the myth that has tended to degrade relations between the sexes, especially in Hispanic Culture'.² Seen in this light, the 'symbolic and incomplete murder of Vespasiano without doubt portrays the destruction of the shallow and perverse version of the myth'.³ This may be so, but to reduce Ayala's treatment of the don Juan figure to his presentation of Vespasiano is to ignore the complicated relationship between all the characters and the figure. In the case of literary myth there is less emphasis on ironic contrasts or the representation of a literary figure by a single 'real' character. In fact there is a conscious fragmentation of the literary figures, who are basically important as ideas. Indeed, the figures used in the Tigre Juan novels are all ones which Ayala had already referred to in essays.

Another clear attempt to unite the real and mythical level in a new way which damages neither is made by giving greater emphasis to the universal symbolism of the less easily degraded myth of the hero. Critics have tended to ignore the supernatural elements of the Tigre Juan novels, which are derived from the myth of the hero. Ayala is prepared to present

2. M. Salgués Cargill and J. Palley, 'Myth and Anti-Myth in Tigre Juan', Revista de Estudios Hispánicos, 7, 1973, pp. 408-9.

3. M. Salgués Cargill and J. Palley, 'Myth...', p. 409.

directly certain motifs connected with the myth, just as he was in some of the later short stories. In the Noche de San Juan sequence Tigre Juan actually becomes the mythical hero, there being little or no attempt at a realistic version of events. This presentation of nature as a magical place in direct contact with the next world marks a return to the techniques of some of Ayala's early short stories. Indeed, in other ways Ayala returns in his last two novels to earlier techniques, with a consequently greater interest in personal psychology, in figures from folk mythology and in the use of works of art as an insight into the next world which was seen in Troteras y danzaderas. Generally, the literary level is much less important and the mythical level more important, with the result that Ayala no longer looks down on the principal characters or treats them as puppets.

7.2. Literary themes

The Tigre Juan novels are Ayala's last attempt to create a novel of ideas. His aim was partly to give his ideas on don Juan their 'debido complemento y desarrollo por la acción', just as in Troteras y danzaderas he had given 'movimiento y temperatura vital' to his ideas on the theatre. As don Juan is basically an idea, the theatre has only reproduced it indirectly:

Las Ideas puras, ecuanímenes e incorruptibles son las realidades supremas del pensamiento; viven por sí, independientes de los objetos. No podemos alcanzarlas si no es por medio de atenuados y degradados reflejos... Por tanto, lo que (el autor dramático) nos ofrece en la escena son sombras de sombras . 4

The Tigre Juan novels are intended to capture the two archetypes through their literary shadows and will therefore involve degradation, not for social

4. Ayala, prologue to the fourth edition (1940) of Las máscaras, Obras Completas, III, pp.20-21.

criticism, but out of artistic necessity. Ayala says as much in the prologue to Las máscaras:

'Al trasplantar al médico de su honra a los tiempos modernos y a una morosa capital de provincia, por fuerza hube de reducir el tipo a su biología y psicología elementales, de hombre de pueblo. El médico se convirtió en curandero'. 5

In exactly the same way, don Juan is converted into a stocking salesman. As Tigre Juan himself points out at the end of the book: 'Todos los Don Juanes vienen a ser viajeros de comercio, y precisamente del ramo de pasamanería, sedería y novedades'. 6 It is interesting that Ayala should point out that he wanted to portray the essence of the two figures. As has been shown, the grotesque treatment of literary figures usually involves sustained juxtaposition of minute physical details, and not essential features. There are clearly two types of degradation.

Don Juan and el médico de su honra are two contrasting figures neither of which can be understood without the other, and Ayala infuses this dependence with his own ideas. The opposition don Juan - médico de su honra is basically the same as the dramatist-philosopher contrast of Belarmino y Apolonio: Tigre Juan feels emotion which paralyses him and Vespasiano can communicate emotion which he does not feel. Tigre Juan consequently even asks Vespasiano to declare love to Herminia. Even at the end of the novel Tigre Juan is still prepared to say: 'Meterte dentro de mí y meterme yo dentro de ti. 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'. 7 Yet whereas Belarmino and Apolonio can never be complete

5. Ayala, prologue..., p. 21.

6. Ayala, El curandero de su honra, Obras Completas, IV, p. 793.

7. Ayala, El curandero . . . , p. 796.

without each other, Tigre Juan can manage quite well without Vespasiano: 'Pero tal como eres, deficiente y castrado, te desprecio'.⁸ This self-sufficiency marks a change from the technique of Belarmino y Apolonio where the two shoemakers were left forever incomplete. In the Tigre Juan novels one half of the pair of opposites manages to become the hero and live successfully in the real world: the characters become more human.

Tigre Juan begins his complicated relationship with the literary models by actually reconciling don Juan and the médico de su honra: don Juan, according to him, performs one of the functions of don Gutierre by taking vengeance on faithless women, who are made to feel the ridicule normally felt by the deceived husband. This echoes Ayala's view that don Juan reverses the traditional roles of the sexes. Yet Tigre Juan is less concerned with the way don Juan seduces women than with his social role. Unconsciously, Tigre Juan embodies Ayala's idea that don Juan has an essentially hebraic view of the role of women, that 'el ser más despreciado de la Biblia es la ramera',⁹ and that 'la idea vertebral de Don Juan, la fuerza interior que le sustenta tan arrogante y erguido frente al mundo... es aquella noción semítica de que el centro de gravedad sexual reside en el varón y no en la hembra'.¹⁰ Indeed, Tigre Juan not only defends don Juan but has a lot in common with him: he is often called don Juan, he attracts women and Herminia feels pulled towards him by an irresistible force: 'Era un zumbido de vértigo. El abismo que ahora ante ella se abría era el amor mudo y hondísimo de Tigre Juan, que, en efecto, la absorbía; y por contrarrestar su atracción irresistible...'.¹¹ In Ayala's writing about don Juan

8. Ayala, El curandero..., p. 796.

9. Ayala, Las máscaras, p. 346.

10. Ayala, Las máscaras, p. 354.

11. Ayala, El curandero..., p. 705.

irresistible is a key word often used to describe the burlador. Yet Herminia's reaction to this comes from a different tradition: 'tenía que encastillarse en una proporcionada voluntad de repulsión'.¹² Encastillarse, the idea of woman besieged by man, is related to the courtly love tradition which for Ayala is the exact opposite of the hebraic mentality. Their relationship is therefore underpinned by two conflicting traditions. This conflict is not just between the two of them, but can also be seen within Tigre Juan's own attitudes. He needs the help of Vespasiano because of his 'ansia, ciega todavía, de conquistar el amor de Herminia'.¹³ Again conquistar implies the idea of the man being attracted by the women, who is an ideal to be won - the courtly love tradition. Tigre Juan is further related to this by his idealisation of three women: 'Mi madre, la Madre de Dios y ella son las únicas mujeres decentes...'.¹⁴ In Tigre Juan there are clearly donjuanesque elements in conflict with Christian and courtly love elements.

Colás is another contradictory character. Although in the dialogues he professes his disdain for don Juan, he has much in common with him. Colás is, like don Juan, a constant traveller always looking for change. Like Vespasiano he is afraid of responsibility and never wishes to be fixed in one place, an hijo del aire whose actions are motivated by momentary whims. He is therefore, like Vespasiano, at the mercy of the passage of time, and to be contrasted with Tigre Juan, who stands for permanence. Both Colás and Vespasiano are related to the theme of deceit, which runs through the whole book as a donjuanesque element. Vespasiano deceives women, and Colás is prepared to travel round the fairs with Carmina earning money

12. Ayala, El curandero..., p.705.

13. Ayala, Tigre Juan, Obras Completas, IV, p.642.

14. Ayala, Tigre..., p.561.

from a fraudulent card trick, justifying his actions by saying that people want to be deceived. There are therefore three characters who exhibit donjuanesque features: Vespasiano, Tigre Juan and Colás. As Ayala himself says: 'Don Juan es un hombre universal, por el carácter, en cuanto representa algo sustancial al sexo masculino, y que se halla más o menos desarrollado, acaso latente, tal vez activo, en todos los hombres'.¹⁵ By fragmenting the character, Ayala presents don Juan's attitude to women as a constant factor in man's psychology and in conflict with others without turning the characters into symbols.

Ayala presents the 'médico de su honra' figure in a different way: unlike the three characters with varying donjuanesque qualities there is a single character who comes into contact with honour on three different levels. By presenting Tigre Juan as a 'curandero de su honra', there is no irony but, as has been seen, a desire to 'reducir el tipo a su biología y psicología, de hombre de pueblo'. On this personal level Tigre Juan needs the ideal of honour to give order to his life, justify past actions in moral terms and make the future more stable. He uses the 'látigo del deber',¹⁶ to defeat the beast within him. Honour therefore represents the light of reason battling against the dark powers of the instinct, the 'generalato de la mollera'¹⁷ which he believes should govern men's actions. Paradoxically, it is his instinctive revulsion at the deceitfulness of women that has led him into this position. Like don Gutierre, he is sensitive to the point of paranoia, dreaming of blood and cursing all women. Yet Tigre Juan is an extreme case, far more dangerous than don Gutierre as he holds that

15. Ayala, Las máscaras, p.387.

16. Ayala, El curandero..., p.604.

17. Ayala, Tigre..., p.559.

women are guilty merely because they are women. They were guilty for the fall of man and therefore for the human condition. On the next level, the performances of the Médico de su honra, Tigre Juan actually becomes don Gutierre by playing the part. The device of having characters identify with the protagonists of a play dates back to Troteras y danzaderas, but is used slightly differently here. Tigre Juan is incapable of deriving spiritual benefit from seeing all the characters locked in the drama because he is one of them, unable to achieve the spectator's viewpoint, and oblivious to those of the other characters. The more general view, achieved after the events of the Noche de San Juan does not come through the contemplation of a play, but through divine revelation. As Tigre Juan says: 'Salí de mí mismo para ponerme en el caso de Herminia. Dejé de existir por propia cuenta, para que ella, solo ella, existiera dentro de mí.'¹⁸ He achieves a completely new definition of honour, which involves fidelity to oneself and trust in others. Honour is therefore presented in a scale in which the médico holds the central position, with Tigre Juan moving from being an exaggeration, to identification with the literary figure before superceding it to become the hero. On this scale, the literary figure (médico) is merely a shadow of the real honour which Tigre Juan achieves through spiritual insight, and which represents permanence in an ever-changing world. True honour is therefore closely related to the theme of the transformation of the hero, being the 'secret treasure' of the hero's search.

