

## RESEÑAS DE LIBROS

A. COESTER. *The Literary History of Spanish-America*. 2<sup>a</sup> edición. New York, The Macmillan Company, 1928, xii + 522 págs.

Dr. Coester's purpose in writing his *Literary History of Spanish America* is, in his own words, "to guide an English-speaking American . . . who desires a better acquaintance with the mentality of his Spanish-American neighbors." The work deserves the recognition due to a pioneer in this field. It is, however, mainly a guide to names, works, and dates in the fields of poetry, the novel and the drama and provides a sketchy historical background. One finds no adequate critical evaluation of literary accomplishment nor of the influences, foreign and local, which have affected the mind and soul of our Southern neighbors, although there is an effort to trace French influence in the "modernista movement." The author appears to think that great masterpieces are incompatible with provincial settings. Just what the literary genius of Spanish-America is—in whole or in part—is not presented clearly in the book.

The author accepts the classification of Bartolomé Mitre, Argentine statesman, historian and poet, and divides Spanish-American literary history into three periods, the colonial, revolutionary, and republican periods. One might also wish that within these three periods a study of the significance and originality of Spanish-American literature had been made. For modelled on Latin, Italian, Spanish, and French patterns and following the classical, romantic, realistic or naturalistic schools, it has always been Spanish-American in thought and substance and constitutes a distinctive literature worthy of careful study.

Dr. Coester's book reveals too great a dependence on histories, biographical sketches, and anthologies, written or compiled by Spaniards or Spanish-Americans, without much direct knowledge of the original works and without a critical study and evaluation of them. Neologisms or odd expressions such as "verses of occasion," "numerous practitioners of lyric verse" occur on pages 5, 7, 14, 20, 23, and 26. Typographical slips persist on pages 27, 70, 221, 477, 478, 483 and 485. Accentuation and spelling of Spanish names is not uniform or correct. In the only new chapter—that of the novel—misstatements are made in giving the plots of *La Casa de los Cuervos* and *Valle Negro*

by Hugo Wast. The bibliography and the index might be revised to advantage by including all the names of authors introduced in the new chapter.

It is to be regretted that every single error and doubtful statement contained in the first edition of 1919 (to be found on pages 3, 5, 6, 13, 30, 40, 41, 46, 52, 62, 77, 79, 83, 103, 104, 125, 245, 261, 304, 431, 444) pointed out in Professor William R. Shepherd's invaluable criticism in *The Romanic Review*, Vol. VIII, No. 2, persist in this edition of 1928. For example, the first book printed in America was the *Escala Espiritual*, and neither the title nor the authorship of the one mentioned on page 5 is correct. Histories did not "make up the bulk of what was written about America and in America" during the colonial period (page 6). The form of government which the rebellious colonies set up was surely not "that of a democracy" (page 41). To say that San Martín (page 52) is the only liberator of South America is an unforgivable error. Whether Spain had any such policy as that of "maintaining the creoles in ignorance" (page 304) is exceedingly doubtful. The Dominican Republic (not "Santo Domingo") is situated in the eastern, and not in the southern part of the island of Haiti (page 431). Aside from these errors of fact, the present reviewer does not agree wholly with Dr. Coester's evaluation of literature. There is no mention of South America's most famous dramatist, Florencio Sánchez. In writing of Carlos Reyles, the author omits his best known novel, *La Raza de Caín*. Throughout the work, the author does not apportion the proper space to the various writers. José Enrique Rodó, the greatest thinker of Spanish-America, he dismisses with two lines and fails to mention his best works, *Ariel*, *El Mirador de Próspero* and *Los Motivos de Proteo*. Central American and Porto Rican authors, especially those of the last decade, deserve more ample treatment. Among the Porto Rican poets one might mention José de Diego, generally considered the best Porto Rican epic poet, and Luis Lloréns Torres, known for *La canción de las Antillas* (*Parnaso portorriqueño*, compiled by E. Torres Rivera, Barcelona, Maucci).

While it may be granted that Paraguay's literary contributions are not so great as those of her Southern neighbor, Argentina, this is not sufficient reason to omit them from a literary history of Spanish-America. The student will find the *Parnaso paraguayo de selectas composiciones poéticas*, compiled by Michael A. de Vitis (Barcelona, Casa Editorial Maucci), helpful in giving him the best examples of Paraguayan writings.

