

Twentieth-Century
Literary Criticism

TCLC 240

Volume 240

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**Criticism of the
Works of Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,
Short Story Writers, and Other Creative Writers
Who Lived between 1900 and 1999,
from the First Published Critical
Appraisals to Current Evaluations**



**Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism, Vol.
240**

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Preface

Since its inception *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (TCLC) has been purchased and used by some 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. TCLC has covered more than 1000 authors, representing over 60 nationalities and nearly 50,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as TCLC. In the words of one reviewer, “there is nothing comparable available.” TCLC “is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many librarians would have difficulty assembling on their own.”

Scope of the Series

TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1999 and to the most significant interpretations of these author's works. Volumes published from 1978 through 1999 included authors who died between 1900 and 1960. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of the period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, TCLC helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in TCLC presents a comprehensive survey on an author's career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of TCLC is devoted to literary topics. These topics widen the focus of the series from the individual authors to such broader subjects as literary movements, prominent themes in twentieth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

TCLC is designed as a companion series to Gale's *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, (CLC) which reprints commentary on authors who died after 1999. Because of the different time periods under consideration, there is no duplication of material between CLC and TCLC.

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A TCLC entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym is listed in the author heading and the author's actual name is given in parenthesis on the first line of the biographical and critical information. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the name of its author.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose

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- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it originally appeared. All titles by the author featured in the text are printed in boldface type. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included. Criticism in topic entries is arranged chronologically under a variety of subheadings to facilitate the study of different aspects of the topic.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism. Source citations in the Literary Criticism Series follow University of Chicago Press style, as outlined in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

Indexes

A **Cumulative Author Index** lists all of the authors that appear in a wide variety of reference sources published by Gale, including *TCLC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

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An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *TCLC*. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of foreign titles and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, dramas, nonfiction books, and poetry, short story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks.

In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale also produces a paperbound edition of the *TCLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

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When citing criticism reprinted in the Literary Criticism Series, students should provide complete bibliographic information so that the cited essay can be located in the original print or electronic source. Students who quote directly from reprinted criticism may use any accepted bibliographic format, such as University of Chicago Press style or Modern Language Association (MLA) style. Both the MLA and the University of Chicago formats are acceptable and recognized as being the current standards for citations. It is important, however, to choose one format for all citations; do not mix the two formats within a list of citations.

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Pío Baroja

1872-1956

(Full name Pío Baroja y Nessi) Spanish novelist, poet, short story writer, essayist, and autobiographer.

The following entry provides an overview of Baroja's life and works. For additional information on his career, see *TCLC*, Volume 8.

INTRODUCTION

Pío Baroja is regarded as one of the most prominent and prolific Spanish novelists of the twentieth century. While the author himself disclaimed the affiliation, he is often associated with the so-called Generation of 1898, a group of writers and thinkers concerned with political and social issues in Spain around the turn of the twentieth century. Although Baroja wrote poems, short stories, and essays, he is primarily remembered for his novels, which he often grouped together into trilogies or longer cycles. In such works as *Camino de perfección* (1902; *Road to Perfection*), *El árbol de la ciencia* (1911; *The Tree of Knowledge*), and the twenty-two volume series *Las memorias de un hombre de acción* (1913-1935), the author expanded the boundaries of the novel genre and examined the realities of contemporary society.

Written in an episodic, amorphous formal style, Baroja's novels focus on a recurring set of themes, such as corruption, anarchy, the negative consequences of industrialization, the creative potential of destruction, and humanity's capacity for manipulation and brutality. They also often stress the limiting effects of traditional religious and social conventions on the individual. As a result of his innovative approach to fiction, many critics regard Baroja as one of the primary contributors to the modern novel in twentieth-century Spanish literature. Writing in 1925, Ernest Boyd described Baroja as a "remarkable figure" of his generation and "the most original writer of Spanish fiction since Galdós." Boyd added that "out of the disaster of the Spanish-American War came a new intellectual era in Spain which has enriched that country with a modern literature, among whose chief ornaments must be counted the work of Pío Baroja."