7.3 Attila

The importance of the reference to Attila, introduced once Tigre Juan's reputation has been outlined and his outward appearance described,

18. Ayala, El curandero..., p. 792.

lies in presenting him from two unexpected points of view: from a great distance in time and from his own position. By looking at the print which Colás shows him, and reacting favourably to the similarity between himself and Attila, Tigre Juan begins the novel by defining himself. He would like to be a 'galán de pelo en pecho, las bragas bien atacadas, como Cristo nos enseña y a mí me place'.¹⁹ Attila is therefore a projection of Tigre Juan's personality which he needs to see clearly. Yet the figure also implies a much more distant perspective in time. In an essay of 1921 Ayala invested the Attila figure with a particular symbolism:

Lo que guiaba a Attila, nómada y raudo, en sus expediciones largas y certeras, no era el intelecto, sino el instinto... modo de inteligencia inferior, pero más segura, que poseen algunos animales superiores; aquel peregrino olfato de Attila, que se gozaba en todas las esencias de la tierra: las del amor y las de la muerte... bebía de un cráneo, y era como una resurrección pausada y deliciosa, heroica y brutal, en que los pulsos de la vida se aceleraban por la sensación de la muerte; un misticismo salvaje y robusto. ²⁰

Love and death can be seen as the two main preoccupations of Tigre Juan, and are closely connected. His love for Engracia led him to become so jealous that he eventually caused her death. His love for Herminia can only be complete after the death of the old Tigre Juan. Through the connection with Attila, Tigre Juan is seen as a primitive man, the original man in close contact with nature and with the life-energy of the world. Yet for Ayala the figure of Attila is more than this; Attila represents primitive man coming into contact with civilisation and decadence: 'El hirsuto hombre de la estepa quería desposar su precioso icono de oro y esmalte, arquetipo de hermosura decadentista'.²¹ The Hun leader wanted to marry a Byzantine

19. Ayala, Tigre..., p.554-5.

20. Ayala, Más divagaciones literarias, Obras Completas, IV, pp.1090-1, (La Prensa, Buenos Aires, 22/11/1921).

21. Ayala, Más divagaciones..., p.1092.

princess, just as Tigre Juan will always prefer women from the town to country girls. He may spend his mornings collecting medicinal herbs, but he is always prepared to give Herminia the most expensive presents, decides that their house will be a 'palace', and on their wedding day symbolically curbs nature by forcing her to wear tiny shoes. This tendency towards decadence is continued and exaggerated in the character of Vespasiano, whose name is reminiscent of the Byzantine Emperors, and may be intended as an echo of the Valentiniano whose daughter Attila was to marry. Tigre Juan may therefore be said to represent humanity at a critical stage of evolution from a primitive society to a more civilised and even decadent one.

In an essay of 1921 on Nietzsche, Ayala compares Attila with the German philosopher, whose ideas may lie behind the character of Tigre Juan. For Ayala the most important aspect of Nietzsche was that he had;

la más saludable y fecunda animalidad, la animalidad en su modo inmanente de operar, o sea fuerza propulsadora y creadora de la vida en su perdurable evolución; tendencia a trascender y superar los tipos ya logrados. A esta fuerza ciega, Nietzsche la dotó de conciencia humana y la coaguló en un símbolo poético: el superhombre. 22

This animal vitality is certainly one aspect of Tigre Juan; he is described as a tiger and a wild boar. His only actions at the beginning of the novel are uncontrolled fits of anger, untempered by the light of reason. His energy, yearning for a son, and contact with nature make of him a life-force in the Nietzschean mould. Right to the end of the novel Tigre Juan is blind to the reasons behind his actions. His purpose is to continue life:

¡ Hijo mío, sobre mi pecho;
leve espuma, naciente onda
en el curso del río eterno
de la vida ! La vida... ¡ Oh vida !

A ti te la he dado, como a mí me la dieron.
¿ Adónde vamos? ¿ De dónde venimos?
Medroso estruendo colma el silencio del universo;
el retumbo del torrente de la vida
en el vacío inmensurable
repercutiendo...
¡ Padre ! ¡ Padre ! Tengo miedo.
Tengo miedo. 23

There is no answer to his questions, and no comfort for his fear. The only possible solution is given by Tigre Juan in the Parergon section, where he seems to be echoing the idea of the superman:

La razón de ser de cada criatura es su perfección, la cual solo la Razón, con mayúscula, la puede definir y apreciar. En la distancia que cada criatura se aproxima más o menos a la perfección, encierra, al respetive, más o menos razón de ser. ¿Cuál es la razón de ser del hombre? Hacerse lo más hombre posible. Tú mismo has dicho que tu Razón no es tuya, sino que pertenece al hombre en general. Será, por tanto, lo razonable en el hombre particular todo aquello que redundará y trasciende en beneficio de la especie. 24

Whereas Marco de Setignano's ideal was a superman who would stand out from, and save, humanity, Ayala's last hero does not see the superman as an individual. The superman is a symbol for the universal reason to which the individual must aspire. Tigre Juan is linked to this universal process indirectly through the figure of Attila. As a result many of the details of Tigre Juan's character - animality, fondness for luxury, preoccupation with death, close contact with nature - are not arbitrary inventions, but linked to a single source. Tigre Juan's connection with the world energy raises the question of the hero's joining of the two worlds and it is therefore appropriate to examine Tigre Juan as a mythical hero.

23. Ayala, El curandero..., p.769-70.

24. Ayala, El curandero..., p.789.

7.4 Tigre Juan : un unwilling hero

On the face of it Tigre Juan does not much resemble the dissatisfied hero who rejects his past and searches for insight into the meaning of the world. He is older than Ayala's other heroes and has settled into an apparently stable middle age. Yet he has only achieved this by suppressing action and abolishing time in order to stagnate in a sterile and timeless vacuum: 'Siempre se le veña en su puesto del aire'²⁵ and: 'Era un puesto permanente: todas las horas del día y todos los días del año'.²⁶ Time has no meaning and there is no possibility of change. Tigre Juan is one of those who have rejected the call to action and the process of rebirth. The structure of the novel is concerned with his forced return to human society. This process is punctuated by mythical references which, for the first time since the early short stories, are often magical. The journey motif is abandoned, Tigre Juan's journey being a psychological one, as was Alberto's.

The setting of the novel is magical. The market square in Pilares contains the 'suma innúmera de hechos que pertenecen al antaño. Nada hay que se haya olvidado'.²⁷ It is the point at which two contrasting worlds come together: the civilised urban world and the rustic world governed by folk superstitions. Tigre Juan stands between the two: his stall is permanent like a shop and is placed near the shops, yet is still in the market and is stocked with herbs and grain from the country. His dress is half peasant and half artisan. His activities bring him into contact with both worlds; he is a herbalist and sells grain, yet he also writes letters for those who

25. Ayala, Tigre..., p. 555.

26. Ayala, Tigre..., p. 552.

27. Ayala, Tigre..., p. 551.

cannot write, changes bills of exchange, and places the peasant girls who come from the country as wet nurses. The market place, where contrasting elements are brought together, is very much a modern world novel.

Tigre Juan, with his feet in both worlds, is consequently a fund of knowledge and experience. Yet he is described as 'ingenuo',²⁸ and 'enamorado y sentimental'.²⁹ A basically ingenuous man, he has been shocked by his contact with the world into a rejection of it: his innocence has been suppressed. The structure of the novel consists in his change from being a tiger (image of experience and energy) to being a lamb (image of innocence and meekness). This follows on from the Urbano and Simona novels, where Urbano had to conserve some of his innocence. At the beginning of Tigre Juan experience has suppressed the innocence which is necessary to see the world as it is.

The apparent stability of Tigre Juan's life is broken by two mythical characters whom Tigre Juan had thought to be his contacts with the next world. Doña Iluminada can see through appearances and is, for Tigre Juan, an ephemeral creature, living in a 'penumbra sagaz, colindante entre el mundo de la materia y el del espíritu'.³⁰ By hinting that she wants to marry Tigre Juan she comes down to the real world, and destroys all his illusions about her. Tigre Juan cannot accept that the next world might have any contact with this one : as at the beginning of all the mythical hero's quests, the two worlds are divided. Doña Iluminada therefore accepts to become his 'ángel custodio'³¹ and devotes her time to making

28. Ayala, Tigre..., p.554 .

29. Ayala, Tigre..., p.624 .

30. Ayala, Tigre..., p.582 .

31. Ayala, Tigre..., p.594 .

the characters aware of their archetypal qualities, which she can see. Clearly Tigre Juan does not choose to undergo these trials; he is an unwilling hero who is thrust into them. The second trial comes with Colás, whose arrival had provided him with a purpose in life. By bringing Colás up Tigre Juan considers himself the 'mandadero del Padre Celestial'.³² Colás is a saviour for Tigre Juan, and it is to him that the curandero turns to ask for forgiveness. Tigre Juan even preserves Colás's room as a shrine, and the departure of his adopted son takes place at the elevation of the host during Mass. The loss of the two idealised figures means a descent into Hell in which all contact with the next world is lost: 'el largo remanso de beatitud... andaba próximo a su término'.³³ Tigre Juan is thrown out of his peaceful existence; he is not called by a higher power.