As a South American, the present reviewer can not help being grateful for Dr. Coester's effort to make known the intel-

lectual life of Spanish-America. Since Dr. Coester has gone so far in making Spanish-American literature known to English-speaking peoples, it is unfortunate that he did not produce a more complete and accurate book.

PASTORIZA FLORES

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R. F. GIUSTI. *Crítica y polémica*. Tercera serie. Buenos Aires, Edit. "Buenos Aires," 1927, 180 págs.

En esta serie, como en las dos anteriores, nos ofrece el director de "Nosotros" un conjunto de ensayos de crítica sobre obras y temas en su mayoría de literatura argentina. Sólo uno de los artículos versa sobre tema extranjero: Anatole France; otro, sobre una figura hispanoamericana no argentina: Baldomero Sanín Cano, noble figura colombiana analizada muy justamente por Giusti. El resto trata de autores argentinos de primera fila como Benito Lynch, Paul Groussac, Victor Juan Guillot, Enrique Larreta y Ricardo Güiraldes, con motivo de sus últimas obras; de Manuelita Rosas, con motivo del libro de Carlos Ibarguren, y el más largo de todos, de la novela argentina estudiada sintéticamente en su evolución y en sus figuras principales. La crítica de Giusti es no sólo penetrante, sino honrada: busca, a través de sus negaciones, valores que afirmar, y los afirma con generosidad, consciencia e imparcialidad. Sus juicios acerca del pasado de la literatura argentina y de los autores contemporáneos ya formados y maduros tienen rara objetividad; sólo al juzgar a los escritores más jóvenes, a los representantes de las nuevas escuelas y la "nueva sensibilidad" me parece que se atenúa el raro poder de comprensión que presta a la crítica de Giusti tan alto valor y hasta que a veces llega a la ceguedad del prejuicio. Las reservas que hace respecto del valor de Güiraldes— aunque sinceras y respetuosas y bien justificadas con razones, buenas desde su punto de vista—me parecen excesivas, y hasta equivocadas; porque creo que en los defectos que él señala en el estilo y la expresión de Güiraldes radica la mayor originalidad de su obra y muchas de sus mejores posibilidades. En cambio los retratos y análisis de Groussac y de Lynch son perfectos; y en conjunto el libro—escrito en un estilo claro, noble y preciso—será una excelente guía para los extranjeros que quieran orientarse con alguna seguridad en la literatura argentina.

FEDERICO DE ONÍS

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

A. TAPIA Y RIVERA. *Mis memorias, o Puerto Rico como lo encontré y como lo dejo*. New York, De Laisne y Rossboro, [1928], 227 págs.

Con el presente volumen de memorias, inicia el Sr. Alejandro Tapia y Díaz la publicación de las obras completas de su padre, Alejandro Tapia y Rivera (1826-1882), rindiendo así un merecido homenaje al extinto polígrafo puertorriqueño, y un servicio incalculable a los que se dedican al estudio de nuestras letras.

D. Alejandro Tapia y Rivera es una de las figuras más conspicuas de nuestro siglo XIX. Nacido en San Juan al iniciarse el segundo cuarto del siglo, de noble madre puertorriqueña y esforzado español (capitán del primer batallón del regimiento de infantería de Granada), asistió al período más dramático de nuestra historia, después de la conquista, y fué ardiente fuerza propulsora en los albores de nuestra formación cultural. Lector voraz y autodidáctico, lejos de todo método se preparó para las lides del pensamiento, y animado de los más altos propósitos culturales dejó al margen de su vida—cosa rara en un hombre de su época—las enconadas luchas políticas, para consagrarse a otras actividades fecundantes de la civilización y el progreso.

Murió (sin terminar sus memorias, que sólo cubren de 1826 a 1854) mientras explicaba un plan ante la junta directiva de la Sociedad Protectora de la Inteligencia, y su entierro fué una imponente demostración de afecto en la que tomó parte el país en general.

Huérfanos como estamos todavía de estudios inteligentes sobre nuestro pasado, es difícil encuadrar con propiedad la personalidad multiforme de Alejandro Tapia: poeta, novelista, dramaturgo, historiador, periodista, publicista, conferenciante, patrocinador de las bellas artes, fundador de una Sociedad de Conciertos, de otra Sociedad Filarmónica, iniciador del Ateneo de Puerto Rico. Pero cuando hagamos en nuestra madurez ideológica nuestro balance cultural e intentemos la historia de nuestra flaca literatura que aun está por hacer, veremos destacarse con sus altibajos la figura de Alejandro Tapia, cualquiera que sea el fallo que demos a su obra, con la gloria de haber sido el más distinguido iniciador de la literatura en Puerto Rico.