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Baroja was born on December 28, 1872, in San Sebastián, a city located on the northern Basque coast of Spain. His mother, Carmen Nessi y Goñi, was a home-

maker, while his father, Serafín Baroja y Zornoza, was a well-educated mining engineer, who maintained an extensive library and introduced his son to the world of literature at a young age. During the early years of his life Baroja and his family moved several times, residing in such cities as Madrid, Pamplona, and Valencia. When he was fifteen the author was pressed to choose a profession, and he decided to pursue a career in medicine. In 1887 Baroja began his medical studies at the University of Madrid and continued his education at the University of Valencia, where he earned his master's degree. He was considered a mediocre student, however, and rebelled against academic authority. In 1893 he moved back to Madrid, where he completed his studies and presented his doctoral thesis on the psycho-physical characteristics of pain. During this time Baroja also became interested in philosophy and was introduced to the ideas of the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, who, along with Friedrich Nietzsche, had a profound influence on his fiction.

On completing his medical degree Baroja accepted a physician's post in Cestona, located in his native province of Guipúzcoa. He quickly tired of the petty rivalries and politics of the small town, however, and abandoned his post in 1895, returning to his birthplace of San Sebastián. Soon after, Baroja left the medical profession entirely and briefly ran his aunt's bakery until the business failed. His efforts to make money in the stock market were also unsuccessful, and in 1899, with no other prospects, he decided to pursue a career in writing. He traveled to Paris, where he met important literary figures, including Oscar Wilde, and further immersed himself in philosophical studies. In 1900 Baroja published his first work, a collection of short stories titled *Vidas sombrías*, which he followed shortly thereafter with his first novel, *La casa de Aizgorri* (1900). This work, along with *El mayorazgo de Labraz* (1903; *The Lord of Labraz*) and *Zalacaín el aventurero* (1909; *Zalacaín the Adventurer*), comprise the trilogy *Tierra vasca*.

During this time Baroja also became friends with essayist and journalist José Martínez Ruiz, better known by his pen name, Azorín, who created the term "Grupo '98," or "Generation of 1898," to identify those politically minded Spanish writers affected by Spain's colonial defeat during the Spanish-American War of 1898. While Azorín included Baroja in this group, Baroja rejected the affiliation, arguing that members of the "gen-

eration" lacked a unified perspective and common goals. In 1901 Baroja published his second novel, *Aventuras, inventos, y mixtificaciones de Silvestre Paradox*, the first work in a second trilogy, titled *La vida fantástica*. The next installment of the trilogy, *Road to Perfection*, was widely acclaimed and helped to solidify Baroja's literary reputation among the Spanish intelligentsia.

Throughout his literary career Baroja maintained a high level of productivity. By 1904, shortly after launching his literary career, he had already seen ten works in print, including the novels of one of his most respected trilogies, *La lucha por la vida*, consisting of *La busca* (1904; *The Quest*), *Mala hierba* (1904; *Weeds*), and *Aurora roja* (1904; *Red Dawn*). In 1909 Baroja unsuccessfully ran for the position of municipal councilman, but thereafter devoted most of his energy to writing, producing several important works over the next few years, most notably *César o nada* (1910; *Caesar or Nothing*), *Las inquietudes de Shanti Andía* (1911; *The Restlessness of Shanti Andía*), and *The Tree of Knowledge*, the third work in the *La raza* trilogy.

Between the years 1911 and 1935, Baroja devoted much of his energy and time to his most ambitious project, *Las memorias de un hombre de acción*, a twenty-two volume work of historical fiction focusing on the life of his distant relative, Eugenio Aviraneta, who was a guerrilla fighter in Spain's 1808-12 war of independence. In 1936, at the onset of the Spanish Civil War, Baroja moved to Paris, where he lived in self-imposed exile for the next four years. In 1940, however, while many other intellectuals were fleeing Spain under Francisco Franco's dictatorship, Baroja ended his own exile and returned to Madrid. On his return, the author began to prepare the last of his literary works, a collection of poetry titled *Canciones del suburbio* (1944) and his memoirs, collected in six volumes under the title *Memorias* (1944-49). On October 30, 1956, Baroja died of cerebral arteriosclerosis in Madrid. Spanish writer Camilo José Cela and American author Ernest Hemingway were among the many supporters and friends who attended his funeral.

MAJOR WORKS

Although Baroja wrote poems, essays, and short stories, he is most often remembered for his novels, which he frequently grouped together into trilogies. *Tierra vasca*, his first trilogy, which includes the novels *La casa de Aizgorri*, *The Lord of Labraz*, and *Zalacaín the Adventurer*, explores the religious and political corruption of the Basque region, as well as the cultural effects of industrialization on the area. While the first novel in the series, *La casa de Aizgorri*, focuses on the struggles of a fledgling artist, the final work, *Zalacaín the Adven-*

turer, revisits the picaresque style of Spain's Golden Age, as it portrays the romantic adventures of Baroja's Nietzschean hero, Martín Zalacaín, a Basque smuggler and spy during the Second Carlist War.