The nightmare period is full of images of death and paralysis. His mouth is a 'cavidad lóbrega, habitada por un silencio mortal, lo mismo que entonces eran su corazón y su pensamiento'.³⁴ He dies a symbolic death: 'Resucitaba en un cuerpo difunto. "Pobre Tigre Juan. Acabóse ayer. Soy un cadáver que anda"'.³⁵ He is incapable of communicating and reality dissolves: there is the usual aimless walk round the town at night and the market place seems like the sea. Alongside the religious and supernatural imagery Ayala also translates the progress of the hero into literal terms.

The Hell into which he falls is a psychological Hell, in which Tigre Juan finally becomes aware that he has not really changed over the years: 'Tantos años, tantos, castigando con el látigo del deber la furia del alma y

32. Ayala, Tigre..., p. 602.

33. Ayala, Tigre..., p. 578.

34. Ayala, Tigre..., p. 580.

35. Ayala, Tigre..., p. 604.

la rebeldía del cuerpo hasta someterlos... En un abrir y cerrar de los ojos, de nuevo la fiera se revuelve y me derriba'.³⁶ The beast is a part of his own character, Tigre Juan being in many ways the legendary beast who awaits the beautiful princess who, by her love, will transform him into a handsome prince. He is frequently described as an animal, and the children of the market place think he is an ogre. Indeed, when he goes to see Carmina, she makes the sign of the cross: 'como para ahuyentar a Lucifer'.³⁷ Tigre Juan's awakening begins when he is invited to return to the country by Nachín de Nacha, who is one of the agents sent to mislead the hero. He offers Tigre Juan renewal by returning to the past: 'No bien saco la pata de mi umbral, asiento la madreña en un país encantao, mano a mano con les animes y les criatures del otro mundo... Cabe el llar, platicando de los años floridos, tornarémonos mozos'.³⁸ This is precisely what Tigre Juan does not want: he is already aware that he has not changed enough since those days. It is interesting that here, as in the early short stories, nature is a magical place where contact can be made with spirits.

Tigre Juan's Hell is to relive his past life, and begins when he receives a letter from his former captain's widow. The letter arrives as if by magic, and the past reappears 'cuajado en una eternidad de infierno', presided over by the 'sacerdotisa de Belcebú'.³⁹ It is for Tigre Juan the Apocalypse, and the memories take on the motif of the dance of death:

Y así como en el día del Juicio Final, en la gran zarabanda postrera de la vida y danza universal de la muerte, lo grotesco se abrazara con lo horrible, así también Tigre Juan, ante tantas memorias, ahora actuales, que le espantaban, fijó acaso la

36. Ayala, Tigre..., p. 604.

37. Ayala, Tigre..., p. 596.

38. Ayala, Tigre..., pp. 610-11.

39. Ayala, Tigre..., p. 623.

atención en un pormenor bufonesco. La capitana Semprún... en guisa de la mujer de Putifar'. 40

This stylisation of Tigre Juan's thoughts turns an impenetrable area of a man's consciousness into a pattern which is already familiar to the reader: a conflict between Heaven and Hell. The intimate reality of Tigre Juan's mind is therefore seen from a very distant point of view: 'así Gamborena como doña Marica se le ofrecían bajo una óptica novísima y extraña, como si él y ellos estuvieran en el limbo o en el valle de Josafat'.⁴¹ Tigre Juan is brought to the point where he must accept his guilt for the death of his first wife in universal rather than personal terms. Throughout the novel there is this Christian element, which is absent from many of the earlier novels. Indeed, the whole nightmare sequence is punctuated by biblical imagery which gives a harmonious 'overview' to the crisis.

The last resurrection of figures from the past involves Engracia herself, who appears reincarnate in the person of Herminia, 'como desde el más allá'.⁴² In this case, however, the Apocalyptic imagery is replaced by the Apotheosis:

'¡ La Apocalipsis! ¡ La resurrección de la carne!', estas exclamaciones habían adquirido para él un poder de sugestión diferente del que poco antes tenían. No expresaban ya el horror de un cataclismo final, sino una manera de dichoso embobamiento, como ante una apoteosis escénica de gran aparato y tramoya. 43

This insight into the next world is treated as an aesthetic experience: through art there will be a glimpse of eternal beauty. On this mythical level the

40. Ayala, Tigre..., p.629 .

41. Ayala, Tigre..., p.634 .

42. Ayala, Tigre..., p.635 .

43. Ayala, Tigre..., p.638 .

structure of the novel becomes clear and even simple: Tigre Juan can only be saved through the love of a woman.

The third and final mythical stage concerns the rebirth of Tigre Juan and the reconciliation of all opposites in the Noche de San Juan sequence which, like many such crucial scenes in Ayala is presented sub specie aeterni. The characters will therefore be seen much more as archetypes and less as individuals and there will be a sense of ritual about the action. It is for Tigre Juan a cathartic process 'Entóncenes, desahoga, hom; gomita y escupe fuera los malos humores. Así quedarás limpio como una patena... Púrgate de malos pensamientos'.⁴⁴ The naturally jealous Tigre Juan is placed in a situation where, if he does not kill Herminja, he must change his whole outlook: it is Tigre Juan's last trial. Nachín de Nacha, by exacerbating his jealousy, plays the role of the tempter.

Tigre Juan's insight into the next world is accompanied by the minimum of psychological explanation: he is just in a state of hallucination. This perfunctory explanation contrasts with the wealth of detail which accompanied his earlier crises and shows that Ayala is willing to abandon verisimilitude for the sake of the mythical sequence of events. During the magical sequence on the Noche de San Juan, his Saint's day on which there is some symbolic contact with the next world, Tigre Juan finally sees the harmony of the material world: 'Cada hoguera, una simbólica llamarada apasionada, declaraba el oculto sentido de la tierra, ansia infatigable de destrucción y de reproducción'.⁴⁵ The tension between the past and

44. Ayala, El curandero... p.731.

45. Ayala, El curandero... p.732.

present is thus seen as a natural process : everything is continually changing but it is a constructive process. From this eternal perspective, even the elements are harmonious: 'Poco después, los contrarios elementos, tierra y aire, fuego y agua, se penetraban y trasfundían en amoroso consorcio...'.⁴⁶

This insight shows the essential unity of the two worlds: 'Lo fugitivo es lo eterno'⁴⁷ as Tigre Juan says.

Yet, in the midst of this universal process Tigre Juan does not change; he is like a rock (symbol of absence of life). His glimpse of the next world is not earned by his own efforts, but freely revealed to him by don Sincerato, the priest and symbol of total innocence, who promises to watch over him from Heaven. At this crucial point, Ayala uses Christian motifs which were only implied in Prometeo: 'El clarín de un arcángel parte por mitad el silencio. Una espada de luz increada rasga el velo del firmamento como toldo de seda crujiente'.⁴⁸ This revelation changes him completely. The last difficulty, which he could not resolve by himself was the traditional opposition of love and honour: 'El honor te aborrece... ¡Mi amor te adora!'.⁴⁹ Both the parallel columns come together at this point in the recognition that love is the ultimate truth : it cannot deceive because it is the force which gives order to the universe. As Tigre Juan says: 'Tan pronto como dejo de amarle, el mundo se convierte en un caos'.⁵⁰ The important point is that Tigre Juan does not discover this through his own efforts but through divine revelation.

Tigre Juan's successful return to the world after the insight into Heaven

46. Ayala, El curandero..., p.733.

47. Ayala, El curandero..., p.734.

48. Ayala, El curandero..., p.737.

49. Ayala, El curandero..., p.736.

50. Ayala, El curandero..., p.734.

involves an important mythical motif: the rejection of the self. He abandons his own point of view and puts himself in the place of Herminia. He is completely cleansed: 'He metido mi vida en la colada y ha quedado limpia, limpia como la nieve de las cumbres. Todas las suciedades y manchones antiguos se han lavado'.⁵¹ This symbolic baptism means that Tigre Juan is born again, after his resuscitation by the love of Herminia following his attempted suicide. Instead of being a tiger, he will be known as 'Juan Cordero', a name with obvious religious connotations. The lamb image also stands for innocence: he will not let the world or the ¿qué dirán? interfere with his future life. The final picture of Tigre Juan is of a man who will always be frightened by the size and movement of an apparently senseless universe, but who has a basic faith in God. He is not the kind of hero who returns to the world to preach, but a modest, and at first unwilling hero, who will manage to live in this world after a momentary glimpse of the next.

By using the universal symbolism of the mythical progress of the hero Ayala avoids the displacement and degradation inherent in any literal transposition of particular myths or literary figures. Tigre Juan does not act as a symbol of the hero, he becomes the hero and so increases in stature. Tigre Juan is so totally identified with the mythical hero that any further exploration of the subject by Ayala could only involve the repetition of some aspect of the mythical process. There is perhaps here one reason why Ayala did not write any more novels after this. He had exhausted the theme which runs through all his novels.

51. Ayala, El curandero..., p. 760.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSIONS

8.1 The underlying myth

At the centre of all Ayala's novels and most of his short stories there stands a single hero whose actions and thoughts are based on a mythical process of transformation involving initiation through suffering. When successful, the hero attains knowledge allowing him to accept his experience of this world and yet maintain the necessary innocence and humility to see God. This idea of the quest and initiation of the hero is not degraded as it is seen throughout Ayala as the essence of the human condition. The myth is revealed in a coherent series of motifs which, by appearing directly, often give Ayala's novels a transcendental tone and always affect the formal aspects of the novel.

Although the figure of the hero is a constant factor, it develops, reflecting Ayala's initial pantheistic ideology, his subsequent pessimism and his final qualified optimism. His earliest hero, about whom he wrote very little, lives in a state of harmony where nature reveals faithfully the presence of the next world in this. After about 1905, however, this innocent world has clearly been lost, and is incompatible with the experience of an absurd and indifferent world which can offer no signs of the hereafter. Some heroes refuse the call to be initiated into this world and make strenuous efforts to recapture their past innocence. Yet innocence, although peaceful and harmonious, is lifeless; Ayala's subsequent heroes are all faced with the paradox that the energy which moves the world also makes it a chaotic and brutal place. The quest of the hero is not therefore primarily an ethical question. Alberto goes through all the stages of the quest but ultimately

fails just as all the other early heroes fail: they opt for innocence or artistic detachment as an escape from experience. Marco too rejects experience for the purity of the man of thought, representing the ultimate in detachment by aiming to create God, because only a god can solve all the problems. The lesson of Prometeo is that a real God already exists, and that the hero's true task will be to know Him. Ayala's next hero is therefore a priest, who although apparently cynical, has had a vision of the next world which enables him to live in this. Ayala's later heroes are much less ambitious: they do not try to change the world, which remains a dangerous and chaotic place, but are content with their moment of insight, which comes after a long period of trials. Total knowledge is in any case impossible; as in one of Ayala's poems, harmony replaces totality.