Desde 1847 en que empezó a publicar, hasta 1882, año de su muerte, entregó al público más de veinte obras de diversa índole. Entre éstas, trece o catorce son dramas y novelas, géneros absolutamente desaparecidos de nuestra raquítica producción actual. Las otras son obras poéticas, históricas, biográficas, conferencias sobre estética y artículos periodísticos. Entre estas obras la más destacada y famosa, aunque realmente

poco leída, es el poema épico *La Sataniada*, en que el Sr. Tapia quiso rivalizar con Dante. Apunto el hecho sin comentarlo por ahora, para destacar los altos propósitos que alentaban al Sr. Tapia como hombre de letras.

Gracias a los notables esfuerzos de su hijo podremos analizar pronto estas obras, hoy perdidas o difíciles de hallar. La que ahora nos ocupa, *Mis memorias*, inédita hasta hoy en forma de volumen, a cambio de un relativo valor literario posee una doble importancia personal e histórica por cuanto tiene de aclaratorio en la vida y carácter del autor y de explicativo y nuevo sobre la evolución histórica del siglo XIX.

En su carácter personal la obra carece de introspección íntima, de desahogos sentimentales que sirvan para hacer una biografía espiritual, completa, de Alejandro Tapia, por más que esporádicamente encontramos oraciones y párrafos contentivos de un sofrenado lirismo. Se ve que el propósito del Sr. Tapia no fué hacer una obra demasiado íntima, independiente de factores exteriores, sino hacer un libro, con miras de publicación, por donde pudieran las generaciones futuras asomarse al Puerto Rico de su época. No son, pues, los estados de alma, los planos espirituales, las reacciones subjetivas, los que dan tono a la obra, a pesar de estar saturada de una reprimida amargura que la extremada sensibilidad del autor no pudo vedar. No obstante, la obra será imprescindible para el que quiera hacer una acabada biografía de Tapia.

Nos parece que su mayor valor radica en su carácter objetivo por ser *Mis memorias* una relación histórica fragmentaria del siglo XIX, escrita con imparcialidad y sin pretensiones, y por contener además ciertas páginas-clave para el estudio de nuestras costumbres, de nuestro carácter colectivo, de nuestra personalidad nacional. Mientras permanezcan como incógnitas sociales los siglos XVI, XVII y XVIII de nuestra historia, tendremos que aceptar que Puerto Rico empezó a labrarse culturalmente ya entrado el siglo XIX, y las raíces de nuestra idiosincrasia toman raigambres en los años en que vivió Alejandro Tapia. De ahí la importancia indiscutible de cuanto nos dice sobre la evolución periodística y literaria, sobre las escasas sociedades y escuelas, las bibliotecas y lecturas, las comunicaciones marítimas, juegos, fiestas, instituciones sociales, censura, comercio, esclavitud, hombres y sucesos notables, descripción de calles, tipos, costumbres, etc., etc. En conjunto la obra de Tapia es una rica fuente de información de primera mano, sin carácter científico, en la cual podremos espigar un gran número de asuntos interesantes, que han de arrojar mucha luz sobre el camino del porvenir. Ella puede ayudar a definirnos.

Avaloran el libro notables adiciones que recogió con muy buen propósito el editor. Entre estos se encuentran la fe de bautismo y el acta de defunción de su señor padre, poesías y artículos necrológicos, recortes de la prensa de aquella época y algunos discursos pronunciados en el homenaje celebrado en el Teatro Municipal de San Juan a raíz de la muerte de nuestro primer dramaturgo.

Empobrecen la obra un gran número de erratas regadas en el texto; las veinte páginas que recogen los nombres de las personas que ayudaron a la "Suscripción a favor de la Viuda e hijos . . . de Alejandro Tapia," páginas que pudieron ser aprovechadas en poner al alcance de todos datos, cartas, noticias, valoraciones, estudios sobre Tapia, de mayor interés para la posteridad. Las notas son insuficientes y vagas, pero nada de esto aminora el valor intrínseco de la obra.