With the publication of his second trilogy, *La vida fantástica*, Baroja's reputation as an important emerging writer was established. In the first novel of this series, *Aventuras, inventos, y mixtificaciones de Silvestre Paradox*, the author introduces what would become his signature writing style, characterized by absurd and farcical elements and an open, amorphous approach to form that eschews the linear causation of nineteenth-century realism. The second novel of *La vida fantástica*, *Road to Perfection*, is considered one of Baroja's most important works. This book features a recurring character type within the author's fiction: a wandering outcast who becomes disillusioned and disoriented as he searches for his lost ideals. In *Road to Perfection* this vagabond-protagonist is Fernando Ossorio, an open-minded painter who embraces innovation and experimentation, the primary tenets of modernism, and tries to rid himself of religious and social prejudices. Lacking artistic motivation, Ossorio begins to wander. Encountering the old Castilian churches, he responds favorably to their beauty, while rejecting the Catholic faith they represent. Finally, Ossorio discovers and is freed by the ideas of Nietzsche. The novel ends ambiguously. While the protagonist embraces the hope that his newborn son will grow up unencumbered by the narrow and life-negating dogmas of his own experience, his mother-in-law prepares to steer her grandson towards the Catholic faith. The third novel of the trilogy, *Paradox, rey* (1906; *Paradox, King*), treats subjects such as anarchy, individual creativity, the link between creation and destruction, and the futility of human progress, as well as the corruption associated with modern civilization and industrialization.

Among Baroja's most acclaimed works are the novels that comprise his next trilogy, *La lucha por la vida*, including *The Quest*, *Weeds*, and *Red Dawn*. In these works the author highlights the poverty, human misery, and hopelessness of the poor districts of Madrid's outskirts. The novels feature a common protagonist, Manuel Alcázar, a fifteen-year-old serving boy who moves from one menial position to another, gradually accepting that the world is a sad and hostile place. From his position working on the fringes of urban society, in a boardinghouse, a grocery store, a bakery, and shoe repair shop, Manuel observes the calculating and predatory behaviors of humankind. As indicated by the title of the trilogy, which translates as "The struggle for life," Baroja draws from Charles Darwin's ideas in order to examine humanity's capacity for manipulation and brutality as it struggles to survive in modern society. Baroja also borrows from the tradition of the picaresque novel in these works, although the trilogy is more

episodic and loosely structured than the traditional models from the Spanish Golden Age. Some scholars have also traced lines of influence between *La lucha por la vida* and nineteenth-century Russian novelists, as well as the works of Charles Dickens.

In another trilogy, *La raza*, Baroja further explores political and social issues. The first work in the series, *La dama errante* (1908), treats the subject of anarchy, while the second novel, *La ciudad de la niebla* (1909), is concerned with the Spanish colony in London. The third novel of the series, *The Tree of Knowledge*, is also, for some critics, one of Baroja's greatest literary achievements. Largely based on the author's autobiography, the novel traces the development of its protagonist, Andrés, an imaginative and studious young man, who struggles with the conflict between his intellectual curiosity and society's moral hypocrisy and predatory behavior, as well as the stifling effects of traditional thinking. As the novel progresses Andrés experiences romantic attachment, as well as the death of his brother, and serves as a country physician in the town of La Mancha. Through his experiences he discovers that he is philosophical in nature and a lover of truth who seeks, not the Tree of Life, but the Tree of Knowledge. In the last section of the work Andrés moves back to Madrid, where he is confronted with the superficiality of Spanish patriotism. He eventually marries, but when his wife and baby die in childbirth, he poisons himself. At the end of the novel, Andrés is characterized as a forward-thinking man, who devoted himself to the pursuit of truth.

In his next trilogy, *Las ciudades*, Baroja deals again with the flaws of contemporary society. In *Caesar or Nothing*, the first novel of the series, the protagonist is César Moncada, an ambitious man of action who has developed a plan to reform the Castilian city of Castro Duro by taking power away from the rich and returning the land to the peasant class. Moncada's plan fails, however, in part because of the protagonist's self-doubt and depression. As in some of his previous work, Baroja explores the thematic link between creativity and destruction. The novel also incorporates chapters written in the style of travel literature, which feature various points of interest in Europe.