The three stages of departure, descent into the underworld and return to the real world become the key events in all Ayala's fiction, and are represented by certain motifs. These are more frequently adapted to modern conditions in the early novels and more often presented directly in the later ones, with the result that ordinary objects often take on almost magical qualities. The characters too, often exist on two levels. The most obvious example of this is Ayala's treatment of women. There is almost always an old crone, whose function is to announce evil. When Tita Anastasia (La pata de la raposa) says that Fina is dead, she is described as a 'sibila decrepita', not to make her more vivid, but because this is her dramatic function. In the mature novels this figure is often seen as a helpful old lady, a fairy-godmother type, who may have a dark and sinister side, like the duquesa de Somavia. Doña Rosita (Luna de miel, luna de hiel) and

doña Iluminada (Tigre Juan) are typical of the old crone in another sense: they are potential heroines. The second female figure is the temptress, who is always associated with energy, usually sexual, and with chance. Her function is to tie the hero to the material world. In marked contrast with the temptress there are the pure and innocent women who are quite passive and usually have some connection with the harmonious and gentle side of nature. They are so peaceful that they even lack the energy to remain alive in this world. It is only in the later novels that there appears the 'queen goddess of the world' type, who is all women, and meant as the prize which the hero may win. Each is both a mother and a mistress, and each is connected with both birth and death. The mature novels all end with the union of the hero and this figure. Amongst the male characters the teacher is perhaps the most frequent. His job is to warn the hero of the difficulties ahead, and to awaken him to the need for change. He often illustrates the problems which the hero faces, and may sometimes hinder rather than help. The father-figure is only seen in the later novels where atonement with him becomes one of the most important events.

These characters all reflect aspects of the trials through which the hero has to pass and have a fixed relationship with both the hero and the plot-structure. They can do very little that is not within their function, and their individuality often rests on grotesque details. Their actions are not determined by a normal sequence of cause and effect, and the narrator often fails to point out why they act. As a result they have a superficial independence which has led critics to suggest that they are conceived dramatically, the more so because characters often receive only one brief

initial description. Yet Ayala's characters have the ability to exist on various levels, and unlike dramatic characters are seen from two or even three points of view. Their relationship with the myth also means that they can easily be classified as good or bad, that they tend to be static, and that they are not nearly as independent as they seem. Generally they can be divided into two camps : those who live in a pure and harmonious world of their own creation, and those who live in the brutal, chaotic, yet living world.

It is difficult to say precisely what the mythical process is about, or why Ayala should always base his novels upon it. It is not about any particular ideology and is only incidentally associated with Christianity. The heroes do not all even achieve the 'liberal spirit' which is Ayala's own ideal. The myth is basically concerned with change and the integration of the individual into the world. The hero must have the courage to accept his experience of a chaotic and absurd world without losing the innocence necessary to see its harmony. This transcendence has much in common with E. M. Forster's concept of 'prophecy' : it is basically a tone of voice, and a vision of the entire universe. The myth of the hero is therefore the natural vehicle for Ayala. It provides the 'ritmo interno' which he was seeking because it is essentially a process. The hero is also a man with very few personal characteristics; he is man at that level at which all men are the same. As in Forster's idea of 'prophecy', the hero reaches back to include the whole of mankind. Without the motifs connected with the hero, the presentation of man in a novel, which is inevitably concerned with physical reality, would inevitably have led Ayala to creating individual and idiosyncratic characters. In addition, the archetypal hero is a man

to whom anything can happen: his world actually reaches into Heaven and Hell. The myth of the hero therefore opens up the possibility for Ayala to treat of the whole of human experience without abstraction.

8.2 Three levels

These mythical motifs, forming a complete and independent structure, often with its own story to tell, constitute a separate level of reality in most of Ayala's novels. This level is often contrasted with an intermediate level, neither so independent nor so complete, formed by references to Greek myths, literary and sometimes historical figures. If the mythical level can be associated with E.M. Forster's 'prophecy', this literary-mythical, or archaic level can be equated with his 'fantasy'. The details of a few of Ayala's plots are built up from some pre-existent framework, but the literary figures are usually chosen as symbols of some idea: those in Luna de miel, luna de hiel are chosen for their innocence and those in the Tigre Juan novels for their connection with honour. If the mythical level links the narrative with the whole of mankind, the literary level affects the relationship between the narrator and the work. Shifts in point of view are often indicated by bringing the literary level to the fore, treating it ironically, or associating it with one particular character. The literary elements contribute to a sense of conscious artificiality in many novels and the characters become puppets, with the narrator as a puppet-master: the characters are strictly literary creations. At this point the contrast with the mythical level becomes most apparent. If the mythical level ennobles the hero, the literary level may degrade him.

In some cases the literary level may have little in common with the real level. There is therefore a constantly changing balance between the three levels.

In the pre-1905 short stories there is not much conflict between the three levels, but in Tinieblas en las cumbres they are drawn far apart for the first time. The mythical theme is only dimly seen in a few motifs, and the literary myths are used ironically, creating a tension between the real and literary levels. Yet there is also tension between the literary and the mythical levels : Alberto may live in a degraded world, but he is a real hero. Sometimes the literary-mythical level may itself be ambivalent: although characters in Troteras y danzaderas are made ridiculous by reference to literature, it is through literature that Verónica achieves her insight into the next world. Marco too, may be degraded by the references to the Odyssey, but it is the Odyssey which gives him knowledge of all mankind. Indeed, the literary level may actually rise towards the mythical level, as in A.M.D.G. and Artemisa, where literary characters perform an emblematic function, summarising from the narrator's viewpoint the main conflicts behind the action. Generally, one of the three levels predominates, but when each has equal status, as in Prometeo, there is greater tension and the levels are kept apart in the formal layout of the work, in an uneasy and changing balance. Greater balance is achieved in Belarmino y Apolonio, where there is virtually no literary level. Luna de miel, luna de hiel and Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona follow a different course, with an attempted, although unsuccessful, merging of all three levels. The Daphnis and Chloe theme is intended as a contrast with the real level; the Persiles and Sigismunda theme, because Cervantes's

characters are themselves real heroes, brings the literary level close to the mythical one, and the Garden of Eden theme provides an emblem for the whole work. Even though the 'Persiles' structure serves much the same purpose in Ayala as in Cervantes, none of the literary elements can be integrated with the real level, with the result that the levels become entangled and do not exist harmoniously. The difficulty is that if the real characters contrast with the literary ones, they look degraded, and if they conform, they look like puppets. The levels are more successfully integrated in the Tigre Juan novels, where the literary themes do not determine the plot and are related to the real characters in that they provide the subject for endless conversations, and illuminate rather than determine character; the real characters even introduce the literary themes themselves. The result of this integration is that the three levels can be seen as aspects of a single subject. Clearly, the ironic use of myth and literature for which Ayala is known is only a small part of his work; the general trend is towards the integration of all levels. The effect of all these levels is that the reader is forced to look upon the action in different ways simultaneously, and sometimes to look at familiar reality in a new way, which, paradoxically, often involves seeing traditional literary forms behind the action. Yet the reader is not free to choose how he reads the novels because there is always the distant but strong viewpoint of the narrator who put the levels together. Indeed, the reader is intended to become the narrator's accomplice.

8.3 The mythical novel

The mythical and literary levels have such a radical effect on the form of Ayala's novels that some of them can be called 'mythical'. In the first place there is a tendency for Ayala's novels to reject the linear sequence of time by the clock. The three stages of initiation impose a ritualistic succession of events so that if they are not predictable, they are certainly familiar to the reader. The novels often follow the cyclic pattern of the seasons, finishing in spring after a winter of trials or exactly a year after they began and often giving the impression that the novel is simply an expanded moment. Descriptions, through their connection with myth, often take the setting and objects out of time altogether. Through the effect of the multiple levels, several time-sequences sometimes come together, and there is always the sense of mythical and real events taking place simultaneously. There is a feeling of the presence of the past in all the novels, and the real characters may sometimes relive the past, because the only measure of progression in time is through reference to the myth. Events and scenes can be divorced from their immediate predecessors. The mythical pattern can bring together events which took years and others which took only a few moments, and in some novels there is the presence of the whole history of mankind behind the action. One result of this time-structure is that it can easily be broken up by the narrator, who has great freedom. His comments cannot interfere with a structure as objective and strong as the progress of the hero.

The tendency to treat the dimensions relatively is also seen in

Ayala's treatment of space. Basically, the action takes place at a privileged location at the centre of the world where all things come together and from which contact may be made with the next world. The characters are often seen to be hovering between heaven and hell, and have easy access to both. The setting for most of the novels is therefore a little universe which has all the attributes of the complete one, but reduced in scale, so that even the humblest objects acquire universal importance. It must be remembered, however, that such universal importance is not gratuitous symbolism, but caused by the mythical associations of certain objects. The novels are often centred on one particular spot, such as the round table in Belarmino y Apolonio or the stall in Tigre Juan. Even the places to which Alberto travels are merely various sites in hell. It is not surprising that one of Ayala's collections of short stories should be called El ombligo del mundo.