A. S. PEDREIRA

UNIVERSIDAD DE PUERTO RICO

F. CARMONA NENCLARES. *Vida y literatura de Rufino Blanco-Fombona*. Madrid, Edit. Mundo Latino, 1928, 188 págs.

The author of this little book aims to do three things: to give a brief account of the life of his hero; to give his own impression of the man; and, finally, to evaluate Blanco-Fombona's work as novelist, poet, historian and critic. He has been rather successful in achieving this three-fold purpose. The story of Blanco-Fombona's eventful life is set down about as it has been told by others—notably, by Blanco-Fombona himself. Here, as throughout the book, the tone is perhaps unnecessarily worshipful but that, of course, is a matter of taste and judgment. The author is personally acquainted with Blanco-Fombona and the intimate glimpses of him are interesting.

In explaining his own critical method, Mr. Carmona Nenclares says:

"Cuando nos hemos puesto a escribir olvidamos todo lo que aprendimos sobre el autor, si nos llegó por cauce diverso de nuestra sensibilidad. Pretensión nuestra es la de ser sinceros con nosotros mismos y, ante de todo, la de volcarnos en nuestras propias palabras. Nosotros seremos siempre nosotros."

He is going to be as subjective a critic as Anatole France himself. And yet, by reference or quotation, he invokes no less than thirty other writers—Spaniards, Spanish-Americans, Italians, Germans, Frenchmen and North Americans. In one or two long quotations he even allows Blanco-Fombona to explain himself—a most excellent idea!

When Mr. Carmona Nenclares tries to express an opinion of his own, two things are apparent: first, that he does not have a clear style; and second, that he must lack confidence in himself in such matters for he deals mainly in generalities. His discussion of the novel, *La mitra en la mano*, is particularly inadequate. One gathers that he has probably read this novel but that is about all. Of course, *La mitra en la mano* is a fairly recent work and the critics have not yet had time to stow it away in its proper niche.

D. F. RATCLIFF

UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI

M. M. KNIGHT. *The Americans in Santo Domingo*. New York, Vanguard Press, 1928, xx + 189 pages, \$1.00.

*The Americans in Santo Domingo* is the result of a year's research conducted in the Dominican Republic, in Washington and in New York. Dr. Knight, the author, examined and digested a vast amount of documentary evidence which he successfully compressed into fourteen brief and readable chapters.

Dr. Knight's book confirms and substantiates a very general belief: that American imperialism in Santo Domingo has an ugly record. Like the fatal manchineel tree, its very shade seems to have been deleterious. Wilson, the sincere champion of the rights of small nations, authorized the military occupation and the long series of acts which for eight years violated the independence of the Dominican Republic. Bryan, the Great Commoner and Defender of the Faith, so forgot his political and moral principles that he intrigued to secure jobs for "deserving democrats" in the customs service of Santo Domingo. A distinguished American college professor with an international reputation as an expert in political legislation and with a brilliant record of disinterested service, went to Santo Domingo, sat in the shade of the manchineel tree, and succumbed: he charged the bankrupt government of that republic one hundred thousand dollars for four months of work, for which, according to Dr. Knight, he had already been amply remunerated by the State Department of his own country! General Cazneau, the pioneer American imperialist who began to operate in Santo Domingo in the fifties and who, in 1862, founded the American West India Company, was a soft-pedal filibuster and notorious adventurer whose record included high treason against his own nation. Backcock, the personal representative sent by President Grant to negotiate the cession of Samaná Bay, was characterized by Carl Schurz as an "obvious liar" and a trickster, and was indicted for conspiracy to defraud the Government of the United

States. Charles Sumner openly accused Grant in Congress of using the armed forces of the Republic to overawe a weak, helpless nation and force it to cede valuable territory without adequate compensation. The foreign debt of Santo Domingo—the taproot of all its troubles—was born out of a colossal swindle. Shrewd Americans bought the claims of foreign creditors at the rate of twenty-eight cents on the dollar and called on their Government to act as their collector, for the American Constitution follows and protects the emigrant dollar when it goes abroad, even though it be engaged in filibustering expeditions.