In terms of style and scope, the most significant of Baroja's later works is the twenty-two volume project *Las memorias de un hombre de acción*. The protagonist of the work is Eugenio Aviraneta, the author's distant relative from the Basque region, who was a guerrilla fighter in the Spanish War of Independence, and later became a liberal Masonic conspirator. In the first volume of the series, *El aprendiz de conspirador* (1913), the author establishes a primary characteristic of his protagonist, namely his passion for truth. This passion drives Aviraneta to act in a world typified by empty rhetoric but also eventually leads to his downfall. Baro-

ja's multi-volume work of historical fiction is considered a departure from its predecessors in Spanish literature, innovative not only for its focus on a little-known figure from the Basque region but also for its impressionistic, episodic formal style.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Baroja's first publication, *Vidas sombrías*, although not commercially successful, was favorably reviewed and introduced the author as a promising new voice in Spanish literature. His critical reputation grew as he completed a number of his novels and trilogies during the first decade of the twentieth century, especially his *La lucha por la vida* series, which still remains one of Baroja's most critically discussed works. For many scholars, *The Tree of Knowledge*, published in 1911, marks the pinnacle of Baroja's early literary phase and is also considered his masterpiece. Many early critical studies of the author addressed the formal concerns of his fiction and emphasized his contributions to the "social-novel" genre in Spanish literature. Writing in the 1920s, Aubrey F. G. Bell and Ernest Boyd both highlighted Baroja's treatment of the outcast or vagabond character in his writings, while William A. Drake, writing in 1928, praised his "intellectual honesty" and lamented his neglect in English-language countries, stating, "Baroja has accepted neglect as his portion, but, with true Basque combativeness, he has launched one masterpiece after another against the world's indifference." In the years following 1912, which marks the end of his early period, the author continued to produce numerous works, including the monumental *Las memorias de un hombre de acción* series of novels. In the opinion of some commentators, however, these later efforts lack the originality and power of Baroja's earlier works.

In more recent years, scholars have addressed a variety of issues with regard to Baroja's literary achievements. E. Inman Fox has emphasized the importance of Schopenhauer's philosophy on his writings, particularly with regard to the structure of *The Tree of Knowledge*, while other critics have highlighted the significance of Nietzschean concepts within his oeuvre. C. A. Longhurst, Ricardo L. Landeira, and Janet W. Díaz have concentrated their studies on Baroja's treatment of existential and social themes, such as isolation, poverty, and human misery, while other commentators have stressed the importance of his formal innovations and noted his influence on subsequent generations of Spanish writers, including Camilo José Cela, Ramón Pérez de Ayala, and Juan Benet Goita, among others.

Many commentators have also underscored the author's social and political concerns, noting, in particular, his blatant disdain for such institutions as the Catholic

Church, the family, and the Spanish aristocracy and government. For many critics, Baroja's open and honest expression of contempt for these institutions is one of the most striking and admirable characteristics of his writings. In the words of scholar Beatrice P. Patt, "the critical spirit of the Generation of 1898 found its most virulent and insistent expression in the works of Baroja, who, undistracted by any concern for life in the next world, was free to concentrate the full force of his attention on this one. Few institutions and few social classes emerge unscathed after the Basque's scrutiny, for reality must fall short of the ideal." Patt has concluded that "the image of Spain that emerges from the totality of Baroja's works is flavored with a consistent if not necessarily comforting amalgam of sarcasm and sympathy, impatience and understanding, anger and pain."

Although Baroja's expansive body of work has failed to attract a wide readership in the United States, the author remains a seminal figure of Spanish letters. Appreciated for both his uncompromising candor and insight into the complexities of modern life, he is considered an innovator within European literature, as well as an artist who influenced subsequent generations of writers by greatly expanding the boundaries of the novel genre.

PRINCIPAL WORKS

- **La casa de Aizgorri* (novel) 1900
- Vidas sombrías* (short stories) 1900
- †*Aventuras, inventos, y mixtificaciones de Silvestre Paradox* (novel) 1901
- †*Camino de perfección* [*Road to Perfection*] (novel) 1902
- **El mayorazgo de Labraz* [*The Lord of Labraz*] (novel) 1903
- ‡*Aurora roja* [*Red Dawn*] (novel) 1904
- ‡*La busca* [*The Quest*] (novel) 1904
- ‡*Mala hierba* [*Weeds*] (novel) 1904
- El tablado de Arlequín* (essays) 1904
- §*La feria de los discretos* [*The City of the Discreet*] (novel) 1905
- †*Paradox, rey* [*Paradox, King*] (novel) 1906
- §*Los últimos románticos* (novel) 1906
- §*Las tragedias grotescas* (novel) 1907
- ||*La dama errante* (novel) 1908
- ||*La ciudad de la niebla* (novel) 1909
- **Zalacaín el aventurero* [*Zalacaín the Adventurer*] (novel) 1909
- #*César o nada* [*Caesar or Nothing*] (novel) 1910
- ||*El árbol de la ciencia* [*The Tree of Knowledge*] (novel) 1911