Myths also alter the relationship between the narrator and his work. Firstly, myth provides the narrator with a language which can be used to describe impersonally and economically. The objects of myth are eloquent in themselves and need no wordy descriptions to be brought to life. Physical reality is often stylised in this way with no pretence that it is other than words on paper. Indeed, Ayala usually exaggerates the literary nature of scenes and events. Secondly, the characters' thoughts are not always presented in the characters' own language but clearly, in terms which link the character to a stage in the myth. Thirdly, the narrator's role is changed because he does not always accept responsibility for the events and characters, who spring from a vast collective knowledge rather than a

limited personal one. The narrator becomes the man who can see all the myths clearly and assemble them. In this way Ayala establishes a serene and distant viewpoint from which to present the action with sympathy and understanding, but not indifference: he sees the action in terms of the mythical process, which is an absolute perspective and cannot be challenged by the reader. Ayala's use of myth and literature offers a consistent view of the universe and is at the heart of the kind of novel which he chose to write. Rather than talk about Ayala's 'intellectual' novel it would perhaps be better to talk about his 'mythical' novel.

APPENDIX

MYTHS AND THE MODERN SPANISH

NOVEL

Although the use of myths and the refashioning of literary figures is not confined to the beginning of the century, and although Ayala's mythical technique was original and consistent, it is possible to account for the form it took partly by reference to the times in which he wrote. In the first place, he uses myth in a way which responds to many of the problems which faced novelists at the turn of the century, and in this respect he can be associated even more closely with 'Clarín'. In the second, it can be shown that there was a limited awareness of the idea of the 'mythical' novel during Ayala's career as a novelist. In the third place it is clear that a number of the particular myths and literary figures which Ayala uses were part of the cultural currency of the times. There is, as has been shown, a distinctly modernist flavour about Ayala's early writing which can be explained by his close if short association with the review Helios. Although it is not in the scope of this thesis to compare Ayala's use of myth with that of other writers, an exception must be made in the case of Alas.

1. 'Clarín'

In one of his first articles Ayala refers to 'Clarín' as 'El Maestro'¹ and so it is reasonable to ask what he learned from him. Possible influences have been suggested by critics, some of whom have pointed to biographical details and to similarities in the characters or situations in their novels.² Amorós has come closest to identifying the connection: 'Pérez de Ayala está al margen de la gran tradición española de Galdós y Baroja. Su

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1. Ayala, 'El Maestro', Los Lunes de El Imparcial, Madrid, 11/4/1904.
 2. A. Amorós, La novela intelectual de Ramón Pérez de Ayala, Madrid 1972, p. 74, p. 84, p. 228, p. 269, p. 308, p. 338, pp. 377-8.

línea es la de 'Clarín'.³ It is a line characterised by intellectualism and a preoccupation with technique and with language. The particular aspects which link Ayala and Alas are, according to Amorós, 'la ironía, el uso de libros en la narración, la crítica de la vida provinciana, la ternura soterrada'.⁴ Both, as Sergio Beser says of 'Clarín', tend to 'ver y destacar, en los personajes de sus relatos, las actitudes literarias; es decir, que examina la realidad social con los ojos de un hombre formado más en los libros que en la vida'.⁵ Yet Ayala moves away from the ironical use of literary models, and although he too shows the relationship of his characters with works of art he often does so for different reasons. Nevertheless, the idea of presenting a character's spontaneous reactions to the theatre comes from Alas.

In his theoretical writing 'Clarín' does not elaborate on the technique of using literary figures, and in a review of El sabor de la tierruca shows his disdain for characters based on such figures: 'Don Pedro Mortera no es nadie, es un signo negativo de don Juan, pura ~~álgebra~~ *álgebra*'.⁶ Unlike Ayala, *lf* 'Clarín' does not allow the literary models to predominate; the literary figures in La regenta do not define characters, but offer momentary insights into them. Alas's rejection of abstraction in the portrayal of character also marks him apart from Ayala: 'Especial misión del artista literario, sobre todo del literario, es este trabajo de reflejar la vida toda, sin abstracción, no levantando un palmo de la realidad, sino pintando su imagen como la pinta la superficie de un lago tranquilo'.⁷

3. A. Amorós, La novela intelectual..., p. 398.

4. A. Amorós, La novela intelectual..., p. 398.

5. S. Beser, Leopoldo Alas, crítico literario, Madrid, 1968, p. 340.

6. L. Alas, review of El sabor de la tierruca in Sergio Beser, Leopoldo Alas: teoría y crítica de la novela española, Barcelona, 1972, p. 209.

Yet there is here a common intention to use the novel to reflect all of life which leads both Ayala and Alas to talk in similar terms about essences and the justification of all the elements of the universe. Indeed, Alas's defence of naturalism could easily have been written by Ayala:

Cuando un fenómeno se cumple conforme a las leyes que atribuimos a la realidad de su esencia, decimos que es natural que así sea, y esta acepción de la palabra es lo que tiene en cuenta y toma para sí el naturalismo. 8

Ayala takes this idea further by presenting such laws directly in some of his recreations of myths where his mythical technique implies a total unity of character and action. Alas rejects the type characters which might result from this and relegates them to the 'novela de tesis' and 'novela idealista' because they involve the direct intervention of the narrator. Yet, like Ayala, 'Clarín' takes the view that art has a moral value and that the writer should be the conscience of humanity, capable of the insight needed to see the essential reality behind appearances. Both novelists face the problem of how to present this privileged view of the world without distorting reality. The aim of art is for both writers to use this privileged view to increase the sensitivity of the reader:

pues el arte, que presentándome bellezas sensibles me eleva a esas regiones y me hace sentir mucho y con pureza, pensar con rectitud y profundidad, o querer con energía y desinterés, a ese arte es al que yo llamo tendencioso cuando concreta a determinada propósito este poder que tiene sobre mí espíritu. 9

If, as we have suggested, Ayala's use of myth is derived from a conception of art as a revelation of eternal truths, it is only indirectly attributable to Alas.

8. L. Alas, 'Del naturalismo' in Beser, 1972, p.119.

9. L. Alas, review of La familia de Leon Roch, in Beser, 1972, p.98.

The use which the two writers make of literary figures is best shown by comparing the don Juan and médico de su honra themes in both. Amorós has noted that 'detrás de Vespasiano, muy cerca, está el Alvaro Mesía de La regenta',¹⁰ and that they represent a criticism of relations between the sexes in Spain. Although both characters represent inauthenticity in love, their donjuanism and their dramatic purpose are very different. Alvaro Mesía may be ageing, but he is not effeminate. His attacks depend on a suitable 'cuarto de hora', not on the lingering fascination of Vespasiano. Mesía's donjuanism is a theatrical act to be played for political reasons, and because society encourages him, for all that it is worth. He may be degraded, vulgar and past his prime, but the idea of don Juan which lies behind him is the traditional one. Vespasiano is based on a different conception of donjuanism: effeminacy, infertility and passivity. Vespasiano is a flat character where inner and outer reality correspond, whereas Mesía is more complicated one, degraded on his own terms by comparison of his social role and private thoughts. Their purpose in the novels is different in that Mesía is a representative of a social group and Vespasiano represents a biological state.

The don Juan figure which most resembles don Alvaro is Pachín Cueto of La triste Adriana because, without being effeminate, he is ineffectual and conscious that he might appear ridiculous. His position as a don Juan depends on his reputation in Pilares, of which he is the mayor, just as don Alvaro is the leading political figure in Vetusta. Both try to seduce a woman who appears at first to offer no difficulty, and both are faced at the end with a violent situation. Both are playing a game, imitating

10. A. Amorós, La novela intelectual..., p. 368.

emotion and sentimentality, and both are ridiculous without being a total inversion of the traditional theme. It can be concluded that Ayala tends to use the don Juan figure as 'pura álgebra' in his early short stories, that in Pachín Cueto he approaches the type of degradation seen in La regenta, but that in Tigre Juan he goes much further. If, as Amorós says, don Alvaro is 'behind' Vespasiano, he is surely a long way behind.

As Amorós points out in his comments on Luna de miel, luna de hiel, both Ayala and 'Clarín' make their characters aware of literature and show them to be influenced by it:

También en esta ocasión utiliza la lectura de libros como un elemento estructural, igual que su maestro Clarín. Se trata, ahora, de El final de Norma, de Alarcón, que le sirve para mostrar cómo leer de verdad es vivir varias vidas, multiplicar el ámbito de nuestras limitadas posibilidades vitales y comprender diversas actitudes; es decir, la misma lección que nos daba Verónica al leer Otelo, en Troteras y Danzaderas. 11

Although it is true that some characters in La regenta live double lives, and others try to imitate literary figures in their social lives, none except Ana gains Verónica's insight into the world through their reading. They tend to read cheap novelettes to alleviate the boredom of provincial life and remain at the same stage as don Cástulo, confusing reality and fiction. Yet he is able to progress where Alas's characters can not. For example, Adriana, of La triste Adriana, and Olvido Paez of La regenta are introduced in a similar way. The first 'anhelaba algún conflicto extraordinario; acaso que el amador se desafiase con el presunto suegro, como el Cid en sus mocedades',¹² and Olvido 'a los dieciocho años se le ocurrió que quería ser desgraciada, como las heroínas de sus novelas, y acabó por inventar un

11. A. Amorós, La novela intelectual..., p.338.

12. Ayala, La triste Adriana, Obras Completas, II, 766.

tormento muy romántico y muy divertido'.¹³ Yet, whereas Olvido can never be saved from her illusions, Adriana's fantasies are merely a prelude to her renewal.

In the use of literature as a structural technique, however, Alás and Ayala have much in common. In La regenta, for example, there are three references to the Barber of Seville which are intended to reduce the action to a tight framework. When Ana despairs of ever rebelling against the crushing boredom of life in Vetusta she imagines a scene from the opera with don Alvaro taking the part of Almaviva: 'se le apareció el Teatro Real de Madrid y vio a don Alvaro Mesía, el presidente del Casino, ni más ni menos, envuelto en una capa de embozos grana, cantando bajo los balcones de Rosina'.¹⁴ This image is repeated from the point of view of de Pas as he lurks beneath a balcony, spying on Ana: 'Después un chillido como el de Rosina en el primer acto del Barbero'.¹⁵ The irony is that Ana saw don Alvaro in the role which de Pas, perhaps unconsciously, is playing. Quintanar also sees himself in a dream as an actor in the drama. When he realises that Ana is unfaithful to him he imagines that he is singing the part of Bartolo before an audience of crows in the singing lesson scene in which the doctor appears at his most ridiculous. The action of La regenta is thus reduced to a skeleton and identified with a well-known dramatic situation by picking out some of the unconscious thoughts of three of the characters. This same reduction of a long novel is to be found in Ayala, although he is prepared to allow the literary model to dominate the narrative to a greater extent.