The story is too long to be summarized in a review. It is interestingly told by Dr. Knight. The reader should not miss any part of it. Suffice it to say that in the course of time American interests became the chief foreign creditors of Santo Domingo. The little republic led a hectic life. It did not always have the patience to wait until its president completed his term of office or died a natural death. It showed a strange preference for the *machete* as the arbiter of political disputes. There were frequent revolutions, harmless affairs which cost little in blood and treasure. American lives and property were seldom put in jeopardy. But the thing could not be tolerated. Since 1898 Uncle Sam has felt that it is his bounden duty to abate all nuisances in the Caribbean, and, as an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, he took steps to secure complete financial control of Santo Domingo, which he achieved in 1907 for the double purpose of settling the foreign debt of the little republic and discouraging revolutions. This control had developed in 1916 into a military occupation which aspired to become a protectorate *de jure*. The courageous manner in which Santo Domingo refused to accept the protectorate under military pressure, is clearly brought out by the author. To that steadfastness she owes the measure of independence which she finally regained in 1924.

Are there any entries on the credit side of American imperialism in Santo Domingo? The Marines restored order and disarmed the population. They introduced modern sanitation and built a few roads and schools, not enough of the latter, however, to house all the expensive American steel desks which were sold and purchased under their auspices. Compared with the constructive work accomplished in the same number of years in Cuba, Porto Rico and the Philippines, the showing made by the military occupation of Santo Domingo was way below the standard of which this country is capable. The reason of this failure was the reluctance of the military government to employ able civilians in important posts and the obvious incompetence

of the martinets who were placed at the head of the executive departments. One thing the soldiers did remarkably well: they restored order with such a heavy hand that they put the fear of God into the stoutest Dominican hearts. It is safe to predict that peace will reign in Santo Domingo for the next hundred years or so, for the inhabitants of that country will endure patiently all the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune rather than tempt the Marines to come back with all their machine guns and airplanes. The revolutionary nuisance has been abated. And the financial control of the republic is safely held in American hands. American imperialism in Santo Domingo has an ugly record, but it has brought the bacon home!

JOSÉ PADÍN

NEW YORK

L. H. JENKS. *Our Cuban Colony. A Study in Sugar.* New York, Vanguard Press, 1928, xxii + 341 pages, \$1.00.

"Cuba's story," says Dr. Jenks, "is only incidentally a matter of politics. It is fundamentally a matter of economics." This monograph, by far the most important of the three "Studies in American Imperialism" published under the general editorship of Professor Barnes, is a keen analysis and brilliant exposition of the process by which, during the past thirty years, American capital has invaded and colonized Cuba, creating the anomalous situation of a free and independent nation which has lost the ownership of its domain and become a virtual economic protectorate of the United States. Dr. Jenks' book should be read by all persons who are familiar with Chapman's *History of the Cuban Republic* and who may be inclined to believe that the troubles of Cuba are due solely to political incompetence and dishonesty. The disruptive effect of the great economic mass of the United States on the economically undeveloped Caribbean countries is only now beginning to be realized. Dr. Jenks shows what has happened to Cuba. A similar picture could be drawn of Porto Rico. Araquistain, in a brilliant and sensational book, has called it "la agonía de las Antillas." These disturbances are not the result of the political action of the United States or of any deliberate plan on the part of this nation to violate the rights of others. They are simply the effect of the suction of a passing gigantic economic mass on smaller bodies which happen to be in close proximity to its path. And the worst is yet to come, for the great mass has not attained its maximum velocity.

JOSÉ PADÍN

NEW YORK

M. A. MARSH. *The Bankers in Bolivia. A Study in American Foreign Investments.* New York, Vanguard Press, 1928, xxv + 233 pages, \$1.00.

This excellent monograph is one of a series of three "Studies in American Imperialism" published under the editorial direction of Professor Harry Elmer Barnes, the well-known writer and lecturer on the social sciences, and financed by the American Fund for Public Service. The purpose of these studies is to vivisect contemporary imperialism, to show what it does, for, as Professor Barnes puts it, "the best notion of what a thing is can be obtained from a thorough knowledge of what it does."

The monograph makes a careful scrutiny of the famous Bolivian 8's of 1947, a \$33,000,000 loan made by North American bankers to Bolivia in 1922. The loan was for 25 years. As security for the full payment of the principal, premium and interest of the bonds, Bolivia pledged her entire customs receipts, the source of 45 percent of her total revenue, and entrusted to a Permanent Fiscal Commission, two members of which were nominated by the bankers, the collection of taxes in the Republic during the quarter century life of the loan. In the analysis of the loan, the author follows closely the course of the negotiations, checking the stringency of the terms against the essential conditions of Bolivian life and credit, estimating its effect upon the future development of the country, studying the degree of interference it involves in the administration of the nation's affairs, and attempting to evaluate it as either a sound investment or a speculation. Her conclusions are that the loan was a highly speculative enterprise and that Bolivia was unwise in handing a blank check to the bankers. The transaction, moreover, constitutes a potential problem in American imperialism: the danger that the United States may be forced to intervene to protect the interests of its nationals. "The setting is there, the characters are already on the stage, the dominant motive, a desire for security, is present."