- ***Las inquietudes de Shanti Andía* [*The Restlessness of Shanti Andía*] (novel) 1911
- #*El mundo es así* (novel) 1912
- El aprendiz de conspirador* (novel) 1913
- Las memorias de un hombre de acción*. 22 vols. (novels) 1913-35
- Juventud, egolatría* [*Youth and Egotatry*] (essays) 1917
- Nuevo tablado de Arlequín* (essays) 1917
- #*La sensualidad pervertida* (novel) 1920
- La leyenda de Juan de Alzate* (novel) 1922
- ***El laberinto de las sirenas* (novel) 1923
- ††*El gran torbellino del mundo* (novel) 1926
- ††*Las veleidades de la fortuna* (novel) 1926
- ††*Los amores tardíos* (novel) 1927
- ***Los pilotos de altura* (novel) 1929
- ***La estrella del capitán Chimista* (novel) 1930
- Canciones del suburbio* (poetry) 1944
- Memorias*. 6 vols. (autobiography) 1944-49
- Obras completas*. 8 vols. (novels, short stories, poetry, and essays) 1946-51
- The Restlessness of Shanti Andía, and Selected Stories* (novel and short stories) 1962

*These works comprise the trilogy *Tierra vasca*.

†These works comprise the trilogy *La vida fantástica*.

‡These works comprise the trilogy *La lucha por la vida*.

§These works comprise the trilogy *El pasado*.

||These works comprise the trilogy *La raza*.

#These works comprise the trilogy *Las ciudades*.

**These works comprise the tetralogy *El mar*.

††These works comprise the trilogy *Los amores tardíos*.

CRITICISM

Aubrey F. G. Bell (essay date 1925)

SOURCE: Bell, Aubrey F. G. "Baroja and the Social Novel." In *Contemporary Spanish Literature*, pp. 107-20. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1925.

[In the following essay, Bell discusses Baroja's fiction within the context of the social novel in contemporary Spanish literature, praising the author's treatment of the pícaro, or outcast, and Basque culture but faulting him for the lack of detail and "atmosphere" in his narratives. The critic asserts that "Baroja resolutely refuses to put flesh upon his literary bones, but it is his triumph that he does succeed in making the dry bones live."]

The attitude towards life of Don Pío Baroja and his heroes seems always a shrugging of the shoulders and a muttered "What is the use?" Yet he has published and continues to publish many books. Why write them? Why, with his spiritual nihilism, trouble to create? But Señor Baroja is a Basque—that is, primarily a man of action—and where there is an obstacle he will not rest until he has overcome it. When he has won universal admiration, it is quite possible that he will not write another line or that he will turn to some field of literature other than the novel. "No doubt it was the obstacles which gave me force and spirit," says his Basque hero Zalacaín, "the knowledge that everybody was eager to prevent me. . . . Now I am confronted by no obstacles and know not what to do. I shall have to invent for myself new occupations and difficulties."

Señor Baroja's novels are all movement and action (or rather disconnected actions), shot through with original thoughts and brief descriptions of persons and places. They have been compared with the old *novelas de pícaros* and with the modern Russian novels, especially with the stories of Maxim Gorki. Their subject is often that of the *pícaro's* quandaries and adventures, the treatment is essentially modern. Objective and impersonal, they are sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought; life for him is tragic, and his sincerity is sometimes appalling. "I do not claim to be a man of good taste but to be sincere," he says. Yet a little pretence is as necessary to life as salt is in preparing a meal. It cannot be all truth and ferocity, without humour. With Baroja the crowd comes into its own in Spanish literature; not, that is, a multitude acting in common, but a crowd of outcasts, a throng of ragged, persecuted, restless human beings, *vidas sombrías* that pass tragically, aimlessly, in a tattered procession across the stage.

In *La Busca* he rakes out the underworld, the *gente descitrada*, of Madrid at the beginning of the Twentieth Century. Hucksters, beggars, petty thieves, ragpickers, *golfos*, gipsies, cobblers, clowns swarm in the Rastro of the "city of contrasts" and in taverns and great sordid houses: "many changed their profession as a snake changes its skin," the constant factor in their lives being "their everlasting and hopeless penury." The scenes are described with much economy of line; for instance, the characteristically thin and pitiless account of a bullfight; and the figures are similarly etched in a few words, as that of the Madrid beggar who, "dressed in rags, leant against the wall in a dignified indifference." *Mala Hierba* and *Aurora Roja* complete this trilogy of *La Lucha por la Vida*, which, in its deliberate study of certain phases of life, belongs to the Zola school.