13. L. Alás, La regenta, Alianza, second edition, Madrid, 1967, p. 252.

14. L. Alás, La regenta, pp. 55-6.

15. L. Alás, La regenta, p. 300.

One aspect of La regenta which Ayala admired was the scene in which Ana watches Don Juan Tenorio:

A Clarín, que si fue un gran crítico fue precisamente porque sabía ver las cosas por primera vez con perfecta ingenuidad y, por decirlo así, barbarie del espíritu, se le ocurrió ensayar la experiencia de ver el Tenorio, por vez primera, sirviéndose de un personaje novelesco, la protagonista de La Regenta. 16

This principle undoubtedly lies behind the reading of Othello in Troteras y danzaderas, although Verónica is made to identify with all the characters in turn whereas Ana merely sees doña Inés as a poetic version of herself. Indeed, the play does not help Ana to see reality more clearly. Yet her vision of some kind of ultimate truth through art, although not examined in such detail as in Ayala, is very like the revelation achieved by some of Ayala's mythical heroes, especially Tigre Juan:

No era ya una escena erótica lo que ella veía allí; era algo religioso; el alma saltaba a las ideas más altas, al sentimiento purísimo de la caridad universal... había llegado a pensar en Dios, en el amor ideal, puro, universal, que abarcaba al Creador y a la criatura. 17

As Ana's experience in the theatre is reminiscent of the mythical joining of the two worlds, it is appropriate to ask whether other elements of the progress of the hero are present in La regenta.

At the beginning of the novel Ana is isolated; hopeless, frustrated and bored; she has been taught to despise physical reality and is in the typical 'situación límite'. The first confession with de Pas is a call to new life: afterwards she dreams that he is offering her a nugget of gold; 18 de Pas himself sees Ana as 'un temperamento especial', 19 and encourages Ana to think of her life as a 'camino de perfección'. 20 The second

16. Ayala, Las máscaras, Obras Completas, III, p.171.

17. L. Alas, La regenta, p.349.

18. L. Alas, La regenta, p.166.

19. L. Alas, La regenta., p.168.

20. L. Alas, La regenta., p.168.

mythical image is the toad which Ana finds by a country path: the toad is a typically mythical element representing the call to action. Traditionally it is transformed by the love of the heroine into a handsome prince, but here Ana is afraid.²¹ Indeed, her initial rejection of the call is symbolised by her refusal to go to Mass the next day.

The traditional sequence usually takes the protagonist through a descent into the underworld, adapted to modern situations as the 'recorrido nocturno por la ciudad'. When Ana returns from a walk night is falling, Vetusta is all confusion: the noise is 'infernical', she sees in the eyes of a passer-by 'una belleza infernal'²² and reality dissolves before her own eyes. She feels 'como en un destierro',²³ walks into one of don Víctor's traps and sees the outside world as a menacing place inviting crime. Her main fear is that she herself will disappear in the confusion. De Pas is clearly the teacher or saviour who will lead her out of this nightmare:

Lo que sabía a ciencia cierta era que en don Fermín estaba la salvación, la promesa de una vida virtuosa sin aburrimiento, llena de ocupaciones nobles, poéticas, que exigían esfuerzos, sacrificios, pero que por lo mismo daban dignidad y grandeza a la existencia muerta, animal, insoportable que Vetusta le ofreciera hasta el día. 24

In contrast to the saviour, Alas sets the tempter figure of don Alvaro ('vieja tentación'),²⁵ in whose presence 'Ana se sentía caer en un pozo'.²⁶

She fights against temptation during the day only to dream of it at night.

21. L. Alas, La regenta,... p.170.

22. L. Alas, La regenta,... pp.172 and 173.

23. L. Alas, La regenta,... p.185.

24. L. Alas, La regenta,... p.266.

25. L. Alas, La regenta,... p.460.

26. L. Alas, La regenta,... p.333.

Her glimpse of an ideal world through art has tragic consequences because she can never transform this tempter into the ideal love of which she dreams: the two worlds are divorced. She may see don Alvaro 'como un náufrago puede ver el buque salvador',²⁷ in the mythical imagery which continually recurs, but he will always be part of the prosaic world.

Her attempts to unite the two worlds follow a familiar sequence: the winter is a time of trials, illness and sometimes madness, which is described in one instance in terms of the dismemberment of the hero: 'Cerraba los ojos, y dejaba de sentirse fuera y por dentro; a veces se le escapaba la conciencia de su unidad, empezaba a verse repartida en mil, y el horror dominándola producía una reacción de energía suficiente a volverla a su yo, como a un puerto seguro'.²⁸ The 'puerto seguro' reflects the traditional theme of the hero's sea-journey. It is in winter that she begins to see her friendship with de Pas as ridiculous, when 'todo parecía que iba a disolverse',²⁹ and when her only way of realising her aspiration 'a las regiones de lo ideal, a la adoración de lo Absoluto por abstracción prodigiosa'³⁰ is to become a beata and in the Easter procession a fake, comic and theatrical Christ. She can never be reborn.

Yet the summer months are always times of hope. Following one of her illnesses she feels that, with the help of de Pas 'ella también iba a renacer, iba a resucitar'.³¹ Her final attempt to unite the ideal and the real involves communion with nature and attempting to draw figures from mythology: 'Los dioses, los héroes, la vida al aire libre, el arte por religión, un cielo

27. L. Alas, La regenta,... p.334 .

28. L. Alas, La regenta,...p.395 .

29. L. Alas, La regenta,... p.532 .

30. L. Alas, La regenta,... p.536 .

31. L. Alas, La regenta,... p.440 .

lleno de pasiones humanas, el contento de este mundo... Quisiera saber dibujar para dar formas a estas imágenes de la Mitología que me asedian'.³²

So, alienated in the world which she has created for herself, she cannot return to the real world. She is a failed heroine because she has not learned, as the true hero must, that the ideal world exists in this one. That she can never be reborn is shown in the repetition of the first mythical image of the novel: the toad, which has never been transformed.³³

In this common mythical framework and imagery there is a strong reason for linking Ayala and 'Clarín'. Both provide long novels with a strong and simple pattern and render subjective states in an objective and stylized language which cannot be confused with the character's own thoughts. Yet although the terms in which they treat the question of renewal are often very similar, Ayala develops a type of successful hero, and Alas is more pessimistic. In conclusion we can say that if their use of literary figures was often different, their interest in the mythical process of renewal, and their ability to use the imagery connected with it, are common factors.

2. The mythical technique and the problems of the novel

Although Ayala's mythical technique is to be seen in embryo in La regenta it provides convincing solutions to some of the problems which novelists faced in the first quarter of the century. The difficulties are mainly concerned with the presentation of character, the 'permeability' of the novel, the relationship of the author to his work and the ability of the novel to deal with serious issues. In terms of the subject matter of

32. L. Alas, La regenta, pp. 575-6.

33. L. Alas, La regenta, p. 676: 'Había creído sentir sobre la boca el vientre viscoso y frío de un sapo'.

the novel, the problem can be seen as a conflict between the obligation to invent and the necessity of treating serious problems which affect the outside world. In the 'Revista de Revistas' section of La Lectura (1905) there is a summary of this problem to the effect that the novelist must strike a balance between his concern for his characters as individuals and his concern for the world outside.³⁴ The novel is expected to be relevant to life but at the same time a creation apart from it. Ayala's myths provide a bridge between the two extremes as they carry with them certain abstract notions and yet are themselves literary. The 'contenido ideal', as Luciano de Taxonera points out in 1912, is the proper material for art, and not observation of society or concern for social questions.³⁵ Writers are no more interested, he claims, in the principles which govern human conduct than in immediate causes.³⁶ As has been shown, myths are basically about such principles and yet at the same time 'ideal' and it is not surprising that mythical figures appear in many of the novels of the period. This interest in 'contenido ideal' would tend to contradict G.G. Brown's statement that 'the use of myths and legends, the device of making literature out of already familiar literature, focuses attention on the treatment instead of the narrative, on how the story is told, not what it tells'.³⁷ Myths and literary models may provide the form for some of

34. Anon. review of Hall Caine, 'La religión en la novela', La Lectura, I, 1905, p. 224.

35. L. de Taxonera, 'La literatura del día', La España Moderna, II, 1912, p. 152: 'La literatura del día no quiere sólo estudiar las cosas y los seres, como hacían los antiguos, sino el contenido ideal de los seres y el medio espiritual de las cosas'.

36. L. de Taxonera, 'La literatura...', p. 144, 'La literatura moderna, que sabe que el destino no es más que la fatal resultante de nuestras acciones, estudia, de minucioso modo, no sólo la interminable serie de causas y concausas que pudieron determinarlas, sino también aquellos principios que se enseñorearon de nuestras almas y fueron, de ellas, árbitro'.

37. G.G. Brown, A Literary History of Spain : the Twentieth Century, London, 1972, p. 13

Ayala's novels, but it is a form which carries with it certain ideas. With the exception of the pastiche Cruzado de amor, Ayala's emphasis is always on the content: the mythical hero is a man who is born again. The mythical technique is a device for treating such characters with the necessary critical detachment to avoid the novel becoming a personal testimony.