JOSÉ PADÍN

NEW YORK

JUAN B. SOTO. *Puerto Rico ante el derecho de gentes.* San Juan, P. R., La Democracia, 1928, 122 págs.

Alegato en defensa del derecho de Puerto Rico a gobernarse a sí mismo, con una solución concreta para el problema político de aquella isla. Consiste la solución en que el Congreso Federal disponga que Puerto Rico adopte e implante una constitución de tipo republicano, y que una vez organizado con arreglo a ella, celebre con los Estados Unidos un tratado permanente en virtud

mucho tiempo. Lástima que el título general no se ajuste en todo al espíritu de la obra, pues en realidad el Sr. Lomba y Pedraja no estudia los albores sino el cenit y el mediodía del drama romántico en España. La alborada, habría que ir a buscar no tanto a Francia como a nuestro siglo de oro.

Es un lugar común, al iniciarse el romanticismo en Alemania, que fueron nuestros clásicos, y preferentemente Calderón, los que sirvieron de bandera al movimiento. Precisamente la polémica Mora-Galiano-Faber es una consecuencia de la cada vez mayor popularidad de nuestros clásicos dramaturgos, en los comienzos del siglo XIX.

El trabajo del Sr. Lomba y Pedraja, claro y metódico, sin desmedidas ambiciones de agotar el tema, es obra de buen juicio y selección por cuanto recoge lo más substantivo y esencial del drama romántico en España: desde Martínez de la Rosa hasta José Zorrilla.

A. S. P.

## LA LITERATURA DE HOY

### LA VIDA LITERARIA EN ESPAÑA

Ni grandes novedades ni éxitos clamorosos ni obras de trascendencia han llegado al público español en la última parte del año 1927 y el primer semestre del actual. Algunos libros interesantes, sí. Casi lo suficiente para conservar la temperatura en que vive el mundo literario madrileño. Se percibe una continuidad de producción que años atrás no se conocía. Sin embargo, ningún autor ha dado la nota alta y resonadora. Algunos escritores maduros se ocupan en la publicación de sus obras completas—recuento de caudal ya acumulado—; los nuevos, salvo excepciones, continúan perfeccionando su instrumental y discutiendo teorías de sesgo novísimo en artículos de periódicos y revistas; otros prosiguen sus cantos a la fábrica, al rascacielos, al deporte, a la velocidad, a todos los símbolos de la civilización actual.

En el inventario de novelas que hasta nosotros han llegado descuellan los nombres de Baroja, Gómez de la Serna, Tenreiro.

BAROJA, después de su trilogía *El gran torbellino del mundo*, vuelve a sus *Memorias de un hombre de acción*, a las que desde hace ya bastantes años viene dedicando lo mejor de su talento.

En *Las mascaradas sangrientas* (Madrid, Caro Raggio, 1927) penetramos con el interés de siempre en el mundo típicamente barojiano, cargado de vida y dinamismo de alta tensión; volvemos a encontrar las mismas briznas de humanidad, vulgares, pero siempre con algo extraño, de *Las figuras de cera*, de *La nave de los locos*, de todas las criaturas de Baroja, y nos sumergimos una vez más en el ambiente muelle y bárbaro, verde de valle y rojo de pasión, de esos pueblecillos vasco-navarros y vasco-franceses que tan bien conocen los lectores de Baroja. En esta nueva novela, las intrigas de la guerra carlista se entremezclan con los instintos perversos y alucinantes que llevan al crimen, y deslizándose entre los resquicios de un plan desordenado, sin pauta, aparece con su esguince maquiavélico, moviendo los hilos de la trama política, don Eugenio Avinareta, el pariente del novelista.

No es ésta la mejor novela de Baroja; es probablemente una de las peores, y a pesar de todo, no nos defrauda enteramente. ¿Cuál será el milagro de Baroja que le permite cruzar incólume, sin batacazos serios, por entre las filas en que se libra la batalla