The trilogy *El Pasado* begins, in *La FERIA de los Discretos*, by studying Córdoba with all the care and interest of a Northerner: the clear air, the magical sunsets of gold and opal and crimson, the glowing white and light-

hued houses, *patios* of orange-trees, narrow silent streets and dingy taverns, the court of the Mosque with its oranges and pigeons and chattering sparrows, and all the bustle and clamour and colour of the market-place with its quaint hucksters' cries. The interest of the novel is chiefly incidental, as is the case with so much of Señor Baroja's work. The other two volumes of the trilogy, *Los Últimos Románticos* and *Las Tragedias Grotescas*, have no connexion with the first, and their scenes lie mainly in Paris, in the last years of the Second Empire and in the Commune. The action centres in the obscure machinations of Spanish revolutionaries. If a momentary interest is awakened by Carlos Yarza or by the queer Pipot with his chocolate-coloured dog, the uneventful life of the insipid Don Callisto Bengoa in his "love of the mediocre" fails to charm or hold the attention.

More intense is the trilogy of *La Vida Fantástica*, composed of *Silvestre Paradox*, *Camino de Perfección* and *Paradox Rey*. In its implacable Basque directness, its avoidance of generalities, abstractions and Latin smoothness, almost one might say of any decent veil of reserve, *Camino de Perfección* is characteristic of Baroja, at any rate of the young Baroja. Its rapid, vivid and precise descriptions of Castile and the Guadarrama country lend attraction to the hero's constant wanderings.

In the trilogy named *La Raza* the author gives free play to his vagabond instincts, for Dr. Aracil is implicated in an anarchist outrage at Madrid (the attempt on the life of the King and Queen of Spain on their wedding-day) and his escape with his daughter provides opportunity for describing the country between the capital and the Portuguese frontier and for some of those shrewd incisive comments on the psychology of nations in which Señor Baroja delights (in this case, that of the Portuguese). One must of course not expect more than passing impressions. The Sierra de Guadarrama is "an embattled wall," a great wave of granite rockily outlined on the cloudless blue sky, but the wonderful view on the way up from Arenas de San Pedro to Guisando is dismissed as follows: "They asked a washerwoman the way to Guisando, and now more slowly proceeded to this village through great pinewoods." For the reader who knows the scene this is perhaps enough to recall it: he sees the delicious mountain path in pines and chestnuts, the scarlet-skirted women coming up from washing clothes in the river which sounds below, the silence of the hanging pine-forests on the mountain's flank opposite, and the purple of the granite sierra against the soft turquoise sky.

In the same way, for one who knows the Basque country intimately Señor Baroja's Basque novels will have a peculiar fascination, but to those for whom every place-name of village or mountain does not possess its charm

of memory and association they may seem mere skeletons, almost catalogues of names. The adventures in *Zalacaín el Aventurero* are so many that the places pass breathlessly before us and it requires special knowledge to fill in the outlines and make a masterpiece of the novel. Señor Baroja would no doubt shrug his shoulders and say that, if by impressions and suggestions he has outlined a masterpiece, that is enough, and certainly the interest in the hero Martín is sufficient to string the incidents together, while an attempt has evidently been made to round off the story of his brief life. Typical of this novel's excessive rapidity is the sketch of Santa Cruz: "He was a stout man, rather short than tall, of insignificant appearance, a little over thirty. The only impressive thing about him was the look in his eyes, threatening, oblique and hard. After a few minutes the priest raised his eyes and said 'Good evening.' He then continued reading."

The two earlier volumes of the trilogy *Tierra Vasca* are more stationary. In *La Casa de Aizgorri*, an account of industrialism as opposed to agriculture in a Basque town, the characters are slightly more emphasized: the cynical Don Lucio de Aizgorri, his charming courageous daughter Agueda, her lover Mariano, her feckless brother Luis, the kindly sensible doctor Don Julián, the superstitious old servant Melchora. In *El Mayorazgo de Labraz*, another skeleton of a fine novel, in which the characters are lightly sketched, we have a series of notes describing the decay of a small Basque town, with glimpses of the life of a provincial *hidalgo*, Don Juan, in its mixture of "sumptuousness and penury." In *La Leyenda de Jaun de Alzate* Señor Baroja returns to the country of *Zalacaín el Aventurero*, that is, the hills and villages of the lovely region to the south and north of the Bidasoa. For those unacquainted with this country one can imagine that this strange and fascinating book, with its Basque names and its snatches of Basque song, may be disconcerting and difficult; but, without being precisely a *Faust*, the work has a real interest of its own. The same atmosphere pervades *Idilios Vascos* and *Idilios y Fantasías*.