The problem of literature as a personal testimony raises the question of sincerity, a subjective approach which was condemned both by Ortega and Rivas Cherif:

Suele adolecer el arte moderno... de exceso de sinceridad: en cuanto el autor ofrece al lector... la obra de su ingenio, sin evitar, antes bien complaciéndose en ellos, los detalles minuciosos, y no siempre gratos aunque interesantes, de su gestación. La obra de Pérez de Ayala, por el contrario, es cabal. 38

Ayala's success in avoiding subjectivity and the chaos of such 'sincerity' is, according to Rivas Cherif, to be seen in his mythical technique: 'en el pensamiento general del autor, en la mente creadora del poeta, que concibe, a imagen divina, su obra, sin ayer ni mañana, en una vasta serenidad, apenas asequible a los hombres en la fatal sucesión del tiempo'.³⁹ In Ortega's view 'sincerity' causes artistic chaos and a return to primitive expression. Both he and Ayala would presumably oppose the idea of literature as the expression of the 'yo' because it would be confined to a single viewpoint. Ayala is always against total identification with characters. Understanding is to be achieved through seeing characters from a distance; and it is difficult to identify with a myth.

The problem of sincerity raises the question of the importance of the individual in novels. Writing in Prometeo in 1910 Eduardo González-

38. C. Rivas Cherif, review of Los trabajos de Urbano y Simona, España, 556, Madrid, 10/2/1923, p. 11.

39. C. Rivas Cherif, review of Los trabajos..., p. 11.

Blanco considers that the identity of the individual has been lost in modern literature.⁴⁰ One reason is that realism has a tendency to look upon the individual as the product of certain external factors, and another may be that the common hero suffering from 'abulia' was a problematic character with only a vague personal identity, usually more interesting for the ideas he represented than for himself. Mythical characters, with their indestructible identity can never be seen as merely the effect of certain causes and are of their nature related to a world of ideas.

Ramón Tenreiro sees the problem of the individual character as 'el problema de si la lengua castellana, castiza, calcada literalmente en los modelos clásicos, tiene capacidad para expresar la riqueza de emociones que se exige hoy a la obra de arte'.⁴¹ Ayala, as we have seen, would argue that no language is suited to portraying the emotions of characters. For Ayala language is basically a vehicle for ideas. His solution is to portray emotion, without borrowing its language, by stylising it in a mythical framework which can be easily understood by the reader. In Artemisa, for example, the emotions of the protagonists are never allowed to dominate the narrative, although the reader is never in any doubt about their nature. Ayala's technique imposes clarity on human relationships without the overt intervention of the narrator. For

40. Eduardo González-Blanco, 'El arte y la moral', Prometeo, III, 20, Madrid, 1910, p.542: 'Que el hombre sea un producto del medio natural y social, que vienen a ser como escuelas donde se va desenvolviendo su espíritu, al construir dentro de la uniformidad del ambiente la variedad de su personalidad, no es óbice para que el artista sepa sacar de la idea-hombre, de la forma hombre, idea encarnada, forma que goza y vive y sufre y se desvanece con la muerte, enseñanzas sublimes, ideales grandiosos'.

41. Ramón Tenreiro, review of El amor de los amores by Ricardo León, La Lectura, I, 121, Madrid, 1911, p.48.

Unamuno, writing in 1899, the only choice was between presenting characters in action, or entirely from the point of view of the novelist.⁴²

Ayala rejects both methods: his mythical characters, even when described by the narrator, can never look like inventions. The narrator is never entirely responsible for them and so they take on a kind of independence, being seen from a distant and impersonal point of view.

The question of the invention of novelistic material looms very large in the years from 1900 to 1925, at the end of which Ortega was saying that there was nothing left to invent and that the novelist would be reduced to treating old subjects in a new way.⁴³ This involves a change in the role of the novelist, who will no longer be an observer or an ingenious inventor. Ayala's mythical technique is basically an attempt to strike a balance between these two extremes, and the way he uses it accords with some of Ortega's theories. For example, Ortega states that the reader should feel saturated by the presence of the characters: '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...'⁴⁴ By providing each character with a mythical or literary level, Ayala engages the reader in a debate about their true identity and relationship with the myth or literary figure. The mythical characters are precisely the type which can be seen from many points

42. M. de Unamuno, review of Boguería ^{by} Narciso Oller, La Vida Literaria, 6, Madrid, 11/2/1899, p.102: 'Sus personajes se revelan por lo común hablando y obrando; rarísima vez penetra el autor directamente en sus almas para mostrárnosla'.

43. J. Ortega y Gasset, Ideas sobre la novela, Obras Completas, III, Revista de Occidente, Madrid, 1947, p.389: 'A mi juicio, esto es lo que hoy acontece en la novela. Es prácticamente imposible hallar nuevos temas'.

44. J. Ortega y Gasset, Ideas sobre la novela, p.393.

of view. In this way the characters are only slowly revealed as the reader makes the necessary comparisons between the levels. They also represent a universe in which perspective plays a great part: endowed with a mythical level they take on many different facets.

Ayala finds a different answer to the problem of 'hermetismo', by which is meant the avoidance in the novel of material which is not strictly novelistic. Although Ayala's novels are closed, an 'orbe cerrada', they are still receptive to a limited range of extraneous material; previous literature and myths. The closed world of Ayala's mythical figures is not meant to cut the reader off from the real world but has the moral aim of opening his eyes before he returns to this world. For this reason Ayala tends to emphasise the artificial nature of many of his plots. His answer to the problem of 'hermetismo' is not, like Ortega's, to convince the reader that he is not reading, but to underline the bookish nature of his novels. In conclusion we can say that Ayala's mythical technique provides answers to many of the problems facing novelists during the 'crisis of the novel'.

Is it then possible to talk of a 'mythical novel' in the literary theory of the time? Although many critics and writers refer to myths, to the resurgence of interest in classicism and to idealism in the novel, few refer to a 'mythical novel' and those who do are concerned with the novel as a vehicle for ideas. The mythical novel becomes associated with the historical novel and for Unamuno, writing in 1903, with social questions. In his essay 'La novela contemporánea y el movimiento social' Unamuno implies that the modern novel will have the same function as myths by being an

aggregate of different, and contrasting, forms of knowledge. He considers the novel to be 'el género supremo literario, como el género de integración, como una forma en que se integran lo épico, lo lírico y lo drámatico de una parte y lo científico y lo artístico de otra, como el género en que más se hace por científicar el arte y artificiar la ciencia'.⁴⁵ It is the only genre which will restore the homogeneous view of the universe which had existed in Homer, before the division of science and art. This is precisely the kind of integration which the narrator of Belarmino y Apolonio sees in the myths and legends of the past, which has been lost in the scientific world, and which might be restored by philosophy and drama. Both Ayala and Unamuno see art as having the mystical purpose of revealing the origins of life and communicating them to the reader. Art will be connected with ideas, but will not preach, due to its capacity to 'pasar al estrépito y calor de estas luchas para que cristalice en él su sedimento eterno'.⁴⁶ This is very much like the aim of presenting the action 'desde el punto de vista de Sirio' of Belarmino y Apolonio; the novel will be concerned with achieving some higher perspective of human affairs. Precisely what form such a novel would take is not clear from Unamuno's very theoretical statements but it seems to involve some kind of fable. After discussing Plato's Phaedra Unamuno concludes:

Dos proposiciones de bien enraizada estética hay aquí: la una, la de que es la filosofía la más grande de las artes... y la otra, de que el poeta, si ha de ser poeta, debe componer fábulas o mitos y no razonamientos... y si parangonamos ambas sentencias y las forzamos a reducirse a unidad, se tendrá el nervio de la doctrina que he desenvuelto en mi escrito, aplicable a las relaciones de la novela con el movimiento social, porque no es este mismo, sino las teorías que de él suele sacarse, lo que acostumbra a meterse en la novela. 47

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45. M. de Unamuno, 'La novela contemporánea y el movimiento social', La Revista Blanca, VI, 114, Madrid, 15/3/1903, p. 559.
46. M. de Unamuno, 'La novela contemporánea...', p. 563.
47. M. de Unamuno, 'La novela contemporánea...', p. 564.

Although Unamuno is here talking about sociological theories, this could apply equally to any novel of ideas. The fact that the concept of the novel as a fable and its characters as mythical entities is common in Ayala would suggest that both writers saw myth as a way of reconciling the demands of artistic creation and the discussion of ideas.

Gómez de Baquero, writing in 1901, did not have such an exalted view of the novel: 'así como el hombre imaginaba en otros tiempos dioses y portentosas maravillas, hoy se contenta con idear imágenes o fantasmas de hombres y sucesos humanos, con los cuales forma entretenidas y deleitosas fábulas'.⁴⁸ The idea of the fable is here connected with literature for entertainment. Myths will always be degraded in a modern setting, and so can be used for comic effect. This is a use of myth which is only to be found in Ayala's 'central' period and seems to correspond to the current trend. Yet by 1908 Gómez de Baquero was referring to the mythical novel by name, and although he still concentrates on its capacity for invention he links it to other forms of novel:

La anarquía que reina en las letras, da origen a todo género de novedades, de combinaciones, de mezclas híbridas, y va creando en la novela, que es un género de géneros, un género tan dilatado que en él cabe todo, una atrevida mezcla entre lo fantástico y lo real, entre lo verdadero y lo imaginario. Por un fenómeno, que a primera vista parece una regresión a los orígenes, en la novela histórica se va introduciendo como una variedad la novela mítica, que da una visión fantástica y legendaria de los hechos y los transforma a voluntad del escritor. 49

Gómez de Baquero was clearly not thinking of Ayala when he wrote this but there are here many characteristics which would later be found in Ayala.