The first novel of the trilogy *El Mar*, of which the second is *El Laberinto de las Sirenas*, also deals with the Basque country, a mile or two further west—that is, on the coast. The vivid pictures of the sea fill the book (*Las Inquietudes de Shanti Andía*) with a peculiar charm and freshness: "Las olas se metían entre los resquicios de la pizarra, en el corazón del monte, y se las veía saltar blancas y espumosas como surtidores de nieve. . . . El agua, verde y blanca, saltaba furiosa entre las piedras; las olas rompían en lluvia de espuma y avanzaban como manadas de caballos salvajes, con las crines al aire. . . . Bajo el agua transparente se veía la roca carcomida, llena de agujeros, cubierta de lapas. En el fondo, entre las líquenes verdes y las piedrecitas de colores, aparecían rojos erizos de mar cuyos tentáculos

blandos se contraían al tocarlos. En la superficie flotaba un trozo de hierba marina, que al macerarse en el agua quedaba como un ramito de filamentos plateados, una pluma de gaviota o un trozo de corcho. Algun pececillo plateado [the same colour, the same word] pasaba como una flecha, cruzando el pequeño oceano, y de cuando en cuando el gran monstruo de este diminuto mar, el cangrejo, salía de su rincón, andando traidoramente de lado, y su ojo enorme inspeccionaba sus dominios buscando una presa. . . . Se siente ese silencio del mar lleno del gemido agudo del viento, del grito áspero de las gaviotas, de la voz colérica de la ola que va en aumento hasta que revienta en la playa y se retira con el rumor de una multitud que protesta." We are perhaps more attracted by this atmosphere of the sea than by the adventures themselves, yet we are made to feel the perils and escapes of these hardy Basque mariners as we feel the charm of the south wind (*aice hegoa*) when "the distant promontories are seen in a transparent clearness and the coast of France and the coast of Spain are marked distinctly as in a map."

The trilogy *Las Ciudades* contains two of Señor Baroja's best-known novels: *Cesar o Nada*, which has its own intensity despite the author's evident pleasure in shocking the reader by his indifference to the classical antiquities of Rome, and *El Mundo es así*, in which our interest is less in the Russian heroine and the cosmopolitan background than in the acute and penetrating incidental remarks, those piquant and ingenious scraps of which Señor Baroja has so rich a treasury. The third volume, *La Sensualidad Perversa*, is a series of disconnected scenes in the Basque provinces, at Madrid and Paris, in which many readers may prefer the description of an old house in a Basque village, *la casa de mi abuela*.

Besides the trilogies and sundry stray volumes of recollections and reflections, Señor Baroja has written a dozen volumes of *Memorias de un Hombre de Acción*. Although their hero, the Liberal adventurer and freemason Eugenio de Aviraneta, is an historical personage, these episodes are much less historical and more individual than the *Episodios Nacionales* of Galdós. Occasionally they have something in common: Santorcaz in *Bailén* and *Don Martín el Empecinado* is such a figure as Señor Baroja loves to draw, and might be a preliminary study for his Aviraneta. Señor Baroja has remarked somewhere on this point that "Some critics have compared these novels of mine with the National Episodes of Pérez Galdós [for whom Baroja had not great admiration]. I think the resemblance is purely external: that of the period and the subject. Galdós went to history attracted by history, but I owing to my interest in a type; Galdós sought out the most brilliant moments in order to narrate them, while I have insisted on those which were provided me by my protagonist. . . . Artistically Galdós' work is like a collection of pictures, skillfully

painted and brilliantly coloured; mine might be compared to woodcuts wrought with greater patience and more roughly."