Certainly the idea that the novel has no limits and can absorb other genres

48. E. Gómez de Baquero, 'Crónica literaria', La España Moderna, III, Madrid, 1901, p. 114.

49. E. Gómez de Baquero, review of La dama errante by Pío Baroja, El Imparcial, Madrid, 17/5/1908.

is common in Ayala, as is the notion that the novel will present the origins or archetypal features of plots, characters and themes. It is interesting that Gómez de Baquero should link the mythical and historical novel: the point is that both deal with facts rather than invented matter. His statement is important for the picture it gives of developments in the novel at that time rather than as a clue to any influence they might have had on Ayala. In fact, Gómez de Baquero thought the subject important enough to return to it in Novelas y novelistas and later in his address to the Real Academia Española in 1925. By that time he was able to associate the mythical trend with the thesis novel and the popularisation of science:

En cuanto a la Didáctica, la novela científica y todas aquellas especies de novelas, generalmente inferiores desde el punto de vista artístico, que responden a algún proselitismo, muestran cómo puede ser este género literario una representación mítica y antropomórfica de los problemas que inquietan a los hombres, proyección popular de la teoría, propia para satisfacer la propensión a lo concreto y figurado que experimentan los grandes públicos populares, el pueblo de la Literatura. 50

Although Ayala was never a popular writer, this judgement throws some light on his recreation of the don Juan theme. It also shows that the use of myths for their grotesque qualities had by this time given way to their use as vehicles for ideas. The novel, for Gómez de Baquero, has the capacity to fulfil the traditional role of the myth. We can conclude that at the time Ayala was writing there was an idea of the 'mythical novel' and that in some ways his novels correspond to it.

50. E. Gómez de Baquero, Discursos leídos ante la Real Academia Española en la recepción pública de Don Eduardo Gómez de Baquero el día 21 de junio de 1925, p. 24.

3. Mythical themes

In his study of classical themes in modern literature José Lasso de la Vega singles out Ayala and Palacio Valdés as writers who use such subjects.⁵¹ He identifies the protagonists of La aldea perdida with the warriors of ancient Troy. It is interesting that Ayala's literary preferences in the early years of the century include Palacio Valdés, and that he devoted a long article to La aldea perdida, drawing attention to its mythical quality: 'Es un poema homérico lleno de dulzura, de armonía, de grandeza heroica y de paz aldeana. Entraña un simbolismo claro, artístico y con insinuaciones inefables a las veces; un simbolismo helénico, amable como el de Homero y Hesiodo'.⁵² Ayala seems to be attracted by the ambivalent qualities of such a technique: the myths are clear symbols but also 'ineffable' and capable of expressing the mystery of the universe. It is a quality which he exploits in such short stories as Artemisa, and El Raposín. At the same time myths unite two poles of the universe: the world of the gods and the countryside where in humble surroundings their power is to be seen. As Ayala says: 'los he visto en mi aldea lejana y en un libro distante: en el libro inmortal del abuelo ciego'.⁵³ Throughout Ayala's novels, and especially in the early short stories, there is this tendency to see the most elevated themes in the most humble situations. Most of his novels are set in some rural setting and in some nature is seen as a place where the gods manifest themselves.

Yet modern myths differ from ancient ones, as Luis Arquistáin

51. J. Lasso de la Vega, Helenismo y literatura contemporánea, Madrid, 1968, p. 71.

52. Ayala, 'La aldea lejana, con motivo de la aldea perdida', Rincón Asturiano, Obras Completas, I, pp. 1094-5 (Helios, IV, 1903).

53. Ayala, 'La aldea lejana...', p. 1095.

points out in his article on 'Don Juan de España'. An ancient myth is a collective creation, but modern man tends to be more interested in the individual: 'El hombre moderno exige mitos individuales, representaciones, no de este o del otro pueblo, sino del hombre en su esencia, en sus últimos anhelos'.⁵⁴ In the modern age, however, writers are not capable of creating new myths and will be forced to reinterpret old ones. This is the case of the don Juan legend because

don Juan sigue estando de moda... Pasa, dispuesto a compear, en cada momento, el amor con la vida, por los párrafos de Ortega y Gasset. Se prende a las inquietudes intelectuales de Pérez de Ayala y a las preocupaciones de Maeztu. Martínez Sierra le saca a las tablas. Y aquí nos lo trae ahora, en su último libro, Azorín.⁵⁵

Indeed, scarcely a single well-known novelist did not write a modern version of the legend, which leads Díez-Canedo to conclude that don Juan is dead because 'Don Juan es Don Juan porque es único'.⁵⁶ The figure of the burlador is unusual among Ayala's literary figures because it is subject to continual reinterpretation. Luis Araquistáin asks whether don Juan is 'una categoría humana eterna, sujeta a eterno conflicto, o está condicionada por circunstancias históricas que, si varían, la pueden también hacer variar y acaso desaparecer un día como símbolo artístico...'.⁵⁷ This problem undoubtedly lies behind Ayala's treatment of the theme: although, as we have seen, he takes pains to show don Juan as an eternal force, his interpretation is a twentieth-century one laying great emphasis on the psychology and biology of don Juan. Indeed, for the first time Ayala here abandons the direct presentation of a figure to let his invented characters talk about it.

54. L. Araquistáin, 'En torno a Don Juan de España', La Pluma, 18, Madrid, 1921, p.306.

55. E. Díez-Canedo, 'Glosas al Don Juan de 'Azorín'', El Sol, Madrid, 23/3/1922.

56. E. Díez-Canedo, 'Donjuanismo', España, 334, 9/9/1922, p.10.

57. L. Araquistáin, 'En torno...', p.307.

This presentation responds to some comments made by Ricardo Baeza in 1924:

He aquí, a nuestro juicio, un mito que aguarda todavía su Sumo Hacedor, a tal punto rebosa el contenido de la anécdota de la forma que hasta ahora la ha encerrado. En toda la larga literatura donjuanesca, toda sub specie saeculi, ni una obra que haya acertado a expresar cabalmente el símbolo. Ninguna, de las grandes anécdotas humanas, tan virgen ni tan tentadora para el creador. Ahí está, perennemente viva y trémula, esperando las manos del artista que la traiga a luz sub specie aeterni. 58

It is clear that don Juan was an unusual case and that Ayala had to modify his methods. This may be why, although there are many references to don Juan in Tigre Juan, there is no mention of the literary form in which he appears. Don Juan may be a myth, but he is not indissolubly linked with any one action. The universality of don Juan depends on his being seen to be a part of all men. The only way that a modern writer, in an age which does not create myths, can render this is by letting his characters talk about the figure. Ayala's don Juan may not be a 'Don Juan real', but is an attempt to see him sub specie aeterni.

Another figure which exercised the imagination of writers during this period was Prometheus, a symbol of human striving against superior forces, and thus of the superman. The collaborators in the review Prometeo announce in 1908 that he is the only mythological figure which appealed to them, being 'la figura más noble, porque más humana, que forjó la fantasía dorada de Grecia'.⁵⁹ He also appears in Trilogía del Evangelio de la Vida, by Pompeyo Giner, as the lonely mediator between the gods and man. Twenty years later, in 1926, Prometeo is seen as a

58. Ricardo Baeza, 'El último Don Juan', Revista de Occidente, III, viii, Madrid, 1924, pp. 258-9.

59. A. González-Blanco, 'Llamamiento a los intelectuales', Prometeo, I,1, 1908, p.49.

cause of the decline of civilization through his help for the weak and infirm.⁶⁰

Clearly Ayala's choice of mythical subjects depended to a great extent on the interests of his time.

A general interest in mythology was a constant feature which seems to begin with the modernists. José Deleito y Piñuela points out

la lejanía que envuelve en pœtica bruma a los siglos pasados los hace eterna fuente de inspiración idealista... la restauración que ahora surge se inspira en el deseo de volver a la primitiva sencillez y rusticidad, el arte informe y tosco producto de civilizaciones incipientes... El poeta modernista, a veces desarrolla los mitos del más allá y otras se inspira en las ansias de liberación que siente el mundo. 61

Ayala draws heavily on this mysterious quality of myths in his early short stories and returns to it in the Tigre Juan novels. Although his novels do not have much 'poética bruma' they all have a sense of the presence of the past. Perhaps the most important point, however, is that, like the modernists, there is always the presence of the next world in Ayala and it is often manifest in his use of mythical motifs. Sometimes the next world is connected with folk superstition, sometimes with Christianity, and sometimes with humble objects which have a symbolic value, but it is always there. This concern for the absolute shows that the roots of Ayala's mythical technique are to be found in the modernist movement.

As Gonzalo Guasp says of modernism in 1902:

solamente le interesa la significación de los seres y de las cosas; inventa y realiza una pintura en la que todo lo que es accesorio ,

60. H.S. Jennings, 'Prometeo o la biología y el progreso del hombre', Revista de Occidente, XI, xxxi, 1926, pp. 75-118.

61. J. Deleito y Piñuela, Gente Vieja, 30/4/1902.

contingente, temporal, se encuentra voluntariamente desdeñado y excluido, para no fijarse más que en lo esencial, desprendiendo de formas variables lo que la Vida y la Naturaleza tienen de absoluto. 62

Although the form which this concern takes in Ayala is very different, and despite the fact that he used realistic detail, the interest in timelessness in literature is to be seen in the way in which Ayala handled plots. His use of myths again shows that, far from being preoccupied with multiple perspectives, Ayala was interested in achieving a single and absolute perspective. Ayala's connection with the modernists is further confirmed by his association with the review Helios, for which he wrote many articles.

Although the interest in myths continues throughout the first thirty years of the century, the modernists' search for absolutes gave way to the psychologists' interest in neuroses. Antonio Marichalar, writing in 1930 says:

Los dioses siguen acosando al hombre; pero hoy son su motor; han hecho nido en lo más hondo de sus regiones tenebrosas, y desde allí le azotan y le acucian. El pasado (herencia, infancia, regresiones), en forma de neuroses, hace cumplir al autómatas su fatal destino. Hoy, el hado se llama subconsciente. 63

With the exception of Artemisa and perhaps some parts of Tigre Juan and El curandero de su honra, Ayala does not follow this path.

With^{out} examining novels beyond the scope of this thesis it can be concluded that Ayala's interest in myths was not unique and that it probably

62. G. Cuasp, Gente Vieja, 30/6/1902.

63. A. Marichalar, 'La vuelta de Edipo', Revista de Occidente, XXXI, xciii, 1931, p. 324.

owed much to his formative years in close contact with modernism. Some of the myths he used were even widely adapted at the time by other writers. His originality lies in the way he refashioned these myths.

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