The *Memorias* are not too near in time, as was *La Dama Errante*, but sufficiently near to have an actual interest. Some of their scattered episodes are etched with a vividness so intense that they warrant us in placing Don Pío Baroja among the great writers of the Twentieth Century. The fight in the Hontoria pass in *El Escuadron del Brigante* and the vengeance of the Exterminating Angel in *Los Recursos de la Astucia* are but two instances out of many in which the reader finds it difficult to believe that he has not actually heard with his ears and seen with his eyes. The Canon, accused of political treachery, is riding, full of foreboding, accompanied by his *mozo*, through a lonely district on his way from Cuenca to Sigüenza. They arrive at a deserted hermitage. The hermit must have died, says the Canon. No, answers the *mozo*, they killed him. Perhaps to rob him? suggests the Canon. No, it seems it was an act of vengeance of the Royalists: he is said to have given information to the Constitutionals. As they ride on, the sun disappears from the valley, and in a dark wood the Canon suddenly finds himself with two figures in front of him, and, as he looks back, two others behind: "The Exterminators rode slowly out of the gully. One of them, the leader, remained to see to the final arrangements. The men carried down the body, and taking it in their arms crossed the wood to the path which ran along the edge of the ravine, and threw it down into the depths. There was the sound of a body falling and carrying stones in its fall. The leader approached the edge and looked down. The light of the sun had left the valley, and it now lay in darkness and shadow. The Exterminator crossed himself, muttered something resembling a prayer, mounted and disappeared rapidly."

Aviraneta serves under El Empecinado, who is introduced in the second volume and whose tragic death, with that of Byron, is described in *Los Contrastes de la Vida*. Readers of Baroja will naturally not expect any unity of interest or action in these *Memorias*. They skip about from place to place (the scene of *La Ruta del Aventurero* is Valencia and the Basque country and Seville and Madrid) and from incident to incident with perfect irresponsibility. *La Veleta de Gastizar* and *Los Caudillos de 1830* are two halves of one and the same book, its scene being, like that of the first volume of the *Memorias* (*El Aprendiz de Conspirador*), the Basque country in Spain and France. The scene of *El Sabor de la Venganza* is mainly Madrid, the scene, that is, in which, apart from the Basque country, Señor Baroja is most at home. *Las Furias* takes us to Barcelona in 1836.

What the volumes have in common is their peculiar vividness: "the narrative of clear, concrete facts, naked and unadorned" (*Las Furias*). They constantly whet our

appetite for more or inspire us with a wish for fuller treatment. Señor Baroja, like a good doctor, believes in keeping his reader hungry. There is matter for a long story in the "second-hand bookseller, a former monk," but this is all we are given: "This man was so devoted to his books and papers that when he sold any of them he was seized with such despair at finding himself without his folio or manuscript that he would go out after the purchaser and murder him to retrieve it" (*Las Furias*). So in *Zalacaín el Aventurero* the village life and philosophy of the delicious Tellagorri, "a man of good heart and bad reputation," might furnish material for a separate volume or volumes could Señor Baroja linger over his characters with the loving-kindness of an Anatole France. But he will not or cannot do so. He will not or cannot concentrate more than momentarily. He refuses to round off a character or finish a story, or indeed construct a plot.

In the guise of a critic of 1954, he says of *La Sensualidad Perversa*: "There is nothing less literary than this book. It is a pity that it is not properly finished and that it was written in such a hurry and in part in a telegraphic style." And as "literature consists in this, to give an ending to what has none," he declares that he is no *literato*. "Life never ends. One is ever at both the end and the beginning" (*Las Tragedias Grotescas*). He is the champion of unliterary literature. Yet the contradiction is not merely apparent and superficial, and it might be wiser if those who, like Señor Baroja, have a horror of rhetoric and of all that is conventional, were to wage their war against false, artificial literature while still maintaining that literature should be, above all things, literary; otherwise art soon descends into strange modernist antics.

All the *curiosa felicitas* which attends Señor Baroja's etching of *figures et choses qui passaient* deserts him when he attempts to dismiss in an epithet or phrase some great literary figure, a Pereda or a Flaubert or a Ruskin. It is said of a celebrated Spaniard that he confessed on his deathbed that he had always been intensely bored by Dante. Señor Baroja waits for no deathbed repentance; he would abhor such lifelong deceit; he insists on clearing his mind of cant. He believes, perhaps rightly, that many persons profess admiration for poets whom they have never read, whereas he himself has a passion for sincerity. We may admire this sincerity, we may sympathize with and pity a man who cannot enjoy Dante or Milton or Luis de Leon or Plato, but our utmost admiration and sympathy will not make us accept him as a good literary critic. Señor Baroja's remarks, for instance, on Pereda, in *Juventud*, *Egología* and *La Caverna del Humorismo*, are lamentable indeed.

One can understand that so full-bodied a writer should not appeal to one who prefers the cold lines of El Greco